

Female Sex Role Characteristics as a  
Function of Sexual Preference

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of The Department of Psychology  
Appalachian State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Helen J Campbell

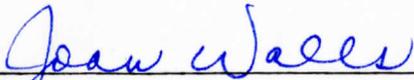
August, 1980

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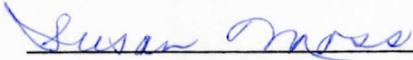
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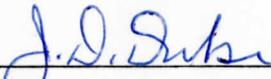
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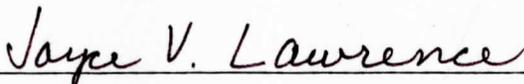
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## Acknowledgements

As I think of all the persons to whom I'd like to express my appreciation, I realize how much a thesis is in reality a group effort. It would never have been completed without a lot of help from my friends.

First of all, I'd like to dedicate this project to my best and finest friend, Bonnie Dawn, whose friendship and love inspired and provoked my original conception of the thesis idea. Also, I'd like to express my appreciation for her many hours of effort in the planning and collection of the data, as well as her continuing support and encouragement.

Of course, many thanks must go to my thesis committee, who managed to be both supportive and constructively critical, and who prevented the whole process from becoming the trauma of my neurotic fantasies. Much love and thanks to Sue Moss, whose warmth and support not only helped me get through the thesis process but through graduate school itself. Thanks to Joan Walls for her careful critique and fine literary eye; and to Dan Duke for his sharp eye for detail and his dry humor, which forced me not to take myself so seriously. A special thanks goes to Frank Terrant, who guided me through the maze of statistics and away from the horrors of the computer.

To all my friends who helped collect data and encouraged me throughout my obsessive-compulsive rantings, I send my heartfelt thanks. You know who you are, but special thanks to Sally, Charol, Jonnie, Pat, Barbara, and Nancy. Also, to my dear friends, Wayne

and Marian, who supported me to the point of compiling data on the morning of their party, and who have always helped me find my more centered self, much love.

Finally, to my family, who continue to be my primary source of nurturance, I send my love and deep appreciation: To my friend, lover, and husband, Leger, who had to endure my stressed-out hysteria and who helped me maintain my mental health and sense of humor; to my sisters, Jeanie and Kathy, who listened and helped whenever I called, and have, as far back as I can remember; and to my parents, Ben and Kitty, whose love, encouragement, and support have carried me through all the momentous occasions of my life.

## Abstract

Studies of differences between lesbians and heterosexual women have revealed no differences in psychological adjustment but have shown differences in personality characteristics. These differences suggest that lesbians are less likely to be bound to sex-stereotypic behavior. The hypotheses tested were whether lesbians tend to be more androgynous and cross sex-typed than heterosexual women and whether heterosexual women tend to be more sex-typed than lesbian women. To assess these factors, 146 employed women ranging in age from 18 to 64 years completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) and a personal information survey used to obtain demographic data, stated degree of feminist ideology, and stated sexual preference. Heterosexual and lesbian groups were equivalent on age, income, educational and occupational levels, and living status (paired vs non-paired). The 87 women in the heterosexual group were found to be more sex-typed ( $p < .05$ ), while the 59 women in the lesbian group were more cross sex-typed ( $p < .01$ ). No differences were found in the frequency of androgynous orientations. Also, the lesbians were found to be significantly more feminist than the heterosexuals ( $p < .001$ ). The results were interpreted as supporting the major thesis of the study, as well as raising questions concerning the behavioral validity of the BSRI categories, in particular, the androgynous and cross sex-typed orientations. Topics recommended as worthy of further investigation include the study of behavioral rather than self-report differences between women of differing

sexual preferences and/or sex role orientations, the impact of masculine identified personality characteristics on the interpersonal adaptability of women, and the relationship between feminism, female sexual preference and sex-typing.

## Introduction

With the resurgence of the Women's Liberation Movement, there has been a marked increase of interest in the study of sex roles in general and in the study of women and the female sex role in particular. However, the study of sexual preference and its **relationship to sex** role characteristics has been noticeably neglected in the plethora of studies that have emerged since Bem's (1974) introduction of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), which unlike previous measures of sex role characteristics, measures masculinity and femininity not as bi-polar opposites on a single continuum, but as orthogonal and independent characteristics. In fact, not only has the issue of sex role characteristics in relation to female sexual preference been neglected as a subject for direct study, but there appears to be a paucity of research on lesbianism in general, relative to the volumes of research on male homosexuality.

### Comparative Studies of Lesbians and Heterosexual Women

Most of the research that is available on female homosexuality has focused on the issue of pathology: are lesbians more neurotic and emotionally unstable than heterosexual women? Many of the early theories and research concerning homosexuality were based on the premise that lesbianism implies pathology (e.g., Bergler, 1956; Caprio, 1957). However, much of the empirical research used to support this premise has been based on **individual case histories of clients** in private therapy or psychiatric institutions (e.g., Benedek, 1952;

Bergler, 1956; Gluckman, 1966) or on other atypical samples such as incarcerated lesbians (Miller, 1966) or emotionally disturbed women in therapy (Kay et al., 1967).

Recently, researchers have tried to obtain non-clinical and therefore more representative samples in an attempt to challenge the assumption that homosexuality constitutes a pathological state. However, in many of these studies, the homosexual subjects were recruited from homophile organizations and the heterosexual controls were often unemployed housewives (Armon, 1960; Freedman, 1971; Hopkins, 1969; Saghir and Robins, 1973; Siegelman, 1972). In the past few years, researchers have recognized this methodological bias and have attempted to establish better controls. For example, several researchers (Thompson, McCandles and Strickland, 1971; Oberstone and Sukoneck, 1976) have recruited subjects through "friendship pyramiding" rather than homophile organizations. In addition, Thompson et al., (1971) matched groups on several demographic variables, while Oberstone and Sukoneck (1976) attempted to control for marital status by including only single women in their study. More recently, Adelman (1977) limited subjects to professionally employed women who were recruited not from homophile organizations but "through personal and professional contacts" (p. 195). Adelman also argued that the "variable of marital status...for the purposes of comparison is misleading when applied to a minority group whose pairing is given no legal sanction in our

society" (p. 195). Instead, she stated that the variable of living status (i.e. paired or non-paired) may be a more meaningful distinction, and, in fact, she found differences between paired and non-paired subjects. She thus concluded that living status may be an influencing variable worthy of consideration in future studies of lesbianism.

