Gender Roles in Young Adult Same-Sex Friendships in Egypt and the United States

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Abstract

Using traits from the Bem Sex Role Inventory, this cross-cultural study examined young adults' perception of masculine and feminine traits and adherence to traditional gender roles within same-sex friendships in Egypt and the United States. Based on more traditional cultural norms (Mensch, Ibrahim, Lee & El-Gibaly, 2003) and the group influence of same-sex peers (Fathelbab, 2004; Korienko, Santos, Martin, & Granger, 2016), gender role adherence was predicted to be more pronounced in Egyptian sample than in the U.S. sample. Specifically, we expected male participants to endorse greater conformity to masculine gender roles and female participants to endorse greater conformity to feminine gender roles in Egypt. Contrary to predictions, men and women in Egypt reported less adherence to traditional gender roles in their friendships than in the U.S., particularly for traits identified as being feminine. These results suggest Egyptian social norms may allow for more flexibility in the expression of gender related traits. Future research is needed to provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between culture and gender that goes beyond stereotypes associated with being traditional versus Western.

Key Words: Gender Roles, Young Adult, Same-Sex Friendships.

أدوار النوع الاجتماعى فى صداقات الشباب من نفس النوع فى مصر والولايات المتحدة

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المستخلص

أجريت هذه الدراسة عبر الثقافية، اعتمادا على سمات بطارية بيم Bem لدور النوع الاجتماعى، وذلك للكشف عن ادراك الشباب للسمات الذكورية والأنثوية والتزامهم بأدوار النوع التقليدية فى اطار الصداقات مع نفس النوع فى مصر والولايات المتحدة. واستنادًا إلى المعايير الثقافية الأكثر تقليدية (Mensch, Ibrahim, Lee & El–Gibaly, 2003) وتأثير جماعة الأقران (Fathelbab, 2004; Korienko, Santos, Martin, & Granger, 2016), تحدد افتراض التقيد بأدوار النوع الاجتماعى بشكل أكبر لدى العينة المصرية بالمقارنة بالعينة الامريكية. وعلى وجه التحديد، كان من المتوقع أن يكشف المشاركون الذكور فى العينة المصرية عن قدر أكبر من التوافق مع أدوار النوع الاجتماعى الذكورية، وأن تكشف المشاركات الإناث عن قدر أكبر من التوافق مع أدوار النوع الاجتماعى الأنثوية. .وعلى عكس ما هو مفترض ، فقد كشف الذكور والإناث في العينة المصرية عن تقيد أقل بالأدوار التقليدية للجنسين في صداقاتهم مقارنة بعينة الولايات المتحدة، خاصة فيما يتعلق بالسمات الأنثوية. وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أن المعايير الاجتماعية المصرية تسمح بمزيد من المرونة في التعبير عن السمات المرتبطة بالنوع الاجتماعى. مع الحاجة إلى أبحاث مستقبلية لتحقيق فهم أكثر دقة للعلاقة بين الثقافة والنوع بما يتجاوز الصور النمطية المرتبطة بالنظرة التقليدية لما هو تقليدى وما هو غربى.

كلمات مفتاحية:: أدوار النوع الاجتماعى، الشباب، الصداقات من نفس النوع.

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1. **Introduction**

This cross-cultural study explores perceptions of masculinity and femininity and gender role adherence in same-sex friendships among young adults in Egypt and the United States. The research was conducted as collaboration between faculty and students in both countries whose goal was to examine whether gender roles in friendships would be more differentiated in a traditional Arabic culture in comparison to a less traditional, Western culture. By examining gender norms within young adult friendships in Egypt, this study provides a transnational perspective and expands the relationships literature to Egypt where little attention has been paid to gender and interpersonal relationships (Gaines, 2022) with a few exceptions (Al-Attar, De Meyer, El-Gibaly, Michielsen,, Animosa, & Mmari, 2017; Atia, 2015; Pataki, Fathelbab, Clark & Malinowski, 2013; Sanders, 1987).

