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Sex-Role Stereotypes: A Current Appraisal[1]

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Consensus about the differing characteristics of men and women exists across groups differing in sex, age, marital status, and educa-

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tion. Masculine characteristics are positively valued more often than feminine characteristics. Positively-valued masculine traits form a cluster entailing competence; positively-valued feminine traits reflect warmth-expressiveness. Sex-role definitions are incorporated into the self-concepts of both men and women; moreover, these sex-role differences are considered desirable by college students and healthy by mental health professionals. Individual differences in sex related self-concepts are related to sex-role relevant behaviors such as achieved and ideal family size. Sex-role perceptions also vary as a function of maternal employment.

Sex-role standards can be defined as the sum of socially designated behaviors that differentiate between men and women. Traditionally, psychologists have uncritically accepted sex roles as essential to personality development and function. Thus psychopathologists have considered gender identity to be a crucial factor in personal adjustment, with disturbances in adjustment often attributed to inadequate gender identity. Developmentalists tend to focus upon the conditions and processes which facilitate successful internalization of appropriate sex-role standards. The positive values of sex-role standards have rarely been questioned.

Recently, however, investigators have expressed concern over possible detrimental effects of sex-role standards upon the full development of capabilities of men and women (Blake, 1968; Davis, 1967; Hartley, 1961; Horner, 1969; Maccoby, 1963; Rossi, 1964). Traditional sex-role patterns are also being challenged by the new feminist movement. During such a period of revaluation, there is need for a close systematic scrutiny of the actual content of sex-role standards and an examination of the influence that these standards have upon individual behaviors. For the past six years we have been engaged in programmatic research examining the nature and effects of sex-role standards in our contemporary society. As psychologists with varying theoretical backgrounds, we share the conviction that existing sex-role standards exert real pressures upon individuals to behave in prescribed ways; we share also a strong curiosity as to what these standards consist of, how they develop, and what their consequences are.

It appeared in the mid 1960s that traditional sex-role patterns were in a state of flux, and we anticipated that a corresponding fluidity would appear in definitions of sex roles. As a first step toward determining these definitions, we devised a questionnaire that assesses individual perceptions of "typical"

masculine and feminine behavior (Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968). This questionnaire has now been administered to almost a thousand subjects, providing normative indices of the content of sex-role standards. In addition, individual differences in sex-role perception have been related to a number of independent variables, thus providing some tentative answers to questions about the antecedents and consequents of varying perceptions of sex roles.

Our findings, culled from a number of studies, lead to the following broad conclusions:

1. A strong consensus about the differing characteristics of men and women exists across groups which differ in sex, age, religion, marital status, and educational level.
2. Characteristics ascribed to men are positively valued more often than characteristics ascribed to women. The positively-valued masculine traits form a cluster of related behaviors which entail competence, rationality, and assertion; the positively-valued feminine traits form a cluster which reflect warmth and expressiveness.
3. The sex-role definitions are implicitly and uncritically accepted to the extent that they are incorporated into the self-concepts of both men and women. Moreover, these sex-role differences are considered desirable by college students, healthy by mental health professionals, and are even seen as ideal by both men and women.
4. Individual differences in sex-role self-concepts are associated with (a) certain sex-role relevant behaviors and attitudes such as actual and desired family size, and (b) certain antecedent conditions such as mother's employment history.

These findings will be discussed in detail following a description of our instrument and its development.

Development of the Sex-Role Questionnaire

Since our concern was with measuring current sex-role perceptions, we rejected traditional masculinity-feminity scales such as the California Psychological Inventory (CPI)(Gough, 1957) precisely because these scales are based on traditional notions of sex-appropriate behaviors and interests, which we suspected might no longer be relevant. Our concern was with the traits and behaviors currently assigned to men and women. Hence we developed our own instrument. Approximately 100 men and women enrolled in three undergraduate psychology classes were asked to list all the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors on which they thought men and women differed. From these listings, all of the items which occurred at least twice (N = 122) were selected for inclusion in the questionnaire. These

items span a wide range of content, e.g., interpersonal sensitivity, emotionality, aggressiveness, dependence-independence, maturity, intelligence, activity level, gregariousness.

