

All The World's A Stage : A Narrative Review on The Impact of Gender Norm Conformity on Self Esteem From 1975-2020

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Abstract

The relationship between self-esteem and gender norm conformity has been one that has changed over the years. Due to the dynamic results over different periods of time, the authors found it relevant to conduct a review of literature over a period of 45 years. 44 articles were included in this review from the period 1975-2020. The articles included were mostly empirical ones. We found different models (androgyny, masculinity and congruence) gaining momentum over different time periods. Additionally, we saw how most researchers found a positive connection between masculine gender norm conformity and self-esteem. We showed how the patriarchal system of society and the socio-cultural contexts of different periods of time influenced our findings. We concluded that neither masculinity nor femininity is inherently linked to self-esteem.

Keywords: Gender norm , Self-esteem, Masculinity, Femininity, Androgyny, Social-cognitive theory of learning

The dynamicity of gender and self-esteem has garnered a lot of attention from researchers over the years. Gender impacts our lives in many ways. Conformity to gender norms impacts our body image (Adams et al,2017), our lifestyle satisfaction (Klienplatz et al 1992) and even our self-esteem (Bem, 1974). With regards to self-esteem, Josephs et. al. (1992) found that men and women base their self-esteem on different things. For women, being connected is important and for men being independent is vital. Even recent research (Cross &Madson., 1997; Maddux & Brewer, 2004) confirms this viewpoint. Discussing why such differences exist, Joseph's et. al. (1992) also found that self-esteem is related to successfully achieving culturally mandated gender norms. Chodrow's (1978) theory of how gender is acquired vis-à-vis mother-child relation has also explained why such a difference between the bases of self-esteem exists. The psychoanalytical school, the cognitive school, the social role theory, the gender schema, the gender role socialization perspective and the social learning perspective all bring to light poignant facets of gender. We will use the last viewpoint to reflect on the understanding of gender in this paper. In 1963, Bandura & Walters proposed that gender is learnt mainly through two processes— observational learning and reinforcement. An extension of social learning is Bandura's theory of social cognitive learning (Bandura, 1999) which posits that a triarchic relationship between the individual's behaviour, their environment and their personal factors (which would include cognition). The basic assumptions of this theory are as follows (McCormick & Martinko, 2004):

- Learning occurs through observation
- Observation can occur without limitation as learning is an internal process
- Cognition impacts learning

Hence, cognitive elements like one's expectations about future effects of decisions impact our present behaviour (Nabavi, 2012). Thus, how we 'perform' our gender is impacted both by our environment and our own cognition.

Consequently, the culture in which we learn our gender is hence of importance. Our gender is created through what people do and say (Zevallos, 2014). It is the overarching universal norm that women are supposed to be communal and empathetic and men, stoic and autonomous. Most media outlets advocate for such behavior as well. However, some cultures do stand out – like the South Korean culture which has presently seen a promotion of makeup ads for men ("South Korean flowerboys", 2018) or the Tahitian culture wherein the social norms for men and women are quite similar (Hegelson, 2012). Gender norms set in the background culture thus play a vital role in classifying what constitutes a gender conforming or non-conforming identity. This review will thus also explore culture and its impact on gender conformity. The focus here is on gender norms which are socially constructed roles, behaviours and attributes that are considered socially appropriate for males and females (American Psychological Association, 2011). One has to only look to find the gender norms of physique and clothes, of interests.

For example, women are expected and also taught to like cooking, (Helgeson, 2012) and are expected to dress in a 'feminine manner' accentuating their hips and buttocks (Lucenford, 2010). The second construct of importance in this paper is that of self-esteem. William James (1890) defines self-esteem as "success divided by pretensions". Hence, what is of importance is how much one has achieved in relation to their ambitions. This makes self-esteem a very personal and subjective concept. Additionally, our evaluation of our worth is also impacted by what we perceive others think of us (Cooley, 1983). Here too, our beliefs and hence subjectivity plays an important role. The level of self-esteem that we possess is also quite influential. It has an impact on our social relationships, how we experience stress and our overall well-being, defined by markers like depression and anxiety (Vanbuskirk, 2021). According to Leary (1999) having a high self-esteem also helps us in goal-setting, becoming more confident and motivated. It has also been found to

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have an impact on our overall happiness, academic achievement and adjustment (Mann et al, 2004). The relationship between gender normativity and self-esteem has evolved through the years and has resulted in the emergence of three definitive models—namely the androgyny model, the congruence model and the masculinity model (Whitely, 1983). The stand point of congruence model is that gender norm conformity aligned to own biological sex is beneficial to psychological well-being. The androgyny model posits that an androgynous gender identity is the best for psychological well-being. The masculinity model states that conforming to masculine gender norms maximises self-esteem. The impact of gender also remains dynamic over time. Keeping in mind the social cognitive learning theory, we can also understand how the changing tides have impacted gender and thus the impacts of gender conformity. It is consequently very poignant that at the turn of a decade we assess where we began and where we are today. Answers to questions like – what has changed in this relationship between gender normativity and self-esteem and why, can bear the seed for understanding the formative relationship between gender nor conformity and self-esteem in the future. The rationale behind this article is to try and understand fully the dynamicity of the relationship between gender norm conformity from the time period of 1974-2020 and its implications for further research.