As a collectivist culture, family plays a central role in Egypt where men and women are expected to live with their families until marriage (Atia, 2015) and maintain close familial ties following marriage (Mensch, 2003).Whereas mixed-gender relationships outside of marriage are accepted and normative in the U.S. (Femlee, 2012), close relationships outside of the family are largely limited to same-sex relationships in Egypt (Al-Attar et al., 2017). Given these cultural differences related to relationships and gender, our expectation was that there would be greater differentiation between masculine and feminine gender roles within same-sex friendships in Egypt where different-sex relationships are restricted in comparison to the U.S. Consistent with this expectation, Sanders (1987) found greater gender role differentiation in Egypt where Egyptian males rated themselves as more masculine and less feminine than males in

the U.S., and Egyptian females rated themselves as less masculine than women in the U.S. In the current study, we expected that male friendships would adhere to more masculine gender roles and female friendships would adhere to more feminine gender roles showing greater differentiation between men and women in Egyptian sample in comparison to the U.S..

To test this hypothesis, we examined the specific traits associated with masculinity and femininity on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), a widely used measure of gender roles developed in the U.S. based on the perceived desirability of traits for men versus women (Bem, 1974; 1981). Although the BSRI has been used extensively in research on gender roles in the U.S. (Abu-Ali & Reisen, 1999; Aikawa, 2020; Bem, 1974; Bem, 1981; Donnelly & Twenge, 2017; Nielson et al., 2020; Smith, Noll, & Bryant, 1999; Wong et al., 2020) and in other Arab countries including Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia (Abdalla, 1995; Abdalla, 1996; Al-Qataee, 1984), we believe our study represents the first in which the traits identified on the BSRI have been translated into Arabic using an Egyptian dialect. By relying on professional back translation between English and Egyptian Arabic, this research examined whether traits associated with gender in the U.S. would be similarly identified in Egypt. This study also enabled us to explore potential changes in the way in which these traits are currently identified in the U.S. As shown in past research, conceptualizations of gender roles are likely to vary across time, culture, generation, and social context (Auster & Ohm, 2000; Donnelly & Twenge, 2017; Ferrer-Perez & Bosch-Fiol, 2014; Hsu, Badura, Newman, & Speach, 2021; Smith et al., 1999; Twenge, 1997; Uleman & Weston, 1986).

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2. Literature Review
2.1.Gender Roles and Traditionalism

Based on social norms, Egyptian participants are likely to have mostly same-sex friendships because casual relationships with other genders outside familial relationship are largely prohibited. Al-Attar et al. (2017) found that male participants in Egypt reported more opposite-sex friendships than females which may be related to the potential consequences for violating gender norms among women. Children also reported concerns that opposite-sex friendships might be mistaken for romantic relationships. In the U.S., participants reported greater openness to different-gender relationships, yet there is also evidence that men and women tend to have differing friendship styles and preferences. Past research suggests females tend to place more value on intimacy and communication whereas males show a preference for friendships that are more easy-going, more activity oriented, and less intimate (Felmlee et al., 2012).

Although there have been significant societal shifts related to gender in the U.S., research suggests that gender roles in the U.S. rest on a traditional foundation and have been resistant to change, particularly for men (Donnelly & Twenge, 2017). For example, Aikawa and Stewart (2020) describe a persistent belief that parenting is a female job, rather than a shared responsibility of both parents. Research on prevalent masculine norms also supports the perseverance of traditional gender roles in U.S. society. Using the Subjective Masculine Norms Scale (SMNS), Wong et al. (2020) identified the gender norms that men in the U.S. identified as masculine. This study found "emotional toughness," "avoidance of femininity," "physicality," "not being a home-maker," and "heterosexism" as important masculine traits, whereas other traits identified as being masculine such as "nonaggression," suggested there may be some shift. Similarly, Auster and Ohm

(2000) found traits seen as desirable for women in 1972 such as "childlike" and "yielding" were no longer rated as desirable, and that there was greater acceptance for males in traditionally female-dominated occupations and roles.

In Egypt, gender roles emphasizing the role of authority for men and submission for women (Mensch et al., 2003) are generally perceived as being more traditional than in the U.S. . On the other hand, although there has been a notable increase in female enrollment in schools, this enrollment is often justified for social reasons rather than preparation for the workforce (Mensch et al., 2003) as might be expected based on adherence to traditional gender roles where women's roles lie largely within the home and men are the breadwinners.

