

## Gender Identity and the Overexcitability Profiles of Gifted College Students

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Traditional sex-based categories are giving way to more expanded notions of gender among young men and women today. Along with feminine and masculine personalities, some individuals combine both for a more androgynous persona, whereas others exhibit few distinctly feminine or masculine characteristics. In a study of 118 gifted college students, the Bem Sex-Role Inventory was used to assess gender identity; personality characteristics were measured with the Overexcitability Questionnaire–Two. Results indicate a stronger relationship between gender identity (masculinity or femininity) and overexcitability (OE) than between sex (female or male) and OE. Males and females were distributed in the gender categories as follows: men tended to be masculine or undifferentiated, whereas women were feminine or androgynous. Androgynous males and females had higher OE scores. Implications for Dabrowski's theory and gifted education are discussed.

Keywords: androgyny, Dabrowski's theory, femininity, gender identity, gifted education, masculinity, overexcitability, personality development

Nearly a century ago educator, researcher, and feminist Leta Stetter Hollingworth identified some of the institutional barriers to women's achievement. In an article in the *American Journal of Sociology*, Hollingworth (1916) showed how social institutions conspire to control and limit a woman's role in society to that of motherhood. The major source of gender difference, she asserted, can be found in the opportunity structure in society rather than in sex category. In a similar vein, Barbara Risman (1998) more recently argued that men and women act differently because of the positions they occupy in society—in their families, their work, and the institutional settings of their lives. She used social interactional and institutional factors, along with individual personality factors, to explain the parenting behavior of men and women.

Research on gender relations in the workplace reveals that when women have the same opportunities as men—for example, interactions with similar others, available mentors, and equal access to promotions—they behave similarly (Kanter, 1977). In an attempt to observe the effects of respondent's sex and social role on behavior in the family setting, Risman asked the question: Can men mother (i.e., care for their children)? The answer, based on her research,

was clearly and unequivocally, yes, men *can* nurture their children. Respondents' sex and parenting roles affected their responsibilities for housework and parent-child intimacy and affection. Single fathers were similar in most ways to single mothers on these ostensible "mothering" measures, and both differed from married fathers and mothers.

### GENDER AND PERSONALITY

The relationship between gender identity and personality traits has been the topic of interest and investigation for years. Brim (1960) analyzed the characteristics parents encourage in their 5- to 6-year-olds and reported that curiosity, ambition, and competitiveness were promoted in boys, whereas kindness, friendliness, and obedience were fostered in girls. Later, these two distinct sets of personality characteristics were labeled *instrumental* and *expressive* and attributed to men and women, respectively (Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Early psychological research assumed masculinity and femininity to be core to personality, and gender identity disorder was assigned to those who deviated from societal norms for sex-typed behavior (Bem, 1993).

In the popular press, John Gray (1992) proclaimed that men and women are from two different planets where they hold different values and speak different languages. His

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Received 8 June 2007; accepted 11 April 2008.

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depiction of inherent personality differences reflects the biological, or sociobiological, view that maleness and femaleness are “natural” sex differences. This position ignores the importance of social forces that shape individuals’ attitudes and behavior. Beyond understanding that differential socialization creates gendered personalities, the recognition that our behavior is influenced by social roles, interactional scripts, and contextual factors extends our views of gender and personality in today’s society (Risman, 1998).

It is common in the academic world to distinguish the concepts of *sex* and *gender* as follows: sex is used to represent the biologically based designation of male and female and gender indicates the performance of activities to confirm one’s sex category (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Some in the social sciences argue that gender is structural, a feature of society designed to create inequality and the subordination of women (Lorber, 1994). Others see gender as both personal and cultural, where external gender constraints affect individual selves (Risman, 1998). Social psychologists Stets and Burke have said that “gender identity involves all the meanings that are applied to oneself on the basis of one’s gender identification” (2000, p. 998) and that self-identity motivates gender-related behavior.

### MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

Male and female, masculine and feminine, generally have been seen as representing opposing tendencies (Bem, 1993; Lips, 2005) and were first measured as opposite ends of a continuum (Lips; Terman & Miles, 1936). However, when sex and gender are distinguished, it becomes clear that people do not fit neatly into masculine and feminine categories. Theorists such as Bem (1974, 1981, 1993) challenged the conceptualization of masculinity and femininity as inherent aspects of personality and argued that they are culturally defined prescriptions for how men and women should act. This view is supported in research based on the inventory she developed called the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1981).

