



# Androgyny

You are learning how to...	In the context of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define psychological terms</li> <li>Explain, criticise and evaluate psychological research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender development; the concept of androgyny</li> </ul>

**Sandra Bem (1974)** was aware that our society considers some traits masculine and some feminine. However, her view was that any person, male or female, can have both feminine and masculine traits. In Bem's view, femininity and masculinity are **independent traits**. That is, a person's level of masculinity doesn't determine their level of femininity and vice versa. This means that people can score high or low on *either* masculinity or femininity or *both*.

Masculinity	Femininity	
High	Low	<b>Masculine</b>
Low	High	<b>Feminine</b>
High	High	<b>Androgynous</b>
Low	Low	<b>Undifferentiated</b>

The terms **androgyny** and **androgynous** are used to denote and describe people who have high levels of both masculine and feminine traits.

**Which of the following traits would our society regard as masculine, feminine or neutral?**

Self-reliant	Independent	Sympathetic
Reliable	Cheerful	Self-sufficient
Sincere	Analytical	Conscientious
Shy	Moody	Affectionate
Happy	Yielding	Aggressive

**Bem (1974)** developed an inventory (a type of questionnaire) called the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) where respondents rate themselves on a 7-point Likert scale for sixty adjectives like the ones above (masculine, feminine and neutral). Their ratings for the different sets of adjectives are summed to give a masculinity and a femininity score. The scores can be used to classify respondents as masculine, feminine, androgynous or undifferentiated. **Bem (1975)** found that highly androgynous people were psychologically healthier than those who were strongly masculine or feminine.

### Some questions to help you think about and evaluate this research

- Suggest a possible reason why androgynous people were found to be more psychologically healthy than others.
- Bem's inventory was constructed based on the views of Americans in the 1970s. To what extent does this matter?
- What issues arise from using self-report questionnaires to study gender as Bem did?