From a more global perspective, Costa et al. (2001) found that although traditional gender roles may be consistent across cultures, the magnitude at which they are expressed may vary. Participants completed the Revised NEO Personality Inventory in this study which included the following 26 countries and sub-cultures: Hong Kong, Taiwan, Croatia, The Netherlands, Belgium, United States (English-speaking), South Africa (Blacks), South Africa (Whites), Estonia, the Philippines, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, India, Norway, Portugal, Zimbabwe, United States (Spanish-speaking), Peru, Spain, Yugoslavia, and Russia (Costa et al., 2001). Based on this dataset, Costa et al. examined gender differences within each culture and determined whether these differences corresponded to the expression of gender roles. Surprisingly, researchers found that gender differences were greater in more Westernized cultures that are typically associated with less traditional sex roles (Costa et al., 2001).

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2.2.Gender Roles in Friendship in Egypt and U.S.

In Egypt, males are taught to be independent, competitive, and in control whereas females are taught to be dependent and sympathetic (Fathelbab, 2004). As a result, males and females likely develop different traits and have different values associated with what is important in their friendships, and thereby learn to interact with others according to the standards of the same gender group. Abosree (1993) examined the characteristics that Egyptian adolescents wanted in a same-sex friend and found two factors using factor analysis. The first factor included good manners, honesty, religiosity, sincerity, openness, mental flexibility, and excellence in studying and achievement. The second factor included characteristics of social attractiveness such as taking care of appearance, physical fitness, sociability, humor, support, and care. Al-Attar et al. (2017) focused on gender norms in adolescent friendships and found an emphasis on the desirability of similar qualities such as trust, conversation, and shared values. Additionally, stereotypically feminine traits were found to be attractive to girls, while stereotypically masculine traits were found to be attractive to boys.

In the U.S., negative consequences, such as teasing and smaller friend groups, are associated with not following gender norms (Nielson et al., 2020). For young men in particular, strict adherence to gender norms may become increasingly important in terms of social acceptance. Masculine traits that highlight aggression, suppression of emotion, and risky behavior are praised while feminine traits are criticized, and male peer groups accept or reject other adolescent boys based upon their ability to conform to these gender norms (Rogers et al., 2021). Korienko et al. (2016) explored aspects of gender identity in adolescence including the pressure to conform to gender norms and found that

adolescents' pressure to conform to gender norms changed to reflect that of their friends. Examining same and other-sex friendships among young adults, Baumgarte and Nelson (2009) identified characteristics that college students preferred in a male friend and a female friend. Findings showed that male friendships were characterized as individualistic, while female friendships placed a higher value on expression. These differences may reinforce gender roles, particularly for students holding a strong preference for friendships with members of the same sex (Baumgarte & Nelsom, 2009).

Given previous research on gender and peer influence (Fathelbab, 2004; Korienko et al., 2016; Mensch et al., 2003; Nielson et al., 2020; Rogers et al., 2021) as well as greater cultural constraints regarding mixed-gender relationships in Egypt (Al-Attar et al., 2017), we hypothesized that young adults in Egypt would show greater gender role differentiation between men and women in comparison to men and women in the U.S. To test this hypothesis, we used traits identified in the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974; 1981), a widely used measure of gender roles developed in the U.S., to analyze young adults' perceptions of gender and to explore how they would describe themselves and their friends within the context of a same-sex friendship.

3. Methodology

Participants

100 undergraduate students from each country participated in this study (*N*=200). Half of the participants in each country identified as being male and the other half as being female. The mean age for U.S. participants (*n*=100) was 19.51 years (*SD* = 1.28) and the mean age for Egyptian participants (*n*=100) was 19.86 years (*SD* = 1.46). Participation was based on a convenience sample of undergraduate students. All

participation was voluntary and all responses were anonymous and confidential.

Procedure

Following approval by an Institutional Review Board, participants in both countries were asked to volunteer to complete an anonymous survey lasting approximately 20 minutes about their closest same-sex friendship. After signing an informed consent, participants were asked to indicate their age, gender, nationality, religion (if any), and marital status. Following these demographic questions, participants completed a survey measuring their perception of 1) themselves and 2) their friend in their closest same-sex friendship, and last, measuring their perception of the masculinity and femininity of the same 20 traits. The twenty traits used were taken directly from the short-form BSRI (Choi et al., 2009). After completing the survey, all participants were debriefed, given the opportunity to ask questions, and thanked for their participation.

