

11-22-1983

# Femininity and Self-Esteem in Professional Women

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<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.3245>

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Shirley Ellen Harper for the  
Master of Science in Psychology presented November 22, 1983.

Title: Femininity and Self-Esteem in Professional Women

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Research in sex-roles has found masculinity and androgyny to be correlated with self-esteem while femininity has a low or negative correlation with self-esteem. Much of the research in this area is based in studies of androgyny. Androgyny is the ability to respond in a feminine or masculine manner, depending on the situation rather than being limited to only feminine or masculine behavior because of sex-role stereotypes. In the research on self-esteem

some studies have reported androgynous individuals measure high in self-esteem. Other studies have found that masculine characteristics contribute more to the self-esteem than androgynous characteristics. These results, taken together, suggest people with androgynous and masculine characteristics have high self-esteem while those with feminine characteristics have lowered or negative self-esteem.

All of the studies examining the correlation between femininity and self-esteem except one have used college women as subjects. None of the studies have investigated professional women. This study addresses the issue of self-esteem in professional women to determine if employment at a professional level affects the correlation of low and negative self-esteem that has been consistently found in college women. The hypothesis tested was that there would be a higher correlation between femininity and self-esteem than that found in college women in previous studies. For comparison a group of women students were also studied.

The professional group consisted of 148 women faculty members at universities and members of a professional women's club. The women were considered professional if they had completed a course of study leading to a degree and had worked at least one year in their professions. The non-professional group was composed of 150 female, undergraduate students at universities. All subjects completed short forms of the Texas Social Behavior Inventory,

a measure of self-esteem, the Personality Attributes Questionnaire, a measure of psychological sex roles, and personal information questionnaire. The hypothesis of a higher correlation between femininity and self-esteem in the professional group than in a group of college students was not supported. Both groups had a low positive correlation with self-esteem although there was no significant difference between the two. For both groups, professional and student, masculine traits contributed more than feminine traits to self-esteem.

FEMININITY AND SELF-ESTEEM IN PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

by

SHIRLEY ELLEN HARPER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE  
in  
PSYCHOLOGY

Portland State University

1983

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Numerous studies have investigated the relationship between femininity and self-esteem, between masculinity and self-esteem, and between androgyny and self-esteem with mixed results. A number of studies pertaining to sex-roles have found masculinity and androgyny to be correlated with self-esteem while femininity had a low or negative correlation with self-esteem (Antill & Cunningham, 1979; Bem, Mantyna, & Watson, 1976; Hinrichsen, Follansbee & Ganellen, 1981; Kelly & Worell, 1977; O'Connor, Mann & Bardwick, 1978; Orlofsky, 1977; Recely, 1973; Schiff & Koopman, 1978; Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975; and Wetter, 1975).

Androgyny is the ability to respond in a feminine or masculine manner, depending on the situation, rather than being limited to only feminine or masculine behavior because of sex-role stereotypes. On measures of androgyny, females and males who score high on femininity are rated as feminine; females and males who score high on masculinity are rated as masculine; females and males who score high on both femininity and masculinity are rated androgynous and those who score low on both are considered

undifferentiated. Androgyny has been proposed as psychologically healthier than either masculinity or femininity. In the research on self-esteem, androgynous individuals measure high in self-esteem (Wetter, 1975; Bem, Mantyna, & Watson, 1976; Orlofsky, 1977; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975; O'Connor, Mann, & Bardwick, 1978; and Hinrichsen, Follansbee, & Ganellen, 1981). Other investigators have challenged the theory that androgyny is healthier than masculinity or femininity. Recely (1973) developed a measure of sex-role conformity and found self-esteem in females to be correlated with conformity to male sex-roles and not with female sex-roles. Wetter (1975); Jones, Chernovetz, & Hansson (1978); Schiff & Koopman (1978); and Antill & Cunningham (1979) found in studies of college women that masculine characteristics contributed more to the self-esteem than androgynous characteristics. However, the majority of the studies have found low correlations or slightly negative correlations between femininity and self-esteem. Almost all of the studies investigating sex-roles and self-esteem limited their population to college students. The present study seeks to determine and clarify the nature of the relationship between femininity and self-esteem in professional women, and to compare this relationship to that found in a group of college women.

