

Societal Perceptions of New and Traditional Masculine Men's Gender Egalitarian Views

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PSB3E-BT15: Bachelor Thesis

Group 15

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June 30, 2024

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Abstract

Perceptions of masculinities and gender equality are changing. Next to traditional masculinity, which among other things describes men as stoic and insisting upon one's own views, there is a new masculinity on the rise where men can be sensitive and value the opinions of others. Where traditional masculinity can be linked to men's domination over women, new masculinity can be linked to gender equality. This shift has implications for the workplace, where gender quotas aim to facilitate women's access to leadership positions. This study aims to explore how different masculinities are perceived in the context of supporting gender equality. We hypothesized that women would perceive a new masculine man to have more gender egalitarian views than a traditional masculine man and a control group was tested. We conducted an experimental study with a between-subjects design in which we surveyed women from the UK via an online questionnaire ($N=316$, $M_{age} = 42.1$, $SD_{age} = 13.0$). Results showed that women expect a man to support a gender quota if he is described as new masculine. We conclude that women perceive new masculine men to have more gender egalitarian views than traditional masculine men and a control condition. These findings highlight the evolving perceptions of masculinities and their potential role in advancing gender equality in professional environments. Limitations and implications are discussed, providing insights for future research and policy development.

Keywords: masculinity, gender equality, societal perceptions

Societal Perceptions of New and Traditional Masculine Men's Gender Egalitarian Views

Gender equality in the workplace is an important issue. Women generally earn less than men. According to the European Parliament (2020), working women earn 12.7% less per hour than men do in the EU. In the Netherlands, this number is 13.5%. Adjusted for factors like age, education and experience, the gender pay gap in the private sector is 6%, and for the public sector 3% (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). Important to keep in mind when looking at the adjusted gender pay gap is that women are less likely to hold a leadership position (European Commission, 2021). In 2023, a milestone was reached in this regard. Of the 500 companies that were listed in Forbes' Fortune 500 list, only 53 (10.6%) had a female CEO (Geffner, 2023). It is the highest rate that female leaders could achieve. This rate might be low, but it is the highest it has ever been. Nevertheless, this is still not an equal distribution.

In order to aid the process of becoming a more gender equal society, the Netherlands have passed a bill that urges companies to implement a gender quota (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2021). This entails that if a man and a woman are equally qualified for a job, the woman will be favored in the hiring process. In higher positions, it can mean a certain number of seats on a board are reserved for women (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2024). In the UK, this has led to women holding 40.2% of FTSE 350 board positions (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2023). This is a step forward to closing the gender pay gap. Many women are striving for greater workplace credibility, however they require the support of men for meaningful change to occur (Hideg & Krstic, 2021). If gender quotas are used to achieve this, it would be considered a top-down change, as people higher up in the hierarchy implement this quota. Because men are usually the ones on top in this hierarchy, as mentioned above, their support would help this top-down change.

From what kind of men should women expect to receive help regarding achieving

gender equality? A possible key-factor is masculinity. The concept of masculinity is multifaceted, encompassing various types that reflect differing attributes and behaviors (Connell, 1995). Traditional masculinity norms that men should be stoic, insistent on their own views, competitive and independent are changing (Messner, 1993). A new type of masculinity is on the rise, where men are sensitive, value the opinions of others, are supportive, and collaborative (Kaplan et al., 2016). However, this new masculinity is not endorsed by everyone. Public figures like Andrew Tate and Jordan Peterson, who are supporters of traditional masculinity ideology (TMI), are gaining popularity among young men (Nesbitt-Larking, 2022; Sayogie et al., 2023). They preach that men should be traditionally masculine. In this, they also have their ideas about how women should fit into this traditionally masculine world. According to Wade and Brittan-Powell (2001), men that endorse TMI, generally do not endorse gender equality. All the while, feminist movements have been fighting for equality between men and women (Hewitt & Valk, 2021). Feminism generally preaches that family responsibilities should be shared, and not necessarily divided in the traditional way (Baxter, 1997). For example, women should be able to work in positions of power, and men should be able to be stay-at-home dads if they so desire. Most importantly, feminism is about gender equality (Council of Europe, n.d.).

