

Revisiting University Student Gender Role Perceptions

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Gender role perceptions of five objects—Ideal Woman, Ideal Man, Most Women, Most Men and Self—were elicited from 3300 university students, 81% of whom were Caucasian, with 7% Hispanic, 6% African-American, and 4% Asian. Profiles of student responses for the five objects provided a comprehensive updating of 1970s research on student gender roles. Women (N = 1842) and men (N = 1148) students generally preferred an androgynous Ideal Woman. Women also preferred an androgynous Ideal Man, but men preferred a masculine sex-typed Ideal Man. Women and men's perceptions of Most Women and Men continued to be sex-typed. Men's self perceptions were androgynous, while women saw themselves as feminine sex-typed. Findings suggest that little change in students' gender role perceptions has occurred in the past 15 years.

Findings from early research on college student gender role attitudes were generally mixed (Scher, 1984). Some studies ascertained that students held sex-typed attitudes (e.g., Adams & Landers, 1978; Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson & Rosenkrantz, 1972), while others found some students, frequently women, holding more androgynous attitudes (e.g., Gilbert, Deutsch, & Strahan, 1978; Roper & Labeff, 1977). Still other studies showed that students generally were confused about their gender role attitudes (e.g., Major, 1979; Voss, 1980) (for comprehensive reviews see Basow, 1992; and Cook, 1985).

While awareness of changing gender roles was high during the early years of research, interest continues through today. Bem's (1975) early

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study demonstrating wider behavior options available to androgynous gender role persons, supported by other research verifying its efficacy (e.g., Nettles & Loewinger, 1983), led to its advancement as a contemporary standard for mental health (Werrbach & Gilbert, 1987). At the same time, accumulating research revealed that masculine sex-typed gender attributes may have been the major correlates of androgyny's success, particularly for women, and especially in relationship with measures of self-esteem (Basow, 1992; Taylor & Hall, 1982; Whitley, 1983).

At the same time, while gender role theory, in particular the construct of androgyny, has assisted in further understanding behaviors of women and men, the constructs continue to have limitations. As well, numerous empirical questions have been raised about measuring gender roles. Researchers have defined androgyny differently, measured different traits on different instruments, and different scoring methods have yielded different results for the same instrument (for more complete discussion of these limitations see Basow, 1992; Cook, 1985). These problems have more recently lead researchers to debate the importance and relevance of gender schema theory (Hudak, 1993) and to question the validity of a unifactorial gender schema theory, as opposed to a multifactorial theory (Spence, 1993). Lipps (1993) suggested that one major theme underlies all the measurement issues: psychologists remain unclear about exactly what they are trying to measure (p. 33). Despite these problems, however, researchers, educators and the general public are interested in how college students currently perceive gender roles, their own and others.

While in the 1970s many women felt compelled to develop and value high levels of masculine gender traits to enter and succeed in fields formerly dominated by men, more recently, women's and men's attitudes towards feminine gender attributes are much more positive (Basow, 1992; Brabeck & Weisgerber, 1989; Eagley & Mladinic, 1989) than demonstrated by previous research (e.g., McKee & Sherriffs, 1959). Today's traditional-age students have matured in a society that has paid attention to issues of gender, while some have been raised by parents who portray non-traditional gender roles. However, many of these parents may still hold more traditional gender role values acquired from their own childhood and themselves experienced role conflict. Thus, students have developed during a period of greater fluidity of models of appropriate or possible gender role options.

Holland and Eisenhart (1989) suggested that the university itself is an important setting for learning and imparting gender. On one hand, universities have implemented numerous programs intended to reduce gender-role stereotyping (e.g., affirmative action policies, protection against sexual harassment, women's studies courses and departments and women's awareness programs). Women faculty modeling nontraditional roles and women

students preparing for nontraditional careers also have contributed to a positive image of androgynous, or nontraditional, roles. On the other hand, some have argued (e.g., Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990; Hughes, 1989) that at least one segment of the university, student services, has emphasized feminine gender roles. Presumably the underlying theme of these efforts, however, has been to promote acceptance of a wider range of gender role options among students in an environment that traditionally valued and reinforced masculine sex-typed gender attitudes.

Some question the extent to which universities in fact foster such freedom of choice. For example, Hughes (1989) asserted that masculine gender-typed behavior and traits continue to be valued and modeled by university faculty. Unger and Crawford (1992) suggested that some segments of the university, such as sororities and fraternities, still legitimize and promote sex-typed gender roles (Kalof & Cargill, 1991; Martin & Hummer, 1989), encouraging male superiority and female subordination. Thus, the degree to which awareness and changes in both society at large and the university community have resulted in student gender role change is uncertain. Do students today accept a wider range of gender roles than did their counterparts two decades earlier?