### Research on Androgyny and Self-Esteem

Bem, Mantyna, & Watson (1976), Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, (1975), Orlofsky (1977), O'Connor, Mann, & Bardwick (1978), Hinrichsen, Follansbee, & Ganellen (1981) reported high correlations between self-esteem and androgyny in college students. However, these studies are plagued by various methodological and theoretical problems.

In an attempt at a behavioral validation of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), Bem correlated the BSRI with the activity of college students while they interacted with a human baby as a measure of feminine nurturance. Feminine and androgynous college students did not differ significantly from one another although masculine students were significantly less "nurturant" toward the baby in their interactions. In a companion study of nurturant behavior Bem correlated the BSRI with nurturant behavior demonstrated toward a lonely student. Again, masculine subjects were significantly less nurturant than feminine and androgynous subjects but feminine and androgynous subjects did not differ significantly from each other. On the basis of these studies Bem concluded that "low scorers in our research were found to be significantly lower in self-esteem than high scorers" . . . (p. 1023). No measures of self-esteem had been administered nor was any evidence cited for the assumption that the level of interaction with a baby or with a lonely student was a valid measure of nurturance.

Another study of androgyny was reported by Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp (1975). Introductory psychology students rated themselves and their peers on sex-role attributes and self-esteem measures. Spence, et al. (1975) assumed that the MF scales of the Personality Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) were measures of Bakan's (1966) ideal masculine and feminine traits of agency-communion. Based on this theory the highly functioning individual would possess traits of both masculinity and femininity and would score in an androgynous manner. They came to the conclusion that androgynous individuals have the positive qualities of both masculinity and femininity contributing to social and personal effectiveness making androgyny "the most desirable state of affairs" (p. 38). However, female valued traits on this scale did not correlate as highly with self-esteem as did masculine valued traits.

The study of Orlofsky (1977) addressed the issue of androgynous people having higher levels of ego identity than feminine and undifferentiated people. The interpretation Orlofsky drew from his study is that:

While masculinity and androgyny are associated with high levels of self-esteem in college males and females, feminine typing in females appears to result in low self-esteem in all areas except physical attractiveness (but even here feminine women were at no advantage: they scored no higher than androgynous or even masculine women). (p. 574)

In an attempt to extend the results of androgyny studies to a population beyond college students, O'Connor, Mann, & Bardwick (1978) measured the self-esteem of middle-aged, upper-middle class professional men aged 40-50 and their wives. The results showed that androgynous and masculine men and women scored significantly higher in self-esteem than feminine subjects. Presumably these women vicariously shared the success of their husbands since variables, such as the age of the wives or level of employment, were not controlled. All that was reported about the women was that they were married to successful men. The theory of wives vicariously sharing their husband's success was challenged by the finding of Macke, Bohrnstedt, & Bernstein (1979). Macke, et al., studied housewives who were married to successful men. Their results indicated that women do not experience their husband's success vicariously. The husband's success has an indirect affect on housewives' self-esteem through its effect on marital success. A non-working wife may not be able to acquire social rewards by her own efforts leading her to feel less adequate in contrast to her husband. The self-esteem of professional women was not influenced by their spouses' characteristics.

The study of sex-roles by Hinrichsen, Follansbee, & Ganellen (1981) used undergraduate college students

enrolled in introductory psychology classes. They concluded that:

The data were generally consistent with Bem's (1974) suggestion that psychological androgyny may represent a more appropriate societal definition of psychological health than the strong sex-role type. However, several inconsistencies with this position were reported and the implication of these inconsistencies is that Bem's statement may have been too broad. (p. 591)

Taken together, these studies indicate that androgynous people have higher self-esteem than masculine, feminine, or undifferentiated people. Several points should be kept in mind, however. All of these researchers have used college students for subjects except one and have generalized their results to a wider population without justification. While no correlations between the sex-role measures that were used in these studies have been published, correlations that have been published between sex-role inventories have been low, indicating that these instruments are not measuring the same traits. The one study that was cited that used non-college students as subjects did not control for variables of the female population other than their marriage.