While there are several studies on traditional masculinity and supporting gender equality, studies on new masculinity on this topic are limited (Fischer & Good, 1998; McDermott et al., 2022; Sinn, 1997; Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2001). It is important to keep a broad perspective when studying masculinity, though, because not all men endorse TMI (McDermott et al., 2022). The aim of this study is to explore societal perception of changing masculinity in relation to gender equality. Similar to new masculinity, societal perceptions are often overlooked in research. We strive to find how different masculinities are perceived, so we can get a better understanding of perceptions of masculinity.

Traditional Masculinity and Gender Equality

Traditional masculinity (TM) can be defined as men asserting male status through competition, having emotional restraint and being self-reliant, being tough by being risk-taking and aggressive, avoiding femininity and having nonrelational, objectified attitudes toward sexuality (Kaplan et al., 2016). According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), masculinity is not necessarily a certain list of personality traits, but rather a practice in social context. That is to say, a man does not have to feel competitive to act competitive and thus behave in a traditional masculine way. TM is related to hegemonic masculinity, in the sense that certain traits are shared between them. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) define hegemonic masculinity as a pattern of practices that allow for the domination of men over women. In line with this is Elliot's (2015) claim that hegemonic masculinity works to maintain and legitimize the patriarchy. In this paper, it is claimed that although hegemonic masculinity is not the most common masculinity, it is the normative one. Not every man may be masculine in a hegemonic way, but they might see hegemonic masculinity as an ideal. Masculinity and gender equality are intertwined. As long as traditional masculinity, and thus the domination of men over women is seen as ideal, there is inequality (Kittay, 1999).

Elliot (2015) presents the negative impact hegemonic masculinity has on both women and men. For men, these downsides include lack of self-care, impoverished relationships and poor health. Hegemonic masculinity comes at the cost of intimacy and emotional health. For women, hegemonic masculinity means pay gaps, unequal opportunities and harmful stereotypes. In this paper, the aspects of hegemonic masculinity mentioned above are used to define TM. Worley (2021) addresses a common side-effect of traditional gender roles in the workplace, facilitated by TM: women are often expected to do "office housework". This entails that women are often expected to take notes or get coffee. This means that in the same position at work, women are expected to do more work than men, despite getting paid the

same or less than men.

Furthermore, studies show that endorsement of TM comes with rejection of gender egalitarian views (Fischer & Good, 1998; McDermott et al., 2022; Sinn, 1997; Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2001). According to a study by Valsecchi et al. (2023), men who hold more traditional masculine views are more likely to endorse ideologies that legitimize gender hierarchies, compared to men who do not hold those views. The results of these studies suggest that TM is a predictor of rejection of gender egalitarian views. Given that the trait of dominance is part of TM, this seems logical. Where there is dominance, there has to be submission, so if men are expected to be dominant, women are expected to be submissive. This can be seen in a gender hierarchy, where men dominate over women. Gender egalitarian views do not fit with this dominance expected from men. If genders are regarded as equal, men will not be able to hold a dominant position. This could be an explanation for the findings that people who endorse TMI generally do not hold gender egalitarian views (Fischer & Good, 1998; McDermott et al., 2022; Sinn, 1997; Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2001).

New Masculinity and Gender Equality

The other type of masculinity addressed in this study, is new masculinity (NM). It is defined as men being sensitive, valuing the opinions of others, supportive, and collaborative (Kaplan et al., 2017). Elliot (2015) discusses a form of NM known as caring masculinity which values positive emotion, interdependence, and relationality and avoids domination over others. Elliot claims that caring masculinity has positive implications, such as improved physical and psychological health. This definition of NM is used for this paper. It is suggested that NM can be linked with gender egalitarian views, as gender-based differentiation and hierarchies between social groups are not as important to this new masculine identity (Inglehard & Norris, 2003).

Kaplan and colleagues (2016) argue that it is not possible to examine whether

endorsing NM can be linked to holding gender egalitarian views because NM is not yet clearly defined. Furthermore, numerous studies do not acknowledge multiple masculinities. Research mostly speaks about masculinity as a whole, which is usually most similar to TM. In Kaplan and colleagues' (2016) study, a distinction between TM and NM was made. They found that new masculinity ideology (NMI) is associated with feminist attitudes and negatively associated with sexism. Sexism was correlated with low NMI scores. Previous research by Viana and colleagues (2020) among Brazilian university students shows that egalitarian men are seen as more sociable and competent. In general, egalitarian men are described as feminine. The researchers propose the idea that it can be hard for men to be open about their egalitarian views, due to fear of discrimination because they are seen as feminine. All in all, new masculine men are expected to be perceived to have more gender egalitarian views, as it seems more in line with the traits associated with NM.