Reflecting perhaps the various ideals held by different segments of the university community, more recent research has found students holding a variety of gender role values (e.g., Etaugh & Spiller, 1989; Holland & Eisenhart, 1989; Pooler, 1991; Stickel & Bonett, 1991). This may be partially because most studies have typically focused on limited aspects of gender roles. A comprehensive picture of student gender role values and preferences is not available at this time. Given this, together with the fact that most studies are now dated, there is a need for a current assessment of student gender role perceptions (Holland & Andre, 1992).

One of the most comprehensive of the early studies was Gilbert, Deutsch and Strahan's (1978) survey of 432 students' attitudes towards the typical, desirable and ideal woman and man using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (1974). They found both women and men students endorsed sex-typed gender roles for the typical, desirable and ideal woman and man, with the exception that women endorsed androgyny for the ideal woman. Earlier studies had found students' ideal woman or man to be more androgynous than most women and men (Deutsch & Gilbert, 1976; McKee & Sherriffs, 1959), although other studies also found mixed preferences for both androgynous and sex-typed ideals by both women and men students (Scher, 1984; Voss, 1980). The present study updates Gilbert et al.'s by eliciting student perceptions of the ideal woman and man, and most women and men. This study augments Gilbert et al.'s as follows: (a) we used the Sex Role Trait Inventory (SRTI) (Street & Meek, 1980), an instrument spe-

cifically designed to elicit perceptions of the four identified objects plus the Self. While Gilbert et al.'s study used the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), it was not designed to measure the objects assessed in their study. (b) We added the object of Self, believing that it provided development of a meaningful and comprehensive compilation of respondent gender role perceptions, particularly when compared to responses for other objects. Hudak (1993) asserted, "Perceptions of oneself influence perceptions of others . . . Thus it is plausible that one's perception of their self as more or less masculine or feminine will have an impact on how others are perceived" (pp. 280-1). (c) We eliminated the evaluation of "desirable" traits for objects, since Gilbert et al. found responses to that category confusing and difficult to interpret (p. 776).

Thus, the purpose of this study was to assess empirically current student gender role perceptions, providing a cross-sectional perspective of student development in this area. In this study we elected to use the terms "perceptions" instead of "attitudes" since the SRTI asked students to indicate how characteristic each trait was for each object as opposed to the extent to which they valued each trait for each object. The following questions guided this research: What are today's student gender role perceptions of the ideal woman and man? What are student perceptions of most women and men? What are student self-perceptions? It was hypothesized that: (1) students will perceive themselves as exhibiting higher levels of sex-appropriate behaviors than most same-sex persons, but lower than their ideals; and, (2) if respondent sex differences are apparent, men's preferences would be more sex-typed than women's.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Students at a large metropolitan university were surveyed in the 1991-92 academic year using the Sex Role Trait Inventory (SRTI) (Street & Meek, 1980). Researchers elicited responses from 3,300 graduate and undergraduate students. Incomplete surveys were eliminated from data analyses, resulting in 2,990 useable returns for analyses. Of these, 61% were women and 39% men. Seventy-seven percent of respondents reported ages between 15 and 25; nine percent between 25 and 30, and nine percent between 30 and 40. Eighty-one percent of the sample were Caucasian, seven percent Hispanic, six percent African-American, four percent Asian. Academic classifications were: freshman, 19%; sophomore, 13%; junior, 31%; senior, 23%; graduate student, 12%.

Researchers met with campus deans and faculty in a variety of academic majors to request permission to attend their classes and invite students to participate in the survey. With few exceptions, faculty agreed to participate. The first author administered the survey in all classes, which ranged in number of students from 10 to 110, using a standardized set of directions. Following university human subjects protection procedures, a statement on the instrument defined student participation as voluntary and anonymous. Students were instructed to cease completing the instrument if they felt uncomfortable. No student expressed discomfort at completing the instrument. Because some classes were quite large and participation voluntary, the exact number of students who declined to participate is not available. However, it is estimated that fewer than 5% of all students invited to participate declined to participate. With few exceptions, students completed the instrument during allotted class time. If faculty requested, a lecture about gender roles was presented following completion of the survey, which took about 20 minutes. Students were surveyed from seven colleges according to the distribution shown on Tables I (women) and II (men). The combined percentages of women and men comprising the study sample included: Business Administration, 26%; Education, 17%; Social and Behavioral Sciences, 14%; Natural Sciences, 12%; Arts and Letters, 9%; Engineering, 8%; Undecided or other, 14%.

Instrument

The Sex Role Trait Inventory (SRTI) (Street & Meek, 1980), was designed to measure participants' perceptions of gender role traits associated with five conceptual objects (i.e., stimulus conditions): Ideal Man, Ideal Woman, Most Men, Most Women and Self. For each object, responses are obtained on a five-point Likert scale for each of 33 masculine and feminine traits.

Each object is explicitly defined on the instrument and presented in the same order on all surveys as follows: Ideal Man and Ideal Woman are defined as the way the respondent expected near-perfect individuals to be, and responses are assumed to provide a profile of gender preferences as opposed to perceptions in this case. Most Men and Most Women are defined as the way respondents thought most men and women really are. Self is defined as the extent to which the respondent believes each given trait is descriptive of self.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceived each trait to be representative of each object, from (5) Very Much to (1) Not at All, with (3) indicating a moderate amount.