See Table 1 for operational definitions of terms important to the text henceforth to ensure clarity.

self- esteem. The initial database used for literature retrieval was Google Scholar. Originally the key words used were gender norms, conformity and self-esteem. The data before 1975 was not included in the search. However, because of the limited search capacity of the three words, additional key words were added (LGBT conformity, androgynous, masculinity, femininity well-being). From Google Scholar, Pro Quest, CORE 200 relevant citations were found. Articles with repetitive findings and studying relationships beyond the scope of this paper like weight, concussion reporting, friendship were screened out and 62 were put through rigorous analysis. Finally from 62 articles, 20 were screened out keeping in mind the exclusion criteria. . From our search we found only 10 new citations were found from the ProQuest (9 articles) and CORE (1 article) data bases, from which only 3 went through thorough analysis and finally only 2 articles from these databases collectively were included. The lack of funding and infrastructure and the limited financial resources available was the primary reason for using Google Scholar exhaustively. Articles studying the relationship between gender norm conformity and self- esteem as a secondary relationship (for example; impact of self-esteem on body image) and those with similar conclusions around already established relationships were excluded. Finally 44 were taken for in-depth analysis. Those studies that brought in relevant intervening variables that impacted the relationship between gender norm conformity and self-esteem were included like skin colour, sexual

Table 1
Definitions of important terms

Term	Meaning
Sex	A biological phenomenon. Sex touches upon the biological and physical traits of male/female (APA, 2015).
Gender Identity	The feeling that one has as being female, male or something outside the gender binary (APA, 2006).
GenderNon-conforming	An umbrella term for those whose gender roles and expressions differs from the gender norms associated to the biological sex they were assigned to at birth (APA, 2015).
Transgender	An umbrella term for those who feel that their gender identity does not conform to their assigned sex (APA, 2015). Includes those who feel they don't fit into the gender binary (Meier et. al., 2013).
Lesbians Gays	They feel attraction to their own sex. Additionally their sexual orientation falls within the long-standing gender binary (APA, 2015)
Androgyny model	The androgyny model posits that an androgynous gender identity is the best for psychological well-being (Whitely,1983)
Masculinity model	The masculinity model states that conforming to masculine gender norms maximises self-esteem. (Whitely,1983)
Congruence model	Psychological well-being is fostered when one's gender identity is congruent to one's sex role orientation (Whitely,1983)
Androgynous	A person possessing balanced levels of both masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1974)

Method

The aim of this review article was to find the relationship between gender norm conformity and

orientation, evolving gender identities etc for literature retrieval. Since this was a narrative review article, no human subjects were involved and only

secondary data sources were used.

Data Collection

The data was collected over a period of 6 months using the method detailed above. 44 articles were then arranged in a table according to theme and year for ease of analysis.

See Table 2 for a detailed description of the different research findings of different periods.

From the data above, we have identified that the

following themes have emerged in different periods of time:

- 1975-1980; The androgyny model prevails with a resurgence in the masculinity model at the end of the period
- 1981-1985 and 1986-1990; The masculinity model prevails

Table 2

Research findings of different periods

S No.	Year	Paper Title	Author(s)	Findings
1	1974	The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny	Sandra Bem	i. That femininity and masculinity are domains not incompatible but complementary to each other- made up of positive attributes. ii. Androgyny/an androgynous personality is needed for an individual to be truly healthy. Androgyny is nothing but a balanced combination of masculinity and femininity.
2	1975	Ratings Of Self and Peers On Sex Role Attributes And Their Relation To Self-Esteem and Conceptions of Masculinity And Femininity	Spencer, Helmrich and Stapp	i. In contrast to those who scored low in the PAQ, individuals who were androgynous reported to dating more, receiving more awards and honors. ii. Masculinity was highly significantly positively correlated with self-esteem (when looked at from the lens of sex typed and male valued items) whereas femininity significantly and positively correlated to self-esteem when it was only assessed by the female valued scale (attributes considered as feminine but considered desirable for both sexes).
3	1977	New Formulations of Sex Roles and Androgyny: A Critical Review	Kelly & Worrell	i. Androgyny and masculinity tap into agentic orientation and femininity taps into a maladaptive and passive one.
4	1978	The Enigma of Androgyny: Differential Implications for Males And Females?	Jones, Chernovetz & Hansson	i. Masculine subjects have higher self-esteem than feminine and androgynous individuals.
5	1978	Androgyny And Self-Esteem in The Upper-Middle Class: A Replication Of Spence	Conner, Mann & Bardwick	i. Being androgynous in one's personality predicted the highest self-esteem scores. ii. Though masculinity was correlated to self-esteem in both men and women, femininity was not related to self-esteem in males. iii. Occupationally successful men scored higher vis-à-vis self-esteem than females.
6	1979	Psychological Androgyny, Feminine Gender Identity and Self-Esteem In Homosexual And Heterosexual Males.	Robert Hooberman	i. There exists a positive correlation between androgyny and self-esteem. ii. Only when masculinity scores are based solely on the individuals' acceptance of masculine norms and not the rejection of the feminine norm of expressivity, do masculinity and self-esteem have a positive relation. iii. The homosexual group encouraged more androgynous behavior and accepted conformity to feminine gender norms. iv. High feminine scores does not necessarily imply low self-esteem scores.
7	1980	The Relationship Of Masculinity, Femininity, And Androgyny To Self-Esteem	Antil & Cunningham	i. Masculine individuals scored higher than androgynous individuals. ii. A nominal, slightly negative correlation between self-esteem and femininity. Femininity was not linked to self-esteem in males iii. Femininity was seen to be negatively correlated to self-esteem in females.