The BSRI is composed of two independent scales: one indicating highly masculine-identified individuals and one indicating highly feminine-identified individuals. A person may score high on one or the other, high on both, or low on both. Scores on the two scales, masculinity and femininity, are used to create four distinct gender categories: masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated. Androgyny is the concept Bem used to indicate a merging of masculine and feminine characteristics within an individual. When men or women score high on both instrumental and expressive dimensions, they are androgynous, and when low on both, they are undifferentiated.

Those classified in either masculine or feminine categories are highly attuned to sex-appropriate, culturally determined behaviors and use these definitions to describe themselves (Bem, 1981). Those classified as androgynous

represent an integration of masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1974). Androgyny is considered a healthy personality trait, beneficial for psychological development and high levels of psychological functioning (Bem; Pipher, 1994; Waterman & Whitbourne, 1982). Androgynous individuals are flexible in social situations because they use situational appropriateness rather than sex-based cultural expectations as the basis of their behavior.

The group defined as undifferentiated are those who have self-concepts that do not recognize or accept cultural definitions of sex-appropriate behavior. They have limited self-identification with either masculine or feminine characteristics (Waterman & Whitbourne, 1982) and are viewed as less adaptable, having fewer options for gender expression (Bem, 1981; Holt & Ellis, 1998). These individuals may see themselves as existing outside the boundaries of culturally defined sex-appropriate behaviors, or they may identify with the gender-neutral or social desirability BSRI items.

In a study investigating the sex-role orientation of gifted adolescents, more females than males were classified as androgynous or feminine, whereas more males than females were in the undifferentiated or masculine categories (Wells, Peltier, & Glickauf-Hughes, 1982). A later study of gifted and talented high-school seniors found that scores on the BSRI indicated a large number of male as well as female students endorsed androgynous sex-role characteristics (Howard-Hamilton & Franks, 1995). Using interviews to investigate the sex-role identity of 13 gifted adolescent boys in high school and college, Wilcove (1998) found evidence of psychological androgyny in nearly all subjects.

In her review of the literature on gifted females, Silverman (1986) found compelling evidence that sex-role stereotyping limits the aptitude of gifted girls. As a result, their creativity, high grades, and achievement orientation are lost in exchange for social acceptance. This is most obvious during adolescence, although the pattern persists into adulthood. In comparison to most other girls, “Gifted girls have more masculine interests . . . and they are often tormented by both boys and girls if they choose to pursue those interests” (p. 69). The less the role differentiation between the sexes, the more likely is the blending of masculine and feminine traits that could benefit both.

### THE CONCEPT OF OVEREXCITABILITY

Our interest in personality focuses on the concept of overexcitability (OE) from Dabrowski’s theory of positive disintegration. In the theory, three factors play a role in higher-level psychological functioning—developmental potential, the social environment, and an autonomous dynamism known as *third factor*, which represents “choice and decision in setting and following internal standards” (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, p. 44). Overexcitability, “a property of the central nervous system,” is the primary component of developmental potential (Mendaglio, 2008, p. 24).

Overexcitability indicates increased frequency, intensity, and duration of response in one or more of the following areas: emotional, intellectual, imaginal, sensual, and psychomotor (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 2006). Briefly, indicants are as follows:

1. A person with emotional OE has deep-felt and complex emotions and can identify with the feelings of others.
2. A person with intellectual OE has an inquiring mind and is introspective, analytical, and not easily distracted.
3. A person with imaginal OE is creative and has elaborate daydreams and fantasies.
4. A person with sensual OE has heightened sensory awareness and reactions.
5. A person with psychomotor OE has a surplus of energy, is highly active and enthusiastic, and may be impulsive and competitive.

For more forms and expressions of OE, see table 1 in Piechowski (2006) or table 1.1 in Silverman (1993).

When all forms of OE are active, the potential for individual development is greatest. However, emotional, intellectual, and imaginal OEs are essential to higher-level development. Emotional OE is an especially strong force for empowering the development process. On the other hand, when sensual and psychomotor OEs are present alone, development is somewhat limited (Dabrowski, 1972; Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977).