Many of the earlier studies demonstrating the existence of sex-role stereotypes required subjects to select from a list those traits which characterize men and those which characterize women (Fernberger, 1948; Sherriffs & Jarrett, 1953; Sherriffs & McKee, 1957). In contrast, we conceptualized sex roles as the degree to which men and women are perceived to possess any particular trait. Therefore the 122 items were put into bipolar form with the two poles separated by 60 points.

Men and women subjects in various other samples were then given the questionnaire with instructions to indicate the extent to which each item characterized an adult man (masculinity response), an adult woman (femininity response), and themselves (self response). The order of presentation of masculinity and femininity instructions was reversed for approximately half the *Ss* within each sample; however, the self instructions were always given last in order to obtain self-descriptions within a masculinity-femininity context.

Scoring the Sex-Role Questionnaire

The scoring procedure for the instrument, developed in our first study, was based upon responses from 74 college men and 80 college women (Rosenkrantz et al., 1968). The concept of sex-role stereotype implies extensive agreement among people as to the characteristic differences between men and women. Therefore, those items on which at least 75% agreement existed among *Ss* of each sex as to which pole was more descriptive of the average man than the average woman, or vice versa, were termed "stereotypic." Forty-one items met this criterion. To determine the extent of the perceived difference, correlated *t* tests were computed between the masculinity response (average response to the male instructions) and the femininity response to each of the items; on each of the 41 stereotypic items the difference between these two responses was significant ($p < .001$) in both the samples of men and women. The sterotypic items are listed in Table 1.

Forty-eight of the remaining items had differences between the average masculinity response and the average femininity response that were significant beyond the .05 level of confidence in each sample, but the agreement as to the direction of the differences was less than 75%. These items were termed "dif-

TABLE 1
STEREOTYPIC SEX-ROLE ITEMS
(RESPONSES FROM 74 COLLEGE MEN AND 80 COLLEGE WOMEN)

Competency Cluster: Masculine pole is more desirable	
Feminine	Masculine
Not at all aggressive	Very aggressive
Not at all independent	Very independent
Very emotional	Not at all emotional
Does not hide emotions at all	Almost always hides emotions
Very subjective	Very objective
Very easily influenced	Not at all easily influenced
Very submissive	Very dominant
Dislikes math and science very much	Likes math and science very much
Very excitable in a minor crisis	Not at all excitable in a minor crisis
Very passive	Very active
Not at all competitive	Very competitive
Very illogical	Very logical
Very home oriented	Very worldly
Not at all skilled in business	Very skilled in business
Very sneaky	Very direct
Does not know the way of the world	Knows the way of the world
Feelings easily hurt	Feelings not easily hurt
Not at all adventurous	Very adventurous
Has difficulty making decisions	Can make decisions easily
Cries very easily	Never cries
Almost never acts as a leader	Almost always acts as a leader
Not at all self-confident	Very self-confident
Very uncomfortable about being aggressive	Not at all uncomfortable about being aggressive
Not at all ambitious	Very ambitious
Unable to separate feelings from ideas	Easily able to separate feelings from ideas
Very dependent	Not at all dependent
Very conceited about appearance	Never conceited about appearance
Thinks women are always superior to men	Thinks men are always superior to women
Does not talk freely about sex with men	Talks freely about sex with men
Warmth-Expressiveness Cluster: Feminine pole is more desirable	
Feminine	Masculine
Doesn't use harsh language at all	Uses very harsh language
Very talkative	Not at all talkative
Very tactful	Very blunt
Very gentle	Very rough
Very aware of feelings of others	Not at all aware of feelings of others
Very religious	Not at all religious
Very interested in own appearance	Not at all interested in own appearance
Very neat in habits	Very sloppy in habits
Very quiet	Very loud
Very strong need for security	Very little need for security
Enjoys art and literature	Does not enjoy art and literature at all
Easily expresses tender feelings	Does not express tender feelings at all easily

ferentiating" items. The remaining 33 items were termed "non-differentiating."