- 1991-1995; The masculinity model prevails with studies detailing the complexity of the relationship

8	1982	Psychological Androgyny: Theories, Methods, And Conclusions.	Taylor & Hall	<p>i.Masculinity has a greater effect on psychological well-being than femininity does.</p> <p>ii.Lower levels of depression is connected to high levels of masculinity.</p>
9	1983	Defeminization And Adult Psychological Well-Being Among Male Homosexuals	Harry	<p>i.Many homosexuals show cross-gender preferences during childhood. However, since most homosexuals don't appear 'markedly effeminate' during adulthood- we can infer that they went through a defeminisation process.</p> <p>ii.Masculinity was not a spontaneous development, rather it was a product of an imposition by society.</p> <p>iii.Those who defeminised during adulthood (i.e. subscribed to masculine gender norms) showed higher self-esteem than those who were persistently effeminate.</p> <p>iv.A higher correlation was found between masculinity and self-esteem for homosexual men (0.56) than for the heterosexual group.</p>
10	1983	A Comparison of Androgynous, Feminine, Masculine, And Undifferentiated Women on Self-Esteem, Body Satisfaction, And Sexual Satisfaction	Kimlicka, Cross & Tarnai	<p>i.Femininity and undifferentiated subjects were most similar to each other (in the college sample).</p> <p>ii.In the college sample, masculinity and androgyny were most similar to each other and</p> <p>iii.Masculinity is positively correlated to self-concept and femininity is not.</p>
11	1983	Sex Role Orientation And Self-Esteem:A Critical Meta-Analytic Review	Whitely	<p>i.No support for the congruence was found.</p> <p>ii.The reason the interplay between femininity and masculinity (i.e. androgyny) was positively correlated to self-esteem was because of the "masculine" component.</p>
12	1985	Masculinity, Femininity, Self-Esteem, And Subclinical Depression	Feather	<p>i.The variable of self-esteem accounts for a negative relationship between depression and masculinity.</p> <p>ii.Self-esteem relates to more masculine characteristics (of instrumentality, being active, etc.).</p>
13	1987	The Impact Of Gender-Role Identity, Conformity And Choice On Women's Self-Esteem, Lifestyle Satisfaction And Conflict.	Klienplatz	<p>i.Traditional women and, more specifically, traditional women who conformed heavily to feminine gender norms had lower self-esteem than non-traditional non-conformist and non-traditional women.</p> <p>ii.Non-traditional women have greater lifestyle satisfaction and lesser anxiety.</p> <p>iii.The profile of the woman with high self-esteem was one who was older, married and with a child which was contrary to the expectation that a younger unmarried woman would probably score higher in self-esteem.</p>
14	1987	Gender-Role Orientation of Adolescent Females: Effects On Self-Esteem And Locus Of Control	Mullis & McKinley	<p>i.Adolescent females who were masculine/androgynous had higher self-esteem than those who were categorized as undifferentiated.</p>
15	1987	The Influence of Sex-Role Identity And Occupational Attainment On The Asian American Women Psychological Well-Being Of Asian American Women	Ngan-Ling Chow	<p>i.Androgynous working Asian-American women had the highest self-esteem.</p> <p>ii. Feminine women had higher self-esteem than masculine women.</p> <p>iii.Probably due to the specific emphasis on femininity in the Asian culture (Fong, 1973), feminine working women showed greater work satisfaction.</p>
16	1987	Androgyny, Masculinity, And Self-Esteem	Lundy & Rosenberg	<p>i.Androgyny scales that emphasize masculinity were most predictive of self-esteem due to a somewhat independent correlation between androgyny and masculinity.</p> <p>ii.Masculine items endorsed by both males and females were the ones related to self-esteem and the ones that were overtly solely endorsed by males had the weakest relation to self-esteem.</p>

- 1996-2000; The congruence model finds support
- 2001-2005; The androgyny and congruence