Table I. Distribution Frequencies and Percentages of Women Students by Academic Major and Grade Classification

Academic Major		Grade Classification						Total
		Fresh	Soph	Junr	Senr	Grad	Othr	
Arts and Letters	<i>N</i>	32	37	56	37	23	1	186
	%	1.69	1.95	2.95	1.95	1.21	0.05	9.79
Business Administration	<i>N</i>	75	38	162	109	21	8	413
	%	3.95	2.00	8.53	5.74	1.11	0.42	21.50
Education	<i>N</i>	52	64	146	40	118	15	435
	%	2.74	3.37	7.69	2.11	6.21	0.79	22.91
Engineering	<i>N</i>	8	4	9	16	3	2	42
	%	0.42	0.21	0.47	0.84	0.16	0.11	2.21
Fine Arts	<i>N</i>	10	16	2	5	0	0	33
	%	0.53	0.84	0.11	0.26	0.00	0.00	1.74
Natural Sciences	<i>N</i>	27	19	87	60	7	3	203
	%	1.42	1.00	4.58	3.16	0.37	0.16	10.69
Nursing	<i>N</i>	12	10	7	0	3	0	32
	%	0.63	0.53	0.37	0.00	0.16	0.00	1.69
Public Health	<i>N</i>	7	8	17	16	39	0	87
	%	0.37	0.42	0.90	0.84	2.05	0.00	4.58
Social Behavioral Sciences	<i>N</i>	36	33	117	77	56	8	327
	%	1.90	1.74	6.16	4.05	2.95	0.42	17.22
Undeclared	<i>N</i>	88	35	8	1	4	5	141
	%	4.63	1.85	0.42	0.05	0.21	0.26	7.43
Total	<i>N</i>	347	264	611	361	274	42	1899
	%	18.27	13.90	32.17	19.01	14.43	2.21	100.00

The SRTI was developed to conduct research specifically to measure the five objects identified on the instrument, since no instrument was available to measure these objects. Studies such as those conducted by Gilbert, Deutsch, and Strahan used the BSRI, which was not specifically designed for the purpose of measuring any object other than Self. Item selection for the SRTI followed procedures outlined by Bem (1974) in choosing items for the BSRI, with one notable exception. A list of 230 adjectives, believed to be stereotypically feminine or masculine, were derived from existent gender role inventories and literature. However, Bem asked students to identify from her similar list those traits they saw as "desirable" (pp. 155-156) for women and men, thus subjecting responses to skewed contamination by expectations of socially acceptable responses. In contrast, SRTI item selection involved asking students directly to assess the degree to which each adjective described women and men, perhaps more directly tapping stereotypes, given the absence of the "desirability" factor.

Fall semester, 1978, graduate and undergraduate students at a major state university and a nearby community college ($N = 214$) were asked to identify those traits they saw as being largely descriptive of only women

Table II. Distribution Frequencies and Percentages of Men Students by Academic Major and Grade Classification

Academic Major		Grade Classification						Total
		Fresh	Soph	Junr	Senr	Grad	Othr	
Arts and Letters	<i>N</i>	16	15	23	23	7	0	84
	%	1.32	1.23	1.89	1.89	.58	0.00	6.91
Business Administration	<i>N</i>	60	39	162	97	26	7	391
	%	4.94	3.21	13.33	7.98	2.14	0.58	32.10
Education	<i>N</i>	8	5	36	14	30	5	98
	%	0.66	0.41	2.96	1.15	2.47	0.41	8.07
Engineering	<i>N</i>	40	16	33	101	7	4	201
	%	3.29	1.32	2.72	8.31	0.50	0.33	16.54
Fine Arts	<i>N</i>	11	4	2	3	0	0	20
	%	0.91	0.33	0.16	0.25	0.00	0.00	1.65
Natural Sciences	<i>N</i>	25	23	60	53	2	9	172
	%	2.06	1.89	4.94	4.36	0.16	0.74	14.16
Nursing	<i>N</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	%	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08
Public Health	<i>N</i>	4	1	6	15	5	0	31
	%	0.33	0.08	0.49	1.23	.41	0.00	2.55
Social Behavioral Sciences	<i>N</i>	11	18	41	34	20	0	124
	%	0.91	1.48	3.37	2.80	1.65	0.00	10.21
Undeclared	<i>N</i>	68	19	4	0	1	1	93
	%	5.59	1.56	0.32	0.00	0.08	0.08	7.65
Total	<i>N</i>	244	140	367	340	98	26	1215
	%	20.08	11.52	30.21	27.98	8.07	2.14	100.00

and men, as well as those they saw as neutral or indicative of either sex. Using an 80% agreement criterion, a list was compiled of those traits seen by students as being stereotypical of women or men. This list was then submitted to three faculty members from the two institutions, who agreed 100% that the traits listed were stereotypically masculine or feminine.

