

# A MAN'S GAME: ANALYSIS OF THE GENDER DIVIDE IN CHESS

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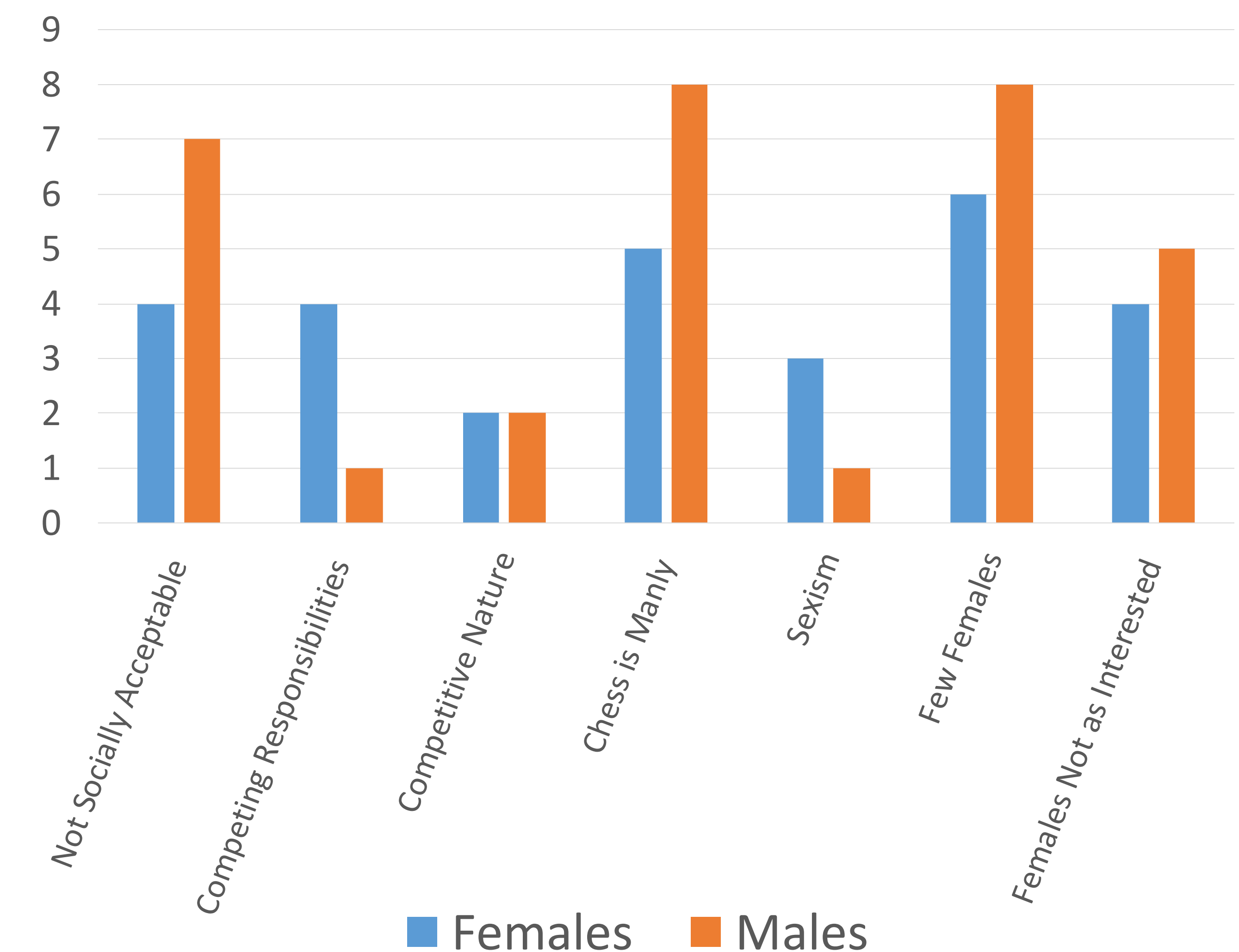
## ABSTRACT

Chess is a mental game, not a physical sport, yet men seem to dominate the chess arena just as they do in athletic competitions. To gather insight as to what might account for the gender rating divide in chess, I distributed a survey to 31 top performing chess players asking questions related to competing against the opposite gender. My survey showed both males and females were aware of gender stereotypes in chess indicating stereotype threat is present during chess tournaments. "Stereotype threat" is broadly defined as confirming a negative stereotype about one's group; in this case that females are weaker at chess. Another potential cause for poorer results may be identity separation which in this study is defined as the conflict women may experience between their "feminine" and competitive identities. Other factors may include the lack of female chess role models and separate girls sections in international youth competitions.



## DATA: QUESTION 4

### Why Are There Less Females Playing Chess?



## METHODOLOGY

### PARTICIPANTS

- 17 male and 14 female chess players
- Average age: Males 24  
Females 20
- Average Rating: Males 2332 (better than 99.3% of USA players) Females 1912 (95.4%)

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- 1) Rate your comfort playing against someone of the same sex who is similar in strength
- 2) Rate your comfort playing against someone of the opposite sex who is similar in strength
- 3) Do you feel differently when you are playing a male as opposed to a female?
- 4) Why do you think there are fewer females playing chess than males?

## DATA: QUESTIONS 1-3

	Comfort Against Same Sex	Comfort Against Opposite Sex
Male	3.59	3.47
Female	4.21	4.21

- Data suggests that males and females do not feel a difference in comfort while competing against the opposite gender
- On average, females felt more comfortable playing against either gender

### Difference in Feeling Playing Against Opposite Sex?

	Yes	No
Males	5	12
Females	6	8

## CONCLUSION

Multiple factors could explain the gender rating divide in chess. Some have argued men are biologically more competitive. Others may describe how gender stereotypes discourage girls from learning the game or contribute to poorer female performance. Some may glance around a tournament room and notice the lack of female chess role models. Even providing a separate section for females may plant a seed of inferiority in the minds of many girls. The true reason is most likely a combination of all these factors.

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