

Gender and Choosing a STEM Major in College: The Role of Gendered Personalities

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THE PROBLEM

The underrepresentation of women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers continues to be a vexing social problem. Researchers have attempted to explain this underrepresentation in a plethora of ways, many of which are predicated on the assumption that STEM fields are seen as inherently masculine environments, which makes women less likely to want to participate. Through this study, we attempt to further understand the gender disparity in STEM majors. Understanding the underrepresentation in STEM is extremely important for the future of STEM fields, and for our economy. There are so many brilliant women who could be making wonder contributions to the fields of science, math, and engineering, and we would all benefit greatly from the utilization of their talent.

METHODOLOGY

We emailed surveys to UAH students asking them questions about their thoughts on traditional gender roles, their occupational values, and demographic information. They also filled out the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), which is used to measure how masculine or feminine a person's personality is. What makes our study different is that we studied the interactions between gender variables, and masculinity/femininity. We found that no other variable did as good a job of explaining the gender gap. Our findings make an important contribution to this literature by showing that masculinity and femininity are personality characteristics that both males and females possess, and that the effects of masculinity and femininity on the probability of majoring in a STEM field are occur differently in males and females.

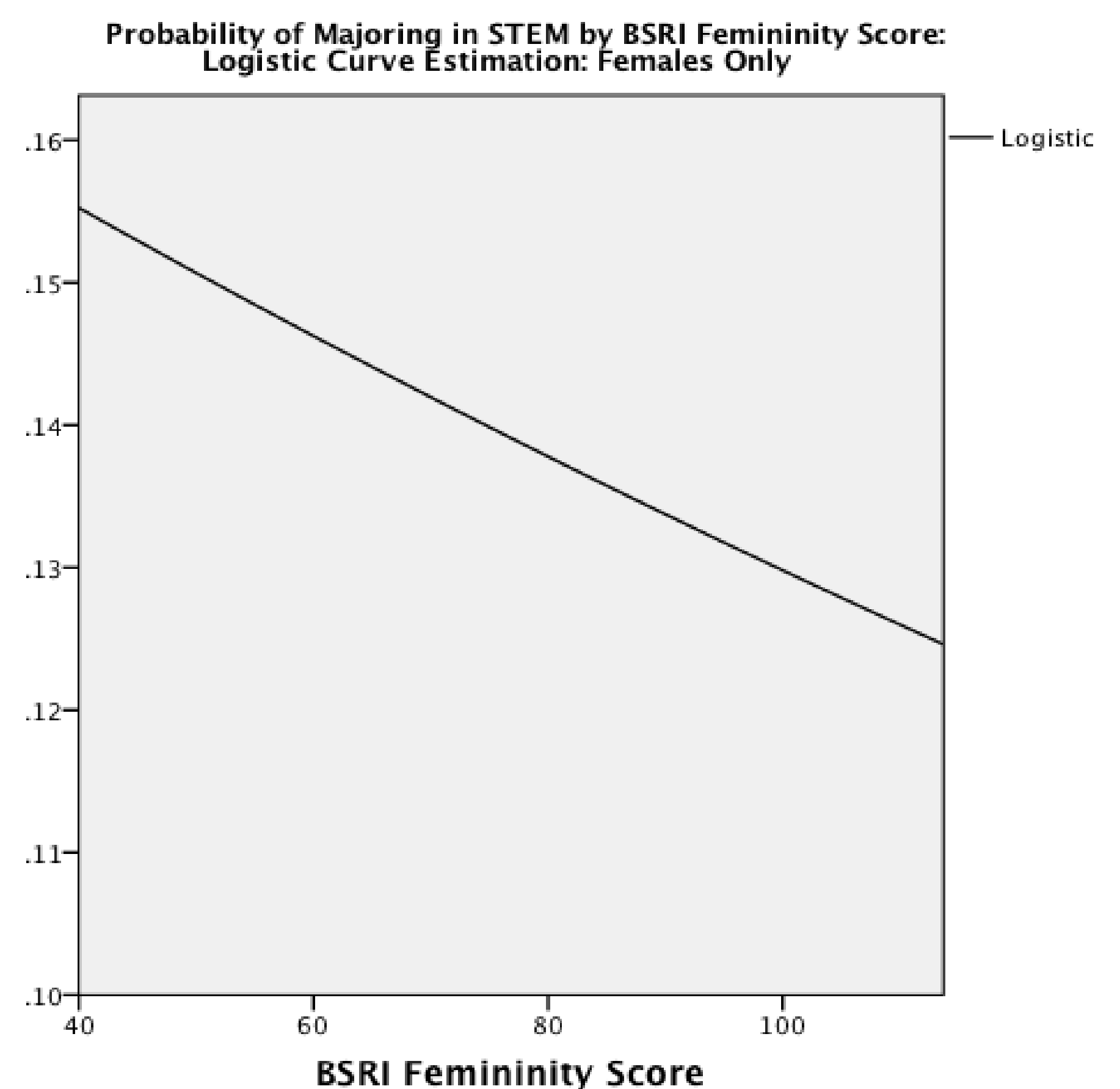
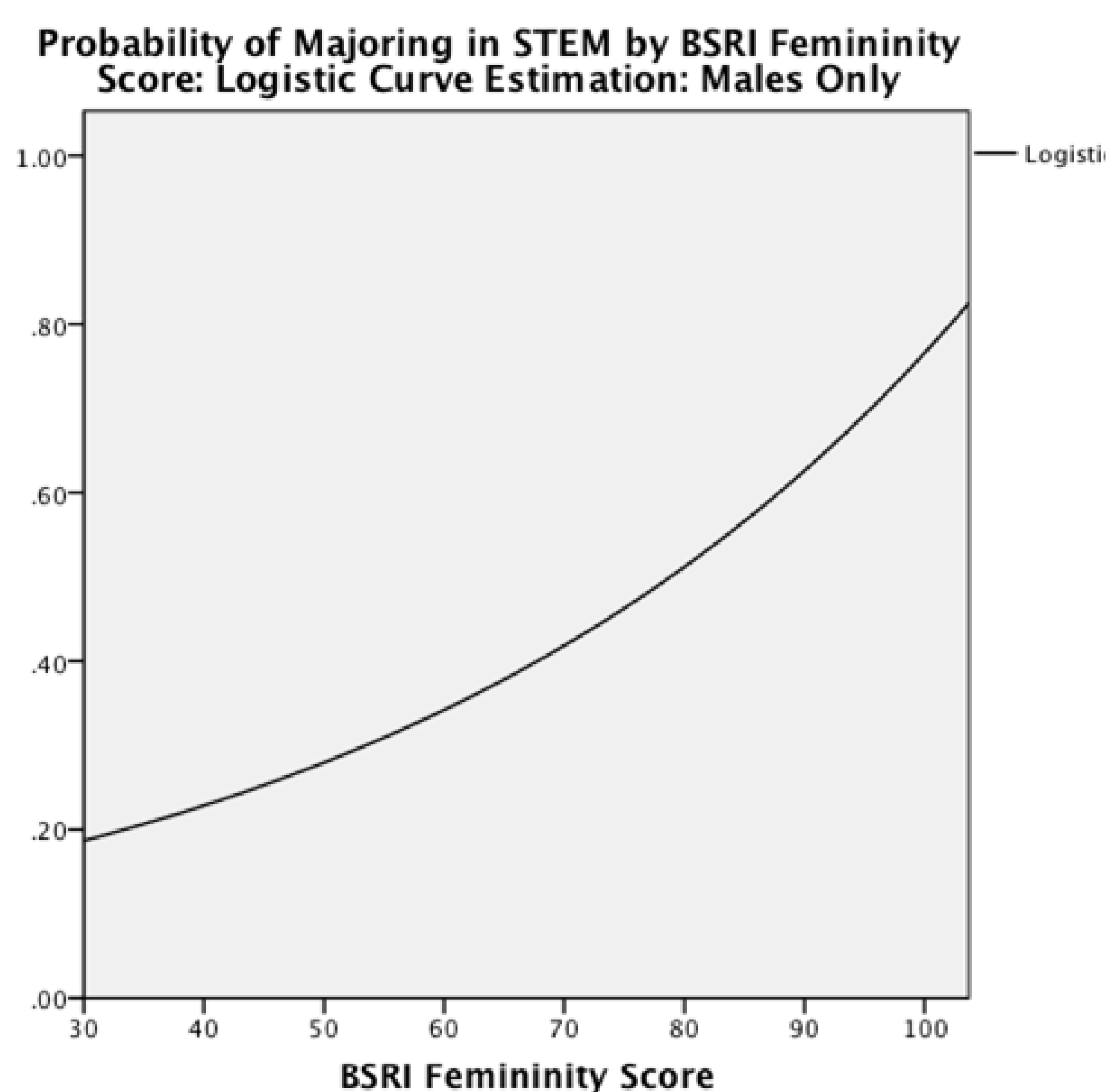
FINDINGS:

MALES:

The **higher** a male student's **femininity** level, the **more likely** he was to be a STEM major. The higher his **masculinity** level, the **less likely** he is to be in a STEM major

FEMALES:

The **lower** a female student's femininity level, the **less likely** she was to be a STEM major. The higher her **masculinity** level, the **more likely** she is to be a STEM major



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dr. Richard Simon for his assistance and mentorship throughout our research process, and also the UAH College of Liberal Arts.