### MALE–FEMALE DIFFERENCES IN OVEREXCITABILITY

Studies exploring sex differences in OE have found higher emotional scores for females, in most cases, and higher intellectual and psychomotor scores for males. In a study of 42 graduate students, Lysy and Piechowski (1983) reported that males had higher psychomotor OE scores than females. Research combining graduate students and gifted adults ( $n = 83$ ) found that females scored higher in emotional OE, whereas males were higher in intellectual OE (Miller, Silverman, & Falk, 1994). Ackerman's study (1997a)

analyzing the combined data from 13 prior investigations found that females had higher emotional and imaginal OE scores than males.

Investigating the gender differences of 562 college students, Bouchet and Falk (2001) reported gender differences in all areas of OE: males scored higher on intellectual, psychomotor, and imaginal OE, whereas females were higher on emotional and sensual OE. In a study of OEs in gifted children (ages 5–15) and their parents ( $n = 143$ ), Tieso (2007) found that intellectual and emotional OE discriminated among males and females. She reported that adult males had the highest mean intellectual OE scores, whereas male students had higher scores than female students. Similarly, adult females had the highest emotional OE scores. Two other studies reported no male–female differences in OE (Falk, Manzanero, & Miller, 1997; Piechowski & Miller, 1995).

Differences in OE have been found between gifted and nongifted groups as well. Research comparing a sample of 41 gifted adults to 42 graduate students found that the gifted group scored higher overall on OE (Miller et al., 1994). Ackerman (1997b) found that psychomotor, intellectual, and emotional OEs differentiated between gifted and nongifted high-school students, suggesting that OE may be used to identify giftedness in the school setting. Using teacher report of OE, Bouchard (2004) also found that intellectual and psychomotor scores discriminated between 96 gifted and 75 nonidentified students; however, in her study, low rather than high psychomotor scores identified gifted elementary-school students.

A literature search revealed an absence of studies examining the relationship between the Bem gender categories (masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated) and OE. One can hypothesize that persons categorized as androgynous will have higher OE scores and, therefore, possess greater potential for emotional development. This is based on the belief that a balance of feminine and masculine qualities affords a psychological advantage, including benefits for mental health and personality development (Bem, 1974; Pipher, 1994; Waterman & Whitbourne, 1982).

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To examine the relationship between sex, gender, and overexcitability, the current study addresses the following questions:

1. Is the relationship between gender (masculinity and femininity) and OE (emotional, intellectual, imaginal, sensual, and psychomotor) stronger than the relationship between sex (male and female) and OE?
2. How are gifted college students distributed in the gender categories—feminine, masculine, androgynous, and undifferentiated?
3. Do the OE profiles differ for male and female students?
4. Do the OE profiles differ in the gender categories?

TABLE 1

Correlations Between OE and Sex, Masculinity, and Femininity

Overexcitability	Sex	Masculinity	Femininity
Psychomotor	0.04	0.38**	0.29**
Sensual	0.22*	−0.02	0.49**
Imaginational	0.09	0.04	0.34**
Intellectual	−0.22**	0.49**	0.09
Emotional	0.48**	−0.05	0.74**

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

## METHOD

### Subjects

From a study of 562 students at a large, mid-Western research university, a sample of 118 (59 males and 59 females) students was selected from the 141 who reported having been in a gifted program at some time in their educational career. At this institution, 25% of entering freshman in 2007 scored 24 or higher on the ACT college entrance exam.

Fifty-nine men had no missing values on research instruments; 59 women were randomly sampled from 80 with no missing values on instruments used. Equal numbers of males and females are required for gender category assignment (Bem, 1981).

Students in Introduction to Sociology courses signed a human subjects' consent form and voluntarily completed a questionnaire that included the shortened version of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory, the Overexcitability Questionnaire–Two (OEQ–II), and several demographic items. The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 38 (median = 19). Approximately 75% (75.2) self-identified as White; 17.1% as African American; and 7.8% as Asian American, Hispanic, or other races. More than half (54.2%) were freshman; 91.5% were full-time students.