Measures

To conduct the study in Egypt, all materials were translated from English into Arabic and then back from Arabic to English to ensure that the translation into Egyptian Arabic was as accurate as possible and that all participants could complete the survey in their first language. The survey questions used in the current study trace back to the original Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974). This widely used measure was developed to categorize an individual as masculine, feminine, or androgynous based on 60 personality characteristics perceived as being "masculine," "feminine," or "neutral", and was found to have high internal consistency and test-retest reliability. In the original U.S. sample, the Chronbach's alpha for masculinity was .86 and femininity was .82. Nearly a

decade later, Bem created a revised, short-form BSRI containing 10 masculine traits (e.g., aggressive and independent) and 10 feminine traits (e.g., gentle and affectionate) by dropping half of the original 20 used to differentiate between masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1981). Given subsequent research supporting the validity of the short-form BSRI (Campbell, Gillaspy, & Thompson, 1997; Choi et al., 2009; Holmbeck & Bale, 1988) we used the 10 masculine and 10 feminine traits of this measure to examine gender role adherence in the current study.

Specifically, the current study used the 20 traits from the short-form BSRI to ask participants to rate themselves and their friend on each trait within their closest same-sex friendship. For example, after being asked to think about a specific, close same-sex friend, participants responded to the following two statements on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely): "(w)ithin my closest friendship, I am gentle" and "(w)ithin my closest friendship, my friend is gentle." Last, participants were asked to rate each of the 20 traits on two 7-point Likert scales ranging from "not at all masculine" (1) to "very masculine" (7) and "not at all feminine" (1) to "very feminine" (7). This set of questions measuring the perception of masculinity and femininity of each trait was completed last to minimize participants' concerns about the social desirability of traits they used to describe themselves and their friend.

4. Results

To determine the reliability of the traits identified as masculine and feminine, a Cronbach's alpha was calculated for all items designated as either masculine or feminine. As indicated in *Table 1*, the alpha coefficients ranged from .84 to .88 demonstrating high internal consistency for both masculine and feminine traits in each country (*Table 1*).

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Table 1
Reliability of the BSRI in the U.S. and Egypt
Chronbach's Alpha

Country	Egypt	United States
Feminine traits	0.85	0.88
Masculine traits	0.84	0.88

To examine whether the traits were related to masculinity or femininity in each country as designated by the BSRI, we analyzed participants' ratings of how masculine and how feminine they perceived each trait to be on two separate scales ranging from (1) not at all feminine to (7) very feminine, and (1) not all at masculine to (7) very masculine. We used a paired samples t-test in each country to see whether there was a statistically significant difference between the mean for how masculine a trait was perceived versus the mean for how feminine a trait was perceived.

As indicated in *Table 2*, in Egypt where participants rated seven of the feminine traits as being more feminine than masculine, one trait (understanding) as being more masculine than feminine, and two of the feminine traits (compassionate and affectionate) as being equally masculine and feminine. The opposite pattern was found in U.S. participants rated seven of the feminine traits as being statistically equivalent in their ratings of how masculine and feminine they perceived the trait to be; only three traits (gentle, sensitive to friends' needs, and loves children) were seen as being more feminine than masculine

Table 2

Perception of BSRI Feminine Traits

Trait	Egypt		United	States
	Masculine *M (SD)*	Feminine *M (SD)*	Masculine *M (SD)*	Feminine *M (SD)*
Gentle	3.93* (1.93)	5.69* (1.73)	3.12* (1.29)	5.70* (1.27)
Compassionate	4.85 (1.73)	5.25 (1.84)	3.96 (1.61)	5.68 (1.16)
Understanding	5.05* (1.82)	4.83* (1.89)	4.18 (1.37)	5.49 (1.20)
Warm	4.35* (1.83)	5.75* (1.62)	3.59 (1.61)	5.77 (1.18)
Sensitive to Friends' Needs	4.55* (1.89)	5.32* (1.91)	3.51* (1.59)	5.95* (1.14)
Affectionate	4.51 (1.74)	5.99 (1.64)	3.74 (1.61)	5.85 (1.22)
Eager to Soothe Friend	4.38* (1.96)	5.53* (1.59)	2.96 (1.48)	5.97 (1.07)
Loves Children	4.83* (1.84)	6.19* (1.33)	3.93* (1.45)	5.85* (1.37)
Tender	3.79* (1.75)	5.95* (1.62)	3.20 (1.49)	5.67 (1.27)
Sympathetic	4.86* (1.66)	5.74* (1.68)	3.68 (1.53)	5.89 (1.04)