Construct validity was established through comparisons with two other validated sex role inventories. Twenty-one items on the SRTI were sex-typed masculine and 12 feminine. Nine items judged stereotypically masculine corresponded with masculine items on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1981), considered to be the most widely used sex role inventory (Cook, 1985). Four items scaled as feminine also appeared on Bem's feminine scale. No items appeared on Bem's neutral scale. Nine items judged stereotypically masculine also appeared in stereotypic sex role data collected by Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson and Rosenkrantz (1972), while five feminine items appeared on the less-desirable traits feminine scale, and one appeared on the desirable traits feminine scale. The unbalanced distribution of sex-typed items was accepted in instrument construction

given that these were the items the judges agreed upon as being stereotypical of each gender.

RESULTS

Factor analysis of the data yielded five consistent factors underlying the thirty-three traits, labeled: Compassion, Intellect, Power, Deference, and Sexuality. It is of interest to note that the profile of Compassion included traditionally female sex role traits (caring, compassionate, sensitive, romantic, loving, able to cry, emotional, gentle, and sentimental), as did the factor Deference (easy to influence, passive, dependent). All these traits were seen as stereotypically feminine on the BSRI, the Broverman et al. (1972) or the SRTI validation study. The Compassion factor was almost identical to the Interpersonal Sensitivity category, found by Deseran and Falk (1982) to be most descriptive of women. Interestingly, consistent with the Broverman et al. study, students appeared to differentiate between the more desirable and less desirable feminine traits such that those probably seen as desirable loaded onto the Compassion factor; feminine traits seen as less desirable loaded onto the Deference factor.

The three other factors included masculine traits, with Intellect (self disciplined, logical, analytical, intelligent, and rational), Power (achievement oriented, competitive, assertive, successful at work, authoritative, leadership ability, self confident, independent, takes risks, aggressive, dominating) and Sexuality (sexually aggressive, physically attractive, and skilled lover), all rated as masculine on the BSRI or the SRTI validation study. While it is not possible to directly compare the five factors identified in this study with all factors identified in earlier studies with the SRTI (Street, 1985), the five factors identified in this study are nearly identical with those identified for the object of Self by 402 University of Florida students (Street & Meek, 1980) over a decade earlier.

Scores on each factor were computed as the mean response to items loading on the factor. The median interval consistency reliability for the scales was 0.79.

Means and standard deviations for the ratings of the five objects by women and men respondents are presented in Table III. These data ($N = 2990$) were analyzed using a three-factor mixed model analysis of variance, consisting of one between-subjects factor (respondent gender) and two within subjects factors (object rated and factor). Significant effects were obtained for each main effect (respondent gender ($F[1,2988] = 4.63, p < .05$), object rated ($F[4,2985] = 1896.74, p < .01$), and factor ($F[4,2985] = 2498.42, p < .01$)). In addition, the three first-order interactions were statistically

Table III. Means and Standard Deviations of Ratings of Five Objects by Respondent Gender

Object Rated	Respondent Gender		Factor				
			Compassion	Intellect	Power	Deference	Sexuality
Ideal Man	F ^a	MN	4.46	4.40	4.00	2.51	3.95
		SD	0.49	0.52	0.48	0.83	0.67
	M	MN	4.10	4.47	4.21	2.54	4.00
		SD	0.66	0.57	0.52	0.87	0.72
Most Men	F	MN	2.67	3.18	3.94	2.69	3.71
		SD	0.64	0.68	0.51	0.75	0.64
	M	MN	2.71	3.11	3.71	2.85	3.57
		SD	0.60	0.66	0.54	0.66	0.65
Ideal Woman	F	MN	4.53	4.42	4.01	2.60	3.89
		SD	0.46	0.53	0.48	0.89	0.64
	M	MN	4.47	4.27	3.79	3.05	4.13
		SD	0.53	0.62	0.58	0.87	0.71
Most Women	F	MN	4.23	3.34	3.08	3.54	3.32
		SD	0.54	0.67	0.60	0.70	0.61
	M	MN	4.01	3.11	3.05	3.40	3.30
		SD	0.57	0.67	0.58	0.66	0.64
Self	F	MN	4.36	4.02	3.68	2.80	3.47
		SD	0.56	0.60	0.58	0.80	0.72
	M	MN	3.84	4.09	3.88	2.78	3.37
		SD	0.63	0.59	0.56	0.78	0.70

^aFor female respondents, *N* = 1842; for male respondents, *N* = 1148.

significant (gender × object ($F[4,2985] = 41.36, p < .01$), gender × factor ($F[4,2985] = 105.31, p < .01$), and object × factor ($F[16,2973] = 860.89, p < .01$)). Finally, the second-order interaction (gender × object × factor) was also statistically significant ($F[16,2973] = 106.15, p < .01$). Since the second-order interaction was statistically significant, differences in all means were evaluated to interpret the obtained effects. Contrasts between individual means were conducted using Dunn’s Test to control the familywise Type I error rate at .05. Unless otherwise noted, differences in means described below were statistically significant using Dunn’s Test.

