

Socioeconomic and Sex (In)Differences in Psychological (In)Flexibility



S. Forrest Parker, B.S., Morgan Franklin, M.A., Chad Drake, Ph.D.



Introduction

This study is a preliminary investigation into the potential effects of self-reported indicators of demographic variables (i.e., gender/sex and socioeconomic status [SES]) on observed psychological flexibility and inflexibility.

It was hypothesized that:

- Those in underprivileged categories will likely have higher levels of inflexibility and lower levels of flexibility.
- No interactions between gender/sex and SES were hypothesized.

Method

The sample was drawn from undergraduate students at a Midwestern American university (N = 314; M age = 19; 60% female; 60% White).

Psychological flexibility and inflexibility was assessed using the 60-item Multidimensional Psychological Flexibility Inventory composite scores (MPFI; Rolfs et al. 2016).

Socioeconomic status was operationalized as annual income. The sample self-identified in the following ways:

- n = 104 (33%) reported an income of \$25,000 or less.
- n = 56 (18%) reported \$25,001-\$50,000.
- n = 68 (22%) reported \$50,001-\$75,000.
- n = 86 (27%) reported \$75,001.

Results

Psychological inflexibility scores were not normally distributed and were consequently subjected to square root transformation. All other ANOVA assumptions were reasonably met.

Results indicated that gender/sex differences were not statistically significant for either flexibility or inflexibility.

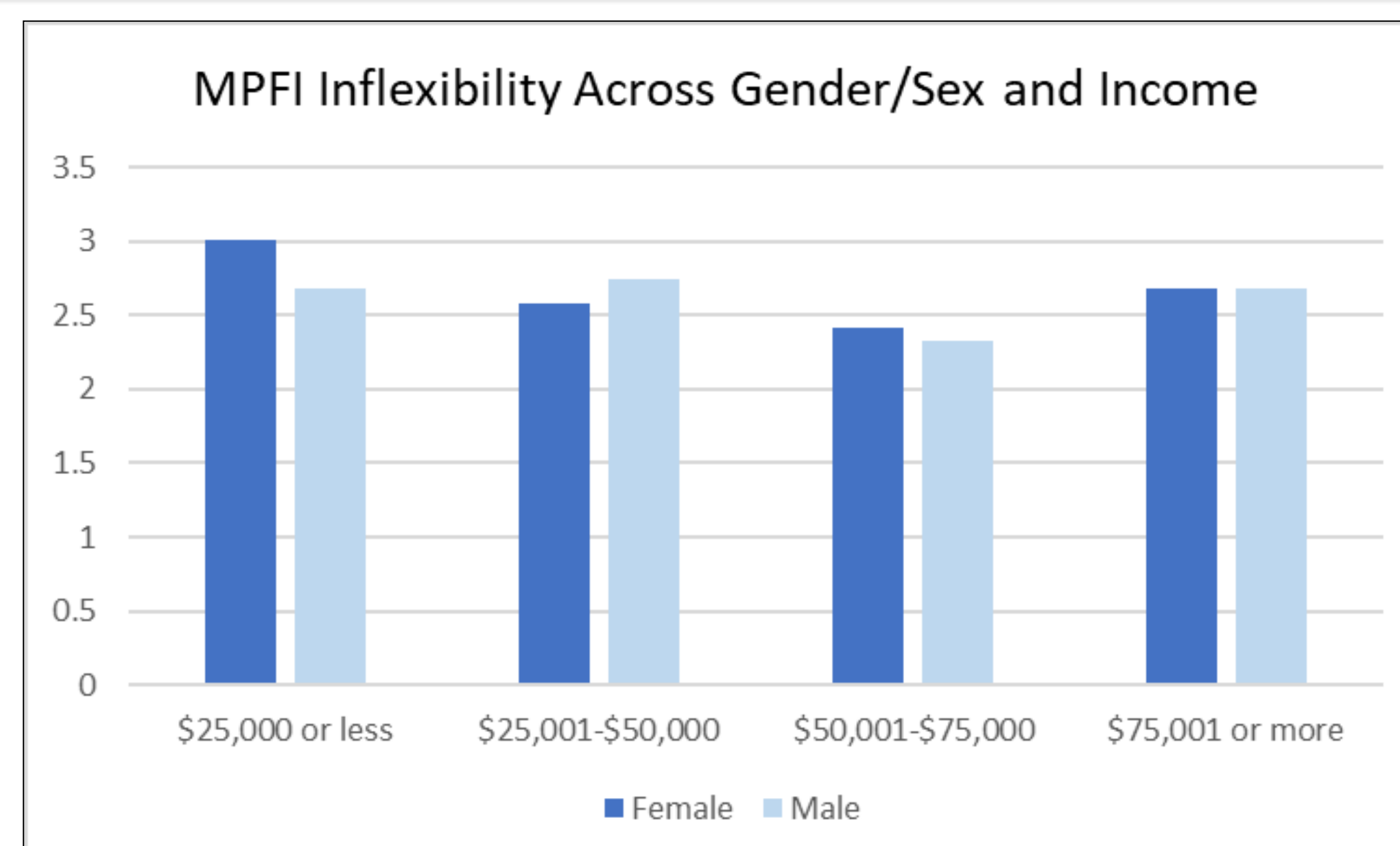
An effect of annual income was found for levels of inflexibility, but not flexibility.

- A Tukey's HSD post-hoc analysis indicated that those reporting an annual income of \$50,001-\$75,000 evidenced significantly different inflexibility levels than those in the lowest income range.

Between-Subjects Factorial ANOVA Statistics for Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	ANOVA			
	Effect	F ratio	df	Partial Eta
Psychological Flexibility	Sex	0.832	1, 305	0.003
	SES	1.53	3, 305	0.015
	Sex x SES	1.748	3, 305	0.017
Psychological Inflexibility	Sex	0.645	1, 306	0.002
	SES	4.127**	3, 306	0.039
	Sex x SES	1.013	3, 306	0.010

Note. ANOVA = analysis of variance, Type II sum of squares.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.



Further information

Please contact Forrest Parker with questions.
(email: steven.f.parker@siu.edu)

Discussion

Income appears to have an effect on inflexibility, but the effect appears to be non-linear and one where those with low-income experience greater levels of inflexibility than those within the income range of \$50,001-\$75,000.

This may suggest that having a higher income may be associated with less inflexibility up to a certain threshold, whereupon high income may be associated with similar levels of inflexibility to those among lower SES.

Further replication of these results is suggested in order to confirm the existence of this effect as well as to confirm that the effect is indeed not linear as one might expect.

Gender/sex did not appear to be a relevant factor in observed levels of flexibility and inflexibility.

Limitations include use of an undergraduate population and limited assessment of both gender/sex and SES (i.e., categorical variables).

Future research should aim to operationalize variables of gender/sex and SES more precisely within a sample more representative of the general population.

References

Rolfs, J. L., Rogge, R. D., & Wilson, K. G. (2016). Disentangling Components of Flexibility Via the Hexaflex Model: Development and validation of the multidimensional psychological flexibility inventory (MPFI). *Assessment*, 1(1), 1- 25. 10.1177/107319111664505.