#### Research on Masculinity and Self-Esteem

Research finding androgyny highly correlated with self-esteem has been challenged by other studies that report masculinity alone correlates highly with self-esteem.

Recely (1973) developed a measure of sex-role conformity and found self-esteem in women to be correlated with conformity to male sex-roles and not with conformity to female sex-roles. Subjects were college students. The need for approval and the rejection of sex-role stereotypes did not significantly affect the level of self-esteem in men and women college students.

The study of sex-roles by Wetter (1975) reported that only the masculinity scores were positively correlated with self-esteem; the femininity scores had a slight negative correlation with self-esteem.

Jones, Chernovetz, & Hansson (1978) used a number of measures to test the theory that androgyny allows greater behavioral flexibility leading to better personality adjustment. Their subjects were undergraduate men and women college students enrolled in general psychology courses. The authors concluded from their study that the theory of androgynous males being better adjusted than masculine males was not supported by their results. Also, both men and women found the masculine traits more desirable than the feminine traits. This preference is interpreted as a desire to behave in an instrumental fashion (e.g. more assertively) rather than a desire to become more masculine. The trend for masculine adaptiveness was evidenced by the women subjects also: the more masculine in orientation, the

more adaptive, competent, and secure they were. Jones, et al., concluded that:

The important issue becomes not whether one has internalized the traits and behaviors appropriate to one's gender but the extent to which one has assimilated the tendencies most highly viewed by society. (p. 311)

The study of Schiff & Koopman (1978) addressed the issue of how women's sex-role identity related to self-esteem and ego development. Subjects were women enrolled in college Human Development classes. Androgynous and masculine women scored significantly higher in self-esteem than feminine and undifferentiated women. They came to the conclusion that:

The finding of no significant difference in self-esteem between androgynous women and masculine women suggests that the masculine component of sex-role identity, present to a high degree in both of these groups, may be closely associated with positive self-perceptions. This supports the belief that masculine characteristics, highly valued in our culture, may contribute significantly to self-esteem and may be weighted more heavily than the feminine component in relationship to personal satisfaction and feelings of self-worth. (p. 304)

Antill & Cunningham (1979) studied specifically the function of masculinity as the key factor correlating with a self-esteem. They studied men and women undergraduate college students. The authors stated that,

Thus, it is clear for both male and female university students that the level of masculinity in self-description is the major contributing factor to self-esteem. The description of one-self in terms of feminine characteristics is largely



irrelevant to males' self-esteem, and in females it tends to be linked with low self-esteem . . . these findings contradict both the traditional view of femininity as ideal for females and the more recent advocacy of androgyny as ideal for both sexes. (p. 785)

Summarizing the literature on masculinity and self-esteem, the masculine trait is the major contributing factor to self-esteem rather than androgyny. Masculine traits appear to contribute more highly than feminine traits to feelings of self-worth and personal satisfaction. Masculine traits are seen as more desirable than feminine traits by both men and women. In Kelly & Worell's (1977) review of the literature on sex-role style, they stated that, ". . . more stereotypically masculine traits than feminine traits are rated as socially desirable by college students . . ." and "stereotypically masculine tasks have also been given higher intrinsic satisfaction ratings than feminine tasks" (p. 1108).

#### Population Variables

As with the studies on androgyny, the studies on masculinity have used college students for their subjects and generalized the results to a broader population without justification. For example, a typical transition during a women's lifespan is a gradual decrease in femininity (Erdwins, Small, Gessner, and Gross, 1978). Utilizing tests normed on college students does not take into account this type of transition. Men derive their status primarily from

their jobs. Women, traditionally have derived their status vicariously from their husbands. Although labor reports consistently show the majority of women who work do so out of necessity rather than choice, society continues to judge women's role in the labor market as secondary to men's. The majority of women work in low prestige professions. This could be a factor in the level of satisfaction they experience in their employment. Being employed is not necessarily what creates dissatisfaction in working women. Women who pursue professional careers where job opportunities tend not to be limited because of their sex and where the pay scale is adequate do not report conflict with their family and child rearing (Ginzburg, 1966).