### Measures

The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1981) consists of personality characteristics rated by respondents on a 7-point scale from 1 (*Never or almost never true*) to 7 (*Always or almost always true*). The short form of the inventory has 30 items: 10 are stereotypically masculine (e.g., independent, forceful), 10 are stereotypically feminine (e.g., affectionate, gentle), and 10 are gender-neutral items used as fillers (e.g., reliable, truthful). Scores are summed on the gender-stereotyped items to obtain a masculinity and femininity score for each respondent. Filler items are not used in scoring. Test–retest reliabilities for the masculinity and femininity scores are .91 and .85, respectively. Research studies have established that the BSRI discriminates between those persons “who restrict their behavior in accordance with sex stereotypes and those who do not” (Bem, 1981, p. 29).

For analysis, subjects were assigned to one of four distinct gender categories: masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated. Categories are formed by comparison of respondent's femininity and masculinity score with the sample median for these scales. For research purposes, the use of sample specific medians is recommended (Bem, 1981).

Respondents whose masculinity scores are higher than the median and whose femininity scores are lower than the median are classified as masculine. Likewise, those whose femininity scores are higher than the median and whose masculinity scores are lower than the median are classified

as feminine. Those with both masculinity and femininity scores above the medians of those categories are designated androgynous; those with masculinity and femininity scores below the medians are designated as undifferentiated.

The OEQ-II is a 50-item, self-rating questionnaire to measure OE (Bouchet & Falk, 2001; Falk, Lind, Miller, Piechowski, & Silverman, 1999). Ten items that assess each of the five OEs (emotional, intellectual, imaginal, sensual, and psychomotor) are randomly distributed throughout the instrument. Respondents are asked to rate items on a scale of 1 (*Not at all like me*) to 5 (*Very much like me*). Examples of items include “I worry a lot,” “Theories get my mind going,” and “I'm a competitive person.” Scores are summed and averaged for each OE. Internal reliability for OEs range from Cronbach's alpha = .85 for imaginal OE to .98 for sensual and intellectual OE. Content validity was established by principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation showing simple structure and item loadings all above .50 (Falk et al., 1999).

Subjects identified themselves as male or female on the questionnaire. Responses were coded 1 “Male” and 2 “Female.”

## RESULTS

### Sex, Gender, and OE

To determine whether the relationship between gender and OE is stronger than the relationship between sex and OE, Pearson's product moment correlations between gender (masculinity and femininity scores) and OE were compared to correlations between sex and OE. Although the variable sex is dichotomous (having only two values; i.e., 1 male and 2 female), it is perfectly acceptable to treat it as interval-level data in quantitative analysis (Schutt, 2006). Results are presented separately for each OE (see Table 1).

#### *Psychomotor*

Correlations for masculinity and psychomotor OE ( $r = .38$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and for femininity and psychomotor OE ( $r = .29$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were both significant. There was no correlation between sex and psychomotor OE ( $r = .04$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

#### *Sensual*

The correlation between femininity and sensual OE was .49 ( $p < .01$ ) and between sex and sensual OE was .22 ( $p < .05$ ), showing that those whose gender identity is feminine and whose sex is female have higher sensual OE. Although both are significant, the correlation between femininity and sensual OE is substantially stronger. There was no significant correlation for masculinity and sensual OE ( $r = -.02$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

*Imaginational*

There was a significant correlation between femininity and imaginational OE ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ), indicating that those with feminine traits scored higher on imaginational OE. There was no significant correlation for masculinity and imaginational OE ( $r = .04, p > .05$ ) or for sex and imaginational OE ( $r = .09, p > .05$ ).

*Intellectual*

The correlation for masculinity and intellectual OE ( $r = .49, p < .01$ ) was higher than the correlation for sex and intellectual OE ( $r = -.22, p < .01$ ), though both were significant. Femininity was not correlated with intellectual OE ( $r = .09, p > .05$ ).

*Emotional*

The correlation for femininity and emotional OE was .74 ( $p < .01$ ) and the correlation for sex and emotional OE was .48 ( $p < .01$ ). Although both were significant, the correlation for femininity and emotional OE was substantially higher. Masculinity was not correlated with emotional OE ( $r = -.05, p > .05$ ).

