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FATHERS AND SONS: THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG
ORIENTATIONS OF SEX ROLE, SPORT, AND WINNING

BY
LEAH SIGLER NARRO

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[Signature]  Date  Committee Member
Sex Role, Sport, and Winning

FATHERS AND SONS: THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG ORIENTATIONS OF SEX ROLE, SPORT, AND WINNING

By
Leah Sigler Narro
B.A., University of Mississippi, 1984

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Richmond in Candidacy for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in Psychology
The present study examines relationships among several cognitive orientations of sons and fathers as well as sons' participation in sport and perception of the influences of others in sport. The subjects, 80 boys enrolled in fifth through twelfth grades, and their fathers completed the Short Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1981), the Sport Value Orientation scale (McElroy, 1983), and the Orientation Toward Winning scale (Kidd & Woodman, 1975). The sons' perceptions of who influences them the most in sport, and the sons' participation in sport were also assessed. The results imply that fathers who have a strong Orientation Toward Winning have sons who rate high in masculinity in their sex role orientation and tend to play sports on a regular basis. Sons who have a high Orientation Toward Winning play sports on a regular basis and have fathers who score high in masculinity in their sex role orientations. Sons who score high in femininity on the Short BSRI rate low on their Orientation Toward Winning. The Short BSRI femininity scores for fathers and sons were positively correlated.
Fathers and Sons: Relationships Among Orientations of Sex Role, Sport and Winning

Sport and competition are areas which have been dominated by males for generations and are ways in which males may express masculinity (Fasteau, 1974; Kidd & Woodman, 1975; Sutton-Smith, Rosenberg, & Morgan, 1963). Because sons' attitudes generally reflect those of their fathers (Emihovich, Gaier, & Cronin, 1984; Johnson, 1975), it is likely that fathers' orientations toward sport and competition influence those of their sons (Maier & Lavrakas, 1981; Margolin & Patterson, 1975; McElroy, 1983).

Until recently, the traditional sex role orientation for males was more clearly defined. Men were expected to be masculine, and could get validation for their masculinity by a show of physical strength (Pleck, 1976), as is often demonstrated in sporting events (Fasteau, 1974; Kidd & Woodman, 1975; McElroy, 1983). Today, men may evidence sex role orientations that are not traditionally masculine; this may be a result of the women's movement and the expectations that both men and women will exhibit cross gender behavior (Abrahams, Feldman, & Nash, 1978; Pleck, 1976). Young men appear to be more aware of the opportunities now
available, but are still strongly influenced by the beliefs and values their fathers hold (Emihovich, Gaier, & Cronin, 1984). This is clearly demonstrated in the Emihovich, Gaier, and Cronin (1984) study that shows that adolescent boys hold the same sex role beliefs as their fathers whether these fathers' beliefs are traditional or not. The present study will take a closer look at the relationships among boys' Sport Value Orientation (SVO), Orientation Toward Winning (OTW), and sex role orientations along with their perception of who influences them in sport, their participation in sport, and their fathers' SVO, OTW, and sex role orientations. These factors and others which may influence boys in sport, such as: body type, influence of peers, years spent playing sports and the influence of mother are shown in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

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Sex Role Development in Children

The socializing process for children is based on a series of interactions between parent and child, and children's learning of appropriate sex role behavior is
often a major focus of parents' attention (Bearison, 1979; Fagot, 1974; Feinman, 1974; Lewis, 1972; Minton, Kagan, & Levine, 1971). At times parents are not aware that they are preparing their children for specific sex roles (Fling & Manosevitz, 1972). A study by Fagot (1974), shows that children display the same sex-typed behavior independent of the parents' awareness of encouraging sex appropriate behavior.

Parents do have different concerns and reactions depending on the sex of the child. Research shows that children are punished for inappropriate sex role behavior and rewarded for appropriate sex role behavior (Feinman, 1974). Parents punish their sons more frequently and severely than their daughters for displaying sex inappropriate behaviors, and boys are sex typed to a larger extent than girls (Feinman, 1974; Fling & Manosevitz, 1972; Wolf, 1973).