Since employment appears to have a major influence on satisfaction of men and women, there is a possibility that women who are professionally employed would score differently in measures of self-esteem than the undergraduate, college women who had been studied in the earlier research. The one study that included non-college women did not control for the employment level of these women (O'Connor, Mann & Bardwick, 1978).

The purpose of this study is to explore how the factor of occupational status affects the correlations of femininity and self-esteem. More specifically, the issue of self-esteem in professional women will be addressed in this study to determine if employment at a professional

level affects the low or negative correlation between femininity and self-esteem that has been consistently found in college women. In examining the correlation between self-esteem and femininity in professionally employed women, the hypothesis is that women who are professionally employed will have a significant positive correlation between femininity and self-esteem. Women who are employed at a professional level have achieved a level of employment that would permit them to regard themselves in a positive manner as opposed to college students who are still in the process of working toward their goals. Women who have been successful in their vocation may be more able to experience their femininity as a valuable component of their personality rather than focusing on male agentic traits.

For comparison, women students attending college will also be studied to see if they differ from previous reports or from the group of professional women.

## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

#### Subjects

The 150 female subjects in group I were undergraduate students attending psychology classes at Portland State University, students living in university housing at the Oregon State University, and students from journalism classes at the University of Oregon. The 148 female subjects in group II included women from the faculty at Portland State University, Lewis & Clark University, University of Portland, and University of Oregon; and from a professional women's group (the American Association of University Women). The women were considered professional if they had completed a course of study leading to a degree and had worked at least one year in their professions.

#### Measures

All subjects completed short forms of the Texas Social Behavior Inventory (TSBI), the Personality Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), and personal information questionnaire (see Appendix).

The PAQ measures masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. The masculinity and femininity scales are

unidimensional. The instrument was developed by Helmreich, Stapp, & Ervin (1974). Undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology classes were asked to rate items from a list of masculine and feminine stereotypes that had been developed by Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman (1968). Items were chosen that described the "typical college male," "typical college female," the "ideal man" and the "ideal woman." Therefore, stereotypic characteristics included on the PAQ are socially desirable traits. Three scales were developed from these items: masculine (M), feminine (F), and masculine-feminine (MF). While the masculine traits were considered desirable for both sexes they were more commonly exhibited by males. Similarly, feminine traits were more common in females. Items on the MF scale were included if they were considered more typical of one sex than the other but ideal for both men and women. Items on the M scale include instrumental and agentic characteristics (e.g. very active, very independent), as postulated by Bakan (1966) and are measures of ambitiousness and competitiveness. Items on the F scale include expressive and communal characteristics (Bakan, 1966), (e.g. very gentle, very aware of feelings of others). MF scale items include instrumental and agentic characteristics (e.g. aggressive, can make decisions easily) and also emotional vulnerability and the need for emotional support (e.g. cries very easily, very strong need for

security). Correlations of the short form of the PAQ with the long form are .85 for the M scale, .82 for the F scale, and .78 for the MF scale. On the short form the possible range of scores of each scale is 0-32. The MF scale is moderately correlated with M scores (males,  $\underline{r} = .66$ ; females,  $\underline{r} = .36$ ) and negatively with F scores (males,  $\underline{r} = -.09$ ; females,  $\underline{r} = -.17$ ).

The TSBI is a measure of self-esteem. This instrument was developed by Helmreich, Stapp, & Ervin (1974) as a measure of self-confidence and competence in social situations. Oblique factor analysis indicates the three major factors assessed by this scale are self-confidence, dominance, and competence (Helmreich, Stapp, & Ervin, 1974). Items are scored on a 5 point Likert type scale ranging from "not at all characteristic of me" (scored 0) to "very much characteristic of me" (scored 4). On the short form the range of possible scores is 0 - 64. The short form correlated with the long form  $\underline{r} = .96$ . The PAQ and the TSBI were selected because of their previous use as research instruments for studying self-esteem and femininity.

### Procedure

Students in summer psychology and journalism classes were requested to participate by completing the questionnaires and returning them to the instructors. Other subjects received the questionnaires in the mail and

returned them by mail. Instructions were included as were forms for permission to participate and assurance of anonymity for those participating. 51% of the questionnaires sent to professional women were returned.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

The profile of the students was as follows. As expected the student and professional groups differed in a number of ways. (See Table I and II) 75% of the students were single while this was true of only 30% of the professional women. The majority of the professional women were parents (56%) compared to 17% of the students.

