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Evidence for Equality?: Guatemalan Adolescents' Views on Gender


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Introduction

Guatemala is known for its beautiful landscapes, delicious food, and vibrant traditional textiles. Despite the country's treasures, Guatemalans face many challenges including gender inequality and wealth disparity. Furthermore, issues pertaining to youth are of particular importance, as approximately 56% of the population is under 25 years of age (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). The gender inequality in Guatemala may be perpetuated by traditional values of *machismo* and *marianismo* (Gibbons & Luna, 2015). *Machismo* refers to the expectation that men be dominant, respected, and strong providers for their family (Arciniega, Anderson, Tover-Blank, & Travey, 2008). Conversely, *marianismo* is the expectation that women be pure and gentle, like the Virgin Mary (Castillo, Perez, Castillo, & Ghosheh, 2010; Stevens, 1973). Developmentally speaking, the Gender Intensification Hypothesis suggests gender roles become more rigid during adolescence, as young people prepare for adulthood (Hill & Lynch, 1983). Previous studies on Guatemalan adolescents' views on the ideal man and ideal woman have revealed a series of gender differences as well. Although *machismo* and *marianismo* still characterize society's views on gender for many Guatemalans, there is evidence that some young people's views on gender might be changing due to globalization and adaptation of more individualistic attitudes (Ashdown & Gibbons, 2012; Flores et al., 2016).

Current Study

- ❖ Do Guatemalan adolescent boys and girls differ in their views of women's and girls' roles in society?
- ❖ How do Guatemalan adolescents characterize the ideal man and woman?
- ❖ Do Guatemalan adolescent boys and girls differ in their characterizations of the ideal person?
- ❖ Do Guatemalan adolescents characterize the ideal man and ideal woman differently?

Method

The purpose of the current study was to evaluate age and gender differences among 293 Guatemalan adolescents (45.7% girls; $M_{age} = 12.62$, $SD = 1.89$) on the Attitudes About Women Scale-Adolescent version (adapted from Galambos, Petersen, Richards, & Gitelson, 1985) and the Ideal Man and Ideal Woman questionnaire (Gibbons & Stiles, 2004).

- ❖ **Attitudes About Women Scale (AWSA, $\alpha = .72$):**
 - ❖ 8 items answered on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Agree*) to 4 (*Strongly Disagree*).
 - ❖ Sample items: "Boys are better leaders than girls." and "Earning better grades in school is more important for boys than for girls."
 - ❖ Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes about women and girls
- ❖ **Ideal Man & Ideal Woman Questionnaire**
 - ❖ Likes Children
 - ❖ Average Height & Weight
 - ❖ Intelligent
 - ❖ Money
 - ❖ Kind & Honest
 - ❖ Fun
 - ❖ Popular
 - ❖ Good Looking
 - ❖ Sexy
 - ❖ Good Job

Discussion

Overall, adolescent girls displayed more positive and less stereotypical attitudes about women than adolescent boys did. This suggests that there may be some inequity in how women are viewed in Guatemala. An age effect was also evident in that older adolescents appeared to view women more positively than younger adolescents. Perhaps as adolescents grow older and become more mature, they begin to develop a greater appreciation for the women in their lives which, in turn, creates more positive attitudes towards women in general.

Gender effects were also evident in terms of perceptions of the ideal person. For example, boys and girls differed in their views of the ideal woman. Specifically, boys thought it was more important that the ideal woman like children and be sexy (stereotypical characteristics) than girls did. Girls thought it was more important that the ideal woman have a good job than boys did.

Limitations

A central limitation of this study is how the questionnaires were administered. Instead of having a core research team administer the assessments in the same location, participants completed the questionnaires at various workshop sites and different people administered the assessments to the participant groups. Thus, data collection procedure could have been more standardized.

Furthermore, as evidenced by missing data, adolescents may have gotten bored when completing this assessment and become disengaged with the questionnaires.

Future Directions

Findings from this study will contribute to culturally-sensitive efforts to empower Guatemalan youth and educate adolescents about gender equality. By shifting gender ideologies of youth in the country, macro-level improvements through policy change and overarching attitudes towards women are possible.

Data Analysis

Attitudes About Women Scale:

- ❖ To assess age differences and gender differences regarding attitudes about women, we ran a multiple regression analysis. See Table 1.

Ideal Person Questionnaire:

- ❖ To assess gender differences on views regarding characteristics of the ideal person, we ran a series of 2 (Participant Gender) x 2 (Ideal Person Gender) mixed-model Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs). See Figures 1 and 2.