Despite these various methodological issues, the bulk of the recent studies using non-clinical samples appear to lend support to a non-pathological view of lesbianism. The results typically reveal a profile of lesbians as being as psychologically well adjusted as women who prefer a heterosexual orientation (Armon, 1960; Adelman, 1977; Freedman, 1967; Freedman, 1971; Hopkins, 1969; Oberstone and Sukoneck, 1976; Thompson et al., 1971; Seigelman, 1972). The studies that do not support this view are much fewer in number (Kenyon, 1968; Saghir and Robins, 1973). Kenyon (1968) reported a higher degree of neuroticism in a non-clinical sample of lesbians. Saghir and Robins (1973) reported significantly higher alcohol abuse and suicidal tendencies in their lesbian sample. Yet, they also concluded that the lesbians were able to achieve, adapt and be productive citizens. Finally, it should be noted that all the researchers that have attempted to improve methodological controls by using samples not recruited from homophile organizations (Adelman, 1977; Oberstone and Sukoneck, 1976; Thompson et al., 1971) found no differences in psychological adjustment on such measures as the MMPI or the Adjective Checklist,

and that they are among the group of researchers who conclude that lesbianism is a non-pathological orientation.

If the majority of studies find that lesbian women are no different in psychological adjustment than heterosexual women, what differences have been found? Further, what implications, if any, may these differences have for the study of sex role typing in women?

One difference found by researchers (Adelman, 1977; Oberstone and Sukoneck, 1976) has been that on the Mf scale of the MMPI, lesbians scored higher (more masculine) than non-lesbians. While the Mf scale may be described as consisting of items that reflect both masculine and feminine interest patterns, researchers are quick to caution as to what this finding actually indicates. The scale was originally designed to indicate homosexuality in men and original item selection was based on the responses of a group of "homoerotic male inverters" (Marks, Seeman, and Haller, 1974). Thus, the scale's diagnostic implications for women are unclear. Adelman's (1977) interpretation seems to best summarize what implications the finding that lesbians endorsed more "masculine" interest items than heterosexual women, may have:

This finding suggests that lesbians more than heterosexual women may depart from stereotypic behavior. It is therefore further suggested that women whose sexual orientation is contrary to traditional sex-role expectations would feel free to break from other traditional

feminine activities and patterns of interpersonal behavior to explore a wider range of expression.

(p. 199)

The view that lesbians practice fewer traditional sex role stereotyped behaviors is further supported by Oberstone's and Sukoneck's (1976) finding that on a 60 item multiple choice questionnaire concerning lifestyle dimensions, more heterosexual women indicated that they play traditional sex stereotype social roles than did lesbian women. In addition, these researchers concluded that with regard to sexual role playing (active/passive), "The lesbian sample relate to their partner in a more reciprocal and non-traditional way than the women in the control group relate to their heterosexual partner" (p. 185). Moreover, lesbians reported less often that their vocational goals had been compromised than did the heterosexual sample.

Oberstone and Sukoneck (1976) interpret these findings as casting doubt upon the traditional assumptions about lesbians. They appear to concur with Adelman (1977) in their view of how lesbians differ from heterosexual women:

Are they really more "masculine" in their behavior than their "normal" heterosexual counterparts, or are they more free to develop both their feminine and masculine

and in fact, their total human potential? It is possible, that rather than being "masculine" the lesbian woman, by virtue of being an outlaw, has had to develop personality qualities that have been traditionally the domain of the male, such as independence, self-determination, competence and aggression. (p. 185)

The findings of several other researchers seem to lend support to this view. Freedman (1967) and Hopkins (1969) both described the lesbian woman as more independent than her heterosexual peer based on differences in scores of inner directedness on the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI). Freedman (1973) also stated that with regard to motivational patterns associated with work (as revealed by a personal data sheet designed for the study) and acceptance of aggressive feelings (as measured by the POI) the lesbians were "more masculinely identified" or responded more like men than did the heterosexual sample (p. 78). He went on to state that based on the personal data sheet, the lesbians "manifested genuinely female interests for the most part, especially in their preference for close interpersonal relations rather than sex per se and in their overall emphasis on deriving life satisfaction from human relationships" (p. 78). In addition, Thompson et al., (1971) found that lesbians scored higher on scale measures of self confidence, and Seigelman (1972) found that on the subscales of the Neuroticism Scale Questionnaire (NSQ), les-

bians score lower on depression, and higher on goal direction and self-acceptance than heterosexual women.

### Sex Role Research

The pattern of differences found between lesbian and heterosexual women has important implications in light of the recent research on sex role characteristics. Kagan (1964) has found that sex role and behavioral options for both men and women are narrowed by the socialization process, which defines and restricts behavior thought to be appropriate to both sexes. Constantinople (1973) in her detailed review of the then existing masculinity-femininity scales, seriously questioned the underlying theoretical construct of such bi-polar scales, which reflect the traditional conception of masculine and feminine as being opposites on a single continuum. On these scales, if one is high in masculinity then one is therefore low in femininity; the lack of masculine traits automatically implies the existence of feminine ones. Spurred by Constantinople's critique, recent researchers have turned to alternative conceptions of sex role characteristics and have developed alternative modes of measurement (Bem, 1974; Heilbrun, 1976; Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp, 197 ). These researchers view individuals as having both masculine and feminine traits that are independent of each other, (i.e. one's masculinity is not dependent on one's lack of femininity). Rather than measuring masculinity and femininity as bipolar qualities, these researchers measure them as separate and independent dimensions. Thus, characteristics of masculinity and femininity can be measured in varying amounts in the same individual.