TABLE I

PERSONAL TRAITS OF STUDENTS AND  
PROFESSIONALS BY PERCENTAGES

	Single	Married	Divorced	Children	Employed	Income less than 10,000	Mother professional	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	Other religion	No religion
Students n = 150	75	24	5	17	52	91	31	43	17	1	17	19
Professional n = 148	30	75	13	56	96	9	25	42	18	7	4	28



TABLE II  
MEANS OF PERSONAL TRAITS OF  
STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS

	Mean Age (s.d.)	Mean last grade in school (s.d.)	Mean years employed (s.d.)
Students n = 150	24.4 (s.d.=7.1)	14.7 (s.d.=6.0)	0.8 (s.d.=1.7)
Professionals n = 148	40.9 (s.d.=9.9)	17.9 (s.d.=2.3)	6.1 (s.d.=6.7)

Most of the professional women were employed (95%) while only half (52%) of the students had employment. Student employment tended to be parttime, with the mean length of employment less than one year. The mean years of employment at their current job for professional women was 6 years. 91% of the students earned less than \$10,000 per year compared to 9% of the professional women. Religious preferences of the two groups were similar. The student group had a higher percentage of mothers who had had professional careers than was true of the professional women.

Pearson's  $r$  coefficients between self-esteem and masculinity, femininity and androgyny were calculated in

both groups. The results are presented in Table III. The hypothesis of a higher correlation between femininity and self-esteem in the professional group than in a group of college students was not supported by the data although there was a low positive correlation. In both groups self-esteem correlates more with masculinity than with femininity.

TABLE III

CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S SELF-ESTEEM AND MF, MASCULINITY, AND FEMININITY AS MEASURED BY PEARSON'S  $r$

	MF	Masculinity	Femininity
Students Self-Esteem n = 150	-.10 <sup>+</sup>	.56**	.17*
Professionals Self-Esteem n = 148	-.23 <sup>+</sup>	.58**	.24**

\*  $p < .01$

\*\*  $p < .001$

+ non significant

For students  $r = .56$  with masculinity whereas with femininity  $r = .17$ . The difference in the correlations is significant,  $t(149) = 6.02$ ,  $p < .001$ . A similar pattern holds for professionals. The correlations between self-esteem and masculinity is  $.58$  whereas the correlation between self-esteem and femininity is  $.24$ . This difference is significant,  $t(147) = 8.58$ ,  $p < .001$ . All the correlations mentioned so far are significantly positive at least at the  $.05$  level.

In contrast to many previous studies, androgyny had a slight negative correlation to self-esteem rather than a correlation higher than that of femininity to self-esteem, (students  $r = -.09$ , professionals  $r = -.23$ , NS). The mean self-esteem for professional women was higher than that of students, (students  $44.5$ ; professionals  $48.1$ ;  $t(296) = 3.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ). None of the differences between the students and professional groups in terms of the correlations of self-esteem with the respective sex-role scales were significant. The critical ratios for the differences in correlation based on Fishers  $r$  to  $Z$  transformation were as follows. For the correlation of self-esteem with MF,  $Z = 1.23$ , with M,  $Z = .69$ , with F,  $Z = 1.44$ .

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

The correlations of self-esteem with masculinity previously reported in the literature are supported by the results of this study.

For both students and professional women, higher self-esteem is associated with high masculinity and lower self-esteem is associated with low masculinity. For both groups femininity has a low, positive correlation with self-esteem indicating that the femininity scale of the PAQ is not a good predictor of self-esteem. The self-esteem measure that was used (TSBI) was only weakly related to femininity. Possible explanations for this finding include the bias against females found in feminine stereotypes, the ineffectiveness of feminine behavior as a source of self-esteem, the lack of adequate instruments as measurements of feminine self-esteem. The inadequacy of the instruments may be a reflection of a deeper inadequacy in the characterization of the femininity construct.