Attitudes About Women

	B	β	Adj. R ²	df	F
Model 1			.045	2, 259	7.06**
Participant Gender	.20	.13*			
Age	.07	.17**			

Table 1. Adolescent girls had more positive attitudes about woman than adolescent boys. Older adolescents had more positive attitudes towards women than younger adolescents.

Ideal Man

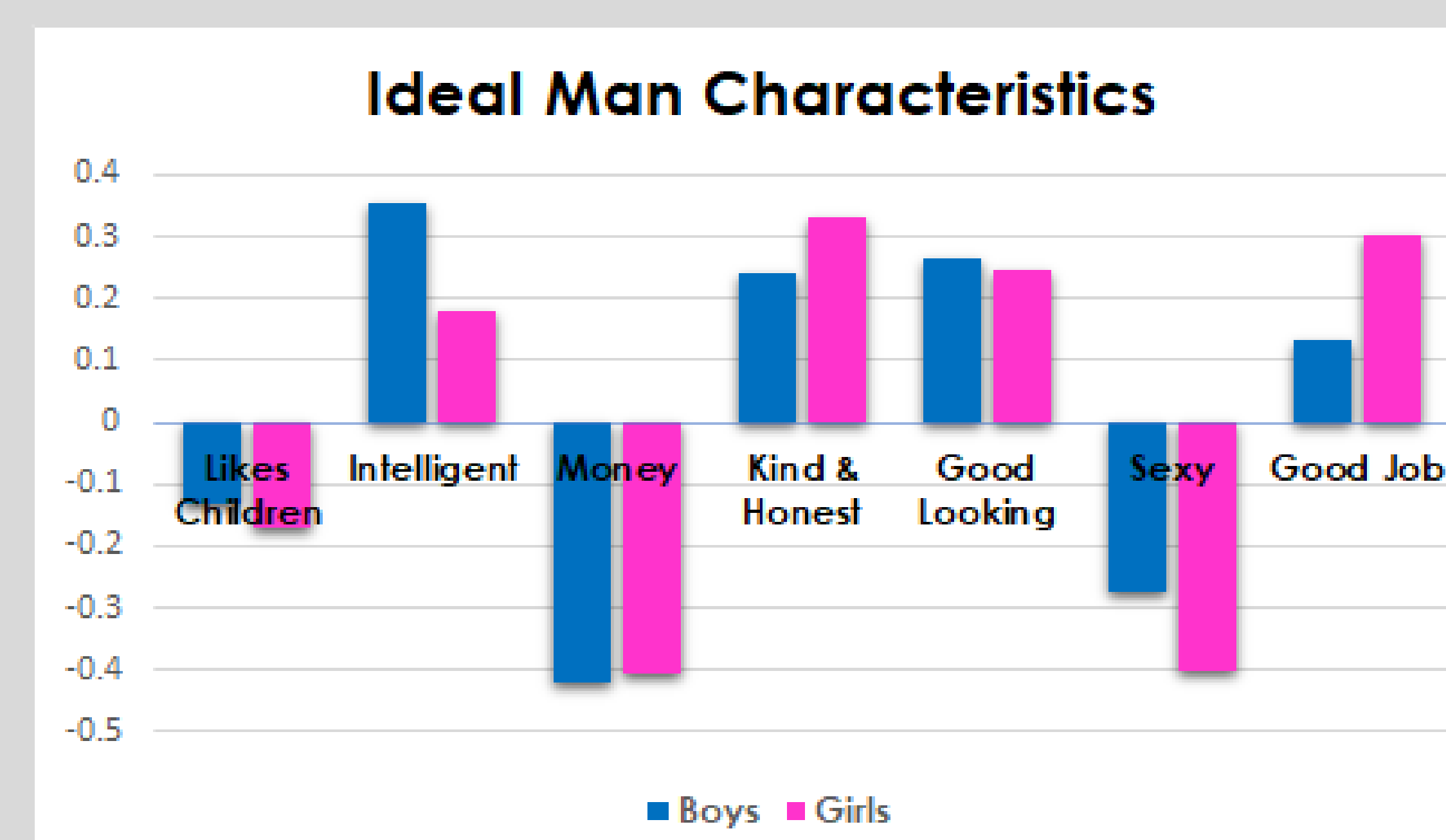


Figure 1. Adolescent boys rated the importance of **intelligence** and **good looks** as more important for the ideal man than did adolescent girls. Adolescent girls rated the importance of being **kind and honest** and having a **good job** as more important for the ideal man than did adolescent boys. Adolescent boys and girls both rated **liking children**, having a lot of **money**, and being **sexy** as relatively important for the ideal man. Adolescent boys and girls did not differ on the importance of fun, average height and weight, and popularity for the ideal man.