Pervasiveness of Sex-Role Stereotypes

Numerous investigators have noted the existence of sex-role stereotypes, i.e., consensual beliefs about the differing characteristics of men and women. These stereotypes are widely held (Lunneborg, 1970; Seward, 1946), persistent (Fernberger, 1948), and highly traditional (Komarovsky, 1950; McKee & Sherriffs, 1959). Despite the apparent fluidity of sex-role definition in contemporary society as contrasted with the previous decades, our own findings to date confirm the existence of pervasive and persistent sex-role stereotypes.

In our initial study (Rosenkrantz et al., 1968) *Ss* were drawn from a variety of New England institutions of higher learning, e.g., a two-year community college, a four-year city college, women's and men's schools, and parochial schools. Although the subsamples clearly differed with respect to religion and social class, our analyses indicated that they did not differ substantially from each other with respect to sex-role perceptions. Furthermore, the average masculinity responses (responses to "adult man" instructions) given by the male subjects to the 122 items correlated nearly perfectly with the average masculinity responses given by the female subjects ($r = .96$). The mean femininity responses (responses to "adult woman" instructions) given by the men and those given by women were also highly correlated ($r = .95$). In addition, the means of the masculinity responses given by men and women were almost identical, as were the mean femininity responses given by the two groups. Thus, we must conclude that sex-role stereotypes cut across the sex, socioeconomic class, and religion of the respondents, at least in individuals who seek education beyond the high school level.

Responses to the sex-role questionnaire have now been obtained from 599 men and 383 women, both married and single, who range in age from 17 to 60 years and in education from the elementary school level to the advanced graduate degree level. These subjects were divided by sex and into three age groups, 17-24 years, 25-44 years, 45-56 years, making a total of six groups. Educational level varied considerably in the four older groups, while it was relatively homogeneous within the two youngest. Marital status also varied among the age groups;

the oldest groups were comprised predominantly of married individuals (most frequently, parents of college students), the middle age groups consisted of both married and single individuals (including priests and nuns), while most subjects in the youngest age groups were single.

Within each of these six groups, the proportion of subjects agreeing that a given pole was more characteristic of men, or of women, was calculated for each item. All items on which agreement differed significantly from chance at the .02 level of confidence or better were noted. Seventy-four of the items met the criterion in at least four of the six different groups; 47 of the items were significant in all six groups. Thus, although some variation exists from group to group, high consensuality about the differing characteristics of men and women was found on a considerable number of items, and this was independent of age, sex, religion, education level, or marital status.

Social Desirability of the Stereotypic Items

The literature indicates that men and masculine characteristics are more highly valued in our society than are women and feminine characteristics (Dinitz, Dynes, & Clarke, 1954; Fernberger, 1948; Kitay, 1940; Lynn, 1959; McKee & Sherriffs, 1957, 1959; Sherriffs & Jarrett, 1953; Sherriffs & McKee, 1957; Smith, 1939; White, 1950). Moreover, both boys and girls between 6 and 10 years express greater preference for masculine things and activities than for feminine activities (Brown, 1958); similarly between 5 to 12 times as many women than men recall having wished they were of the opposite sex (Gallup, 1955; Terman, 1938). Sears, Maccoby, and Levin (1957) report that mothers of daughters only are happier about a new pregnancy than are mothers of sons. Investigators have also found that the interval between the birth of the first child and conception of the second is longer when the first child is a boy than when it is a girl; and that the likelihood of having a third child is greater if the first two children are both girls than both boys (Pohlman, 1969).

