

A REDUCED VERSION OF THE SCHEIN DESCRIPTIVE INDEX

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ABSTRACT

We describe the development of a short version of the Schein Descriptive Index. The short version yields significantly less missing data than the long version, but a manipulation check shows that even with the short version, there is a strong tendency among male students to recall a hypothetical female entrepreneur as male. We believe that this is likely due to a strong implicit “entrepreneur=male” bias, not to the length of the instrument, since this occurs with both the long and the short versions of the SDI. The Schein Descriptive Index (SDI) is a list of 93 words and phrases. It was used in a 1973 study indicating that traits stereotypically attributed to males were also attributed to hypothetical managers, while those traits considered stereotypically “female” were not [1]. Management researchers continue to use the SDI [2-6]. Our own SDI results, however, have come back with a great deal of missing data. Generally, “(l)onger surveys take more time to complete, tend to have more missing data, and have higher refusal rates than short surveys” [7]. Moreover, our manipulation checks indicate that students appear to forget the gender of the person described at the start of the survey. 300 business undergraduates completed the long SDI, reporting on a male, female, or unspecified entrepreneur. Using P.C. factor analysis, we derived clusters of characteristics, which were then labeled by student researchers [7]. From there we selected labels that we judged representative. The final 13 items were: Compassionate, Passive, Weak, Unreliable, Capricious, Conscientious, Managerial, Artistic, Focused, Dominant, High Emotional Intelligence, Stable, and Analytical. 44 business undergraduates completed this revised SDI, with some improved results:

	93 item SDI	Revised 13 item SDI
Participants	300 business undergraduates	44 business undergraduates
Male entrepreneur described	78% recalled as male, 15% recalled as female, 7% don't remember/neither	54% recalled as male, 46% don't remember/neither
Female entrepreneur described	54% recalled as male, 38% recalled as female, 8% don't remember/neither	12.5% recalled as male, 50% recalled as female, 37.5% don't remember/neither
Entrepreneur, neutral pronouns	76% recalled as male, 21% recalled as female, 3% recalled as neither	53% recalled as male, 33% recalled as female, 14% recalled as neither
Missing data	1326 cells out of (300 x 93) 4.7%	2 cells out of (44x13) .03%

Although the shorter single-page survey had far fewer unanswered items, the issue of correctly recalling the gender of the hypothetical entrepreneur persisted. Around half of participants didn't recall the gender of their hypothetical entrepreneur. This indicates that even with a one-page survey there may be issues relating to participant attention. In addition, there seems to be bias toward assuming an entrepreneur is male. 12.5% of participants given a description of a female entrepreneur remembered her as male, while no one given a male entrepreneur remembered him as female, and more participants imagined an ungendered entrepreneur as male rather than female.

Please contact the first author for references.