

## **Masculinity—Femininity**

### **Current and Alternative Paradigms<sup>1</sup>**

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*Six areas of research in developmental and personality psychology concerning sex-typed traits, attitudes, and interests are identified as elements of a common "masculinity-femininity" paradigm needing reexamination. The masculinity-femininity paradigm is defined in relationship to Money and Ehrhardt's model for gender identity differentiation and dimorphism. The six lines of research in the masculinity-femininity paradigm are then briefly critically examined: (1) the measurability of masculinity-femininity as a trait, (2) the identification model of masculinity-femininity development, (3) the effects of father absence on boys, (4) correlates of masculinity-femininity in life adjustment, (5) cross-sex identity in males, and (6) sex role identity problems in black males. The empirical and conceptual problems in each line of research are explored, and are substantial enough to suggest the need for alternate paradigms. Two alternate models for masculinity-femininity development are briefly sketched. First, masculinity-femininity development is analogized to moral development, as a phasic process ideally leading to sex role transcendence and androgyny. Second, the acquisition of masculinity-femininity is analogized to language acquisition, as a highly symbol-dependent learning process contingent upon the interaction between an innate acquisition apparatus and a corpus of observed sex role behavior.*

In recent years, our understanding of the development of sex role identity, and its variant constructs, has undergone revolutionary rethinking. There is little question that the most significant source of this rethinking is the research of John Money and his co-workers since 1955, recently summarized by Money and Ehrhardt (1972). The goal of this article is to review six areas which have constituted the major body of research in developmental and personality psychology

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concerning sex role identity. First, Money and Ehrhardt's analysis of gender identity differentiation and dimorphism is presented, though not critically reviewed, and the relationships between this broader model and the more specific topics pursued in developmental and personality psychology are defined. Second, each of these topics is briefly critically examined as a constituent element of a dominant paradigm (Kuhn, 1962) for masculinity-femininity which has guided psychological research up to the present. Third, two alternatives to this dominant paradigm are sketched.

### **MONEY AND EHRHARDT'S MODEL AND THE MASCULINITY-FEMININITY PARADIGM**

Money and Ehrhardt's model for "gender identity differentiation and dimorphism," which they propose as a more comprehensive term than "psychosexual or gender identity development," identifies a developmental sequence of interacting biological and environmental events which underlie adult gender identity. In schematic outline (Money and Ehrhardt, 1972, p. 3), the sex chromosome configuration at conception leads to differentiation of the fetal gonads, which in turn leads to differentiation in the production of fetal hormones. This differentiation in fetal hormones, specifically the presence or absence of fetal androgens, directly causes dimorphism in certain aspects of brain development, as well as dimorphism in the internal and external genitalia. The differentiated appearance of the external genitals at birth causes others to define and behave toward the individual as male or female, and later causes the individual to define their own body image as male or female. These processes, along with brain dimorphism, contribute to what Money and Ehrhardt term "juvenile gender identity." During puberty, the gonads produce hormones which stimulate gender-differentiated eroticism and body appearance. These pubertal developments in eroticism and body appearance interact with the earlier-established juvenile gender identity and brain dimorphism to produce "adult gender identity."

This model provides a framework for understanding the discrepancies between chromosomal, hormonal, gonadal, morphological, and psychological gender which occur when there is some failure in the links between each developmental event and the next. For example, receptor organs may be insensitive to fetal androgens (androgen-insensitivity syndrome); the adrenals may produce excess androgens (adrenogenital syndrome); drugs with androgenic properties may be unknowingly administered during pregnancy; or the external genitalia may be ambiguous, misidentified, or injured during infancy for other reasons. Perhaps the most startling proposition derived from Money and Ehrhardt's clinical experience is that the gender in which the child is reared in infancy, based on the classification of the child's external genitalia as male or female, establishes a psychological gender identity in the child which is practically irreversible by age

three, even if discrepant with chromosomal, hormonal, or gonadal sex, or later morphological changes.