The Current Study

Achieving gender equality in the workplace has been a goal for businesses for many years (International Labour Organization, 2019). Therefore, it is important to examine what type of masculine men women perceive to be their allies. Together, they can join forces to achieve a more gender egalitarian workplace.

Previous research has primarily explored the relationship between TM and gender egalitarian views, leaving a gap in understanding how women perceive men's support for gender equality based on different masculinity types. This study aims to address this gap by addressing whether women perceive men to have gender egalitarian views based on whether these men endorse TM or NM. Specifically, if women expect traditional or new masculine men to support gender quota. We ask the research question: "What type of masculinity do women perceive to be supportive of a gender quota?" Based on previous research, the hypothesis is that women perceive men with new masculine traits to have more gender

egalitarian views compared to men with traditional masculine traits. This hypothesis is tested through an experimental design in which women are surveyed about different types of masculinity in relation to support of gender quota.

Methodology

This study (PSY-2324-S-0306) has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Psychology of the University of Groningen.

Participants

Participants were reached through the online research platform Prolific. The complete questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics. Our simple random sample consisted of 317 people from the United Kingdom, which was composed using simple random sampling. The sample size was based on the power calculation. All of the participants were female. The ages of these participants varied from 20 to 78, with a mean age of 42 ($SD=13.0$). One participant was excluded from the sample, because she answered that she was under 18 years old. 316 participants remained.

Procedure

We performed an experimental study using a between-subjects design, with the use of an online questionnaire, which participants could fill out wherever they were. Initially, participants were informed about the structure of the study, which information would be asked of them, as well as data processing. However, they were not told the specific hypothesis or goals of the study. Here, they could consent to both participation in the study and processing of their data. Participation was at all times voluntary and quitting was permitted at any moment.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions in which they could see one of the masculinity profiles, specifically: a) traditional masculine; b) new masculine; c) control condition. A control question was used to determine how masculine the

participants perceived the man in their experimental condition to be. Participants were presented with mostly the same description of a fictional man, William Burton, including his education level and profession. This description remained constant across all three conditions. The conditions differed in the mentioning of either traits of TM (i.e. stoic, insisting on one's own views, competitive, and independent) or NM (i.e. sensitive, valuing the opinions of others, supportive, and collaborative). In the control condition, participants did not receive any masculinity traits. The descriptions of the male target can be found in Appendix A.

Based on this description, our sample was asked to rate their perception of how likely the man is to engage in sexual harassment, work fraud, emotional expression, intimate partner violence, fatherhood, support of gender equality, and solidarity with disadvantaged groups. Since this is a bachelor thesis, participants read and responded to all scenarios, however, this paper will focus on the gender equality scenario. All questions utilized a 7-point Likert-scale. Lastly, they were asked questions on demographics including gender and age, as well as their ProlificID. After completing the survey, participants were debriefed about the purpose of the study and thanked for their participation.

Measurements

Manipulation Check

To check if the traits used to describe TM and NM corresponded with the expected image, participants were asked a control question: “How masculine do you think this man is?” (1 = *extremely unmasculine*, 7 = *extremely masculine*). They were also asked to what extent they would like to be friends, colleagues or neighbors with this person and how competent or warm they perceived this man to be in comparison to the average man.

Supporting Gender Equality

To measure the perceptions of our participants on masculinity and gender equality, the participants had to read a scenario. This scenario described a colleague from a different branch within the company surveying employees. This colleague asked employees about their opinion with regards to a potential future gender quota in their company. To measure the perception of how likely the man mentioned before is to engage in this scenario, the following items were used: “How likely is it that William Burton votes in favor of this gender quota?” and “How likely is it that William Burton openly supports this gender quota in conversation with his colleagues?” (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) ($\alpha = 0.893$).