Note. Scores could range from 1 to 7. Higher numbers indicate greater endorsement. *$p < 0.05$

As indicated in *Table 3*, In Egypt, participants rated all of the masculine traits as being more masculine than feminine. U.S. participants rated seven of the masculine traits as being

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more masculine than feminine, and three of the masculine traits as being equally masculine and feminine (leadership abilities, strong personality, independent).

Table 3
Perception of BSRI Masculine Traits

Trait	Egypt		United	States
	Masculine M (SD)	Feminine M (SD)	Masculine M (SD)	Feminine M (SD)
Aggressive	4.65* (2.29)	3.35* (2.09)	5.87* (1.28)	3.39* (1.57)
Dominant	5.73* (1.92)	3.98* (1.92)	5.69* (1.36)	3.71* (1.62)
Leadership Abilities	5.81* (1.66)	4.30* (2.04)	5.26 (1.29)	5.05 (1.43)
Strong Personality	5.82* (1.71)	4.52* (1.87)	5.39 (1.32)	5.29 (1.38)
Forceful	5.89* (1.76)	4.11* (1.73)	5.44* (1.43)	3.51* (1.47)
Ability to Defend Beliefs	5.81* (1.69)	5.22* (1.69)	5.83* (1.24)	5.48* (1.45)
Willing to Take Risks	6.17* (1.34)	4.52* (1.74)	5.82* (1.27)	4.81* (1.43)
Willing to Take a Stand	5.74* (1.59)	4.61* (1.51)	5.50* (1.44)	4.91* (1.71)
Independent	5.34* (1.91)	4.23* (1.91)	5.55 (1.57)	5.21 (1.59)
Assertive	5.62* (1.70)	3.68* (1.75)	5.81* (1.13)	4.41* (1.55)

Note. Scores could range from 1 to 7. Higher numbers indicate greater endorsement. *$p < 0.05$

As expected, these findings suggest that contemporary gender roles may be less differentiated in the U.S. in comparison to Egypt given that seven feminine traits and three masculine traits (10 traits out of 20 total) were seen as being equally masculine and feminine in the U.S. whereas only two feminine traits were seen as being equally masculine and feminine in Egypt. Interestingly, this pattern suggests that the BSRI may have greater contemporary validity as a measure of gender roles in Egypt than in the U.S. The finding that being understanding was rated as more masculine than feminine in Egypt however, was not consistent with its designation as a feminine trait on the BSRI.

Self-perception of Gender Roles In Egypt and U.S. Friendships by Participant Sex:

To test our hypothesis that gender role adherence would be more pronounced in Egypt than in the U.S., we examined the extent to which male and female participants described themselves within the context of their closest friendship on the 10 feminine and 10 masculine traits of the BSRI. We conducted an independent samples t-test in each country to see whether there was a statistically significant difference between the means for female and male participants. We did not compare means between countries given the likelihood of subtle translation differences and participant response sets.

As indicated in *Table 4*, U.S. males rated themselves lower than females across all 10 feminine items on the BSRI. In contrast, there was less differentiation for males in Egypt where there was no statistically significant difference for six of the feminine traits of the BSRI (understanding, warm, sensitive to friends' needs, eager to soothe friends, loves children, and sympathetic). These findings did not support our hypothesis that Egyptian participants would show more pronounced gender roles in their close friendships. Rather,

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our results indicate that feminine gender roles were more differentiated within same-sex friendships in the U.S. in comparison to Egypt.