Individuals are classified according to whether they endorse a higher degree of one set of characteristics than the other. Thus, in addition to sex-typed orientations (endorsing a higher degree of traits appropriate to one's sex) and cross sex-typed orientations (endorsing a greater degree of traits appropriate to the opposite sex), such a system allows for the measurement of a third sex role orientation, androgynous, which consists of a balance or a high number of both masculine and feminine traits.

Several theorists and researchers (Bem, 1974, 1975, 1976; Bem and Lenney, 1976; Bem, Martyna, and Watson, 1976; Heilbrun, 1976; Spence et al., 1974; Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp, 1975) support the notion that the androgynous person is more flexible and able to respond appropriately to various interpersonal situations, while the sex-typed individual is more rigid and less able to respond in situations requiring behaviors outside of the traditional role for their sex. Bem (1974) conceives of the androgynous person as being "both instrumental and expressive" (p. 155). Instrumental implies interpersonal traits traditionally thought of as masculine, such as assertiveness and independent thinking, while expressive implies interpersonal traits traditionally thought of as feminine, such as nurturance and sensitivity to the feelings of others. The androgynous person is therefore able to be both appropriately assertive and appropriately emotionally sensitive depending on the situation. Thus, it is the androgynous person who may best fit current notions of the well adjusted individual, as Bem and Lenney (1976) state:

One consequence of the women's liberation movement has been a questioning of the traditional assumption that it is the masculine male and the feminine female who typify mental health. Rather it's now the "androgynous" person capable of incorporating both masculinity and femininity into his or her personality, who is emerging as a more appropriate sex role ideal for contemporary society. (p. 48)

In a series of studies, Bem (1975, 1976; Bem and Lenney, 1976; Bem et al., 1976) found empirical support for her view of the androgynous individual as being more flexible and less sex role restricted than the sex-typed individual. In one study (Bem, 1975) androgynous subjects resisted pressure to conform and maintained a "masculine" sense of independence. Yet, in the same study, androgynous subjects were also able to demonstrate "feminine" nurturance, when given the opportunity to play with a kitten and a human infant and to listen sympathetically to a lonely student. In a later study, Bem and Lenney (1976) found that androgynous persons were less likely to avoid cross-sex behaviors than sex-typed individuals and when required to perform a gender-inappropriate task, they reported experiencing less discomfort.

Of particular concern to the present study is the pattern of behavior found in female subjects. As expected, androgynous females perform behaviors labeled inappropriate for their sex and yet are

also able to demonstrate expressive or feminine behaviors. Somewhat surprisingly, cross sex-typed or "masculine women" (subjects who scored significantly higher on masculine characteristics than feminine) not only were able to perform cross sex behaviors but were also able to relate well in the more expressive and nurturant tasks. Bem concludes that this result suggests that:

growing up female in our society may be sufficient to give virtually all women at least an adequate threshold of emotional responsiveness. It further suggests that what differentiates women from one another is not the domain of expressiveness or communion, but whether their sense of instrumentality or agency has been sufficiently nourished as well. (p. 59, Bem, 1976)

As has been demonstrated, it is precisely in the domain of "instrumentality" that lesbians appear to differ from their heterosexual peers. In the past, because of traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, lesbians have been labeled more masculine and therefore less feminine, and by implication, less well adjusted. However, with changing viewpoints of masculinity and femininity, researchers recognize that more masculine may not indeed mean less feminine. Due to the bi-polar nature of their measures, however, these researchers could only speculate that perhaps the lesbian woman is less restricted by sex role stereotypes and thus able to

be both feminine and masculine in her behaviors, that is, more androgynous.

#### Statement of the Problem

Thus, it is the purpose of this study to investigate directly the differences in sex role orientations between lesbian and heterosexual women by using a measure which includes an androgynous sex role orientation. Specifically, this study seeks to examine the thesis that lesbian women are less likely than heterosexual women to be stereotypic in their sex role orientation.

Hypotheses. Two directional hypotheses were generated for this study:

- 1) In the lesbian sample, there will be a significantly greater number of both androgynous and cross sex-typed women, than in the heterosexual sample.
  
- 2) In the heterosexual sample, there will be a significantly greater number of sex-typed women, than in the lesbian sample.

The prediction that the lesbian group would more likely be both androgynous and cross sex-typed, as opposed to androgynous alone, is based on Bem's (1975, 1976; Bem and Lenney, 1976; Bem et al., 1976) finding that there were virtually no behavioral differences between these two groups, that is, both androgynous and cross

sex-typed women were able to perform both traditionally masculine tasks and the more feminine expressive and nurturant tasks. No predictions are made concerning the undifferentiated subjects, since so little is known concerning the characteristics of this category.

## Method

### Subjects

Subjects were 146 female volunteers residing throughout North Carolina, primarily in the Piedmont region. A small number of the subjects (15) resided in various other states including Massachusetts, Colorado, Texas, Vermont, and the District of Columbia. Each of the subjects was assigned to one of two groups on the basis of self ratings indicating their sexual preference. The 87 women included in the heterosexual group indicated an exclusive or primary sexual preference for the opposite sex. The 59 women in the homosexual group indicated an exclusive or primary preference for the same sex.

The two groups did not significantly differ on such demographic variables as age, income, living status (i.e., paired or non-paired), educational level, or occupational status (based on Hollingshead's 1957 occupational classification system). The subjects ranged in age from 18 to 64 years with an average age of 29.35 years. The average age of the lesbian group was 28.3 years, while the heterosexual group average was 30.4 years. The subjects, all of whom were employed at the time of the study, ranged in annual income from \$3,360 to \$25,000 with an average income of \$11,279.80. The average income of the lesbian group was \$11,899.60 per year, while the heterosexual women averaged \$10,660 per year. The educational level of the entire sample ranged from high school graduate to doctorate.