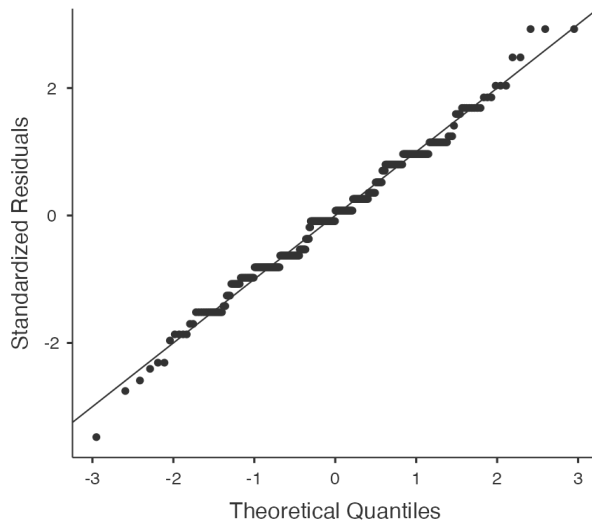
Results

Preliminary Analyses

The assumption of normality was checked with the Shapiro-Wilk test with Jamovi. The assumption of normality was violated for gender equality ($SW = 0.988; p < 0.05$). A Q-Q plot of the residuals can be found in Figure 1. As the figure shows, the residuals deviate from the reference line. This signals that the data is not normally distributed. However, the sample size of 316 surpasses the threshold of 200, allowing us to expect that the distribution of residuals approximates normality. The assumption of homoscedasticity was checked by Levene’s test. The mean of the scores of the gender equality questions did not pass Levene’s test, indicating that the variances of the gender equality scores are not equal across the groups, ($F(2, 313) = 6.07, p < 0.05$). Welch’s ANOVA was used to test our data.

Figure 1

Q-Q plot of the residuals



Manipulation Check

To check if the different descriptions of the male target would be considered to have different masculinity levels, a manipulation check was performed using Welch's ANOVA. The result ($F(2,202) = 16.4, p < 0.001$) tells us that all conditions were perceived as having different levels of masculinity. The results of the post-hoc test can be seen in Table 1B, which can be found in Appendix B.

Likelihood of Supporting a Gender Quota

A Welch's ANOVA test was conducted to determine whether there is a difference in supporting a gender quota between new masculinity, traditional masculinity targets and control conditions. The results indicate a significant difference between the new masculinity, traditional masculinity and control condition, Welch's $F(2, 204) = 30.9, p < 0.001$. The Games-Howell test was used as a post-hoc test to explore pairwise differences between groups. The traditional masculinity condition ($M = 3.71, SD = 1.32$) and the new masculinity condition ($M = 4.91, SD = 1.03$) were significantly different with mean differences $-1.21, p < 0.001$. The traditional masculinity condition ($M = 3.71, SD = 1.32$) and the control condition ($M = 4.10, SD = 1.04$) were more similar but significantly different, with a mean difference of

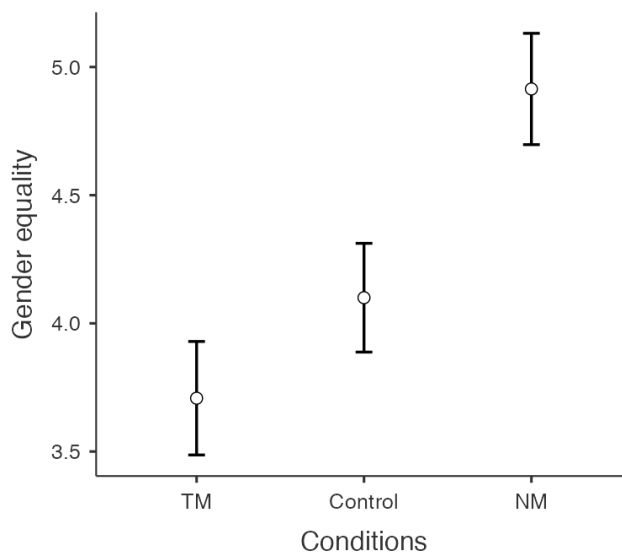
-0.39, $p = 0.047$. The control condition ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.04$) and the new masculinity condition ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.03$) were not similar and significantly different, with mean differences -0.81, $p < 0.001$ (see Figure 2 below and Tables 2B, 3B and 4B in Appendix B).

The higher the mean values, the more likely the participants perceived William Burton to have gender egalitarian views. This means that given the new masculinity description, women were most likely to think William Burton would support a gender quota. In the control condition, the participants were less likely to perceive the male target to have gender egalitarian views. Lastly, they were least likely to think he would support a gender quota when given the traditional masculinity description.