17	1988	Gender Identity, Self-Esteem, And Physical and Sexual Abuse In Dating Relationships	Burke, Stets & Pirog-Good	i. Feminine identity was associated to lower self-esteem.
18	1991	Gender Role, Gender-Role Conflict, And Psychological Well-Being In Men	Sharpe & Heppner	i. PAQ masculinity scores were linked to positive psychological well-being reports, specifically self-esteem. ii. There exist 2 types of well-being – traditional well-being and affiliative well-being. Both were conceptualized to be important. iii. Masculinity was seen to be the best predictor of both these well-beings. However, there exists a considerable amount of variance in this model and its cause could be attributed to femininity.
19	1994	Masculinity, Femininity, And Hispanic Professional Women's Self-Esteem and Self-Acceptance	Long & Martinez	i. Hispanic women's femininity scores were slightly lower than their masculinity scores. This may be a result of their attempt to 'fit into' the American highly-individualized society. ii. Masculinity was significantly related to self-esteem scores. iii. The professional Hispanic women group had elevated masculinity scores but their self-esteem scores did not vary significantly from the other groups. This indicated the presence of other variables.
20	1994	Multiple Roles and Identities: Factors Influencing Self-Esteem Among Middle Aged Working Men and Women	Reitzes & Multran	i. Commitment to the parent, spouse and worker role was positively related to self-esteem regardless of the sex of the individual. Hence, the expectation that conformity to the worker role by men and the family role by women would consequently increase self-esteem; was not supported.
21	1995	Gender Roles And Self-Esteem: A Consideration of Environmental Factors	Burnett, Anderson & Heppner	i. There exists a masculine bias in American societies. ii. Those with the masculine traits of independence, competitiveness and decisiveness report higher self-esteem than those without it. iii. Women without low masculinity were at risk for low self-esteem specifically when in an environment high in masculinity.
22	1995	The Gender Role Strain Paradigm: An Update	Pleck	i. Men are adversely affected by traditional masculine gender norms due to different types of psychological 'strains' felt. ii. Strict conformity to traditional gender norms of masculinity adversely impacts a man's well-being.
23	1996	Gender Role Identity and Self-Esteem	Frome & Eccles	i. Support for the congruence model- that psychological well-being results from the alignment of one's sex role and gender identity was found. However, this model was revised to the idea of gender being on a spectrum. ii. Masculine women who perceived themselves as such and devalued femininity had high self-esteem. iii. Masculine males who devalued masculinity and valued femininity had lower self-esteem than those who did not. iv. Feminine women who devalue femininity and value masculinity did not have low self-esteem. v. Feminine men who devalued masculinity had low self-esteem. Their valuation of femininity was unrelated to self-esteem. vi. When the gender role identity of men was controlled, valuing masculinity predicted high self-esteem. vii. The pressure for women to avoid masculinity exists but is slightly less severe than the pressure men have on them to avoid femininity.
24	1997	Conformity To Sex-Typed Norms, Affect, And the Self-Concept.	Wood, Christensen, Hebl & Rothgerber	i. The participants for whom gender role norms was important- engaging in norm congruent experiences led to positive experiences. ii. There exist social stereotypes that, despite being self-affirming to the participant, leads to negative self-concept in them.

model are explored. At the end of the era, non-conformity is linked to self esteem

- 2006-2010; Conflicting results, multiple models

find support

- 2011-2020; A new found interest in masculinity

25	1997	Masculinity, Popularity, And Self-Esteem Among Israeli Preadolescent Girls.	Slone & Winch	i.Masculine pre-adolescent Israeli girls lower on tomboyism had significantly higher home and parent-related self-esteem.
26	1999	Attitudes Toward Gender Roles, Self-Esteem, And Body Image	Lennon, Rudd, Sloan & Kim	i.In women with non-traditional attitudes towards gender, placing importance on grooming and clothes was not positively related to self-esteem. ii.Across all the sample groups, highest self-esteem was found in those who had non-traditional gender role attitudes.
27	2001	Gender Identity: A Multidimensional Analysis with Implications For Psychosocial Adjustment	Egan & Perry	i.Felt pressure to conform is linked negatively to adjustment. ii.Gender typicality (feeling that one is a typical example of their gender) is positively related to adjustment. iii.Children's adjustment is optimized when they feel free to explore cross-sex options if they so desire. iv.Boys scored higher than girls with regards to gender typicality and felt pressure to conform. v.Felt pressure to conform affected girls more than boys.
28	2001	The Blacker The Berry: Gender, Skin Tone, Self-Esteem, And Self-Efficacy	Thompson & Keith	i.Skincolour of black people was relevant to the masculine norms of competence and feminine norms of affirmation of self. ii.Men's self-efficacy was impacted when their skin color impacted others understanding of their conformity to the norm of competence. iii.Working women's self-esteem was impacted when they received higher evaluations about their attractiveness.
29	2005	Black Adolescent Girls: Do Gender Role and Racial Identity: Impact Their Self-Esteem	Buckley & Carter	i.Androgynous/masculine black girls had higher self-esteem and so did girls with internally defined racial attitudes. ii.Androgynous girls showed that their self-esteem was positive when it came to their physical appearance.
30	2005	Examining African Self-Consciousness and Black Racial Identity as Predictors Of Black Men's Psychological Well-Being.	Mahalik, Pierre & Wan	i.A black man's self-esteem was positively related to their 'internalization' of racial attitudes and negatively related to conforming to the masculine norms as prescribed by the dominant culture.
31	2005	How Investment in Gender Ideals Affects Well-Being: The Role of External Contingencies of Self-Worth.	Sanchez & Crocker	i.Investment in gender ideals predicts higher gender norm conformity. ii.Investment in gender ideals indirectly affect self-esteem- it is mediated by whether their self-worth is externally contingent or not. iii.Investing in gender ideals is more costly to psychological well-being when accompanied by avoidance of different sex ideals. iv.Investing in gender norms negatively predicted self-esteem for both the genders. This is because it leads to the development of a fragile, externally dependent self-esteem.
32	2005	Heterogeneity In Transgender: A Cluster Analysis of A Thai Sample	Winter	i.The undifferentiated Male to Female transgender group may be the best adjusted (in the Thai sample).
33	2005	Social Anxiety in Young Gay Men	Pachankis&Goldfried	i.Gay men have lower self-esteem as compared to their heterosexual counterparts. i.No support was found for the hypothesis linking low self-esteem to greater childhood gender non-conformity.
34	2006	Gender Nonconformity and Psychological Distress in Lesbians And Gay Men	Skidmore, Linsenmeier& Bailey	ii.It was found that for gay men and not lesbian women, gender non-conformity was linked to psychological distress.