**Distribution of Students in Gender Categories**

Frequencies were examined to determine how students were distributed in the four gender categories. The distribution was as follows: 34 (28.8%) were classified as androgynous, 31 (26.3%) were undifferentiated, 28 (23.7%) were in the masculine category (see Figure 1), and 25 (21.2%) were in the feminine category.

Cross-tabulation of respondent's sex by gender category revealed a significant association (chi-square = 38.67,  $p < .01$ ). Females tended to be androgynous or feminine (78%), whereas males tended to be masculine or undifferentiated (78%; see Table 2).

**Analysis of Group Differences**

To analyze group differences in overexcitabilities, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed for

TABLE 2  
Crosstabulation of Sex by Gender Category

	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Gender			
Masculine			
Count	22	6	28
% within Sex	37.3%	10.2%	23.7%
Feminine			
Count	3	22	25
% within Sex	5.1%	37.3%	21.2%
Androgynous			
Count	10	24	34
% within Sex	16.9%	40.7%	28.8%
Undifferentiated			
Count	24	7	31
% within Sex	40.7%	11.9%	26.3%
Total			
Count	59	59	118
% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

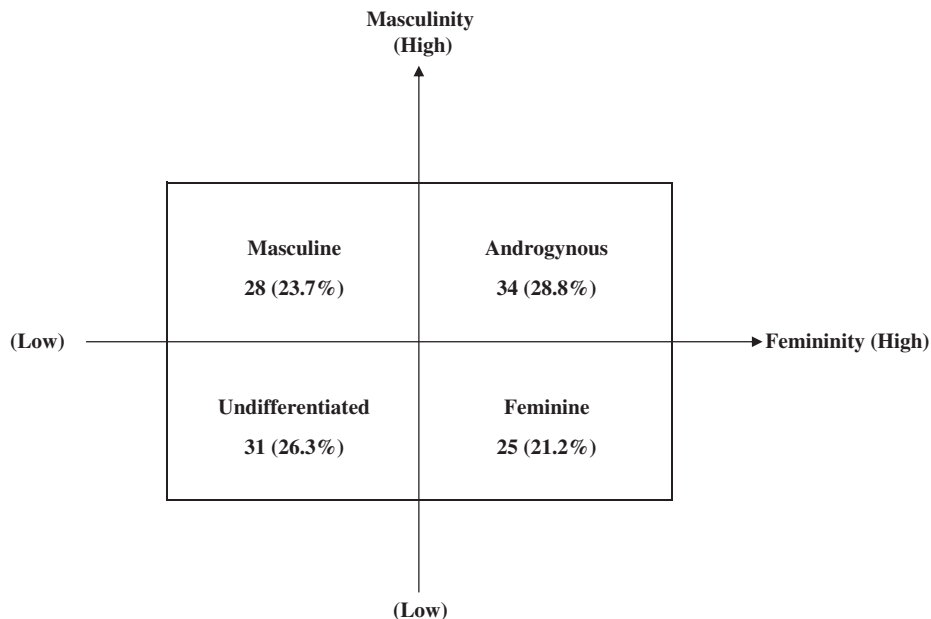


FIGURE 1 Distribution of students in gender categories.

OE and sex (male or female) and OE and gender (masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated). This is a recommended procedure when multiple dependent variables might be correlated. First, an overall test is conducted to determine the level of significance, controlling for the number of dependent variables. Next, individual OE differences for sex or gender category are examined.

### OE Profiles for Sex Categories

A MANOVA to determine whether OE profiles differed by sex found an overall difference between males and females ( $\Lambda = .649$ ,  $F = 12.1$ ,  $df = 5, 112$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Stepdown  $F$  tests indicated which OE means were significantly different for the group variable sex. Males scored higher on intellectual OE (3.85 vs. 3.52), whereas females scored higher on emotional (4.21 vs. 3.42) and sensual OE (3.58 vs. 3.18).

