The relationship between Eysenck's personality dimensions and Bem's masculinity and femininity scales revisited

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Abstract

A sample of 86 male and 93 female students in Wales completed the short form Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire together with the Bem Sex Role Inventory. The data indicate that high scores on the scale of masculinity are associated with high extraversion and low neuroticism, but unrelated to either psychoticism or the lie scale, while high scores on the scale of femininity are associated with low psychoticism, high neuroticism and high lie scale scores, but unrelated to extraversion. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In the development of the Bem Sex Role Inventory, Bem (1981) argues that the personal qualities which society generally recognises as characterising masculinity and femininity may be present in varying degrees in both men and women. Moreover, according to Bem, masculinity and femininity are orthogonal constructs in the sense that an individual's position on one construct cannot predict the position on the other construct. These constructs distinguish between the sexes, however, in the sense that men record higher mean scores on the dimension of masculinity, while women record higher mean scores on the dimension of femininity.

In the development of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, Eysenck and Eysenck (1975) argue that individual differences in personality may be most adequately and economically summarised in terms of three dimensions which are labelled as extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. According to Eysenck these three constructs are also orthogonal. At the same time these constructs distinguish between the sexes, in the sense that men record higher mean scores on the dimension

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of extraversion and on the dimension of psychoticism, while women record higher mean scores on the dimension of neuroticism.

The attempt to integrate these two theories regarding gender orientation and personality generates two conflicting hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that masculinity and femininity should relate to Eysenck's dimensional model of personality in opposite ways. According to this hypothesis, high scores of masculinity should be associated with high extraversion, high psychoticism and low neuroticism, while high scores of femininity should be associated with low extraversion, low psychoticism and high neuroticism, reflecting the personality difference generally recorded by men and women. The second hypothesis, however, takes more seriously the contention that masculinity and femininity are orthogonal factors. According to this hypothesis, masculinity and femininity should be related to Eysenck's dimensional model of personality in a more complex way than if masculinity and femininity were the opposite poles of the same continuum. Present theory does not, however, lead to clear predictions as to how the relationship between personality and masculinity and the relationship between personality and femininity may differ.

Previous empirical studies have tended to support the view that Bem's scales of masculinity and femininity are related in different ways to Eysenck's dimensions of personality. There remains, however, a lack of consensus regarding the precise nature of this difference. Three previous studies, conducted among 70 male and 70 female British volunteers by Williams (1982), among 71 male and 146 female American undergraduates by Kimlicka et al. (1988) and among 135 male and 276 female American college students by Nagoshi et al. (1993) present the correlations for males and females separately. All three studies agree that masculinity is positively correlated with extraversion and unrelated to psychoticism among both males and females. A positive correlation is found between masculinity and lie scale scores among males by Watson (1982). A negative correlation is found between masculinity and neuroticism among females by Kimlicka et al. (1988) and among both males and females by Nagoshi et al. (1993). All three studies agree that femininity is unrelated to extraversion and lie scale scores among males. In two studies there is a significant negative correlation between femininity and psychoticism among males, while in one there is a significant positive correlation between femininity and neuroticism among males. There is no consensus among the three studies regarding the relationship between femininity and personality among females.

Against this back ground the present study was designed to revisit the relationship between Bem's masculinity and femininity scales in relationship to Eysenck's dimensional model of personality.

2. Method

A sample of 86 male and 93 female undergraduate students attending introductory courses in the psychology of religion in Wales completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1981), together with the short form Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQR-S) (Eysenck et al., 1985). Three-fifths (58%) of the subjects were in their twenties, with 28% under the age of twenty and 14% over the age of twenty-nine. The data were analysed by the SPSS statistical package, using the reliability, frequency and partial correlation routines (SPSS Inc., 1988).