The past research on parenting has focused on the mother (Fruchter, 1984), which has shown that mothers are not as concerned about appropriate sex-typing as fathers (Johnson, 1963), and that mothers treat their sons and daughters more alike than fathers (Goodenough, 1957).
Fathers Influence on Children

Fathers do have a great influence on their children (Bearison, 1979; Fagot, 1974; Emihovich, Gaier, & Cronin, 1984). In recent years they have shifted slowly to take on some of the child rearing roles (Pedersen & Robson, 1969), and fathers are expected to do more, especially by modeling, for a son than a daughter (Fagot, 1974).

Men who are more involved with their children demonstrate more feminine and androgynous behaviors than fathers who are traditionally masculine and avoid caretaking responsibilities (Carlson, 1984; Pederson & Robson, 1969). Feminine or androgynous fathers have children who hold fewer stereotypes about feminine and masculine roles than children of masculine fathers (Carlson, 1984).

The research on fathers' participation in child rearing is limited and in many studies that examine the father's role, the father has not been interviewed (Fagot, 1974; Pedersen & Robson, 1969). However, research shows that fathers do treat their sons differently than their daughters and somewhat dissimilarly from how mothers treat their children (Fagot, 1974; Johnson, 1975). Most of the research that
Sex Role, Sport, and Winning

examines fathers' behavior toward the sex role socialization of their children confirms that the fathers, more than mothers, encourage femininity in their daughters and masculinity in their sons (Bearison, 1979; Cairns, 1979; Goodenough, 1957; Johnson, 1963; Johnson, 1975; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Fathers, in the past, tended to become especially upset when a son demonstrated cross-sex (or "girlish") behavior (Cairns, 1979; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974).

Sports and Sex Role Orientation

Mothers and fathers socialize their children in different ways toward the masculine arena of sport (Kidd & Woodman, 1975; McElroy, 1983), and involvement in sport is an excellent way for fathers to encourage masculinity in their sons (Kidd & Woodman, 1975). Children learn the ideas and rules of sport through pastimes, toys, and games. Pastimes, or playing with toys, are defined as having rules but not necessarily definite outcomes; games and sports on the other hand, have definite rules, procedures and outcomes (Sutton-Smith, Rosenberg, & Morgan, 1963). In sport the hierarchy continues to become more professional. Kidd and Woodman (1975) define professionalization of sport as a hierarchy in which one plays a sport at first for
fun, then to play skillfully, and finally to win.

Studies that examine the relationship between children and competition usually show males as being more competitive (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974) and more physically active, especially in groups of other males (Harper & Sanders, 1973; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Maloney & Petrie, 1972). Just by watching television or reading a newspaper we can observe that sport and competition are dominated by males.

As mentioned earlier, children are socialized differently depending on their gender. This influence becomes stronger when children are socialized toward sport (Kidd & Woodman, 1975; Webb, 1969). Both mothers and fathers are more apprehensive about the physical well being of their daughters; while they attempt to elicit more gross motor behavior from their sons, and fathers play "rough and tumble" with sons more than daughters (Cairns, 1979). As boys reach school age they become more involved in sport by playing outside more often than girls and becoming involved in school sponsored athletics (Harper & Sanders, 1975).

Boys and girls play sports for different reasons and these are encouraged differently by mothers and fathers (Kidd & Woodman, 1975; Maier & LavrAKas, 1981;
McElroy, 1983). Mothers encourage both their sons and daughters to play for the traditional feminine reasons, defined by McElroy (1983) as playing fair, and allowing everyone to play. Fathers continue to sex-type their children differently as related to sport. Fathers influence their daughters to play for the traditional feminine reasons and their sons to play for the traditional masculine reasons, which are to play to win and to improve one's skill (McElroy, 1983).

Fathers and Sons: Sex Roles, Sport, and Winning

Society's expectations of men are changing yet men are still able to easily demonstrate masculinity through sport, competition, and winning (Emihovich, Gaier, & Cronin, 1983). Parents influence the beliefs of their children and fathers appear to be especially responsible for attitudes and behavior of their sons. Therefore, the present study examines not only sons' perceptions of who influences them in sport, and their participation in sport, but also fathers' and sons' sex role orientations, SVO, and OTW.