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations for Self-ratings on BSRI
Feminine Traits by Participant Sex

Trait	Egypt		United	States
	Males M (SD)	Females M (SD)	Males M (SD)	Females M (SD)
Gentle	4.92* (1.61)	5.72* (1.29)	3.70* (1.56)	5.02* (1.30)
Compassionate	4.64* (1.51)	6.02* (1.32)	5.28* (1.36)	6.20* (0.88)
Understanding	5.78 (1.43)	5.82 (1.64)	6.12* (1.21)	6.58* (0.70)
Warm	5.38 (1.34)	5.62 (1.60)	5.02* (1.49)	5.92* (1.19)
Sensitive to Friends' Needs	5.60 (1.49)	5.54 (1.72)	5.76* (1.17)	6.52* (0.79)
Affectionate	5.42* (1.42)	6.20* (1.44)	4.46* (2.00)	5.36* (1.47)
Eager to Soothe Friends	5.40 (1.58)	5.76 (1.59)	5.18* (1.91)	6.38* (1.05)
Loves Children	5.90 (1.59)	6.14 (1.69)	4.56* (2.11)	5.60* (1.68)
Tender	5.98* (1.15)	6.42* (0.88)	3.66* (1.78)	5.30* (1.47)
Sympathetic	5.90 (1.23)	6.34 (1.15)	5.52* (1.56)	6.16* (0.98)

Note. Scores could range from 1 to 7. Higher numbers indicate greater endorsement. *$p < 0.05$

As indicated in *Table 5*, In Egypt, half of the masculine items were endorsed more by males than females, and half were endorsed equally by males and females. Given the mixed pattern for the endorsement of masculine traits in Egypt. U.S. males and females rated themselves similarly across eight of

the masculine items on the BSRI. Ratings of being aggressive and forceful were the only two items endorsed higher among males than females. we did not find strong support for our hypothesis that masculine gender role adherence would be more pronounced in male friendships in Egypt than in the U.S.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Self-ratings on BSRI Masculine Traits by Participant Sex

Trait	Egypt		United States	
	Males *M* (SD)	Females *M (SD)*	Males *M* (SD)	Females *M (SD)*
Aggressive	2.36 (1.93)	1.84 (1.57)	3.44* (2.04)	2.56* (1.51)
Dominant	5.40* (1.64)	4.38* (1.88)	3.80 (1.97)	3.70 (1.57)
Leadership Abilities	5.26* (1.40)	4.28* (1.74)	5.56 (1.47)	5.42 (1.36)
Strong Personality	6.00* (1.23)	5.28* (1.67)	6.36 (1.16)	5.90 (1.37)
Forceful	5.78* (1.39)	5.04* (1.86)	3.52* (2.05)	2.16* (1.20)
Ability to Defend Beliefs	5.88 (1.57)	5.86 (1.62)	6.36 (1.26)	6.46 (1.01)
Willing to Take Risks	5.86 (1.55)	5.90 (1.47)	5.88 (1.29)	5.68 (1.27)
Willing to Take a Stand	5.52 (1.52)	5.16 (1.83)	6.12 (1.21)	5.74 (1.44)
Independent	4.46 (2.06)	4.06 (2.20)	5.90 (1.23)	5.96 (1.21)
Assertive	5.42* (1.59)	3.96* (2.01)	5.00 (1.65)	4.40 (1.57)

Note. Scores could range from 1 to 7. Higher numbers indicate greater endorsement. *$p < 0.05$

As an additional test of our hypothesis that gender role adherence would be more pronounced in Egypt than in the U.S., we also examined the extent to which male and female participants described their same-sex friend within the context of their closest friendship on the 10 feminine and 10 masculine traits of the BSRI. As indicated in *Table 6*, U.S. males rated their friend lower than females rated their friend across all 10 feminine traits. This was the same pattern found for U.S. males and females in their descriptions of themselves. In contrast, there was more variability in Egypt where male and female participants rated their same-sex friends equally on four feminine traits (understanding, warm, sensitive to friends' needs, and eager to soothe friends). These four traits were also found to be statistically equivalent between males and females in their descriptions of themselves with the addition of two more feminine traits (loves children and sympathetic). Again, these findings did not support our hypothesis that Egyptian participants would show more pronounced gender roles in their close friendships. Rather, our results indicate that feminine gender roles were more differentiated within same-sex friendships in the U.S. in comparison to Egypt.