In addition to the criterion of statistical significance of differences, the magnitude of the differences was considered in the interpretation of the results. Cohen (1988, 1992) described a medium effect size (a difference between means that is one-half of a standard deviation) as that which is visible to the “naked eye.” The pooled estimate of a standard deviation of the SRTI is approximately 0.56 for these data, so differences between means that were at least 0.28 points were considered to be substantively significant differences.

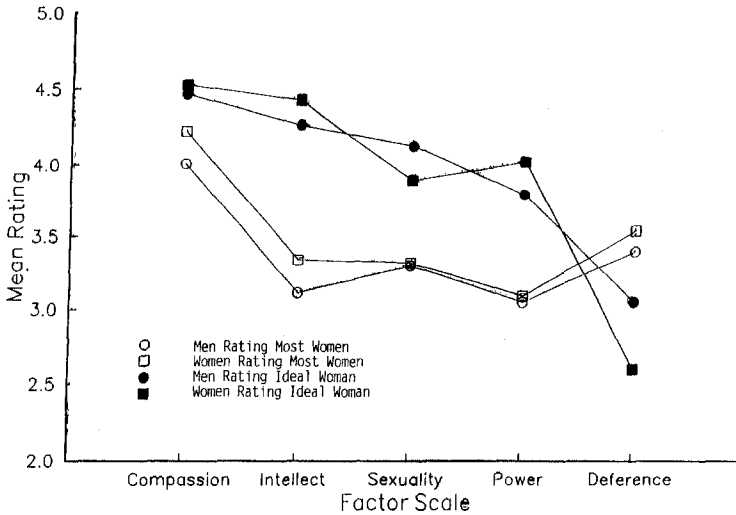


Fig. 1. Women's and men's ratings of factors for Ideal and Most Women.

Ideal Woman

Women and men students expressed their highest preferences for the Ideal Woman in the combined traits of Compassion, a feminine sex-typed factor, and Intellect, a masculine factor (see Fig. 1). For women, Power and Sexuality were not differentiated from each other as the third and fourth most desirable factors, but were notably preferred to Deference. For men, Intellect and Sexuality were not differentiated as second and third highest factors; Power was the fourth highest, with Deference following. A comparison of women and men's responses found men preferred higher levels of Deference ($x = 3.05$) than did women ($x = 2.60$). Otherwise, women and men did not differ on preferences and levels of strength for the most desirable traits.

Ideal Man

Women valued the combined traits in both Intellect and Compassion most highly for Ideal Man (see Fig. 2), followed by Power and Sexuality, undifferentiated from each other. Deference is the trait they least desired for the Ideal Man.

Intellect included the traits men valued highest for Ideal Man. A combination of Power, Compassion, and Sexuality were the second through

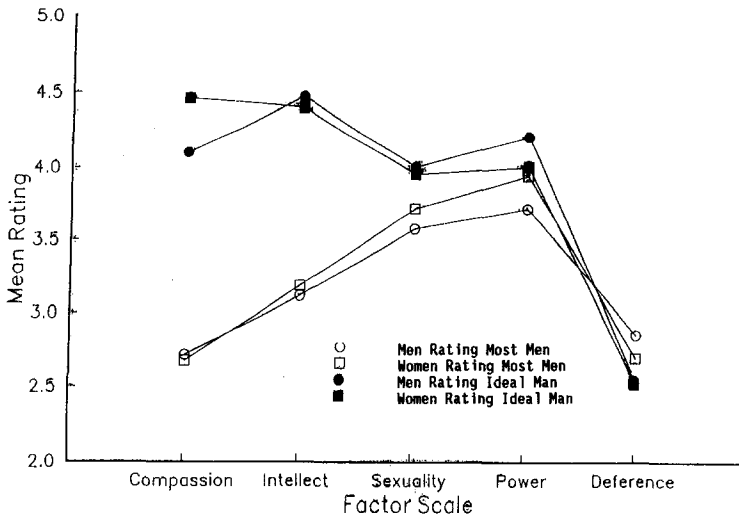


Fig. 2. Women's and Men's ratings of factors for Ideal and Most Men.

fourth highest values (not differentiated from each other) while Deference followed, again as the least preferred factor.

A comparison of women and men's ratings for Ideal Man found no practical differences in mean responses for Intellect, Deference, Power, and Sexuality, but women desired higher levels of Compassion ($x = 4.46$) for the Ideal Man than did men ($x = 4.10$).