The median educational level for both groups and for the entire sample was that of college graduate. (Tables 1 through 4 present the data for the main demographic variables.)

There were significant differences in the racial distribution of the two groups,  $\chi^2(1) = 7.965$ ,  $p < .01$ . Ninety-five percent of the lesbian group were caucasian as compared to only 75% of the heterosexual group. In addition, the heterosexual group was 20% black, whereas blacks comprised less than 2% of the lesbian group.

#### Procedures

The subjects were recruited through "friendship pyramiding" (Oberstone and Sukoneck, 1976; Thompson et al., 1971). This is a procedure in which friends of the experimenter were asked to distribute questionnaires to their friends, who, in turn, were also asked to distribute questionnaires to their friends. A total of 220 questionnaires were distributed in this manner to approximately equal numbers of lesbian and heterosexual women. An additional 80 questionnaires were distributed in drinking establishments located in the Piedmont region of North Carolina; 40 were distributed in taverns known to be frequented by lesbians, and 40 were distributed in taverns known to be frequented by heterosexuals. Thus, a total of 300 questionnaires were distributed.

One hundred and fifty-six of these questionnaires were returned to the experimenter via the mail. Ten out of the 156 respondents were eliminated from the final sample for the following reasons: four were women who designated themselves as bisexual; four were

Table 1  
Distribution of Subjects by Age

Age <sup>a</sup>	Lesbians <sup>b</sup>	Heterosexuals*	Total N**
24 yr & under	14 (24%)	23 (27%)	37 (26%)
25 to 35 yr	39 (67%)	42 (50%)	81 (57%)
35 to 44 yr	3 (5%)	11 (13%)	14 (10%)
45 yr & over	2 (4%)	8 (10%)	10 (7%)

<sup>a</sup> $\chi^2(3) = 5.8, p > .05.$

<sup>b</sup>Lesbian age range: 21 - 64 yrs.;  $\bar{x} = 28.3$  yrs.

\*Heterosexual age range: 18 - 59 yrs.;  $\bar{x} = 30.4$  yrs.

\*\* Total N age range: 18 - 64 yrs.;  $\bar{x} = 29.35$  yrs.

Table 2  
Distribution of Subjects by Income Levels

Yearly Income <sup>a</sup>	Lesbians <sup>b</sup>	Heterosexuals*	Total N**
under 5,000	3 (5.45%)	2 (2.4%)	5 (3.6%)
5,000 - 9,999	17 (30.9%)	42 (49.4%)	59 (42%)
10,000 - 14,999	20 (36.4%)	31 (36.5%)	51 (36.4%)
15,000 - 19,999	11 (20%)	6 (7%)	17 (12%)
over 20,000	4 (4.7%)	4 (7.25%)	8 (6%)

<sup>a</sup> $\chi^2(4) = 7.73, p > .05.$

<sup>b</sup>Lesbian salary range: 3,600 - 25,000;  $\bar{x} = 11,899.6$

\*Heterosexual salary range: 3,360 - 24,000;  $\bar{x} = 10,660$

\*\*Total N salary range: 3,360 - 25,000;  $\bar{x} = 11,279.8$

Table 3  
 Distribution of Subjects by Educational Level

Educational level <sup>a</sup>	Heterosexual	Lesbians	Total N
H.S.	6	5	11
grad	(7%)	(8.5%)	(8%)
H.S. + vocational training	8	2	10
	(9%)	(3.5%)	(7%)
1 -3 yr college	18	14	32
	(21%)	(24%)	(22%)
College grad.	41	21	62
	(48%)	(36%)	(43%)
Post grad training	12	16	28
	(14%)	(28%)	(20%)

$$^a \chi^2 (4) = 4.93, p > .05$$

Table 4  
Distribution of Women by Occupational Category

Occupational Category <sup>a</sup>	Heterosexual	Lesbian	Total
1)	4 (5%)	9 (15%)	13 (9%)
2)	17 (28%)	11 (20%)	28 (19.4%)
3)	36 (41%)	21 (37%)	57 (39.6%)
4)	30 (34%)	16 (28%)	46 (32%)

$$^a \chi^2 (3) = 5.316, p > .05$$

Note. Categories are based on Hollingshead's (1957) 7 point occupational scale: 1--higher executives, proprietors of large concerns and major professionals; 2--business managers, owners of medium sized businesses, and lesser professionals; 3--administrative personnel, owners of small independent businesses, and minor professionals; 4--clerical and sales workers, technicians, and owners of little businesses; 5--skilled manual workers; 6--machine operators and semi-skilled employees; 7--unskilled employees.

unemployed housewives or students; and two returned only partially completed, and therefore unscorable, materials.

Each participant completed a packet containing a set of general directions and information about the study, the BSRI, and a personal data sheet used to obtain demographic data, stated degree of feminist ideology, and stated sexual preference. (See Appendix A and C for samples of the personal data sheet and the instructions given to the subjects.) The instructions informed the subjects that the study was concerned with the perceptions women have of themselves and emphasized the voluntary nature of the subject's participation. The subjects were assured that all responses would be anonymous and confidential. The directions also requested that the subject fill out the questionnaire in private and without benefit of discussion with another person and that the subject be as truthful as possible. Finally, included in the packet was an addressed and stamped envelope to facilitate return and to ensure complete anonymity.

#### Apparatus

Bem Sex Role Inventory. The BSRI is a self-report scale designed to measure the degree of a person's identification with masculine and feminine traits. It contains both a masculinity and a femininity scale, each consisting of twenty characteristics which were previously judged to be more appropriate for one sex than another and to be relatively positive in tone. It also includes a third scale of twenty neutral items judged to be no more desirable for one sex than the other. Ten of these items were judged to be positive in tone and

ten negative. Thus, this neutral scale has also been termed a social desirability scale (Bem, 1974) in which the degree to which an individual generally self reports positive or socially desirable characteristics can also be measured. (See Appendix B for sample of BSRI given to subjects and Appendix D for listing of items by scale.)