Up to the present, the literature on sex role identity in developmental and personality psychology has focused on a somewhat different set of problems. The major topics investigated in this literature, and reviewed here, include the development of measures for gender-appropriate traits and interests (or masculinity-femininity); the acquisition of gender-appropriate traits and interests by identification with the same-sex parent; the effects of father absence on boys; the correlates of masculinity-femininity in life adjustment; "cross-sex" identity; and sex role identity problems in black males.

Money and Ehrhardt's analysis does not have direct implications for any of these six areas. Money and Ehrhardt do criticize the overemphasis given to identification, as contrasted with complementation (learning behavior which is complementary to others of the opposite sex) in learning gender-appropriate traits, an overemphasis which they curiously attribute to social instead of developmental psychology. They still affirm their belief in identification in their emphatic statement "the fact is that children differentiate a gender role and identity by way of complementation to members of the opposite sex, and identification with members of the same sex" (p. 13). However, unlike other parts of Money and Ehrhardt's analysis, this assertion is not based on their own research, or reference to the research of others (see also p. 185). In the one later section in which they do cite literature from developmental psychology (pp. 179-182), they propose a "gender-feedback" effect in parent-infant interaction, in which parents both reinforce and are reinforced by gender-appropriate behavior in their children, and then cite several descriptive studies showing the presence of various sex-typed behaviors in children of various ages.

Money and Ehrhardt's model specifies that, in addition to the effects of fetal brain dimorphism, once the child's sex is categorized by the parents and others according to the appearance of the child's external genitals, psychological processes act to bring about further differentiation of gender-appropriate psychological traits and behaviors. However, their model does not of necessity require that identification (or complementation, or gender-feedback, or any other specific process) be the particular psychological process involved. Their model also does not specify what psychometric structure gender-appropriate traits, attitudes, and interests have, or what their correlates in life adjustment are. It is precisely these topics, and three additional derivations from identification theory (father absence, cross-sex identity, and black males' sex identity), which the major body of sex role research in developmental and personality psychology has focused on.

In the sense used by Kuhn (1962), these topics can be viewed as lines of research defining a larger paradigm, specifically what is termed here the *masculinity-femininity* paradigm in psychology. This paradigm concerns the acquisi-

tion and significance of gender-typed traits, attitudes, and interests in personality development, after the child's biological sex has been established. By labeling this paradigm after the specific kind of measure which all of its lines of research employ, we will avoid confusion with the larger process of gender identity differentiation and dimorphism which begins at conception, and with the many different formulations of sex role identity and variant constructs which have abounded in psychology. Money and Ehrhardt's model is neutral with respect to this paradigm and its lines of research, which refer to processes relevant to only one particular link in their larger model. It may be that, in the context of the larger model, the success or failure of some of the components of the masculinity-femininity paradigm is of only limited interest. Nonetheless, because of the dominant influence these lines of research continue to have in psychology without recent examination of their implications or supporting evidence (as illustrated by Money and Ehrhardt's acceptance of identification), it is worthwhile critically to examine them.

### COMPONENTS OF THE MASCULINITY-FEMININITY PARADIGM

The masculinity-femininity paradigm examined here includes the following components and applications: (1) masculinity-femininity (*M-F*) measures, indicating the extent to which the individual shows gender-appropriate traits, attitudes, and interests, assess a psychometrically coherent and meaningful dimension of personality; (2) persons develop their masculinity-femininity through identification with others of the same sex, particularly the same-sex parent; (3) boys who grow up without fathers will show deviant masculinity-femininity, and other indicators of adaptive difficulty such as poor school performance and delinquency; (4) more generally, gender-appropriate *M-F* scores are associated with positive adjustment; (5) "cross-sex" identity is a particular disorder of masculinity-femininity development to which males are specially vulnerable because of their early identification with their mothers, and has negative correlates in personality functioning; (6) because of the higher rate of father absence in the black community, black males are particularly likely to show deviant *M-F* scores. Each of these lines of research in the masculinity-femininity paradigm will be briefly and critically examined in turn.