The PAQ was constructed on the basis of stereotypes held by college students. The value of the feminine stereotypes is less than that of the masculine stereotypes. Lowenthal, Thurnher, Majda, Chiriboga, and Associates (1975)

found both men and women placed extremely high value on:

Self-control, reasonableness, and versatility; and on cooperativeness, sincerity, and sympathy. Almost all rejected timidity, helplessness, indecisiveness, hostility, and also touchiness and the propensity to be easily hurt or embarrassed. (p. 67)

In these negatively valued traits, hostility is considered a masculine trait while the rest are stereotyped feminine traits. In their studies of various tests with MF scales, Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, & Vogel (1970) stated, "The masculine poles of the various items were most often considered to be socially desirable than the feminine poles" (p. 65). The stereotypes of women have remained remarkably stable over time despite the changes that have occurred in life styles of women. Neufeld, Langmeyer, and Seeman (1974) replicated the 1948 studies by Fernberger and the 1950 studies by Seeman on sex-role stereotypes. They found stereotyping was even greater in the current study than it had been in the previous ones and in the same direction. For example, men and women both agree to the superiority of men. Using tests based on stereotypes that view females as less effective than men raises the possibility that women who view themselves as feminine or fitting the feminine stereotype think less highly of themselves than they do of men. Lower scores on self-esteem for feminine women would likely be the result of this attitude.

Another issue to be considered when stereotypes are used is the conflict people may experience when they view themselves as diverging from the sex-role stereotypes. Studies have shown a discrepancy in comparing the stereotypes with personal preferences. Women believed the stereotype for females was to be physically attractive rather than successful in sports or vocations. Jones, Chernovetz, & Hansson (1978) made the point that assimilating the tendencies valued by society is more important than internalizing appropriate gender traits and behaviors. This has implications for self-esteem for both women and men who see themselves as differing from the expected stereotypes. People may experience conflicts when they view themselves as diverging from the sex-role stereotypes which could lower self-esteem. Stereotypes have a powerful effect on people's behavior. Zanna & Pack (1975) found that when a woman was with a man who was attractive to her, she tended to represent herself according to the stereotype of women as he indicated his preference. This is supported by Athanassiades' study (1977) indicating that the female stereotypes are not necessarily internalized but are rather an external constraint in feminine behavior. Women described their ideal woman as being relatively balanced between self-achieving and nurturant. They believed men's ideal woman was more subordinate and family oriented (Steinmann & Fox,

1966). According to Brovermen, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, & Vogel (1970):

The ideal woman is perceived as significantly less aggressive, less independent, less dominant, less active, more emotional, having greater difficulty making decisions, etc., than the ideal man; . . . both greater competence in men than in women and greater warmth and expressiveness in women than in men, than are apparently desirable in our contemporary society. (p. 69)

Further, in a poll of college students, the students believed these sex-role stereotypes to be desirable.

Another possible explanation for the consistent low correlations between femininity and self-esteem is that feminine type behavior may not be as rewarding as masculine behavior. Block (1973) contends that the process of feminine socialization is in conflict with the individuation process and prevents the achievement of higher ego functioning. If femininity does indeed mean being submissive and conservative, then perhaps these behaviors do not lead to self-satisfaction and self-esteem.

An explanation that must also be considered for the low correlations between femininity and self-esteem is the type of instrument used for the measurement of feminine self-esteem. Women scoring as masculine endorse instrumental and agentic characteristics which are correlated to items on the self-esteem scales such as "I would describe myself as one who attempts to master situations" and "I would rather not have very much responsibility for other

people" (scored in reverse). Traits that contribute to the self-esteem of feminine women may not be included. Maas & Kuypers (1974) listed some of the traits of women in their study as "behaves in a giving way, considerate, is compassionate, arouses liking and acceptance dependable, cheerful, candid, ethically consistent." If women's major traits are communal as suggested by Baken (1966), it is possible that these traits could lead to self-esteem. Although the items included in the femininity scale do not appear to lead to self-esteem there may be other communal behaviors that do. In actuality, being considerate may require behavior that is not submissive while behaving in a dependable manner may require assertive behavior. More research needs to be done to establish the distinctive way in which women do gain a sense of self-esteem.