When comparing Ideal Man and Ideal Woman profiles, several differences were apparent. Men preferred higher levels of Compassion ($x = 4.47$) and Deference ($x = 3.05$) for the Ideal Woman than for the Ideal Man ($x = 4.10$ and 2.54 , respectively). Men also preferred for the Ideal Man to exhibit higher levels of Power ($x = 4.21$) than the Ideal Woman ($x = 3.79$). Women students, on the other hand, expressed no differences in factor preferences for Ideal Man and Ideal Woman.

Most Women

Women saw Most Women differently than the Ideal Woman, describing them as most like Compassion, followed by an undifferentiated series of the three factors, Deference, Intellect, and Sexuality (see Fig. 1). Power, in combination with Intellect and Sexuality, was seen as least like Most Women.

Similarly, men saw Most Women as most like Compassion, and, secondly, like Deference undifferentiated from Sexuality. Men saw the third and fourth most descriptive traits for Most Women as a combination of Sexuality and Intellect (not different from each other) and fifth, Power.

Both women and men rated Deference lowest for Ideal Man and Ideal Woman, ($x = 2.68$) indicating its low priority. Yet, both sexes described Most Women as exhibiting high levels of Deference ($x = 3.47$). They also rated Intellect as only moderately descriptive of Most Women ($x = 3.23$). Women and men's ratings of Most Women were not significantly different, with both groups of respondents indicating feminine sex-typed traits as being most descriptive of Most Women.

Comparisons of women and men's response means for Most Women and Ideal Woman indicate that both view the Ideal Woman as exhibiting more desirable levels of all five factors than do Most Women.

Most Men

Women and men described Most Men similarly, rating masculine sex-typed traits as being most descriptive of them. That is, both saw Power and Sexuality as the factors most descriptive of Most Men, followed by Intellect, then a combination of Deference and Compassion (see Fig. 2).

Profile comparisons for women and men's ratings demonstrated considerable differences between their mean ratings for Ideal Man and Most Men. Women indicated they believed the Ideal Man possessed more of the traits they valued most, Compassion (Ideal = 4.46; Most = 2.67) and Intellect (Ideal = 4.40; Most = 3.18), than Most Men. However, they expressed that Most Men evidenced levels of Power, Sexuality, and Deference equal to those of the Ideal Man. Men on the other hand, saw Most Men as being lower than Ideal Man on the four desirable factors and higher on the less desirable one.

Self

Women respondents described themselves as most like Compassion and second like Intellect (see Fig. 3). Power and Sexuality were not differentiated as the third and fourth factors, while women saw themselves as least like Deference.

Men described themselves as most like an undifferentiated combination of Intellect, Power, Compassion, and Sexuality. However, Intellect was differentiated from Sexuality. Men saw themselves as least like Deference.

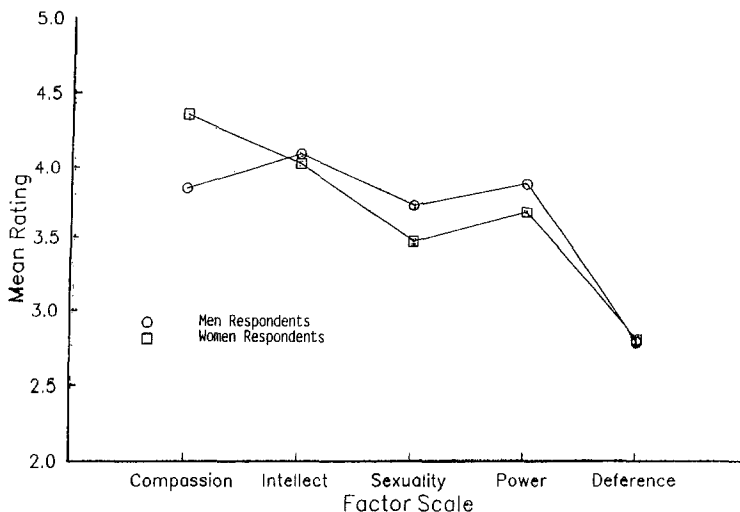


Fig. 3. Women's and men's ratings of factors for Self.

A comparison of profiles indicates women students rate themselves higher in Compassion ($x = 4.36$) than do men students ($x = 3.85$). Otherwise women and men students see themselves the same.

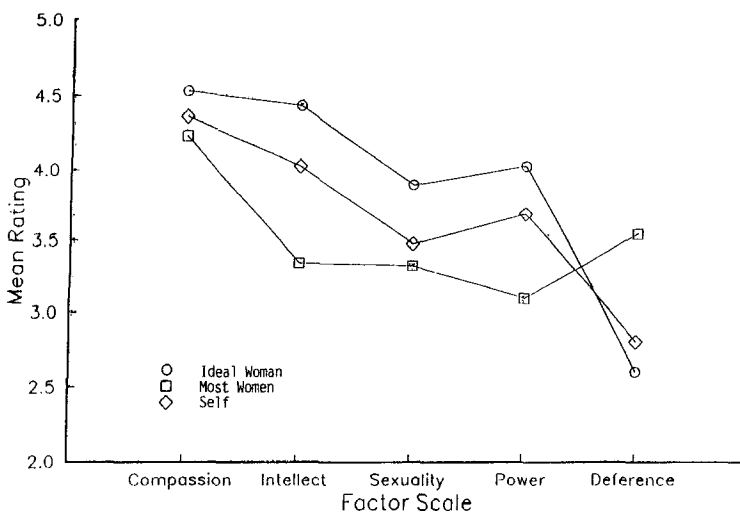


Fig. 4. Women's ratings of factors for Ideal Woman, Most Women, and Self.