Discussion
The Historical context- Culture and Gender norm conformity

The 1970's is synonymous to the growing popularity of feminist icons like Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan. This period was shaped by the rise of second

35	2009	Body Image Concerns and Contingent Self-Esteem In Male And Female College Students	Grossbard, Lee, Neighbors and Larimer	i.For males, a greater contingent self-esteem was related to a stronger drive for muscularity (which prior research has shown to be connected to masculine norms). ii.Females reported weight-related concerns and reported higher levels of contingent self-esteem.
36	2009	Reported Effects of Masculine Ideals on Gay Men	Sanchez, Greenberg, Liu, Ming, Vilian	i.Adherence to masculine norms by gay men had many negative impacts. Gay men had a more negative self-image as well. ii.Gay men reported feeling more pressure to adhere to masculine gender norms.
37	2010	Self-Regulation of Gendered Behavior In Everyday Life	Guerrero-Witt & Wood	i.Higher the conformity to gender norms, higher their self-esteem would be.
38	2010	Doing Gender for Different Reasons: Why Gender Conformity Positively and Negatively Predicts Self-Esteem	Good & Sanchez	i.Conformity to gender norms leads to lowered self-esteem if the conformity was a result of societal pressure for both genders.
39	2010	Masculine Norms, Avoidant Coping, Asian Values And Depression Among Asian American Men	Iwamoto, Liao & Ming Lee	i.For Asian men, subscribing to the norm of winning (a masculine norm) served as a protective factor of mental health.
40	2014	Men's Self-Compassion and Self-Esteem: The Moderating Roles of Shame And Masculine Norm Adherence	Reilly, Rochlen&Awad	i.Lower masculine norm adherence and higher self-esteem was related to higher levels of self-compassion. ii.At high levels of trait shame (which taps into a man's perceived ability to live up to masculine ideals), high gender normativity was related to high self-esteem, but not at low levels of trait shame.
41	2014	Masculine Gender Role Discrepancy Strain and Self-Esteem	Rummell and Levant	i.When the individuals ideal of masculine norms was higher than his actual conformity to masculine norms, his self-esteem was positively impacted.
42	2016	Body Image In Transmen: Multidimensional Measurement and The Effects of Mastectomy	Grift, Krukels, Bouman et. al.	i.Transmen before mastectomy, showed a lower self-esteem ii.Mastectomy improved body satisfaction in the participants. Body satisfaction was related to higher self-esteem.
43	2018	Gender Typicality, Felt Pressure for Gender Conformity, Racial Centrality, And Self-Esteem in African American Adolescents	Skinner, Kurtz-Costes, Wood, and Rowley	i. Gender typicality, that is conforming to the gender norms of one's sex was positively related to self-esteem, especially for girls ii. Felt pressure was negatively related to self-esteem iii. Boys reported experiencing higher pressures to conform and simultaneously higher gender typicality.
44	2020	Is Being Gender Nonconforming Distressing? It Depends Where You Live: Gender Equality Across 15 Nations Predicts How Much Gender Nonconformity Is Related to Self-Esteem	Zentner and Aufsess	i. The positive relation between self-esteem and gender conformity reduced as gender equality increased. ii. Gender non-conformity is not inherently negative for self esteem

Note. 2011-2019 has been considered as one period due to similar nature of findings and a paucity of research between 2011-2015 studying solely the relationship between self-esteem and gender norm conformity

wave feminism. The movement became increasingly political by its proponents lobbying for the Equal Rights Amendment and by engaging in protests and strikes. We find research, poetry and even literary critique taking a feminist turn in this period.