In conclusion, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a difference in likelihood of perception of men having gender egalitarian views for the different conditions. This supports our hypothesis that new masculine men were perceived to be more likely to have gender egalitarian views than traditional masculine men or the control condition.

Figure 2

Estimated marginal means



Discussion

In this study, we examined women's perceptions of traditional and new masculine men's gender egalitarian views. A control condition in which no traits were mentioned was also examined. The research question was: "What type of masculinity do women perceive to be the most supportive of a gender quota?" Our hypothesis was that participants perceived a male target to have more gender egalitarian views if he was described with new masculine traits compared to traditional masculine or no traits. The results supported this hypothesis. The analyses showed that if the male target was described to be new masculine, women were likely to expect he would support a gender quota. If the male target was described as being traditionally masculine, or if there were no characteristics given, women were significantly less likely to think he would support this gender quota. The answer to the research question is that women perceive new masculine men to be the most supportive of a gender quota.

Perceptions of masculinity and gender egalitarian views were found to be related, as hypothesized. An explanation for this is what Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and Elliot (2015) claim, namely that traditional masculinity is designed for the domination of men over women. Because of this trait of dominance, not supporting gender equality makes sense. That is to say, if all genders are equal, men cannot dominate. Another explanation is that one of the traits mentioned for traditional masculinity was "competitive". Our participants could have taken this trait to mean that the male target would not want others to be favored when a promotion is at stake. They might think the male target would want these hypothetical promotions for himself, and the favoring of a woman might get in the way of that.

In case of the control conditions, the participants seem to assume the male target would have the same views as the traditional masculinity condition. This is in line with the view that traditional masculinity is seen as normative (Elliot, 2015).

The aim of our study was to find out if women in general would assume new masculinity to be linked to gender egalitarianism. New masculinity was described as collaborative and valuing the opinion of others, as well as supportive. These traits might have signaled to the participants that the male target would support people in his company to promote to a higher position. In the scenario described in our study, that would entail supporting a gender quota. In order for a workplace to become more gender egalitarian, new systems have to be implemented by the people in leadership positions. These people are, more often than not, men (European Commission, 2021; Geffner, 2023). That means men's help is necessary to realize measures such as a gender quota (Hideg & Krstic, 2021). According to the results of this study, this help is expected to come from new masculine men, more than traditional masculine men, or men without specified traits.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several strengths that should be acknowledged. The first strength of this research is including a control group. Including this condition gives insight to what would be deemed "average" for a man according to women, instead of only what would be expected when told about specific traits. Secondly, looking at perceptions of masculinity and gender egalitarian views is also fairly unique. There is not much literature to be found on perceptions of masculinity and gender equality. The hypothesis was mostly supported by studies that found a relationship between masculinity and gender equality (Fischer & Good, 1998; Inglehard & Norris, 2003; Sinn, 1997), but in these studies there was no perception mentioned.

This study also has limitations that should be acknowledged. First, we looked at women's perceptions specifically. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, it would also be beneficial to examine men's viewpoints. This is especially relevant because gender equality has different effects on men and women. In case of a gender quota for leadership

positions, its implementation could stand in the way of a man's hope to be promoted.

Iacoviello et al. (2021) found that men were likely to behave differently depending on the group of people they were with. Men encouraged to act for male approval displayed more traditionally masculine behavior compared to those seeking approval from women or society. In that study, it is suggested that men anticipate lower societal approval for traditional behaviors. This might lead them to believe, in a control scenario without gender bias, that a male target is more likely to support a gender quota than a female target. Future research could be done to see if women expect men to behave differently around women, society as a whole and other men. This could explain why women perceived the control group to have similar gender egalitarian views to the traditional masculinity group.

Second, the participants were all from the United Kingdom, so the result may not be generalizable to other countries. The United Kingdom is part of what Henrich and colleagues (2010) call "WEIRD" countries. This acronym stands for White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic. A lot of studies are done in countries that would be considered WEIRD, but the samples of those studies are not generalizable to other, non-WEIRD countries. Future studies could survey people from non-WEIRD countries, where views of masculinity might be different, to get a broader view of perceptions of masculinity across cultures.