### OE Profiles for Gender Categories

A MANOVA for OE means by gender showed significant differences in OE for gender category ( $\Lambda = .39$ ,  $F = 8.09$ ,  $df = 15, 304$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Stepdown  $F$  tests revealed the following patterns (see Figure 2): For psychomotor OE, androgynous scores ( $M = 4.01$ ) were higher than those of the other categories—masculine ( $M = 3.58$ ), feminine ( $M = 3.33$ ), and undifferentiated ( $M = 2.98$ ). The masculine score was also higher than the undifferentiated. For sensual OE, androgynous ( $M = 3.73$ ) and feminine ( $M = 3.68$ ) scores were higher than those for masculine ( $M = 2.82$ ) but not significantly different from undifferentiated ( $M = 3.26$ ). Likewise, the undifferentiated mean was not statistically different from the masculine mean.

The imaginational OE pattern indicated no significant difference between gender category means—androgynous

( $M = 3.31$ ), masculine ( $M = 2.80$ ), feminine ( $M = 3.15$ ), and undifferentiated ( $M = 2.77$ ). The intellectual OE pattern showed the following: androgynous ( $M = 3.92$ ) and masculine ( $M = 3.85$ ) scores were higher than the undifferentiated category ( $M = 3.48$ ). Feminine category ( $M = 3.43$ ) was lower than the androgynous score but not significantly different from the masculine or undifferentiated scores. Finally, the emotional OE profile indicated that feminine ( $M = 4.37$ ) and androgynous ( $M = 4.23$ ) scores were significantly higher than those for masculine ( $M = 3.36$ ) and undifferentiated ( $M = 3.32$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Findings indicate that correlations between gender (masculinity or femininity) and OE are stronger than correlations between sex and OE. There are significant, but moderate, correlations between either masculinity or femininity and psychomotor, sensual, imaginational, and intellectual OEs—a strong correlation exists between femininity and emotional OE. Both masculinity and femininity are correlated with psychomotor OE. Although significant relationships exist between sex and intellectual OE (males scored higher), emotional OE (females scored higher), and sensual OE (females scored higher), the absolute value is considerably lower than for correlations of the gender scales with OE. One's gender identity clearly is a better indicator of personality, as assessed by OE, than one's classification as male or female.

Reflecting traditional gender roles, those with self-identified feminine personality characteristics were more emotional and sensual; those with masculine characteristics were more intellectual. This finding may reflect areas in

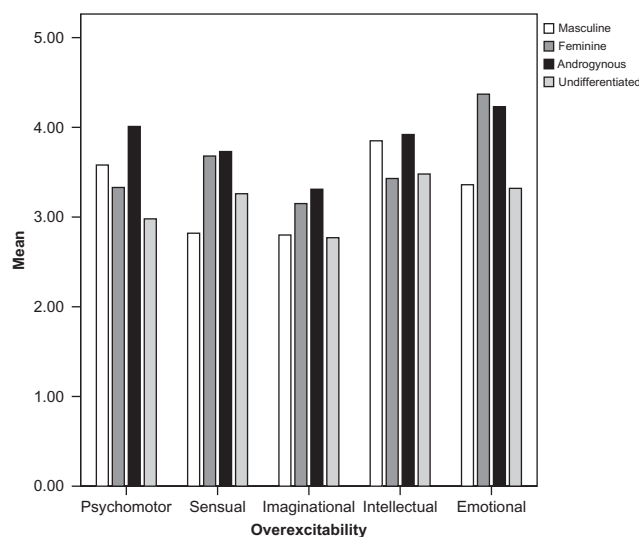


FIGURE 2 Overexcitability profile for gender categories.

which personality styles are more delineated and more closely mirror social norms for men and women.

The distribution of students in the gender categories indicates that females are more likely to be androgynous or feminine, whereas males are more likely to be masculine or undifferentiated. This is consistent with the earlier findings of Wells et al. (1982) with gifted adolescents. One study of gifted high-school students concluded that females were more contemporary in their attitudes toward sex roles and career plans than males (Dunnell & Bakken, 1991). We can speculate that the pursuit of success in the workplace has resulted in many women adding masculine qualities to their identity. This merging of feminine and masculine traits may contribute to the number of women who are androgynous. On the other hand, over 20% of the females in our study of gifted college students had a very traditional feminine identity. Slightly more males identified themselves by stereotypically masculine traits (24%). When this was not the case, men tended to identify with neither masculine nor feminine norms.