Table 6

*Means and Standard Deviations for Friend-ratings on BSRI
Feminine Traits by Participant Sex*

Trait	Egypt		United	States
	Males *M (SD)*	Females *M (SD)*	Males *M (SD)*	Females *M (SD)*
Gentle	4.74* (1.82)	5.52* (1.56)	3.88* (1.70)	4.88* (1.55)
Compassionate	4.58* (1.42)	5.58* (1.37)	5.24* (1.47)	6.08* (0.97)
Understanding	5.02	5.20	5.84*	6.46*

	(1.45)	(1.54)	(1.41)	(0.76)
Warm	4.84	5.30	4.78*	5.70*
	(1.49)	(1.73)	(1.60)	(1.31)
Sensitive to Friends' Needs	4.88	5.22	5.34*	6.22*
	(1.55)	(1.72)	(1.48)	(1.38)
Affectionate	5.08*	5.88*	4.54*	5.28*
	(1.43)	(1.60)	(1.98)	(1.54)
Eager to Soothe Friends	4.96	5.18	5.08*	6.18*
	(1.62)	(1.80)	(1.82)	(1.02)
Loves Children	5.26*	5.94*	4.20*	5.10*
	(1.90)	(1.46)	(1.98)	(1.84)
Tender	5.26*	5.82*	3.60*	5.18*
	(1.35)	(1.44)	(1.84)	(1.40)
Sympathetic	5.08*	5.96*	5.34*	5.94*
	(1.37)	(1.12)	(1.55)	(1.32)

Note. Scores could range from 1 to 7. Higher numbers indicate greater endorsement. *$p < 0.05$

As indicated in *Table 7*, In Egypt, there was only one statistically significant difference; male participants described their same-sex friend as being more assertive than female participants. Male participants in the U.S. rated their same-sex friend higher than females on the same two masculine traits (aggressive and forceful) that were statistically higher in their self-descriptions. As one comparison counter to traditional gender roles in the U.S. however, female participants rated their same-sex friend as being more dominant than male participants.

Taken together, these results are not consistent with our hypothesis that there would be greater differentiation in gender roles in Egypt in comparison to the U.S. given that nine of the 10 masculine traits were statistically equivalent between males and females in Egypt.

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Table 7
Means and Standard Deviations for Friend-ratings on BSRI
Masculine Traits by Participant Sex

Trait	Egypt		United	States
	Males M (SD)	Females M (SD)	Males M (SD)	Females M (SD)
Aggressive	2.58 (1.94)	2.12 (1.60)	3.40* (2.01)	2.60* (1.44)
Dominant	3.48 (1.62)	3.26 (1.78)	3.12* (1.60)	4.04* (1.48)
Leadership Abilities	4.50 (1.68)	3.98 (1.86)	5.06 (1.54)	5.24 (1.44)
Strong Personality	5.24 (1.21)	5.04 (1.69)	6.14 (1.09)	6.24 (1.00)
Forceful	5.00 (1.44)	4.74 (1.77)	3.46* (2.07)	2.36* (1.47)
Ability to Defend Beliefs	5.40 (1.11)	5.60 (1.50)	6.22 (1.35)	6.50 (0.89)
Willing to Take Risks	5.14 (1.53)	5.08 (2.02)	5.52 (1.47)	5.58 (1.39)
Willing to Take a Stand	4.92 (1.54)	4.92 (1.70)	5.74 (1.61)	5.56 (1.47)
Independent	4.50 (1.90)	4.10 (2.11)	5.72 (1.34)	5.74 (1.59)
Assertive	4.80* (1.67)	4.08* (1.75)	4.68 (1.68)	4.54 (1.73)

Note. Scores could range from 1 to 7. Higher numbers indicate greater endorsement. *$p < 0.05$

Overall, our findings provide mixed support for our hypothesis, particularly in relation to feminine traits. Consistent with our hypothesis, U.S. participants rated more

feminine traits as being equally masculine and feminine; only three feminine traits (being gentle, sensitive, and loving children) were rated as being more feminine than masculine. In contrast, Egyptian participants' ratings of feminine traits were more consistent with the BSRI designation and more reflective of traditional gender roles with the exception of being understanding which was rated higher on masculinity than femininity. Two other exceptions in Egypt were being compassionate and affectionate which were seen as being equally masculine and feminine. Also consistent with traditional gender roles, young adults in Egypt rated all ten masculine traits as being more masculine than feminine whereas young adults in the U.S. rated three masculine traits (having leadership abilities, being independent, and having a strong personality) as equally masculine and feminine. In participants' self-descriptions and ratings of their same-sex friend however, we found more differentiation related to gender in the U.S. than in Egypt particularly for traits designated as feminine on the BSRI. Specifically, male participants rated themselves and their friends lower than female participants on all 10 feminine traits in the U.S. whereas there was more perceived similarity between males and females in Egypt.