The valuation, or social desirability, of the characteristics designated as masculine or feminine by the questionnaire responses follows this same pattern: The masculine poles of the various items were more often considered to be socially desirable than the feminine poles. This differential valuation of sex-related characteristics was observed in several different

studies. For instance, two different samples of students, one from a Catholic liberal arts college for men and one from an Eastern women's college, indicated the pole of each item that they considered to be the more socially desirable behavior for the population at large (Rosenkrantz et. al., 1968). Of the 41 items defined as stereotypic, 29 had the masculine pole chosen as more desirable by a majority of each sample. We have termed these "male-valued" items; the remaining 12 items are termed "female-valued." Moreover, the men and women showed high agreement about which poles were socially desirable (r between men and women = .96).

Additional samples of men and women were given the questionnaire with instructions to indicate that point on each item scale which they considered most desirable for an adult, sex unspecified. The average response was computed for each item for the sexes separately. The point most desirable for an adult was found to be closer to the masculine pole on the same 29 stereotypic items on which the masculine pole was considered more socially desirable by the previous samples. Also, men and women once more showed high agreement about the point on each stereotypic item that was most socially desirable for an adult.

Content of the Sex-Role Stereotypes

To explore further the dimensions reflected by the stereotypic items, factor analyses were performed separately on the masculinity and feminity responses in both a sample of men and a sample of women. Each analysis produced two initial factors accounting, on the average, for 61% of the total extractable communality. The two factors in all four analyses divided the stereotypic items into those on which the male pole is more socially desirable versus those on which the female pole is more socially desirable. These results indicated that the stereotypic items consist of two orthogonal domains, i.e., male-valued items and female-valued items.

The male-valued items seem to us to reflect a "competency" cluster. Included in this cluster are attributes such as being independent, objective, active, competitive, logical, skilled in business, worldly, adventurous, able to make decisions easily, self-confident, always acting as a leader, ambitious. A relative *absence* of these traits characterizes the stereotypic perception of women; that is, relative to men, women are perceived to be dependent, subjective, passive, noncompetitive, illogical, etc.

The female-valued stereotypic items, on the other hand, consist of attributes such as gentle, sensitive to the feelings of others, tactful, religious, neat, quiet, interested in art and literature, able to express tender feelings. These items will be referred to as the "warmth and expressiveness" cluster. Men are stereotypically perceived as lacking in these characteristics, relative to women.

Self-Concepts and Sex-Role Stereotypes

These factorial distinctions between the male-valued and female-valued components of the sex-role stereotypes have important implications for the self-concepts of men and women.

The social desirability of an item is known to increase the likelihood of that item's being reported as self-descriptive on personality tests (Edwards, 1957). This tendency to align one's self with socially desirable behaviors, together with the fact that the feminine stereotype entails many characteristics that are less socially desirable than those of the masculine stereotype, implies that women ought to reject the negatively-valued feminine characteristics in their self-reports. However, our findings indicate that women incorporate the negative aspects of femininity (relative incompetence, irrationality, passivity, etc.) into their self-concepts along with the positive feminine aspects (warmth and expressiveness).

In a study of college men and women (Rosenkrantz et al., 1968), the mean self-concept scores of the men over the 41 stereotypic items were significantly different from the mean self-concept scores of the women ($p < .001$), indicating that male and female *S*s clearly perceived themselves as differing along a dimension of stereotypic sex differences. However, the women's self-concepts were also significantly less feminine than their perceptions of women in general. Similarly, the self-concepts of the men were significantly less masculine than their perceptions of the "average" man.

Ideal Sex-Roles

Our evidence and that of others (Elman, Press, & Rosenkrantz, 1970; Fernberger, 1948; McKee & Sherriffs, 1959) suggest that the existing stereotypic differences between men and women are approved of and even idealized by large segments of our society. One hundred thirty-seven college men

were given the questionnaire with instructions to indicate that point for each item which is most desirable for an adult man, and that point which is most desirable for an adult woman. The number of *Ss* who agreed that a particular pole of each item is more desirable for men or women was first computed. On 71 of the 122 items agreement was significantly different from chance ($p < .001$). The masculine pole was judged more desirable ($p < .01$) for men than women on 28 of the 29 male-valued stereotypic items (competency cluster); similar agreement reaches the .07 level of confidence on the remaining stereotypic items. These data indicate that college men feel that it is desirable for women to be less independent, less rational, less ambitious, etc., than men.