The last issue raised of methodological problems that occur in studies of femininity and self-esteem pertains to the appropriateness of the definition of femininity. Perhaps tests devised on the basis of "ideal characteristics" neglect to include traits by which women feel feminine. The discrepancy between one's self-concept and society's ideal becomes a factor in the lowering of self-esteem scores. The factors that contribute to making a woman feel feminine may not be the ones that she considers "ideal" according to her perception of society's stereotype.



More research needs to be done to determine what factors women perceive as constituting their own femininity and in what ways they experience self-esteem.

The results of the correlation between the MF scale and self-esteem are puzzling. Most previous studies found relatively high correlations between MF and self-esteem in contrast to the low negative correlation found in this study. The composition of the MF scale does not lend itself to any explanation for the different results obtained with professional women. Considering the low level of the correlation, the differences are likely to be the result of minor variables in the populations.

It is important to note that none of the correlations between femininity and self-esteem reported in the literature or found in the present study are strong enough to make the femininity scale useful as a predictor of self-esteem. Rarely does femininity account for as much as 10% of the variance in self-esteem. The discussion in the literature tends to slip easily from an observation of a slight negative correlation to comments that assume a virtually perfect negative relation.

This study has shown that the interesting difference between the correlations of masculinity and femininity with self-esteem extend to a population of professional women, contrary to our working hypothesis.

Future research should explore how well the present femininity scales really tap those characteristics of femininity that are generally valued by society at large. It is these characteristics that would contribute to feminine self-esteem.

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## APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

TEXAS SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL INVENTORY

Each item below has a scale marked with the letters A, B, C, D, and E, with (A) indicating "not at all characteristic of me" and (E) "very characteristic of me," and the other letters, points in between.

For each item, choose the letter which best describes how characteristic the item is of you.

A	B	C	D	E
Not at all	Not very	Slightly	Fairly	Very much
characteristic	characteristic	characteristic	characteristic	characteristic
of me	of me	of me	of me	of me

1. I am not likely to speak to people until they speak to me.  

A . . .	B . . .	C . . .	D . . .	E
---------	---------	---------	---------	---
2. I would describe myself as self-confident.  

A . . .	B . . .	C . . .	D . . .	E
---------	---------	---------	---------	---
3. I feel confident of my appearance.  

A . . .	B . . .	C . . .	D . . .	E
---------	---------	---------	---------	---
4. I am a good mixer.  

A . . .	B . . .	C . . .	D . . .	E
---------	---------	---------	---------	---
5. When in a group of people, I have trouble thinking of the right things to say.  

A . . .	B . . .	C . . .	D . . .	E
---------	---------	---------	---------	---
6. When in a group of people, I usually do what the others want rather than make suggestions.  

A . . .	B . . .	C . . .	D . . .	E
---------	---------	---------	---------	---
7. When I am in disagreement with other people, my opinion usually prevails.  

A . . .	B . . .	C . . .	D . . .	E
---------	---------	---------	---------	---
8. I would describe myself as one who attempts to master situations.  

A . . .	B . . .	C . . .	D . . .	E
---------	---------	---------	---------	---

9. Other people look up to me.

A . . B . . C . . D . . E

10. I enjoy social gatherings just to be with people.

A . . B . . C . . D . . E

11. I make a point of looking other people in the eye.

A . . B . . C . . D . . E

12. I cannot seem to get others to notice me.

A . . B . . C . . D . . E

13. I would rather not have very much responsibility for other people.

A . . B . . C . . D . . E

14. I feel comfortable being approached by someone in a position of authority.

A . . B . . C . . D . . E

15. I would describe myself as indecisive.

A . . B . . C . . D . . E

16. I have no doubts about my social competence.

A . . B . . C . . D . . E

The following consists of a pair of characteristics with the letters A-E in between. For example:

Not at all Artistic      A . . . B . . . C . . . D . . . E      Very Artistic

Each pair describes contradictory characteristics - that is, you cannot be both at the same time, such as very artistic and not at all artistic. The letters form a scale between the two extremes. You are to choose a letter which describes where you fall on the scale. For example, if you think you have no artistic ability, you would choose A. If you think you are pretty good, you might choose D. If you are only medium, you might choose C, and so forth.