Third, it could be debated if the two questions measuring gender equality do actually measure what they aim to measure. Specifically, the second question, which asks how likely participants think a male target is to support the quota in conversation with his colleagues. This question might not measure women's perception of a male target's gender egalitarian views, but more how likely they think he will act agreeable in a social setting. Research could be done to see if women perceive new masculine men to be more agreeable than traditional masculine men in relation to gender equality next to other topics. Additionally, we aimed to

measure perception of gender egalitarian views by asking about a gender quota, but this might not measure perception of gender egalitarian views as a whole. People can be supportive of gender equality, and at the same time not support gender quota. According to a study by Möhring and Teney (2019), in countries that scored high on gender equality, there was actually less support for a gender quota. Also, supporting a gender quota does not mean a person supports gender equality. A study by Pereira and Porto (2020) addresses this issue. They found that support for gender quotas was associated with support for benevolent sexism. Benevolent sexism entails thinking women need to be protected, and they need help to thrive. A gender quota would help achieve this goal. However, benevolent sexism is negatively associated with supporting gender equality. This means we might not have measured perception of gender egalitarian views, but perception of benevolent sexism. In the future, research could repeat the current study with a different measure of gender egalitarian views, to test if new masculine men are perceived to support other aspects of gender equality as well.

Lastly, the mean age of the women that participated in our study was 42. It would be interesting to analyze the differences between age groups in regard to their perception of gender egalitarian views for different masculinities. A study conducted by Bettencourt et al. (2011) found that younger adults tended to be more positive toward feminism and women's movements than older adults. This was regardless of their gender. Our participants' gender egalitarian views might influence what they perceive a male target's views to be, and this might be moderated by age. In future studies, participants' own views on gender equality and masculinities can be studied in relation to their perceptions of others.

Conclusion

This research provides an important insight into the development of gender egalitarianism and changing masculinities. We found that women perceive men to be more

likely to support a gender quota when they are described as new masculine, compared to traditional masculine or without traits mentioned. The concept of masculinities is complex, so this is important to be aware of when studying masculinities and perceptions of it.

Understanding what women's perceptions of different masculinities are, enables analyzing the development of gender equality and how people react to this development. As

masculinities will continue evolving, perceptions will, too. Furthermore, gender egalitarian views are important to keep in mind. People's views on gender quotas as well as perceptions of the different masculinities have an impact on the way people behave towards each other.

By acknowledging these dynamics, we can gain a clearer understanding of the development of both masculinities and gender equality. This allows us to work toward more gender equality in the workplace.

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Appendix A

Conditions

Control Condition

William Burton is a senior manager at LMS, a finance company in London, United Kingdom. He is originally from Manchester, where he lives with his girlfriend. William is 38, has an Associate Degree in Finance, and is Caucasian.

Traditional Masculinity Condition

William Burton is a senior manager at LMS, a finance company in London, United Kingdom. He is originally from Manchester, where he lives with his girlfriend. William is 38, has an Associate Degree in Finance, and is Caucasian. *He is described as stoic, insisting on one's own views, competitive, and independent.*

New Masculinity Condition

William Burton is a senior manager at LMS, a finance company in London, United Kingdom. He is originally from Manchester, where he lives with his girlfriend. William is 38, has an Associate Degree in Finance, and is Caucasian. *He is described as sensitive, valuing the opinions of others, supportive, and collaborative.*

Appendix B

Table 1B
Games-Howell Post-Hoc Test – masculinity level

		TM	Control	NM
TM	Mean difference	—	0.452	0.820
	p-value	—	0.001	< 0.001
Control	Mean difference		—	0.368
	p-value		—	0.022
NM	Mean difference			—
	p-value			—

Table 2B
One-Way ANOVA (Welch's)

	F	df1	df2	p
Gender equality	30.87	2	204.17	< .001

Table 3B
Group Descriptives

		Conditions	N	Mean	SD	SE
Gender equality	Traditional		101	3.71	1.32	0.13
	Control		110	4.10	1.04	0.10
	New		105	4.91	1.03	0.10

Table 4B
Games-Howell Post-Hoc Test

		Traditional	Control	New
Traditional	Mean difference	—	-0.39	-1.21
	p-value	—	0.047	< .001
Control	Mean difference		—	-0.81
	p-value		—	< .001
New	Mean difference			—
	p-value			—