Boys who rate as more masculine in their Sport Value Orientation and high in their Orientation Toward Winning are expected to score high in masculinity in their sex role orientation, to participate in sports
more regularly, to rate either father or coach as the person who influences them the most in sports, and to have fathers who rate as high in masculinity, have a masculine SVO, and a high OTW. On the other hand, because the feminine reasons for playing sports are to play fairly and allow everyone to play it is expected that if the father scores as having a sex role orientation which is high in femininity, he would also rate as having feminine SVO and low OTW. Thus, the son's sex role orientation and Sport Value Orientation should be more feminine and his Orientation Toward Winning should be lower.

Method

Materials

The Short Bem Sex Role Inventory (Short BSRI) was used to determine the fathers' and sons' sex role orientations (Bem, 1974; Bem, 1979). The Short BSRI yields scores on degree of femininity and masculinity. The Short BSRI asks the subjects to rate themselves on 30 personality characteristics. Usually the adjectives are rated on a seven point Likert continuum. To make the form easier for the boys a five point scale was used and the phrase "I am" was placed before each adjective. The same scale was also used for the fathers. The Short
BSRI has high internal (ranging from .84 to .90) and
test-retest (ranging from .76 to .91) reliability, and
claims adequate validity (Bem, 1974; Bem, 1981; Payne,
1985). The scale was designed to assess sex role
orientations independently of each other (the femininity
score does not affect the masculinity score and vice
versa).

The participants completed the Sport Value
Orientation (SVO) scale adapted from McElroy (1983).
The scale was designed to reveal whether the
participants had a feminine or masculine Sport Value
Orientation. The two questions asked the boys and their
fathers to choose which aspect was the most and second
most important to them in sports. The choices were: (a)
to beat your opponent or the other team (b) to play
fairly, (c) to play as well as you can, and (d) to be
sure everyone gets to play. The first question (which
is most important) was scored a +2 or a -2, with
positive scores recorded for the masculine responses
(skill and win) and negative scores recorded for the
feminine responses (playing fair and allowing everyone
to play). The second question (which is second most
important) was scored either as a +1 or a -1. Together
these scores gave the subjects a total ranging from +3
(high masculine) to -3 (high feminine). For statistical ease the scores were converted to positive numbers, high masculine 4, low masculine 3, low feminine 2, and high feminine 1. The literature on McElroy's scale does not give validity or reliability.

The portion designed to measure the subjects' Orientation Toward Winning (OTW), adapted from Kidd and Woodman (1975), consisted of four questions that the subjects rated on a five point scale. The scores could range from a total of 4 (low OTW) to 20 (high OTW). This four question scale has an estimated reliability of .76 but no validity estimates were attempted.

Theoretically the SVO and OTW should overlap since they are both scales which measure reasons to play sports. Because neither has been validated it is expected that the overlap would provide some validation for each.

Along with the Short BSRI, SVO, and OTW the boys were asked if they participated in sports and their perception of who influences them the most in sport.

Subjects and Procedures

In an attempt to make participation in this study convenient for potential subjects, two procedures were used. The first was used when testing subjects selected
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from schools, the second for subjects selected from Boy Scout troops. In both instances the researcher was introduced to the boys as "a graduate student working on her thesis". The researcher elaborated on what that involved and asked the boys to help by participating in the study. Both groups consisted of boys in fifth through twelfth grades and their fathers. The majority of the 80 participants who live in a metropolitan area of approximately 500,000, are Caucasian and middle class. The mean age for the boys was 13.3, standard deviation was 2; the fathers' mean age was 41.5, standard deviation was 5.

The boys in private schools who wanted to participate were asked to take a consent form home to their fathers. If allowed to participate the boys were asked to complete the questionnaire (which included the Short Bem Sex Role Inventory, SVO scale, OTW scale, questions asking who influences him in sport, and if he participates in sports) "as honestly as you can". The fathers were sent the Short Bem Sex Role Inventory, SVO, and OTW scales and asked to complete and return them.