Hence it is no surprise that this period begins with Bem's paper which concludes by giving a nod to the feminist movement of its time. Bem herself admitted that her research was motivated by feminist considerations (Bem, 1981). This period being dominated by the androgyny model is thus understandable. The 1970's was also a momentous year for the LGBT community. The period saw its first Pride Walk and also the American Psychological Association removing homosexuality as a mental illness (Drescher, 2015). Hence the relevance of research like Hooberman's (1979) highlighting the positive impact of the acceptance of femininity by homosexuals on their self-esteem can be understood. The end of the 70's and the beginning of the 80's saw the feminist movement facing a setback in America. The ERA failed to get passed and the newly elected conservative Raegan cabinet continued their resistance to abortion rights and other liberal policies (Clinton, 2003). A growth in films that emphasised and hence reinforced hypermasculinity; like Robocop was also found in this period (Vergne, 2012). It is thus quite understandable why we find growing evidence for the masculinity model in this period. Barringer (1990) also documented a growth of the Asian population in America from 1980-1988 which led to a newfound academic interest in them due to the unique characteristics of their culture and the impact their assimilation had on the American society viz a viz racism and politics (Takagi, 1993)

The Raegan cabinet stayed in power till 1988. During his presidency he remained close to his conservative views and was termed by many as an 'Anti-feminist' president (Coste, 2016). His stay in government could have been the partial reason for the masculinity model remaining dominant in the next period as well. In the 1990's we find the Raegan cabinet passing its baton on to the George HW Bush Cabinet and the rise of third wave feminism. Though the movement began in the mid 1990's (Burkett & Brunell, 2021) one could see traces of it from the dawn of the period itself (E.g., Protests at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development etc). In the world but specifically the United States the ideas of masculinity also began to change. Movie franchises which previously showed ideal men to be hypermasculine churned out new films (E.g., Terminator 2) which showed men in a different light. The ideal new became a man who was 'college-educated, nurturant and father' (Sotelo and Messner, 1994). This shift in the socio-political climate indicated that there were those willing to take a closer look at masculinity. However, Bush's cabinet may not have been as gender-neutral as they would have liked us to believe- as we found out in 2017 with the rise of the

#MeToo movement (McGann, 2018).

In the mid 90's the third wave of feminism came to the forefront. These feminists were different, in that they emphasised on intersectionality. The importance of femininity for females also came to light. The impact of the movement is more profound in the next period (2001-2005). Research moves away from looking at the relationship between self-esteem and gender norm conformity as different for men and women. During this period, we see that regardless of gender there are certain variables – like external conditions of self-worth that impact this relationship (Sanchez and Crocker, 2005).

In the period 2006-2010 there occurs a cultural shift. The transitional period saw its first African American president being elected in America and a very prominent return to liberal policies and attitudes (Khan, 2014). In America especially, the LGBT community faced multiple social victories like the repelling of the 'Don't ask Don't tell' policies. Since the society was moving from conservatism to liberalism, research was similarly affected, and no singular model dominated research in that period of time. This occurred because there was no consensus on what is accepted and what is desirable by society at large, which is necessary for an increase in self-esteem. (Smith-Lovin, 1995)

In 2012 the 4th wave of feminism began. This period focused on harassment, rape and microaggressions. In 2016 Donald Trump became the President of the United States. As he began his campaign trail, the TimesUp and #MeToo movement began as well. Suddenly we saw multiple women calling out powerful men. Culturally, toxic masculinity and abuse by men came into focus all over the world. This consequently led to conversations about whether masculine norms (of dominance and aggression) are truly positively related to well-being and thus self-esteem (Wong et al, 2017). Hence in this period, a focus on the impact that masculinity had on self-esteem can be understood.

Simultaneously gender non-conformance has begun to find representation in the mainstream media with many influential people coming out as gender non-conforming. Though traditional ideas of gender norms don't seem to have changed there is a realization that gender differences are exaggerated (Haines et al, 2016) and that gender norms are a 'performance' (Barker et al, 2015; Weingartern, 2015).

A Theoretical perspective on Gender

As we look through the research articles discussed in this paper, we find evidence of the social cognitive learning theory of gender (either directly or indirectly) in explaining who conforms to what gender norms. Even if we go back as early as the 1980's we find that in Harry's paper (1983) on the defeminization of gay men has been explained as a result of an interaction of the homosexual boys and their environment. He also found that masculinity did not develop

spontaneously. He looked at it as more of an imposition propagated by the pressures and teasing by others.

Skipping ahead a few years, we land at the 1990's and still find evidence of the same model of gender. Eccles (1996) in his paper, explained his findings by turning to the reinforcement providing environment. He found that society values masculinity and devalues femininity. Hence feminine identified men who valued femininity faced a negative impact on their self-esteem.