The 12 stereotypic female-valued items (warmth-expressiveness cluster), however, present a different picture. On only 7 of the 12 items was there significant agreement ($p < .01$) that the feminine pole is more socially desirable for women than for men; on one item, the agreement reaches the $p < .07$ level; on the remaining 4 items there is no significant agreement, i.e., the socially desirable adult pole is rated desirable as often for men as for women. Thus these male *Ss* appear to reserve for men those masculine traits which are socially desirable for adults in general, and also to consider 40% of the desirable feminine characteristics as equally desirable for men.

Again it is important to know not only the extent of agreement among *Ss* as to whether a trait is more desirable for men or for women, but also whether there is a significant difference between the amount of each trait assigned to men and women. Hence, the mean point at which each trait was considered most desirable for men and women, respectively, was computed for each of the stereotypic items. On the 29 male-valued traits, the difference between the means was 9.82; on the female-valued characteristics, the mean difference was 4.94. The t test between these two differences was significant ($p < .01$). This sample of college men, then, perceives male-valued traits as significantly less desirable for women than are female-valued traits for men.

Elman et al. (1970) investigated ideal sex-role concepts of both men and women. Using a shortened version of our questionnaire which included 10 male-valued and 10 female-valued stereotypic items, they asked both men and women to indicate that point on each item which is ideal for men and for women,

respectively. Their results indicate that the concepts of the ideal man and the ideal woman in both men and women subjects closely parallel the male and female sex-role stereotypes. The ideal woman is perceived as significantly less aggressive, less independent, less dominant, less active, more emotional, having greater difficulty in making decisions, etc., than the ideal man; the ideal man is perceived as significantly less religious, less neat, less gentle, less aware of the feelings of others, less expressive, etc., than the ideal woman. Both greater competence in men than in women, and greater warmth and expressiveness in women than in men, then, are apparently desirable in our contemporary society. Furthermore, Elman et. al. and our own results suggest that the college population, a group which tends to be critical of traditional social norms and conventions, nonetheless believes that the existing sex-role stereotypes are desirable.

Sex-Role Stereotypes and Judgments of Mental Health

The literature consistently points to a positive relationship between the social desirability of behaviors and clinical ratings of the same behaviors in terms of normality-abnormality (Cowen, Staiman, & Wolitzky, 1961), adjustment (Wiener, Blumberg, Segman, & Cooper, 1959); and health-sickness (Kogan, Quinn, Ax, & Ripley, 1957). Given the relationship existing between masculine versus feminine characteristics and social desirability, on the one hand, and social desirability and mental health on the other, we expected that clinicians would maintain distinctions in their concepts of healthy behavior in men and women paralleling stereotypic sex differences. Secondly, we predicted that behavioral attributes which are regarded as healthy for an adult, sex unspecified, and presumably indicative of an ideal health pattern will more often be considered by clinicians as healthy for men than for women. This latter prediction was derived from the assumption that an abstract notion of health (adult, sex unspecified) will tend to be more influenced by the greater social desirability of masculine stereotypic characteristics than by the lesser desirability of feminine stereotypic traits (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, & Vogel, 1970).

The sample in this study consisted of 79 practicing mental health clinicians: clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychiatric social workers. There were 46 men, 31 of whom held PhD or MD degrees, and 33 women, 18 with doctoral degrees. Their

ages ranged from 23 to 55 years, and their experience from an internship to extensive professional practice. The clinicians were given the sex-role questionnaire with one of three sets of instructions: *male* instructions asked respondents to "think of normal, adult men, and then indicate on each item that pole to which a mature, healthy, socially competent adult man would be closer"; *female* instructions were to describe "a mature, healthy, socially competent adult woman"; finally *adult* instructions asked for the description of "a healthy, mature, socially competent adult person." *S*s were asked to think of the poles of each item in terms of direction, rather than in terms of extremes of behavior.