5- Discussion

Our hypothesis that gender roles in same-sex friendships would be more differentiated in Egypt than in the U.S. was partially supported by young adults' perception of traits on the BSRI. The finding that more traits were seen as being equally masculine and feminine in the U.S. suggests that what has been considered traditionally masculine or feminine may be shifting towards less gender differentiation in the U.S. and as found in previous research (Auster & Ohm 2000, Donnelly & Twenge, 2017; Hsu et al., 2021). In contrast, young adults'

perceptions of masculine and feminine traits in Egypt were more consistent with traditional gender roles as designated on the BSRI with the three exceptions of being compassionate, understanding, and affectionate. The finding that being understanding was rated as being more masculine than feminine in Egypt underscores the need for a contemporary measure of gender roles developed and validated in Egypt. Future research is also needed to interpret why being compassionate and affectionate were perceived as equally masculine and feminine in Egypt. Although this finding could reflect cross-cultural differences in gender roles, Egyptian men still described themselves and their friend as lower on these traits in comparison to Egyptian females.

Our hypothesis that gender roles would be more differentiated in Egypt than in the U.S. was not supported by young adults' perception of themselves and their same-sex friend. Whereas Egyptian males rated themselves equally to Egyptian females on more than half of the feminine traits, males in the U.S. rated themselves lower than females in the U.S. on every feminine trait. Similarly, males in the U.S. rated their same-sex friend lower than females on every feminine trait; Egyptian males did not. These findings are particularly interesting given that young adults in the U.S. rated many of these same traits as being equally masculine and feminine. They are consistent with past research by Smith et al. (1999) who found that young men in the U.S. were more likely to avoid describing themselves with feminine traits in their same-sex interactions in comparison to their other-sex interactions. Taken together, these findings in the U.S. suggest that although gender norms may be shifting towards less differentiation between the perception of masculine and feminine traits, U.S. males may still be reluctant to indicate that they adhere to any behavior or characteristic traditionally seen as being feminine in their male friendships. In contrast,

Egyptian males were more likely to ascribe traits they identified as feminine to themselves and their friends suggesting that there may be more flexibility in the expression of feminine traits within their male friendships. Future research is needed to explore whether the description of traits in both countries is reflected in actual behavior or whether these descriptions are based on gender-related impression management.

In addition to demonstrating cultural variation between Egypt and the U.S., we believe this research highlights the critical need for a gender role measure that is specific to Egypt, a region currently underrepresented in the literature on interpersonal relationships (Gaines, 2022). Although Egyptian participants rated most traits (with the exception of three) as being more masculine or feminine in a way that was consistent with their designation on the BSRI, there may be other traits in Egyptian culture (e.g., being calm, modest, or religious) that are more central to individuals' understanding of gender in Egypt. Because this study relied on a measure of gender roles developed in the U.S., we were not able to examine cross-cultural differences in traits related to gender that may be more important in Egyptian culture. Future research is also needed to explore whether the traits identified as being equally feminine and masculine in the U.S. reflect a shift in beliefs that can be replicated in a larger U.S. sample. In addition to cultural variations, gender norms likely differ based on social context (Smith, Noll, & Bryant, J., 1999; Uleman & Weston, 1986) and other demographic variables including age, education, and income.

Overall, this research provides insight on the way in which gender roles are perceived and endorsed by young adults in two countries with differing relationship norms and perceptions of gender diversity. Perhaps most importantly this work highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of

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gender that goes beyond stereotypes associated with traditional versus non-traditional/Western cultures (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013). The finding that young men in Egypt were more willing than men in the U.S. to describe themselves and their friends with traits they perceived as being feminine suggests there may be less gender role adherence within same-sex friendships in Egypt than in the U.S. This finding is consistent with Costa et al. (2001) who found that gender differences in personality were lower in more traditional cultures in comparison to more Westernized cultures, and van Hemert, van de Vijver, and Vingerhoets (2011) who found that gender differences in crying were also lower in more traditional cultures. Interestingly, results may also viewed in light of what has been labeled the "gender-equality paradox" (Vishkin, 2022).

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