

## ***Analysis Assignment 14: The Bem Sex Role Inventory***

### **Instructions**

#### ***Part 1: The Measure***

Rate yourself on the following items on 1-7 scale:

**1**  
**(never or almost never true)**

**to**

**7**  
**(always or almost always true)**

- |                        |                                      |                                 |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. self-reliant        | 22. analytical                       | 42. solemn                      |
| 2. yielding            | 23. sympathetic                      | 43. willing to take a stand     |
| 3. helpful             | 24. jealous                          | 44. tender                      |
| 4. defends own beliefs | 25. has leadership abilities         | 45. friendly                    |
| 5. cheerful            | 26. sensitive to the needs of others | 46. aggressive                  |
| 6. moody               | 27. truthful                         | 47. gullible                    |
| 7. independent         | 28. willing to take risks            | 48. inefficient                 |
| 8. shy                 | 29. understanding                    | 49. acts as a leader            |
| 9. conscientious       | 30. secretive                        | 50. childlike                   |
| 10. athletic           | 31. makes decisions easily           | 51. adaptable                   |
| 11. affectionate       | 32. compassionate                    | 52. individualistic             |
| 12. theatrical         | 33. sincere                          | 53. does not use harsh language |
| 13. assertive          | 34. self-sufficient                  | 54. unsystematic                |
| 14. flatterable        | 35. eager to soothe hurt feelings    | 55. competitive                 |
| 15. happy              | 36. conceited                        | 56. loves children              |
| 16. strong personality | 37. dominant                         | 57. tactful                     |
| 17. loyal              | 38. soft-spoken                      | 58. ambitious                   |
| 18. unpredictable      | 39. likable                          | 59. gentle                      |
| 19. forceful           | 40. masculine                        | 60. conventional                |
| 20. feminine           | 41. warm                             |                                 |

Next, Add up your ratings for items 1, 4, 7,10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37, 40, 43, 46, 49, 55, and 58. Divide the total by 20. This is your masculinity score.

Add up your ratings for items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 32, 35, 38, 41, 44, 47, 50, 53, 56, and 59. Divide the total by 20. This is your femininity score.

Find out your sex type by consulting the following chart.

	Masculinity greater than 4.9	Masculinity less than 4.9
Femininity greater than 4.9	Androgynous	Female sex-typed
Femininity less than 4.9	Male sex-typed	Undifferentiated

### Interpreting the results

The publisher of The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) describes the purpose of the test in this way:

“The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) provides independent assessments of masculinity and femininity in terms of the respondent’s self-reported possession of socially desirable, stereotypically masculine and feminine personality characteristics. This can also be seen as a measurement of the extent to which respondents spontaneously sort self-relevant information into distinct masculine and feminine categories. The self administering 60-item questionnaire measures masculinity, femininity, androgyny, and undifferentiated, using the Masculinity and Femininity scales. “ - <http://www.mindgarden.com/products/bemss.htm>

Bem’s conception of gender typing placed a high value on individuals demonstrating flexibility in their ability to embody the positive values of both genders, as is illustrated in the following quote.

"The concept of psychological androgyny implies that it is possible for an individual to be both compassionate and assertive, both expressive and instrumental, both feminine and masculine, depending upon the situational appropriateness of these various modalities. And it further implies that an individual may even blend these complementary modalities in a single act, such as the ability to fire an employee, if the circumstances warrant it, but with sensitivity for the human emotion that such an act inevitably produces."

The corollary of this positive view of androgyny would hold that being sex-typed or undifferentiated (having neither characteristics valued for men or women) would be less adaptive or advantageous for the individual. One interpretation of strong sex-typing is

that highly sex-typed individuals have constrained the possibilities for their development by accepting society's determination of what they might become.

### ***Part 2: Reflection***

Write a reflection on the sex role inventory. It's a good idea to focus both on the underlying concepts that Bem has developed (i.e. sex types & androgyny) as well as the measure itself (i.e. how good a job does the measure do of assessing sex role identity?). Some issues you may wish to consider:

- Bem's idea that masculinity and femininity were independent (you could be high or low on either) was a movement away from views that masculinity and femininity were poles of a single dimension (similar to the way introversion and extroversion are two opposite poles of a single dimension). Do you think Bem's way of thinking about it is more useful than a single dimension view? Why or why not?
- How useful do you think sex role typing is in describing personality? Do you think it is more or less useful than other kinds of traits (like the Big 5)? In what ways might the characteristics of the sex roles overlap with trait theories, such as the Big 5?
- Bem suggests that being sex-typed indicates that the individual has accepted society's norms about male vs. female behavior, and that these norms have constrained the individual's personality. Some might argue that biological differences between men and women underlie the characteristics that societies value more heavily in men or women. Although there is undoubtedly some truth in each perspective, do you think that one perspective is more *useful* than the other in explaining human behavior? Why?
- What do you think about the ideal qualities of a man or woman? Do you agree with Bem, that it is good to have both traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine positive behavior patterns? Why or why not? If you were to do this exercise for your ideal self, how would it compare to the results you got for your actual self?