The Boy Scouts choosing to participate completed the Short BSRI, SVO, OTW, and the questions on who influences him in sport, and whether he participates in
sports. They then took the consent form and Short BSRI, SVO, and OTW scales home. If the father returned the signed consent form and completed scales, the father-son pair were included in the study.

In both instances a form was enclosed for the fathers to request results from the study.

**Results**

The results indicate that there is a small amount of variability among the scores. Table 1 illustrates the means and standard deviations for the scores.

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients were calculated for all variable pairs including measures on the sons: sex role orientation (as measured by the Short BSRI), SVO, OTW, participation in sports, and perception of who influences the boys most in sports, along with measures on the fathers' sex role orientation, SVO, and OTW. The complete correlation matrix is shown in Table 2.

---

Insert Table 2 about here

---
The analyses revealed significant relationships between the sons' SVO and OTW, $r = .382$ ($p < .05$) and between the fathers' SVO and OTW, $r = .418$ ($p < .05$). The son playing sports on a regular basis was positively correlated with his perception that his father influenced him most in sport, $r = .225$ ($p < .05$) and negatively correlated with his perception that "other" (sibling, friend, etc.) influenced him in sport, $r = -.321$ ($p < .05$). It was revealed that if a father had a high OTW he was likely to have a son who rated as high in masculinity on the BSRI, $r = .223$ ($p < .05$), and played sports on a regular basis, $r = .216$ ($p < .05$). Fathers' femininity scores on the BSRI were positively correlated with sons' femininity scores on the BSRI, $r = .276$ ($p < .05$) and fathers' masculinity scores were correlated with sons' OTW, $r = .210$ ($p < .05$).

There was a significant relationship between the sons' femininity scores on the BSRI and the fathers' masculinity score on the BSRI, $r = .214$ ($p < .05$) and between sons' masculinity scores on the BSRI and fathers' femininity score on the BSRI, $r = .304$ ($p < .05$). There was a negative correlation between the sons' masculinity scores and the sons' perceiving a coach as influencing him the most in sport, $r = -.201$.
(p < .05).

The data were also analyzed with a Canonical Correlation to look for the overall overlap of measures on the sons and fathers. The correlations between measures on sons and fathers and their canonical variates are shown in Table 3. The canonical variates explain about 40% of the total variance in measures on the sons and about 20% of the variance in measures on the fathers. The significant pairwise relationships listed above account for almost all of the overlap.

Insert Table 3 about here

Discussion

This study examined the relationship between fathers' and sons' sex role orientations, Sport Value Orientation and Orientation Toward Winning, as well as sons' perceptions of who influences their sport involvement and the sons' participation in sports. Past research has shown that fathers encourage their sons to demonstrate not only appropriate sex role behavior in general, but also to play sports for the traditional masculine reasons (to win and to improve their skill) (McElroy, 1983). The expectation for this study was
that the results would support those earlier findings. It was also hypothesized based on past research that fathers who influence their sons in sport and feel winning is important in sport will rate high in masculinity, will have sons who rate high in masculinity, feel winning is one of the most important reasons for playing sports, and will play sports on a regular basis.

The low variability among scores could have significantly influenced all correlations since the lack of variability limits possible relationships.