Limitations to the study include the cross-sectional nature of the data, the reliance on information from undergraduate students, and the conception and measurement of gender differences. Cross-sectional data do not allow a statement of directionality with regard to findings. Therefore, even though we have assumed that OE profiles reflect gender-role identity, the reverse cannot be ruled out. Further, findings reflect the views of college students and may not generalize to younger students or other populations. Finally, though the Bem Sex-Role Inventory is a widely used instrument to assess perceptions of gender roles, it is composed of traditionally rated items and thus may not reflect contemporary views of gender (Konrad & Harris, 2002). Median values for femininity and masculinity will fluctuate across samples; as a result, the placement of individuals into gender categories is sample specific.

### Implications for Dabrowski's Theory

Comparing OE profiles for the gender categories, we find that androgynous college students have higher OE overall. In absolute terms, they have the highest mean value in psychomotor, sensual, imaginal, and intellectual OE and the second highest mean in emotional OE. Following the theoretical position that OE is a component of developmental potential, we tentatively infer that androgynous persons have strong potential for advanced personality development. Research relating OE and levels of emotional development has shown that OE, especially emotional, intellectual, and imaginal, is positively related to levels of personality development (Lysy & Piechowski, 1983; Miller et al., 1994). Future research that examines the relationship between androgyny and OE in other groups is needed to confirm this supposition. The relationship between androgyny and level of emotional development should be investigated as well.

Another pattern discovered in the OE profiles is that androgynous- and feminine-classified students scored higher on sensual and emotional OE, whereas those classified as undifferentiated and masculine were higher on intellectual and psychomotor OE. In these areas, personality characteristics would appear to reflect traditional sex roles. OE profiles showed no differences between men and women on imaginal OE in this study.

### Implications for Gifted Education

Some psychologists have criticized the concept of androgyny because it is based on traditional sex-based characteristics that vary by age, race, economic status, and historical period (Gill, Stockard, Johnson, & Williams, 1987; Konrad & Harris, 2002; Lips, 2005). In line with Hollingworth's (1916) and Risman's (1998) positions, any imputed gender differences may also "reflect women's lack of opportunity in a male-dominated society" (Risman, p. 20). Although options for women have increased in recent years and many women have filled jobs previously held exclusively by men, their position in society is still subordinate to men's in many areas, especially those with important decision-making responsibilities (Ridgeway, 2001).

Results of gender research have shown that behavior is predicted by gender-role socialization to a lesser extent and to a greater extent by structural contingencies, such as social role demands. Risman's (1998) findings support the position that structural constraints impact individuals' selves and at the same time confirm the continuing influence of gender-role socialization on behavior. When social roles are shared equally, gender roles may be less sex defined, and personality traits may be valued more for their appropriateness in the situation than for their affiliation with maleness. It follows that if the role demands of teachers and parents are less sex biased, boys and girls will be encouraged to respond without reliance on traditional gender norms but rather on the basis of their own interests, abilities, and unique personality.

Although androgyny may not be the ideal it was once thought to be, flexibility of gender specifications will create more open, adaptable, and accommodating personalities appropriate for an ever-changing and global society. The efforts of teachers to minimize gender stereotypes, according to Lips (2005, p. 52), "may ultimately help to reduce the power imbalance between women and men and foster an era of greater equality."

The analysis presented here allows us to see the value of so-called feminine attributes in their association with sensual and emotional OE and the value of traditionally defined masculine attributes that are associated with higher intellectual and psychomotor OE. This is true for both women and men. Although this study infers that females have incorporated traditional male attributes to a greater extent than

males have identified with feminine attributes, the goal for gifted educators should be to support both male and female traits within each student.

Teachers can help children by providing a nonstereotyped environment and incorporating models of men and women in a variety of roles and positions in society. This could include, for example, fathers who are nurturing, affectionate, and involved in the lives of their children and mothers who are self-sufficient and assertive in their relationships with others. Children should be allowed to take the lead in acquiring their own gender identity, and those in the field of gifted education particularly should be sensitive to the individualized notion of development that includes one's gender identity.

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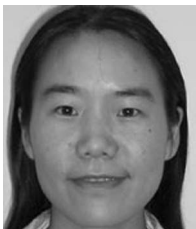
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