When taking the BSRI, subjects are asked to indicate on a 7 point scale the extent to which each characteristic describes himself or herself. The BSRI was originally scored by calculating the difference between masculine and feminine scores and then multiplying each difference score by a constant (2.322) to arrive at a t-ratio or androgyny score. Through this method, both males and females can be classified as conventionally sex-typed (feminine females having a significantly higher feminine score and masculine males having a significantly higher masculine score), androgynous (the two mean scores are relatively balanced and the difference between the two scores is small) or cross sex-typed (masculine females and feminine males).

Problems in Measurement. There has been considerable controversy in the literature as to the most appropriate procedure for operationalizing the construct of androgyny. Bem's original subtractive technique has been criticized for not differentiating those individuals who score low on both the masculine and feminine scales and who are termed "undifferentiated." Since the original conception of an androgynous person is one of an individual who has available to them both masculine and feminine trait behaviors and who is able to exercise either trait area positively and appro-

priately according to the requirements of the situation, it has been argued that persons low in both traits would not have the flexibility and adaptability inherent in the original conception of androgyny. Moreover, individuals low on both scales appear to also be deficient in self-esteem (Spence et al., 1975). Thus, an alternative procedure has been suggested (Bem, 1977; Spence et al., 1974) in which a fourfold classification is used based on the sample median score for each subscale.

In this method, subjects are classified as androgynous when both masculine and feminine scores fall above the sample median; sex-typed or cross sex-typed if one score is above and one below the median; and undifferentiated when both scores are below. Although Bem (1977) has revised her original scoring to fit this schema, she admits to the theoretical problem created by the undifferentiated category and suggests the use of multiple linear regression techniques as a way to further explore the data without regard to categorization.

Recently a third method of classification has been proposed (Orlofsky, Aslin and Ginsburg, 1977) which attempts to maintain the best qualities of both the difference and the median split methods. This method uses Bem's (1974) original subtractive technique but then eliminates from the androgynous category those subjects whose masculinity and femininity scores are both below the median scores for the sample. These individuals are labeled undifferentiated. While admitting that this method may be more "cumber-

some," Orlofsky et al. (1977) argue that it is theoretically a more sensitive measure, since the median split procedure "ignores difference scores, labels some otherwise imbalanced scores (sex-typed) as androgynous or undifferentiated; and labels some otherwise balanced scores as sex-typed or cross sex-typed" (p. 414). Their research findings indicate that, at least with female subjects, the difference/median split procedure may have better predictive value than the simple median split procedure. Orlofsky et al. also argue that the difference/median split procedure is less likely to be influenced by social desirability responding, since their results indicate that the categories derived by the median split method differed significantly from each other on the BSRI social desirability (neutral) subscale scores, while categories arrived at by the difference/median split procedure did not.

Despite the theoretical problems posed by the creation of the undifferentiated category, the median split method has been viewed by most researchers (Worrell, 1978) as more appropriate than the original difference or subtractive method. The newly proposed difference/median split procedure appears to have distinct advantages over both of the previously used methods, but it has not been in use long enough for its relative merits to be proven. Therefore, in the present study, both the median split and the difference/median split procedures were used. It was hoped that by assessing the data by both methods the relative merits of each could be further explored.

## Results

### Female Sexual Preference and BSRI Categories

A chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) analysis comparing the distribution of sex role orientations between the heterosexual and lesbian groups was performed to test the general hypothesis that there is a relationship between female sexual preference and sex role orientations. The results proved significant using both methods of determining BSRI categories, median split:  $\chi^2(3) = 11.735$ ,  $p < .01$ ; difference/median split:  $\chi^2(3) = 17.881$ ,  $p < .001$ . Table 5 presents the distribution of sex role orientations for both scoring methods.

In order to assess the directional hypotheses that lesbian women as a group are more likely to have androgynous and cross sex-typed orientations, and that heterosexual women are more likely to have sex-typed orientations, individual chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) one sample tests were used to compare the groups along each dimension. Significant results were found in the predicted direction on the cross sex or masculine dimension, median split:  $\chi^2(1) = 5.083$ ,  $p < .05$ ; difference/median split:  $\chi^2(1) = 9.888$ ,  $p < .01$ , and on the same sex or feminine dimension, median split:  $\chi^2(1) = 4.6$ ,  $p < .05$ ; difference/median split:  $\chi^2(1) = 6.18$ ,  $p < .05$ . However, on the androgynous dimension no significant results were obtained, median split:  $\chi^2(1) = .0242$ ,  $p > .05$ ; difference/median split:  $\chi^2(1) = .0245$ ,  $p > .05$ .

### Feminism and Sexual Preference

A second set of analyses were performed to assess the degree of feminist ideology within each group and to determine whether this

Table 5  
Distribution of Subjects by Sex Role Classifications

Group	Sex Role Classifications			
	Cross sex	Androgynous	Sex-typed	Undifferentiated
	Median Split Method <sup>a</sup>			
Lesbian	24 (41%)	14 (24%)	9 (15%)	12 (20%)
Hetero- sexual	16 (18%)	22 (25%)	31 (36%)	18 (21%)
	Difference/Median Split Method <sup>b</sup>			
Lesbian	28 (47%)	12 (20%)	13 (22%)	6 (11%)
Hetero- sexual	15 (17%)	20 (22%)	43 (49%)	9 (11%)

$${}^a\chi^2(3) = 11.735, p < .01.$$

$${}^b\chi^2(3) = 17.881, p < .001.$$

was an influencing factor in the major results reported above. Based upon self ratings, the subjects were placed into three categories: feminist, moderate, and traditional. A chi-square analysis comparing the distribution of these categories within the lesbian and heterosexual groups yielded highly significant results,  $\chi^2(1) = 25.52$ ,  $p < .001$ . Table 6 presents the distribution of categories for the two groups. These results show that 96% of the women in the lesbian sample classified themselves as feminist as compared to only 56% of the heterosexual women. In addition, none of the lesbians viewed themselves as traditional, whereas 24% of the heterosexual women classified themselves as such.