The SVO and OTW were the two scales included in this study to determine the sons' and fathers' attitudes toward sport and winning. It was expected that the two scales would yield scores which would largely overlap thus providing some validity for each other as determinates of the participants' reasons for playing sports. There was a significant correlation between the SVO and OTW, indicating that the scales measure variables in the same general domain, but obviously measure different aspects of that domain. Thus, the correlation, although moderate (the low variability may influence this relationship as well as all the others), does lend some validity to the use of those scores to
indicate the subjects' reasons for playing sports. As predicted by earlier studies that show that fathers influence their sons in many ways (Bearison, 1979; Emihovich, Gaier, & Cronin, 1984; Fagot, 1974) and that males are able to demonstrate masculinity through sport and winning (Emihovich, Gaier, & Cronin, 1984), this study showed that fathers who score high in masculinity on the Short BSRI and who score a high Orientation Toward Winning have sons who believe similarly. Fathers who feel that winning is an important aspect of sport are more likely to have sons who also believe that, who rate as high in masculinity on the Short BSRI, and who play sports on a regular basis. Fathers who rate as high in masculinity on the Short BSRI are more likely to have sons who feel winning is an important aspect of sport (high OTW). Also, boys who do play sports on a regular basis are more likely to be influenced in sport by their fathers (and least likely to be influenced by others, such as siblings or friends). In this study boys who rate as high in femininity, generally have fathers who also rate high in femininity on the Short BSRI. This correlation supports the Emihovich, Gaier, and Cronin (1984) study which states that boys are influenced by the beliefs and
values their fathers hold, even if those beliefs and values are not traditional.

While the above data lend some support to previous research and theory, there were results which run counter to this. The most apparent is the positive relationship between the sons' masculinity score on the Short BSRI and fathers' femininity score on the BSRI and vice versa.

This may have been due to one of several weaknesses in the study. The first of which was using the BSRI on boys below high school age (the Bem Sex Role Inventory was standardized on college students) (Bem, 1978). Many subjects had difficulty understanding some of the adjectives (e.g. assertive, dominant, and compassionate), this may have led the boys to answer differently than if easier adjectives had been used. Although this may have weakened the study in that way, using the Short BSRI did provide a scale for the measurement of sex role orientation for fathers and sons that eliminated other problems that might have occurred if different scales had been used. Other shortcomings of the study were: the selection process which may have eliminated participants who would rate as high in masculinity on the Short BSRI, SVO and have a high OTW;
as obtaining participants from a sport oriented group (e.g. football team), or doing purposive sampling may provide participants which include boys who would rate high in masculinity. The researcher should also use subjects from a smaller age range, provide scales which are more suited to the participants' specific ages, and include a larger variety and number of subjects.

Future study in this area should also include other variables which influence boys in sport, such as body type, the influence of peers, as well as the influence of both the father and mother. The scales should provide more specific information which relates to sport and other parent/son interactions. This will contribute to a better understanding of how sport relates to other aspects of a boy's life.
References


Bear, S., Berger, M., & Wright, L. (1979). Even cowboys sing the blues: Difficulties experienced by men trying to adopt nontraditional sex roles and how clinicians can be helpful to them. Sex Roles, 5, 191-198.


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setting. *Developmental Psychology, 9*, 120-123.
Figure Caption

Figure 1. Variables that are related to son's Sport Value Orientation, Orientation Toward Winning, and sex role orientation.
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<td>3. Masculinity Score on BSRI</td>
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Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix

31

Sex Role, Sport, and Winning
### Correlations Between Measures on Sons/Fathers and Canonical Variates

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<td>-.27</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<td>3. Other Influences Son</td>
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<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Plays Sport</td>
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</tr>
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<td>6. Orientation Toward Winning</td>
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Appendix I
Consent Form

This study is being completed to meet the requirements for a graduate thesis at the University of Richmond. The research is designed to look at the relationship between sons and fathers, especially fathers' influence on sons' orientations toward sport. Several factors will be examined: fathers' socialization, fathers' orientations toward sport and winning, sons' perceptions of the influence others have on them in relation to sports, sons' participation in sports, sons' socialization, and sons' orientations toward sport and winning. You will be able to receive the overall and personal results from this study. To participate please read and sign below. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

[Signature]
Leah Narro

I agree to participate in this study by completing and returning a scale and a questionnaire which will be mailed to my home. I agree to allow my son to participate by completing these during school. I
understand that the information my son and I provide is confidential.

Signature:__________________________
Print name:__________________________
Son's name:__________________________
Address:_____________________________
City:_______________________________
Zip code:___________________________
Appendix II
Request for Results

Thank you for participating in this study. Please complete the attached scale and questionnaire. Return this sheet, the questionnaire and the scale in the addressed envelope by April 15th. If you want to receive results from this study please sign below. Results will be mailed out after completion of the study (in about two months).