The results of this study, concerning the stereotypic items, indicated that men and women clinicians did not differ from each other in their descriptions of adults, women, and men, respectively. Furthermore, within each set of instructions there was high agreement as to which pole reflected the more healthy behavior, indicating that these clinicians did have generalized concepts of mental health. We also found high agreement between the pole judged as more healthy for an adult by the clinicians and the pole chosen as more desirable for adults by college students ($\chi^2 = 23.64$; $p < .01$). This confirms the positive relationship between professional concepts of mental health and conceptions of social desirability held by lay people which has been reported by other investigators (Cowen et al., 1961; Kogan et al., 1957; Wiener et al., 1959).

Comparisons of the clinicians' judgments of the healthy men and the healthy women on the competency cluster indicated that the desirable masculine pole was ascribed to the healthy man significantly more often than to the healthy woman (on 25 out of 27 items). However, only about half of the socially desirable feminine characteristics (warmth-expressiveness cluster) were ascribed more often to women than to men (7 out of 11 items). On the face of it, the finding that clinicians tend to ascribe the male-valued, competency cluster traits more often to healthy men than to healthy women may seem trite. However, a consideration of the content of these items reveals a powerful, negative assessment of women. In effect, clinicians are suggesting that healthy women differ from healthy men by being more submissive, less independent, less adventurous, less objective, more easily influenced, less aggressive, less competitive, more excitable in minor crises, more emotional, more conceited about their appearance, and having their feelings more easily hurt.

The clinicians' ratings of a healthy adult and a healthy man did not differ from each other. However, a significant difference did exist between the ratings of the healthy adult and the healthy woman. Our hypothesis that a double standard of health exists for men and women was thus confirmed: the general standard of health (adult, sex-unspecified) is actually applied to men only, while healthy women are perceived as significantly *less* healthy by adult standards.

Essentially similar findings were reported by Neulinger (1968), who asked psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers to rank 20 paragraphs descriptive of Henry Murray's manifest needs according to how descriptive they were of the Optimally Integrated Personality (OIP), i.e., the mentally healthy person. Each of his *S*s completed the rankings once for the male OIP, once for the female OIP. His results showed that, although the two rankings were highly correlated, there were significant differences in the mean rankings of male and female OIP on 18 of the 20 paragraphs, 14 of them at the $p < .001$ level. Neulinger's *S*s ranked dominance, achievement, autonomy, counteraction, aggression, etc., as more indicative of mental health in men than in women; sentience, nurturance, play, succorance, deference, abasement, etc., were rated as higher for the female OIP than the male OIP. These findings are strikingly similar to ours. Neulinger interprets his findings as indicating that different conceptions of mental health exist for males and females, and that "the sex orientation of this society is not only shared, but also promoted by its clinical personnel." He believes that these rankings reflect an ideal rather than an optimally functioning person, judging by the female OIP, namely: "an affiliative, nurturant, sensuous playmate who clings to the strong, supporting male [Neulinger, 1968, p. 554]."

Behavioral Correlates of Sex-Role Stereotypes

Family Size

Davis (1967) and Blake (1969) have proposed that a critical psychological factor affecting the number of children a woman has is her acceptance or rejection of the feminine social role prevalent in our society. Blake (1969) has argued that most societies hold "pronatalistic" attitudes which prescribe for women the role of childbearer and rearer. Effective functioning in this feminine role encourages childbearing and earns social approval, while acceptance of an alternative role, such as gainful employ-

ment outside of the home, tends to reduce childbearing and earn social disapproval. Several studies have reported that working women do indeed desire (Ridley, 1959) and have (Pratt & Whelpton, 1958) fewer children than do nonworking women.