Ideal Woman

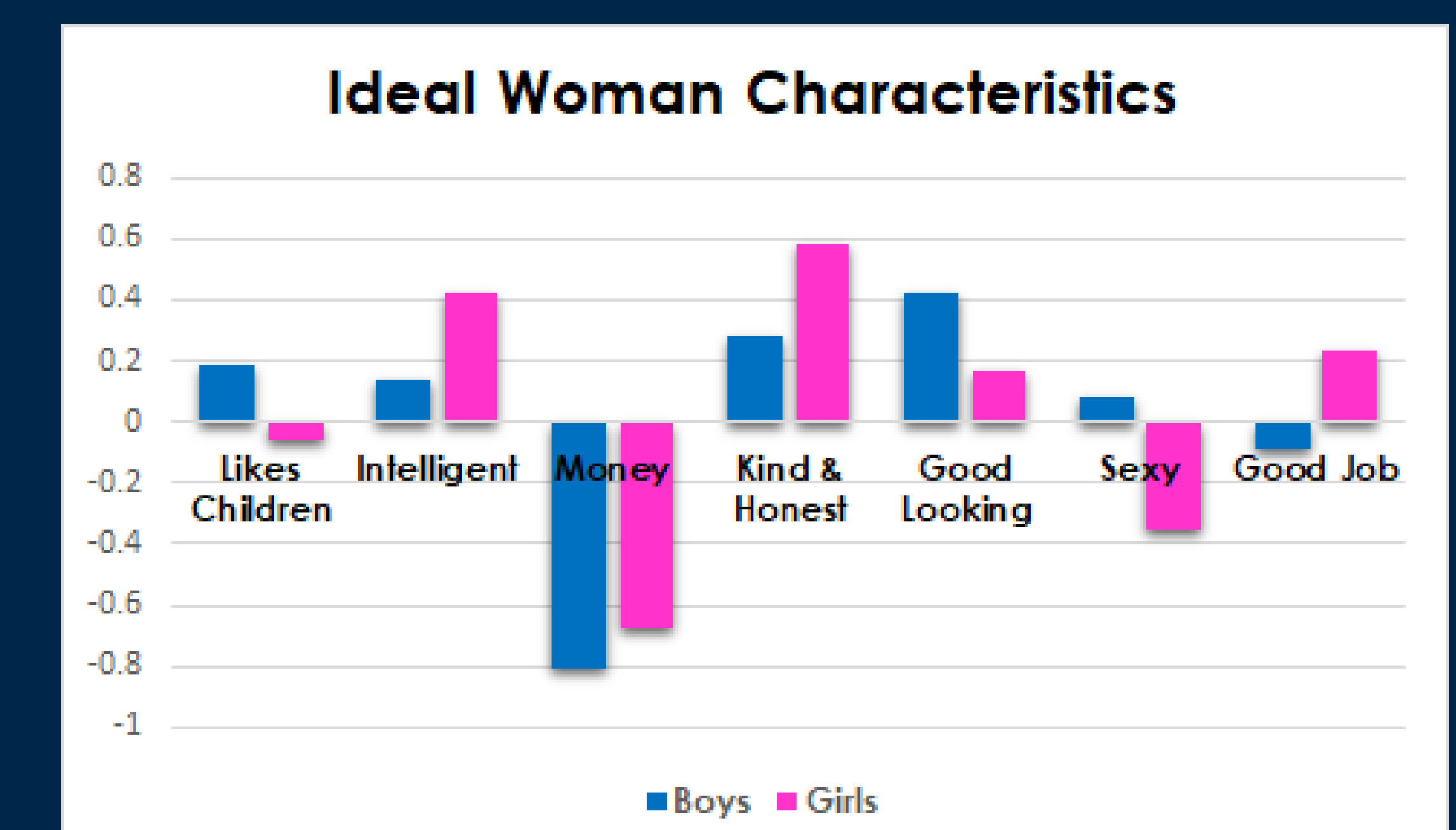


Figure 2. Adolescent boys rated the importance of **liking children** and being **good looking** and **sexy** as more for the ideal woman than did adolescent girls. Adolescent girls rated **intelligence**, being **kind and honest**, and having a **good job** as more important for the ideal woman than did adolescent boys. Both adolescent boys and girls rated having a lot of **money** as relatively unimportant for the ideal woman. Adolescent boys and girls did not differ on the importance of fun, average height and weight, and popularity for the ideal woman.