I would like to receive my personal and the overall results from this study.

Signature: ____________________

My son would like to receive his personal results and he has my permission.

Signature: ____________________
Appendix III
Consent Form

This study is being completed to meet the requirements for a graduate thesis at the University of Richmond. The research is designed to look at the relationship between sons and fathers, especially fathers' influence on sons' orientations toward sport. Several factors will be examined: fathers' socialization, fathers' orientations toward sport and winning, sons' perceptions of the influence others have on them in relation to sports, sons' participation in sports, sons' socialization, and sons' orientations toward sport and winning. To participate please read and sign below. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Leah Narro

I agree to participate in this study by completing and returning this sheet along with the attached scale and questionnaire. I agree to allow my son to participate by completing these at Boy Scouts. I understand that the information my son and I provide is confidential.

Signature: __________________________

Print name: __________________________
Son's name: ______________________
Address: ______________________
City: ______________________
Zip code: ______________________

I would like to receive my personal and the overall results from this study.

Signature: ______________________

My son would like to receive his personal results and he has my permission.

Signature: ______________________
Appendix IV
Student Questionnaire

Name:
Grade:
Age:

These are some questions about how you feel about sports. Please answer them as honestly as you can. Circle the letter beside your answer.

1. Which of the following people seem to show the most interest in you playing sports?

   A. Mother
   B. Father
   C. Coach
   D. Other (friend, brother, sister, etc.)

2. Do you play an organized sport (such as baseball or tennis) on a regular basis?

   A. Yes, I do play an organized sport on a regular basis.
   B. No, I do not play organized sports that often.

3. In playing a sports game, which of the following is the most important?

   A. To beat your opponent or the other team
   B. To play fairly
   C. To play as well as you can
   D. To be sure everyone gets to play

4. In playing a sports game, which of the following is the second most important?

   A. To beat your opponent or the other team
   B. To play fairly
   C. To play as well as you can
   D. To be sure everyone gets to play
For the remaining questions please answer by writing the number which best describes you.

1--never or almost never true
2--usually not true
3--occasionally true
4--usually true
5--always or almost always true

___1. Winning is the most important thing in a competitive contest.

___2. To win in sports is essential.

___3. Victory is important because it is the ultimate reason for the contest.

___4. Winning may not be everything, but it is more important than anything else.

Adapted from: McElroy, 1983; Kidd and Woodman, 1975
Appendix V
Father Questionnaire

Name:
Age:
Son's name:

These are some questions about how you feel about sports. Please answer them as honestly as you can. Circle the letter beside your answer.

1. In playing a sports game, which of the following is the **most** important?
   A. To beat your opponent or the other team
   B. To play fairly
   C. To play as well as you can
   D. To be sure everyone gets to play

2. In playing a sports game, which of the following is the **second most** important?
   A. To beat your opponent or the other team
   B. To play fairly
   C. To play as well as you can
   D. To be sure everyone gets to play

For the remaining questions please answer by writing the number which best describes you.

1--never or almost never true
2--usually not true
3--occasionally true
4--usually true
5--always or almost always true

___1. Winning is the most important thing in a competitive contest.

___2. To win in sports is essential.

___3. Victory is important because it is the ultimate reason for the contest.
4. Winning may not be everything, but it is more important than anything else.

Adapted from: McElroy, 1983; Kidd and Woodman, 1975
Appendix VI
Sex Role Inventory

Below is a list of characteristics. Please rate how each describes you.

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I defend my own beliefs.
I am affectionate.
I am conscientious.
I am independent.
I am sympathetic.
I am moody.
I am assertive.
I am sensitive to the needs of others.
I am reliable.
I have a strong personality.
I am understanding.
I am jealous.
I am forceful.
I am compassionate.
I am truthful.
I have leadership abilities.
I am eager to soothe hurt feelings.
I am secretive.
I am willing to take risks.
I am warm.
I am adaptable.
I am dominant.
I am tender.
I am conceited.
I am willing to take a stand.
I love children.
I am tactful.
I am aggressive.
I am gentle.
I am conventional.

Adapted from: Bem, 1981