

# Exploring Gender Differences in Engagement with Self-Transcendent and Self-Enhancement Value Affirmation Interventions



Tai'Mir Mitchell, Shabely Fernandez, Julia Lombard

## Introduction

- Value affirmation exercises aim to reduce defensive responses through written reflection of closely held values (see Cohen & Sherman, 2014).
- However, little work has explored *how* individuals write about their values, and what themes tend to emerge in these reflections.
- Additionally, little work has investigated how **gender** may impact the engagement with value affirmation interventions.

## Predictions

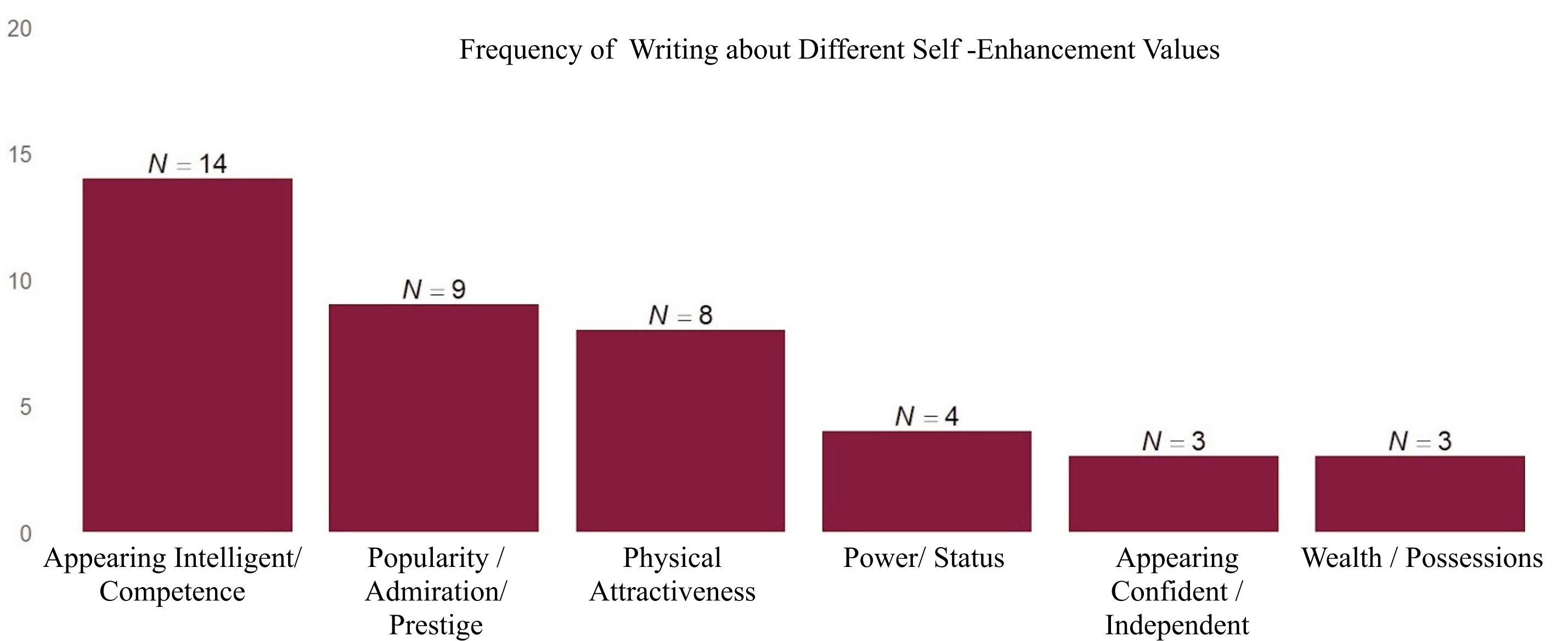
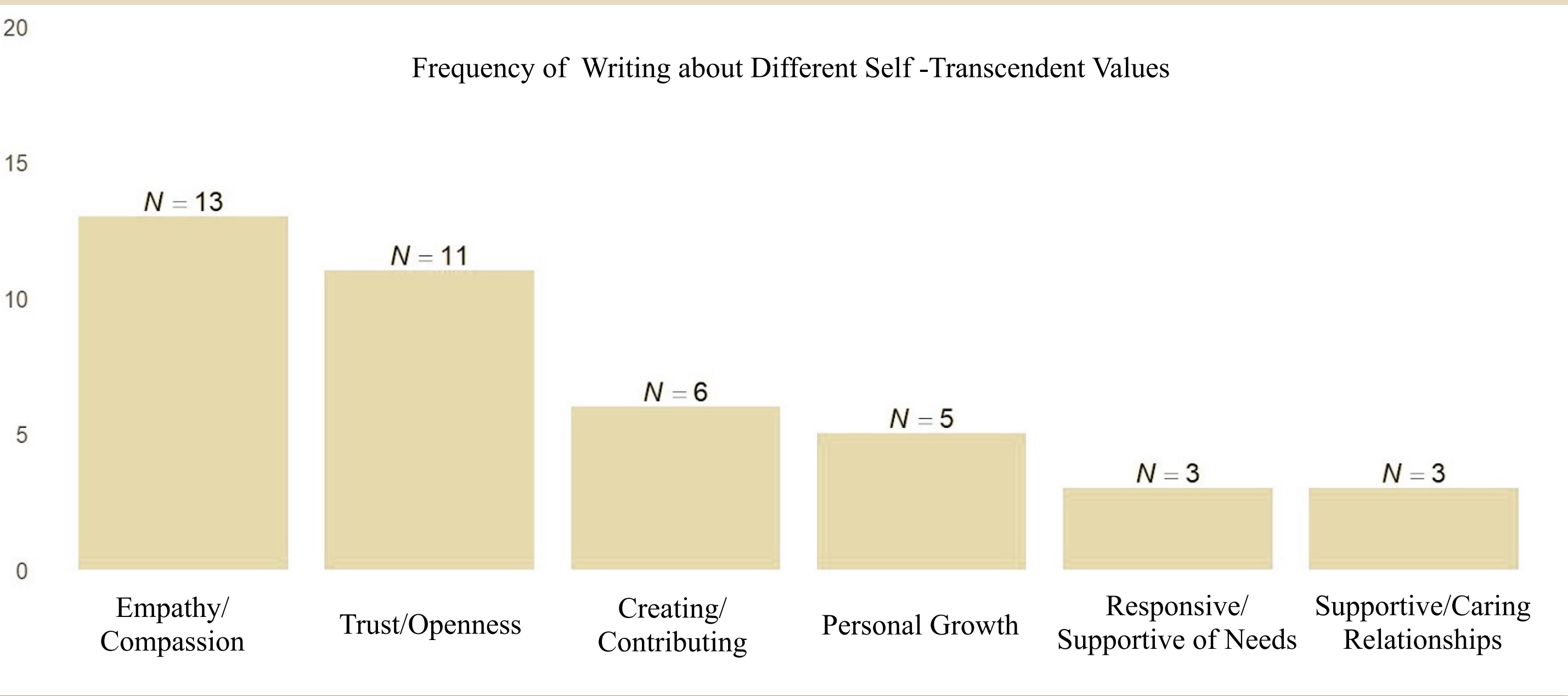
1. We will explore gender differences in terms of the use of **self-enhancement (SE)** themes.
2. Compared to males, females will use significantly more **self-transcendent (ST)** themes.
3. Compared to males, females will share more personal experiences in their written reflections.