The studies of the Black American population which we have included in the paper also support the social cognitive theory of how gender is learnt. Buckley and Carter's (2005) findings that black girls who are masculine have higher self-esteem can be explained by the impact that their history as slaves has had on them in that they had to go to work (similar to their male counterparts) and thus go beyond the ideas of traditional femininity (Collins, 2004; Fordham, 1993). Hence, throughout the years we find how important socialization and external rewards and reinforcements are.

The importance of cognition can be found prominently in the period 2011-2020. We find growing evidence of the benefits of gender non-conformance for self-esteem. A reason given for this nonconformity is that it is the result of psychological reactance towards the forces that pressurize people to conform to gender norms. (Jhangiani and Tarry, 2014). Psychological reactance is a motivational force that is so strong that it resists social influence (Brehm 1966; Miron and Brehm, 2006). Jhangiani and Tarry believe that when people feel pressured to conform, a reactance state gets aroused. This reactance is what leads to non-conformity. Psychological reactance can thus also increase self-esteem (Brockner & Elkind, 1985) as it occurs to restore ones feeling of control over their environment and autonomy over their choices and behaviours (Brehm, 1966).

Self-esteem: Conformity to which gender norm is ideal?

The theoretical and historical contexts tell us about gender and why different gender identities and models and how empirical research has documented their dynamicity. To explain why conformity to specific gender norms relate to self-esteem that we will touch upon two theories.

First, Rosenberg et al (1979), Gecas and Shwable (1983) etc. believed that self-esteem is increased when an individual makes favourable comparisons of themselves with others and behaves effectively in their social and or physical world. Secondly, Smith-Lovin (1995) gave us another construction of self-esteem wherein they call it a 'reflexive emotion', one which has developed due to social processes. They also believe that self-esteem is subject to control by one's social environment.

Putting these theories in the context of our findings

we can understand the 'trends' that arose. From 1975-1980 androgyny became the new effective and ideal way of being. This resulted in androgynous people getting an impetus. That is, they could make favourable comparisons of themselves with others and behave in what was then believed to be 'effectively' in their environment. Hence their self-esteem scores soared (Refer to 1 in table 2). However, gender binaries tend to persist (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020) and research is very reactionary in that they are a direct result of the studies preceding them. It is because of this reactionary nature of research that we find different models gaining popularity at different times (e.g. the masculinity model emerging popular after the androgyny model).

Hence influenced by the socio-political context of the time and the inherent tendency of binaries to persist, the masculinity model resurges around 1980 and persists till 1996. Here we would like to bring up another important view of self-esteem as explored by Harist and Orth (2019). They found in their meta-analyses of longitudinal studies that the relationship between self-esteem and social relationships is reciprocal. Social acceptance in this period (1980-1990) positively depended on one conforming to masculine gender norms. This allowed masculine individuals to access positive social relationships which in turn increased their self-esteem. This increase in their self-esteem reciprocally had a positive impact on their social relationships and so the cycle continued. Thus, the social atmosphere at that time promoting masculinity as being the best predictor of self-esteem could be why the masculinity model emerged in this period. Its persistence however can be traced to the reciprocal influence of research on society. In the period between 1991-1995, the focus on the impact of masculinity on self-esteem became more refined. This signalled a coming change in the focus of academic literature as the understanding of masculinity became narrower moving away from a monolithic comprehension of the same, leading to the realization that masculinity as a singular construct may not always have positive impacts on self-esteem (Refer to Research 22 in table 2).

From 1996-2001 we move towards a semblance of balance within the structure of binaries. The understanding of what is 'effective' thus changed (by effective here we mean behaving in a manner which leads to producing socially desirable results). The idea that 'men should be like men and women should be like women' is quite a pervasive one. Hence believing that if one behaved in a gender conforming manner, regardless of their sex, their self-esteem would increase was not difficult for some (Refer to Research 23 in table 2). Consequently, those who already adhered to the gender norms aligning to their sex made favourable comparisons of themselves with others of the same sex because all the academic literature at that time told them they had room to do

so. This led to an increase in self-esteem in those who behaved in a gender conforming manner. In the next two periods we continue to find evidence supporting the congruence model.

However, we find support of the androgyny model as well. We find that the understanding of what is 'ideal' and who has access to the highest level of self-esteem is changes continually. This confusion may be contributed to the growth of opposing views and the introduction of non-conformity in the picture. The terms of social acceptance and inclusion being in a stage of evolution lead to different people of differing gender identities conforming in different ways to show high levels of self-esteem. Hence, A trend could not be established here because what was 'socially acceptable' and what was 'effective behaviour' was not collectively determined yet.

The socio-political context of the period we are in now is inherently more inclusive – with the concept of the 'masculine ideal' being heavily questioned. Hence, finding friends and social acceptance as non-masculine people is slightly easier than it was before. Conversely conforming strongly to solely masculine gender norms now a days may lead to social rejection (Boyd,2019) (E.g.- Incels and Toxic masculinity) and may not always lead to effective behaviour. This may thus have a negative consequence on self-esteem.