Using only those subjects who identified themselves as feminist, the distribution of sex role classifications within the lesbian and heterosexual groups were again compared. No significant results were obtained using the median split procedure,  $\chi^2(3) = 2.7717$ ,  $p = .39$ , or the difference/median split procedure,  $\chi^2(3) = 5.8333$ ,  $p = .12$ .

#### Scoring Procedures

The third and final analysis of the data involved examining the differences in classification between the two methods used to score the BSRI. Differences in classification occurred in the case of 38 (26%) of the subjects, 19 (32%) lesbians and 19 (21.8%) heterosexual women. The difference/median split procedure yielded a higher proportion of sex-typed individuals (38%) than the median split procedure (27%) and a smaller proportion of undifferentiated

Table 6

## Distribution of Subjects by Feminist Ideology

Feminist Ideology <sup>a</sup>	Lesbian Women	Heterosexual Women	Total N
Feminist	56 (96%)	48 (56%)	104 (71%)
Moderate	3 (4%)	17 (20%)	20 (14%)
Traditional	0	22 (24%)	22 (15%)

<sup>a</sup> $\chi^2(1) = 25.52, p .001.$

individuals (10% vs 21%). (See Table 5 for a presentation of the differences in classification.) The median split derived categories differed significantly in BSRI neutral or social desirability scores,  $F(3, 142) = 21.63, p < .01$ , while the difference/median split derived categories were not significantly different in social desirability scores,  $F(3, 142) = 1.70, p > .05$ . Finally, in reviewing the discrimination power of the two methods throughout the results of this study, it is clear that the difference/median split procedure consistently provides the more significant discriminations between the lesbian and heterosexual groups.

These results concur with Orlofsky et al.'s (1977) previous findings and appear to support their contention that the difference/median split procedure is a more powerful and sensitive measure and one which is less prone to the influence of social desirability responding than the now widely accepted median split method.

## Discussion

The major thesis of this study - that lesbian women are less likely than heterosexual women to be sex stereotypic in their sex role orientations - was generally supported by the data. In particular, the results supported the hypothesis that heterosexual women were much more likely to be sex-typed in their sex role orientations than were lesbian women. However, the hypothesis that cross sex-typed and androgynous orientations would be more characteristic of lesbians was only partially confirmed. While the cross sex-typed classification was found to be highly characteristic of lesbian women, the androgynous orientation was no more characteristic for one group than the other.

### Sexual Preference and BSRI Sex Role Classifications

These results clearly support the view that lesbians are less likely to be bound by sex role stereotypic behavior than their heterosexual counterparts, which is consistent with the pattern of differences reported by previous studies. However, the fact that the cross sex-typed or masculine sex role orientation was found to be characteristic of the lesbian group, while the androgynous orientation was not, provides an unexpected and somewhat ironic point of consistency with previous studies. In these studies, lesbians have repeatedly appeared to be more "masculine" on a variety of self-report measures related to sex role characteristics. The typical argument found running throughout the recent literature has been that these self-report scales have not been designed to measure a

balance of feminine and masculine personality characteristics. Thus, because of the lack of an appropriate measure, the question of whether the lesbian woman is actually more masculine or more fully self realized within both the masculine and feminine domains, that is, more androgynous, continued to be posed. In the present study, it was hoped that the BSRI, which is designed to measure androgyny, would provide a clear and unequivocal answer to that question. Instead, the results appear to shed a somewhat qualified light on the subject, while also outlining new areas in need of further investigation.

Taken at face value, the results seem to answer the question quite clearly by stating that lesbian women are more masculine, or cross sex-typed, but they are not more androgynous in their sex role orientations as measured by the BSRI. What could be clearer? But just as the previous researchers were hesitant to label the lesbian woman more masculine because of the limitations of their measures, the same limitations may still exist in the present study. While the lesbian woman has endorsed a significant degree of personality characteristics identified as masculine, there is no evidence to support the idea that her behavior is significantly more masculine. In fact, as has been noted earlier, in studies attempting to validate the BSRI categories, (Bem, 1975; 1976; 1977; Bem and Lenney, 1976; Bem et al., 1976) no behavioral differences were found between cross sex-typed and androgynous female subjects. The cross sex-typed woman was just as capable of performing expressive and

nurturing tasks as she was the more assertive and instrumental tasks.

The results of these studies also indicated that the sex-typed female, which in the present study is most characteristic of heterosexual women, not only appeared to be restricted in the performance of tasks requiring instrumental or masculine behaviors, she was also less adequate than her androgynous and cross sex-typed sisters in tasks requiring nurturant or expressive behaviors. However, when required to perform the relatively passive and structured task of sympathetically listening to a lonely student, sex-typed females were the most responsive and expressive group (Bem, 1976; Bem et al., 1976). In light of the pattern of behavior demonstrated by sex-typed women, Bem (1976) concluded that feminine women were less likely to engage in risk taking behavior and more likely to depend upon clearly defined behavioral expectations.

The behaviors found to be characteristic of sex-typed and cross sex-typed women appear to closely correspond to the differences found between heterosexual and lesbian women in previous studies. In addition, given this knowledge of the the behavioral correlates of these sex role classifications, it would seem that lesbian women are indeed more likely to be androgynous in their behavior than their heterosexual peers, despite the fact that the androgynous orientation, as determined by the BSRI, was no more characteristic for one group than the other.