APPENDIX B  
PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTES QUESTIONNAIRE

The following consists of a pair of characteristics with the letters A-E in between. For example:

Not at all Artistic                    A . . B . . C . . D . . E                    Very Artistic

Each pair describes contradictory characteristics - that is, you cannot be both at the same time, such as very artistic and not at all artistic. The letters form a scale between the two extremes. You are to choose a letter which describes where you fall on the scale. For example, if you think you have no artistic ability, you would choose A. If you think you are pretty good, you might choose D. If you are only medium, you might choose C, and so forth.

- |                                                        |                           |                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1. Not at all aggressive                               | A . . B . . C . . D . . E | Very aggressive                          |
| 2. Not at all independent                              | A . . B . . C . . D . . E | Very independent                         |
| 3. Not at all emotional                                | A . . B . . C . . D . . E | Very emotional                           |
| 4. Very submissive                                     | A . . B . . C . . D . . E | Very dominant                            |
| 5. Not at all excitable in a <u>major</u> crisis       | A . . B . . C . . D . . E | Very excitable in a major crisis         |
| 6. Very passive                                        | A . . B . . C . . D . . E | Very active                              |
| 7. Not at all able to devote self completely to others | A . . B . . C . . D . . E | Able to devote self completely to others |
| 8. Very rough                                          | A . . B . . C . . D . . E | Very gentle                              |

PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTES QUESTIONNAIRE (CONT'D)

9. Not at all helpful to others      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Very helpful to others
10. Not at all competitive      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Very competitive
11. Very home oriented      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Very worldly
12. Not at all kind      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Very kind
13. Indifferent to others' approval      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Highly needful of others approval
14. Feelings not easily hurt      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Feelings easily hurt
15. Not at all aware of feelings of others      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Very aware of feelings of others
16. Can make decisions easily      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Have difficulty making decisions
17. Gives up easily      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Never gives up easily
18. Never cries      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Cries very easily
19. Not at all self-confident      A . . B . . C . . D . . E      Very self-confident

PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTES QUESTIONNAIRE (CONT'D)

- |     |                                    |                                   |                                    |
|-----|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 20. | Feels very inferior                | A . . . B . . . C . . . D . . . E | Feels very superior                |
| 21. | Not at all understanding of others | A . . . B . . . C . . . D . . . E | Very understanding of others       |
| 22. | Very cold in relations with others | A . . . B . . . C . . . D . . . E | Very warm in relations with others |
| 23. | Very little need for security      | A . . . B . . . C . . . D . . . E | Very strong need for security      |
| 24. | Goes to pieces under pressure      | A . . . B . . . C . . . D . . . E | Stands up well under pressure      |

## PERSONAL INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your marital status? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your race? \_\_\_\_\_  
(White) (Black) (Oriental) (Other)
4. Do you have children? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, how many  
boys? \_\_\_\_\_ How many girls? \_\_\_\_\_ What are their  
ages? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the last grade you completed in school? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How long have you been out of school? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you ever had any other kind of schooling or  
job training? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes: What kind of school  
or course was it? \_\_\_\_\_ How many months or  
years did you attend job training? \_\_\_\_\_ Did you  
get a diploma or certificate? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is your profession? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Are you currently employed? \_\_\_\_\_ If not, why  
not? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, how long have  
you worked at this job? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your job title? \_\_\_\_\_



## INFORMED CONSENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agree to serve as a subject in the research project of the Study of Personality Traits of Professional Women in the Field and Preprofessional Women in College conducted by Shirley Harper.

The purpose of the study is to learn what difference in personality traits may be found between professional and preprofessional women.

The study involves taking a paper and pencil test and a personal history involving about 30 minutes of my time.

There are no known possible risks to me associated with this study.

All information I give will be kept confidential and the identity of all the subjects will remain anonymous.

I may not receive any direct benefit from participation in this study, but my participation may help to increase knowledge which may benefit others in the future.

I am free to withdraw from participation in this study at any time.

I have read and understand the foregoing information.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

If you experience problems that are the result of your participation in this study, please contact Victor C. Dahl, Office of Graduate Studies and Research, 105 Neuberger Hall, Portland State University, PO Box 751, 97207.