## Methods

- Sample from the FSU Sona pool  
 $N = 124$   
(99 identified as female, 25 identified as male; mean age = 19.3,  $SD = 1.29$ )

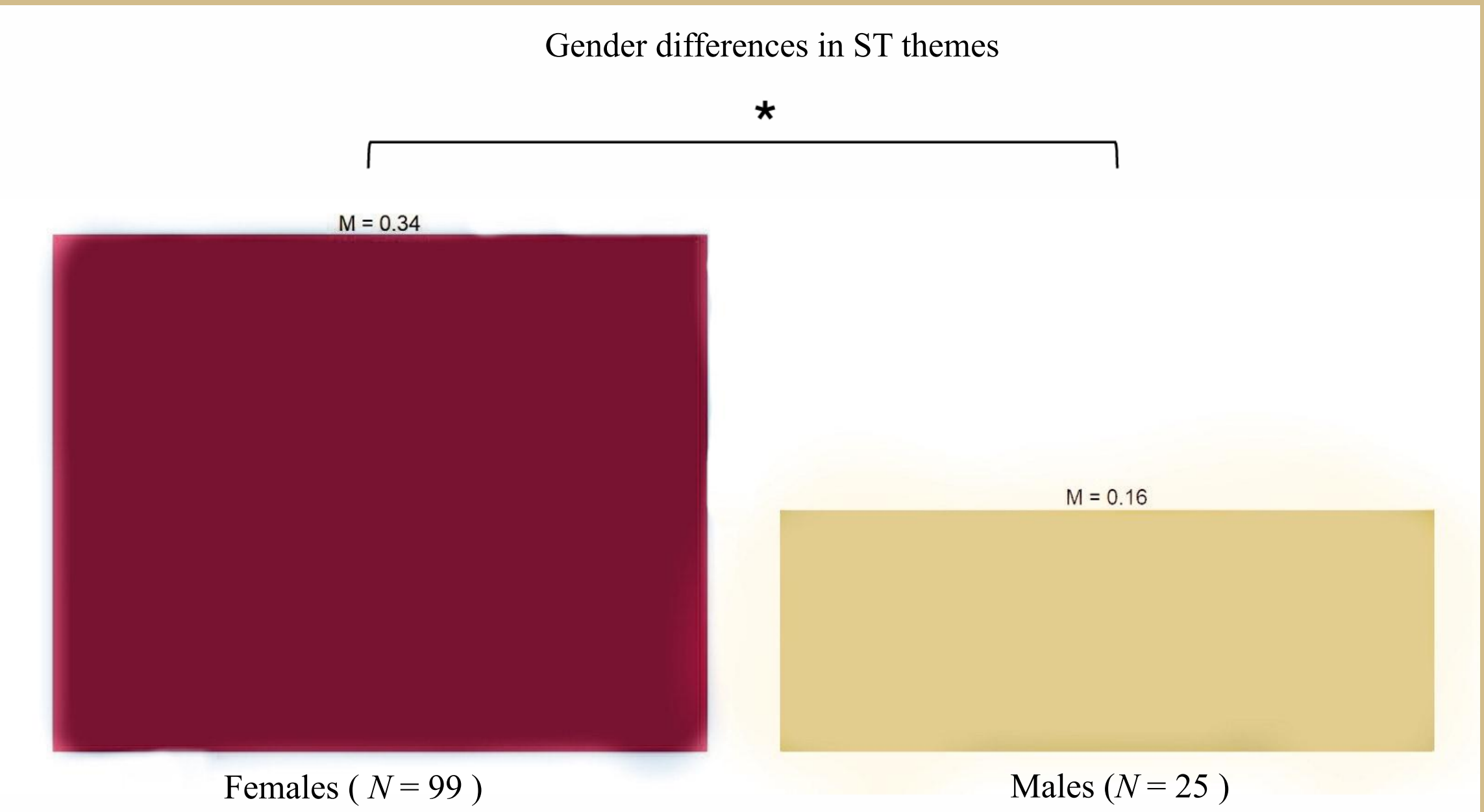
Conditions (adapted from Burson et al., 2012):