Let us now go back to our original question; What is the relationship between gender norm conformity and self-esteem. Is there a particular type of gender norm which is the 'best' predictor of self-esteem? With the consistent evidence positively linking masculinity to self-esteem, we may be led to believe that conforming to masculine gender norms is what leads to high self-esteem. However, history has proven us wrong. We may also be led to believe that femininity has an inherent 'flaw' and is thus negatively related to self-esteem. This assumption too however has been debunked by multiple research (refer to 2 in table 2). We believe that inherently nor masculinity or femininity is directly related to self- esteem. However, the society we exist in is patriarchal (Gruber & Szołtysek,2015; MacKinnon,1989). It thus determines what kind of behaviours is rewarded. Because a patriarchal system emphasizes masculinity and conformity to traditional gender norms and punishes femininity (Sultana,2012), we find masculinity to be linked to higher self-esteem more often. Similarly, we find femininity to be linked to lowered self-esteem (Eg- Research 7 in table 2). Marmot, Ryff and colleagues (1997) stated that an individual's self-esteem is tied to their position in society. Additionally, Kraus and Park (2014) showed how one's lowered social position can negatively affect their self-esteem. We can thus extrapolate the negative effect a woman's lowered socio-economic ("Women & socioeconomic status," 2020) position would have on her. If the societal structure changes our findings will as well since our gender identity is a performance (Butler, 1990). If the 'stage' and the idea

of the character we are allowed to play changes, so will the performance that is expected of us.

The pull of binaries

Though gender has come over the discrete binary system theoretically, the social structure continues to resist changes that challenge this system (Korolczuk& Graff,2018). It is because of this tendency we usually find a resistance towards research deemphasising conformity to any gender norms. Thus, it would be relevant here to discuss why binaries tend to perpetuate.

The gender binary is maintained through the binary performance of gender (Butler,1990; Eagly and Wood, 2012). By looking at gender as a performance we are essentially viewing conformity as the alignment of the character, the script, the costume and the stage (Morgenroth& Ryan, 2020). It's also proposed that the stage is built to facilitate the essential and binary view of gender. This performance further reinforces the idea that gender is in fact binary. Once this idea is reinforced, non-conformity is punished and people are consequently compelled to conform to the character of the play. Additionally, Rudman and Fairchild (2004) also found that stereotypic behaviour is maintained by the fear of backlash by the actors. However, this fear can have a negative impact on the actor's self-esteem (Refer to 31 in table 2). This explains why the structure of the binary view of gender is a self-perpetuating one.

Conclusion

We began this article with the motive to attempt to understand how the relationship between self-esteem and gender norm conformity has changed over the years. After reviewing the articles present, we can conclude that with certainty that this relationship is an extremely dynamic one. When we began, ideas of androgyny being the best predictor of self-esteem seemed to be the dominating trend. From there we saw how the masculinity model garnered support for many years. After 2 periods, we see evidence for the congruity model. Ultimately, the androgyny model partially finds its way back as the focus of research. In the last period, we found a growing focus on masculinity and its impact on self-esteem and parallelly we found research emphasizing lowered norm conformity as being related to high self-esteem and research delineating the context in which lowered norm conformity would relate to lowered self-esteem.

We also wanted to understand why these changes have occurred. We saw how changes in the socio-political environment coincided with different models getting support. We saw how the growth of two waves of feminism, conservative cabinets, and a worldwide focus on intersectionality, the growing marginalization and the subsequent acceptance and visibility of the LGBT community possibly impacted research findings over the years. We finally concluded that neither masculinity nor femininity

is inherently linked to self-esteem.

Limitations and Implications

This review article is not without limitations. Primarily since the article uses secondary data, verifying the results was not possible. Hence, the integrity of the papers collected cannot be established. The review could not take into consideration the wide variety of gender identities that have been recognized recently due to the lack of scientifically reviewed literature. Hence, the queer identity, the gender fluid identity etc. have not been delved into. Additionally, the review includes primary American or European studies. The Eurocentrism in this article is also a severe limitation of it. The paucity of researches in the last period as well may have hindered our ability in correctly identifying the overwhelming trend present in the last few years.

The review article however despite its limitations has a number of implications. Firstly, given the fact that the masculinity model garnered the most support during the years where there was an overwhelming conservative wave in the US, the research linking the self-esteem scale to that masculinity also get implicated. A deeper look must be done into why and how these two scaled are linked. Secondly, this article would allow for improvised meta-analyses of the papers included and other researches delineating this relationship. Contextualizing the findings of this paper, thus, may lead to interesting conclusions. Thirdly, we also found how the ideas of gender are constantly evolving. Additionally, we also saw how parallelly, the research findings evolved as well. The limitations of the tools used to assess gender identity thus became strikingly clear. With new ideas of gender and with the increasing complexity of its nature, the need for more nuanced tools is highlighted.

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