Certainly the sex-role stereotypes delineated by our research appear to be pronatalistic. Women who are perceived and perceive themselves as relatively incompetent might well feel inadequate to the challenges and stresses of employment. A less anxiety-provoking course of action would be to focus one's energies on home and family for which societal approval is certain, regardless of one's effectiveness in this role. Accordingly, we investigated the relationship between self-perception in the context of stereotypic sex roles and the number of children a woman has (Clarkson, Vogel, Broverman, Broverman, & Rosenkrantz, 1970).

Sixty Catholic mothers of male college students were studied. Their ages, 45 to 59 years, permitted the assumption that their families were completed. Only women with two or more children were included, thus excluding women with possible fertility problems. Education ranged from seven grades completed to doctoral degrees, with the median at 12 grades; the number of years employed outside the home since completion of formal education ranged from 0 to 29 years, with the median at 7.5 years.

Mothers with high competency self-concepts, as measured by our sex-role questionnaire, were found to have significantly fewer children than mothers who perceived themselves to be low on the competency items (3.12 versus 3.93 children, $p < .025$). Number of years worked was inversely related to number of children as expected, but did not reach statistical significance ($p < .10$).

Incorporation of male-valued stereotypic traits into the self-concepts of women should not be interpreted as a shift away from the positively valued characteristics of the female stereotype. The correlation between the self-concept score based on the competency cluster and the self-concept score based on the warmth-expressiveness cluster is low and not significant. Moreover, the self-concept scores on the warmth-expressiveness cluster were not related to family size. Thus, the self-concepts of mothers with relatively fewer children differed from the self-concepts of mothers with relatively more children only with respect to the negatively valued aspects of the feminine stereotype, i.e., the competency cluster, but do not differ with respect

to the positively valued feminine traits, i.e., the warmth-expressiveness cluster.

Interpretation of these findings is not without ambiguity. It is not clear whether women who perceive themselves as relatively more competent chose to have fewer children; or whether a woman's estimation of her own competency diminishes as a function of her preoccupation with home and family. Preliminary analyses of new data from unmarried women attending a Catholic women's college suggest, however, that self-concept may be primary. College women with relatively high competency self-concepts perceive their ideal future family size as significantly smaller (4.16 children) than college women who see themselves as relatively less competent (4.89 children). Furthermore, those women who perceive themselves as more competent indicate that they plan to combine employment with childrearing, while women who perceive themselves as relatively less competent indicate that they plan to stop working when they become mothers. Self-concept in the context of stereotypic sex roles is thus related not only to the number of children a woman has once her family is completed, but apparently influences the plans of young women concerning their future sex roles.

These data clearly demonstrate a predictable and systematic relationship between sex-role attitudes—specifically, self-concept in a sex-role context—and concrete sex-role behaviors.

Maternal Employment

We have conceptualized sex-role stereotypes very broadly as attitudinal variables which intervene between particular antecedent conditions and sex-role behaviors. The following study demonstrates the relationship between sex-role attitudes and the specific antecedent condition of maternal employment.

We reasoned that a person's perception of societal sex roles, and of the self in this context, may be influenced by the degree of actual role differentiation that one experiences in one's own family. Maternal employment status appears to be central to the role differentiation that occurs between parents. If the father is employed outside the home while the mother remains a full-time homemaker, their roles tend to be clearly polarized for the child. But if both parents are employed outside the home, their roles are more likely to be perceived as similar—not only because the mother is employed, but also because the father is more likely to share childrearing and other family-related

activities with the mother. Evidence exists that husbands of working wives share more in household tasks (Hoffman, 1963) and decisions (Blood, 1963; Heer, 1963) than husbands of wives remaining at home. Moreover, a number of studies suggest that the mother's employment history and status do in fact minimize a daughter's perception of sex-role related behavioral differences (Hartley, 1964), increase the likelihood of her expectation to combine marriage and a career (Riley, 1963), and make her more likely to actually pursue a career (Graham, 1970).