These interpretations clearly confirm and strengthen the support for the major thesis of this study, yet they also lead to sev-

eral unanswered questions concerning the BSRI and its measurement of female sex role orientations. If the cross sex-typed orientation in women can be interpreted as actually reflecting androgynous behavior, why does this orientation discriminate between lesbian and heterosexual women, while the androgynous orientation does not? How do androgynous and cross sex-typed women differ, and what implications do these differences have for better understanding lesbian women? What, if any, behavioral differences between cross sex-typed and androgynous women have yet to be discovered? Clearly, there must be differences in self-perception, but what specific forms do these differences take and what are their implications for behavioral and psychological functioning? Finally, how valid is the BSRI conceptualization of androgyny if other sex role categories can demonstrate as great a degree of androgynous behavior?

These questions tend to cast doubt upon the validity and utility of the BSRI. Certainly, one must question the utility of a scale that purports to identify androgynous individuals through the measurement of a balance of self reported masculine and feminine identified personality traits, when, at least in female subjects, it appears that androgynous behavior is just as likely to be related to the degree of masculine identified traits. So perhaps the question to be asked in future studies is not whether lesbians are more "masculine" or more androgynous, (since depending on your definition they are obviously both), but whether the degree of masculine identified traits endorsed by women, particularly lesbian women, is actually correlated with more interpersonally adaptive and flexi-

ble behavior. Obviously, more research needs to be done to determine the behavioral correlates associated with the various BSRI categories.

#### Feminism and Sexual Preference

In reviewing the results and conclusions of this study, questions not only arise concerning the validity and meanings of the BSRI categories, they also arise concerning the significance of the differences found between the lesbian and heterosexual women. While these groups have been found to differ in sex role orientations in such a way as to lend support for the belief that lesbians are less bound by traditional sex role stereotypes, the groups have also been found to differ in their degree of self-reported feminism, with the lesbian group being significantly more feminist. Some may argue that this difference in feminism is purely related to sample selection and that this accounts for the differences in sex role orientations found between the two groups.

There were not enough subjects who labeled themselves traditional for a meaningful analysis to be done to directly test whether feminist and traditionalist women differ significantly in their sex role orientations regardless of sexual preference. However, the original comparison of sex role classifications by sexual preference was reanalyzed using only the feminist subjects. No significant results were obtained. This suggests that the degree of feminism is the major variable influencing the differences found between the two groups rather than sexual preference per se.

Another way to interpret these results would be to recognize

that the differences in feminism found between the two samples are representative of actual differences between the population groups and are not the result of a sampling error. It seems quite probable that, as a group, lesbians are more likely to be feminists than are heterosexual women, since lesbians, by virtue of their sexual preference and resulting lifestyle, are more likely to be forced to question the traditional attitudes concerning sex roles. By choosing not to relate to men for their primary emotional and affectional needs, lesbians are less likely to be caught up in traditional male/female sex role interactions. Just as lesbian women are less likely to be stereotypic in their sex role orientations or to be bound by sex role stereotypic behaviors, so they are also less likely to be stereotypic and traditional in their attitudes and beliefs concerning sex roles in general. Thus, feminism, sex role orientations, and sexual preference appear to be interrelated variables, whose interaction merits further study.

When viewed in this light, the difference in feminist ideology found between the lesbian and heterosexual samples can be understood as lending indirect support to the major thesis of this study. Also, it is interesting to note that these results suggest that the relationship between the variables is such that as heterosexual women increasingly question traditional sex roles in their attitudes and behavior, the present pattern of differences found between lesbian and heterosexual women will diminish.

The overall results of this study provide supportive data for

the major thesis, which sought to establish a clear cut relationship between female sexual preference and sex role orientations. The results can be viewed as being consistent with the pattern of findings presented in the literature comparing lesbian and heterosexual women, that lesbian women are less likely to be bound to sex role stereotyping. In addition, the findings indicate that feminist ideology appears to be a significantly related variable to the results of the present study and to sex role typing in general. It is recommended that in future studies of female sexual preference or sex role typing, feminism be considered a variable worthy of investigation. The results of the present study also call into question our present ability to define and measure the theoretical construct of androgyny, particularly in women. Clearly, further research in the areas of female sexual preference and/or female sex role orientations should focus on examining the behavioral differences found between groups as opposed to self-report measures. Also, the role of masculine identified personality traits in relation to androgynous behavior and to psychological well being in women might well be a promising avenue of exploration for researchers.

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Appendix A

Introductory Information and Feedback Sheet

TO THE PARTICIPANT

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The information gathered in these questionnaires will be used as supportive data for a research project concerning perceptions women have of themselves. Please be aware that your participation in this study is purely voluntary. You may terminate participation at any point in time if you so desire. All the information gathered will be handled confidentially. No names or identifying information will be requested.

The questionnaires should take no more than 25 minutes of your time to complete. Please fill them out in private and without benefit of discussion with another person. We are interested in your own unbiased perceptions only. Once you have completed the questionnaires, please place them in the addressed and stamped envelope provided with this packet. Then, mail the envelope as soon as you possibly can. Your prompt response will be greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in receiving feedback concerning the results of this study, please contact me at the following address:

Helen J Campbell  
1328 Biscayne Road, N.W.  
Roanoke, Virginia 24019

I will be glad to share this information with you.

Thanks again for volunteering your time and energy.

Sincerely,



Helen J Campbell

Graduate Student

Appalachian State University

Boone, North Carolina

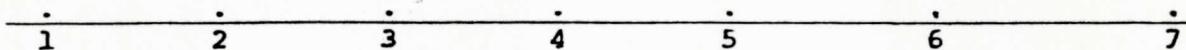
Appendix B

Bem Sex Role Inventory

## PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS INVENTORY

Directions: The items below consist of 60 personality characteristics. You are asked to rate each characteristic in terms of how well it describes you. Rate each characteristic based on your evaluation of yourself as you really are, rather than how others may think of you, or how you would like to be. The rating is measured on a 7 point scale which is included with each item.