- ST Value Affirmation
- SE Value Affirmation
- Writing about daily routine

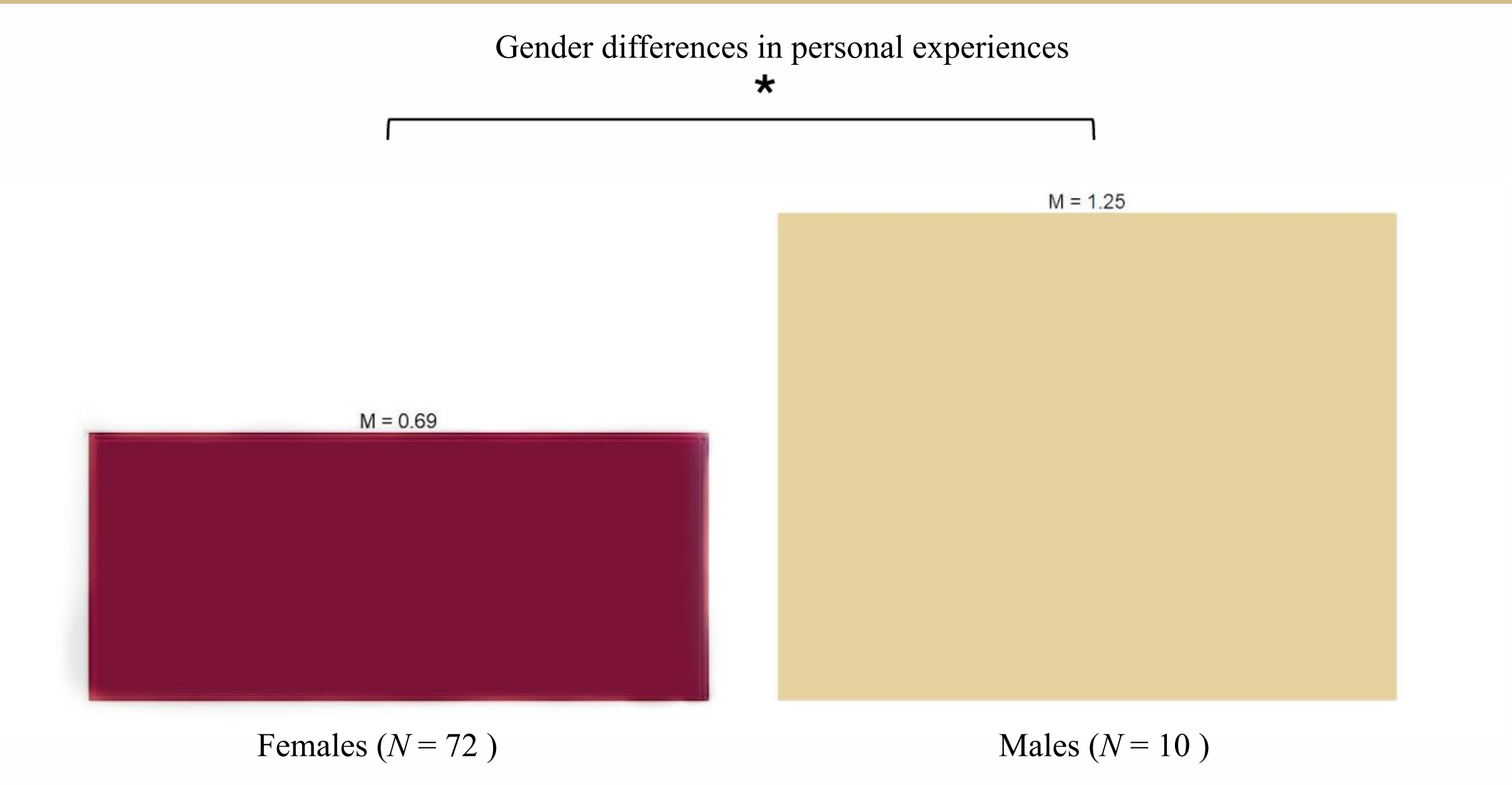


## Results

1. There was no significant difference in use of SE themes for males ( $M = 0.19$ ,  $SD = 0.36$ ) and females ( $M = 0.30$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ );  $t(41.38) = 1.37$ ,  $p = .17$ , 95% CI [-0.05, 0.29].
2. Females ( $M = 0.34$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ ) used significantly more ST themes than males ( $M = 0.16$ ,  $SD = 0.32$ );  $t(46.47) = 2.36$ ,  $p = 0.02$ , 95% CI [0.03, 0.34].



3. Males ( $M = 1.25$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) used personal experiences significantly more than female participants across both value affirmation conditions ( $M = 0.69$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ );  $t(11.70) = -2.46$ ,  $p = 0.03$ , 95% CI [-1.06, -0.06].



## References

Burson, A., Crocker, J., & Mischkowski, D. (2012). Two types of value-affirmation: Implications for self-control following social exclusion. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 3(4), 510–516. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611427773>. Cohen, G. L., & Sherman, D. K. (2014). The psychology of change: Self-affirmation and social psychological intervention. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65(1), 333–371. Crocker, J., Niiya, Y., & Mischkowski, D. (2008). Why does writing about important values reduce defensiveness? : Self-affirmation and the role of positive other-directed feelings. *Psychological Science*, 19(7), 740–747. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02150.x> Ellemers, N. (2018). Gender stereotypes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 69(1), 275–298. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-122216-011719> Haines, E. L., Deaux, K., & Lofaro, N. (2016). The times they are a-changing ... or are they not? A comparison of gender stereotypes, 1983–2014. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3), 353–363. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684316634081> Newman, M. L., Groom, C. J., Handelman, L. D., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2008). Gender differences in language use: An analysis of 14,000 text samples. *Discourse Processes*, 45(3), 211–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01638530802073712>

## Coding Scheme

### The Validation code

- **Use of ST Themes:** May include any of the following themes or topics: humility, connectedness, other-orientedness, helping, shifts or transformations in perspective, deeply held morals.
- **Use of SE themes:** May include any of the following themes or topics: personal achievements relative to others, positive self-image, independently accomplishing goals, social status, and demonstrating competence.

**Coding** (0 = not present, 0.5 = mentioned but not the dominating theme, 1 = mentioned and the dominating theme)

### The Personal Engagement Code

- **Usage of personal experience:** The extent to which the participant uses detailed personal anecdotes, examples from their life, or first-hand experiences in the value affirmation conditions.

### Coding

0 = the participant uses no personal examples of their experience in their response.

1 = the participant brings in one personal example into their response.

2 = the participant brings in two or more personal examples into their response.

## Discussion

### Implications and Takeaways

- Perhaps females are more likely to express ST themes because they align with gender stereotypes about women, such as warmth and communion (e.g., Ellemers, 2018; Haines et al., 2016).
- Females may also use more ST themes in their writing because females tend to express themselves with language connoting social processes (see Newman et al., 2008).
- Males draw upon more personal experiences in their value affirmation reflections than do females; This may indicate that males' responses are more personally relevant, a feature essential to the efficacy of value affirmation exercises (see Crocker et al., 2008).