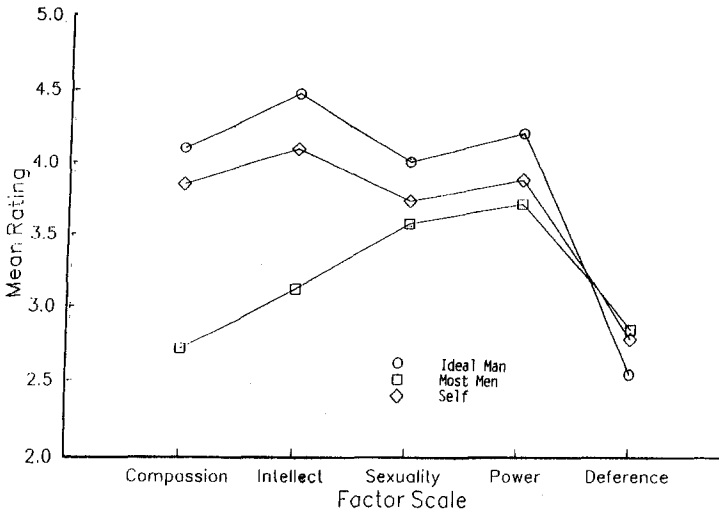


Fig. 5. Men's ratings of factors for Ideal Man, Most Men, and Self.

Self and Ideal. A comparison of Self and Ideal profiles showed that women see themselves as being most representative of Compassion and Intellect, the same factors they value most highly in the Ideal Woman (see Fig. 4). They see themselves exhibiting the same levels of Compassion and Deference as the Ideal Woman, but they see the Ideal exhibiting higher levels of Power, Sexuality, and Intellect than they do.

Intellect was men's most desirable factor for both Self and Ideal Man profiles, although respondents saw themselves as most like a combination of Intellect, Power, Compassion, and Sexuality (see Fig. 5). Men saw themselves as exhibiting the same levels of Deference, Sexuality, and Compassion as the Ideal Man, but they saw the Ideal Man as exhibiting higher levels of Intellect and Power.

Ideal, Self, and Most. When all three women's profiles are compared, the Ideal Woman exhibits more desirable levels than Most Women for all factors except Compassion. Self is seen at more desirable levels than Most Women for Intellect, Power, and Deference, but the same in terms of Compassion and Sexuality.

Scores for the Ideal Man on all factors were more desirable than those for Most Men. Males saw themselves as exhibiting more desirable levels of Compassion and Intellect than Most Men, but the same levels of Power, Sexuality, and Deference.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to compare women and men students' perception of Ideal and Most Men and Women, and Self, and to update Gilbert, Deutsch, and Strahan's (1978) study of student perceptions of ideal and most women and men. Given that 81% of this sample was Caucasian and 77% of traditional age college students, comparisons should be limited to similar populations. Comparisons of responses of study minority groups cannot be considered valid, given the small percentages of Asians, African-Americans and Hispanics in the sample. As well, it is clear many other differences characterize the 3000 students comprising this study sample, some of which were noted earlier. Thus, approaching this sample as a homogenous group implies a somewhat artificial paradigm. On the other hand, the heterogeneity of this sample is probably similar to that of other U.S. state universities. All share the role of being a student on American campuses. Gilbert et al. reported only that their sample were students in an introductory psychology class at Iowa State University; however, it is likely the two study populations are similar. Future gender role research comparing perceptions of ethnic populations should prove informative.

Exploration focused on three research questions to determine the present status of student gender role perceptions. The first question was what students would express as their preferred gender role options (Ideal Woman and Man). Study results showed that women respondents' preferences for an Ideal Woman and Man comprised both a masculine (Intellect) and feminine (Compassion) factor. Scher (1984) also found university women preferred an androgynous Ideal Woman. Men in this study also chose an androgynous Ideal Woman, but preferred an Ideal Man whose outstanding traits were in the more masculine Intellect factor. This reflects a change from Scher's (1984) men college students, who preferred a sex-typed Ideal Woman and Ideal Man.

The second research question about student perceptions of Most Men and Women showed them to be sex-typed. In fact, consistent with previous research (e.g., Deseran & Falk, 1982), women and men rated Most Women and Most Men the same and described them as being sex-typed. Bergen and Williams (1991) concluded that little change had taken place in student perceptions of male and female sex stereotypes between 1972 and 1988; these data reflect that traditional sex-typing continues. While androgyny may exist in the abstract cognitions of students' ideals, clearly they continue to see most women and men in stereotypical ways.