For example, a rating of 1 means that a particular personality characteristic is "never or almost never true" as a description of yourself. A rating of 7 at the opposite end of the scale, means a characteristic is "always true or almost always true" as a description of yourself. The intermediate ratings fall between in terms of how well a particular characteristic describes you. The ratings are as follows:



1. Never or almost never true
2. Usually not true
3. Sometime but infrequently true
4. Occassionally true
5. Often true
6. Usually true
7. Always true or almost always true

Depending on how well each characteristic describes you, please rate each personality item on the 7 point scale. Circle the number of the most accurate rating in each case.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	Never or almost never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally True	Often true	Usually true	Always true almost true	true always
1. Self-reliant .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. Yielding .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. Helpful .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. Defends own beliefs .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. Cheerful .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. Moody .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7. Independent .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8. Shy .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9. Conscientious .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10. Athletic .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11. Affectionate .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12. Theatrical .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13. Assertive .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14. Flatterable .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15. Happy .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16. Strong personality .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
17. Loyal .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
18. Unpredictable .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
19. Forceful .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
20. Feminine .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
21. Reliable .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
22. Analytical .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
23. Sympathetic .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
24. Jealous .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
25. Has leadership abilities .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
26. Sensitive to the needs of others ..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
27. Truthful.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
28. Willing to take risks.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
29. Understanding.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
30. Secretive .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Never or almost never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally True	Often true	Usually true	Always true almost always true
31. Makes decisions easily .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Compassionate .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. Sincere .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. Self-sufficient.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. Eager to soothe hurt feelings .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Conceited.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. Dominant .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. Soft spoken .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. Likable .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. Masculine .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. Warm .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. Solemn.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. Willing to take a stand .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. Tender.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. Friendly .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. Aggressive.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. Gullible.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. Inefficient .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. Acts as a leader .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. Childlike .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. Adaptable .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. Individualistic .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53. Does not use harsh language .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54. Unsystematic .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55. Competitive .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56. Loves children.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57. Tactful.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58. Ambitious .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59. Gentle .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60. Conventional .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C  
Personal Data Survey

## PERSONAL DATA

Directions: Please answer all questions as honestly as you can. All answers will be kept completely confidential.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Present educational level: \_\_\_\_\_

Educational level you hope to attain: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Full time \_\_\_\_\_ Part time \_\_\_\_\_

Gross Income: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (hourly)

or

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ (monthly)

or

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ (yearly)

Ethnic background: \_\_\_\_\_ Afro-American \_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_ Oriental \_\_\_\_\_ Native American  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other; please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

In what kind of area do you live: \_\_\_\_\_ rural \_\_\_\_\_ suburban  
 \_\_\_\_\_ urban \_\_\_\_\_ other; explain \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have children? \_\_\_\_\_ yes, \_\_\_\_\_ no. If so, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you:

- \_\_\_\_\_ married and have a monogamous commitment with your partner  
 \_\_\_\_\_ married and have a non-monogamous commitment with your partner  
 \_\_\_\_\_ intimately living with one person in a monogamous commitment  
 \_\_\_\_\_ intimately living with one person in a non-monogamous commitment  
 \_\_\_\_\_ not living with, but intimately involved with one person  
 \_\_\_\_\_ not living with, but intimately involved with more than one person  
 \_\_\_\_\_ intimately living with more than one person  
 \_\_\_\_\_ single and presently uninvolved or unattached  
 \_\_\_\_\_ other; please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

In your sexual orientation, do you see yourself as:

- preferring sexual relations only with members of the opposite sex
- preferring sexual relations only with members of the opposite sex,  
but have had sexual experiences with member of the same sex
- preferring sexual relations with member of opposite sex, but open  
to having sexual experiences with member of same sex
- open to having sexual relations with members of either sex and having  
no preference for one sex over the other
- preferring sexual relations with member of same sex, but open to  
having sexual experiences with member of opposite sex
- preferring sexual relations only with members of same sex, but have  
had sexual experiences with opposite sex
- preferring sexual relations only with members of same sex
- other; please explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

On the following continuum, do you consider yourself to be:

- strongly feminist
- somewhat feminist
- moderate
- somewhat traditional
- strongly traditional
- other; please explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Thanks for answering these questions so honestly. Now, fold up the questionnaires, place them in the envelope and mail them. Then you're finished: It's important that these be mailed within twenty-four hours, but even if you're late please mail them.

Thanks again for your time. If you have comments, reactions or feedback you want to share, feel free to use the back of this page.

Appendix D

BSRI Items Listed by Scale

The Masculine, Feminine, and Neutral Items on BSRI

<u>Masculine</u>	<u>Feminine</u>	<u>Neutral</u>
49. Acts as a leader	11. Affectionate	51. Adaptable
46. Aggressive	5. Cheerful	36. Conceited
58. Ambitious	50. Childlike	9. Conscientious
22. Analytical	32. Compassionate	60. Conventional
13. Assertive	53. Does not use harsh language	45. Friendly
10. Athletic	35. Eager to soothe hurt feelings	15. Happy
55. Competitive		3. Helpful
4. Defends own beliefs	20. Feminine	48. Inefficient
37. Dominant	14. Flatterable	24. Jealous
19. Forceful	59. Gentle	39. Likable
25. Has leadership abilities	47. Gullible	6. Moody
7. Independent	56. Loves children	21. Reliable
52. Individualistic	17. Loyal	30. Secretive
31. Makes decisions easily	26. Sensitive to the needs of others	33. Sincere
40. Masculine	8. Shy	42. Solemn
1. Self-reliant	38. Soft spoken	57. Tactful
34. Self-sufficient	23. Sympathetic	12. Theatrical
16. Strong personality	44. Tender	27. Truthful
43. Willing to take a stand	29. Understanding	18. Unpredictable
28. Willing to take risks	41. Warm	54. Unsystematic
	2. Yielding	