Accordingly, we examined the relationship between mother's employment status and sex-role perceptions of college students (Vogel, Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1970). The sex-role questionnaire was administered under standard instructions to 24 men and 23 women whose mothers had never been employed, and to 35 men and 38 women whose mothers were currently employed. For each *S* the mean masculinity, femininity, and self-response scores were computed, separately for the male-valued (competency) items and for the female-valued (warmth-expressiveness) items.

As expected, daughters of employed mothers perceived significantly smaller differences between men and women than did daughters of homemaker mothers, on both the competency cluster and the warmth-expressiveness cluster. Sons of employed mothers perceived a significantly smaller difference between women and men on the warmth-expressiveness cluster than did sons of homemaker mothers. However, the perceptions of the two groups of male *Ss* did not differ significantly on the competency cluster. Further analysis uncovered another significant difference: Daughters of employed mothers perceived women less negatively on the competency characteristics than did daughters of homemaker mothers. Thus, while the two groups did not differ in their perceptions of women with respect to the characteristics usually valued in women (warmth-expressiveness), daughters of employed mothers did perceive women to be more competent than did the daughters of homemaker mothers.

No significant differences were found between the mean self responses of *Ss* with employed mothers compared to *Ss* with homemaker mothers for either men or women. The self responses fall between the masculinity and the feminity responses for all *Ss*. However, since the difference between the masculinity and the femininity responses is significantly smaller in *Ss* whose

mothers are employed compared to *Ss* with homemaker mothers, the meaning of the self-concepts of the two groups may differ as a function of the different contexts in which they occur.

The results of this study suggest that the stereotypic conceptions of sex roles are not immutable. Insofar as perceptions of sex roles are subject to variation as a function of the individual's experience, then societal sex-role stereotypes may also be subject to change.

Summary and Conclusions

Our research demonstrates the contemporary existence of clearly defined sex-role stereotypes for men and women contrary to the phenomenon of "unisex" currently touted in the media (Bowers, 1971). Women are perceived as relatively less competent, less independent, less objective, and less logical than men; men are perceived as lacking interpersonal sensitivity, warmth, and expressiveness in comparison to women. Moreover, stereotypically masculine traits are more often perceived to be desirable than are stereotypically feminine characteristics. Most importantly, both men and women incorporate both the positive and negative traits of the appropriate stereotype into their self-concepts. Since more feminine traits are negatively valued than are masculine traits, women tend to have more negative self-concepts than do men. The tendency for women to denigrate themselves in this manner can be seen as evidence of the powerful social pressures to conform to the sex-role standards of the society.

The stereotypic differences between men and women described above appear to be accepted by a large segment of our society. Thus college students portray the ideal woman as less competent than the ideal man, and mental health professionals tend to see mature healthy women as more submissive, less independent, etc., than either mature healthy men, or adults, sex unspecified. To the extent that these results reflect societal standards of sex-role behavior, women are clearly put in a double bind by the fact that different standards exist for women than for adults. If women adopt the behaviors specified as desirable for adults, they risk censure for their failure to be appropriately feminine; but if they adopt the behaviors that are designated as feminine, they are necessarily deficient with respect to the general standards for adult behavior.

While many individuals are aware of the prejudicial effects

of sex-role stereotypes both from personal experience and hearsay, evidence from systematic empirical studies gives added weight to this fact. The finding that sex-role stereotypes continue to be held by large and relatively varied samples of the population and furthermore are incorporated into the self-concepts of both men and women indicates how deeply ingrained these attitudes are in our society. The magnitude of the phenomenon with which individuals striving for change must cope is well delineated.

On the other hand, the finding that antecedent conditions are associated with individual differences in stereotypic sex-role perceptions offers encouragement that change is possible and points to one manner in which change can be achieved. Finally, the finding that stereotypic sex-role self-concepts correlate with actual and desired family size testifies to the central role in behavior that these concepts play. One can speculate that eventual change in sex-role concepts will in fact be associated with far reaching changes in the life styles of both women and men.

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