The third question about students' Self perceptions showed that only men perceived themselves as androgynous. Surprisingly, women described

themselves as most like Compassion, a feminine factor. Nonetheless, they still valued Intellect highly.

The hypothesis that students would see themselves exhibiting more desirable levels of all factors than most same-sex persons, but lower levels than their ideals, was partially supported. Both women and men students saw themselves expressing ideal levels of Compassion and Deference, suggesting confidence in those areas. However, each saw their ideal as expressing higher levels of Intellect and Power. Women students added that they believe it is desirable to express higher levels of traits in the Sexuality factor than they are willing or able to do.

The relative valuing of masculine and feminine sex-typed traits by the present respondents is noteworthy. First, respondents differentiated positive and negative feminine sex-typed traits, similar to Broverman et al. (1972) findings, and both women ($x = 4.40$) and men ($x = 4.11$) evidenced a relatively high valuing of the positive feminine traits (Compassion), although women generally expressed higher preferences than men. While 20 years ago women idealized masculine gender traits (Basow, 1992), today's women and men appear to be adding value for the feminine ones to the equation. These findings are even more noteworthy in light of the greater advantages to women in adopting masculine sex-typed traits than to men in adopting feminine ones (Deseran & Falk, 1984; Silvern & Ryan, 1983). Some (Eagley & Mladinic, 1989; Etaugh & Stern, 1984) have suggested that profeminine responses may be a conscious effort not to appear anti-female. Another explanation may be that society has come to see the importance of feminine traits (e.g., caring, sensitive, loving)—witness the express teaching of these in leadership/management programs throughout the world (e.g., Peters & Waterman, 1982). Finally, women expressed a high preference for Compassion in the Ideal Man as well. Komarovsky (1985) suggested that women who express high preferences for feminine gender in men may be reacting to their perception of masculine gender traits already in place for men, and expressing a preference for the relative increase of feminine gender ones.

At the same time, while feminine gender traits, particularly those subsumed under the Compassion factor in this study, appear to be more valued, women as a group may continue to be under-valued today. For example, one might have expected both women and men university students would view Most Women as holding high levels of traits subsumed under Intellect, but they did not. Further, the relatively high rating ($x = 3.47$) given to Deference, made up of generally undesirable traits, for Most Women by both women and men is cause for concern.

Masculine sex-typed traits also appeared to be differentiated into more and less desirable. Intellect, which includes more cognitive skills, appeared

to be more desirable or acceptable than Power, which includes more overtly action-oriented traits. Men students in this study valued Intellect traits in women, consistent with findings by Grayson and Medalie (1989). However, Power was not as highly esteemed for the Ideal Woman, consistent with earlier study findings that traditional men do not esteem masculinity highly in their ideal woman (Silvern & Ryan, 1983).

The overall comparison of women's evaluations of the Ideal Man and Most Men is somewhat troubling. While they saw Most Men as already expressing ideal levels of Sexuality, Power, and Deference, they did not see Most Men as exhibiting the high levels of Compassion and Intellect they valued most in the Ideal Man. Of even greater concern was the finding that men found Most Women significantly lacking in all five factors when compared with Ideal Women. Clearly, neither group found the other to match their ideal.

The hypothesis that sex-typing would be largely expressed by men was not strongly supported. Both women and men expressed some sex-typed preferences for self descriptions, although neither expressed pronounced sex-typing.

CONCLUSION

Overall, it may be concluded that some changes have occurred since Gilbert, Deutsch, and Strahan (1978) conducted their research, largely in expressed preferences for ideal women and men. Women students expressed preferences for an androgynous Ideal Woman and Man, while men expressed preferences only for an androgynous Ideal Woman. Men continued to express value for traditional masculinity in the Ideal Man, although extreme sex-typing was not indicated. For both women and men, sex-typed perceptions of Most Men and Women continued.

Both women and men consistently valued the masculine factor Intellect for both Ideal Man and Woman, which may be simply a reflection of their academic environment and the ingredients needed for success in it. Follow-up research is needed to determine how students' perceptions and preferences evolve after leaving college and entering a different social environment. Additionally, research on a same-age, non-college population is called for to assess the effect of the university environment. There still appears to be a need for education to eliminate outworn stereotypes about women and men. Earlier thinking may have been that androgyny should be the gender role most promoted in the traditionally liberal spirit of the university, giving value to integrating both feminine and masculine characteristics. Today, perhaps those concerned with student development, such

as faculty and others, should broaden their acceptance of either masculinity, or femininity, or androgyny. An acceptance of diversity implies advocacy for students' free choice among an array of options. As a mental health practice, acceptance of an individual's choices and "being-ness" facilitates the self-exploration process, paradoxically enhancing the possibilities of change and growth (Rogers, 1959).

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