#### *1. Masculinity-Femininity as a Psychological Trait*

Many scales for masculinity-femininity have been developed, and many continue to be used. There is, however, considerable disenchantment with these instruments by responsible psychometricians. Tyler (1968, p. 211) notes that *M-F* scales have proved of little value because *M-F* is not unidimensional. It includes different components — emotional qualities, interests, and abilities — that

have little empirical relationship with each other. Further, different *M-F* scales in popular use show only low positive correlations among themselves. Edwards and Abbott (1973, p. 248), in another recent review, conclude that the convergent validity of the available *M-F* scales has not been demonstrated, and that factor analyses of items taken from many different scales fail to produce a single common factor. Kohlberg (1966, pp. 91–92, 109–110), Herzog and Sudia (1970, pp. 42–50), and Constantinople (1973) also present critiques of available *M-F* scales.

In addition to the psychometric criticisms of *M-F* scales which have been offered, two broader points need to be made as well. First, the traits and interests which masculinity-femininity comprises constitute a relatively small proportion of the personality domain. In the development of *M-F* scales with items from standard item pools or from broad ranges of items, many more items are rejected as failing to meet the criterion (here, differentiating men and women) than are accepted, as is usual in scale development. Interestingly, studies of sex role stereotyping reveal a similar pattern. On the traits most commonly ascribed to persons, men and women are not seen as differing, while the traits on which the sexes *are* seen as differing tend to be ones rated with rather low frequency for both sexes (Sherriffs & McKee, 1957, p. 455). Jenkin and Vroegh (1969) also find considerable overlap between stereotypes of ideal masculinity and ideal femininity, which is interpreted as resulting from the fact that both stereotypes are socially desirable and thus share many common features. These data from *M-F* and stereotyping studies suggest that those traits and interests which differentiate the sexes on the average, and which are perceived as constituting an *M-F* dimension, are relatively secondary rather than dominant in the personality.

Second, it is not clear that the best way to interpret within-sex differences on sex-typed interests is as a psychological trait. *M-F* scores have long been known to vary systematically by social class and education. More recently, Lipman-Blumen (1972) has proposed the construct “sex role ideology” in the analysis of women’s career goals. Women who want careers (as compared to those who do not) are conceptualized as having a liberal rather than a traditional conception of the female role, not as being psychologically “masculine,” as traditional *M-F* measures might classify them. The concept of *M-F* as a purely psychological trait makes sense in a culture with universal and unchanging sex role norms, but must be regarded cautiously in a culture such as our own, where sex role norms vary according to social class and other factors and are undergoing major change over time.

## 2. *Masculinity-Femininity Acquisition Through Parental Identification*

While social-learning and cognitive developmental models have recently emerged as major alternatives to the parental identification model of mascu-

linity-femininity acquisition (Kohlberg, 1966; Mischel, 1970), the identification model is still powerful in influence. The identification model is now under serious attack from several quarters. Kohlberg's (1966) review concludes that many of the relationships implied by the identification model are not consistently confirmed. Many studies show no relationship between the child's masculinity-femininity and the same-sex parent's *M-F* score, the parent's expectation for the child on the *M-F* dimension, the warmth of the relationship between the parent and child (presumably a factor in the child's identification), or even the presence of the same-sex parent. Kohlberg specifically shows that children develop sex-typed preferences before there is evidence of attachment to the same-sex parent. Mischel's (1970) review also questions the empirical support of the identification model. While the failure of many studies to find these relationships does not demonstrate that they do not exist, it does call into question the common assumption that these and other relationships implied by the identification model have been clearly established.

The identification model has not been a monolithic one. Lynn's (1964) model of divergent and convergent feedback in identification, and Slater's (1963) proposal for a "dualistic" theory of identification, are examples of some of the rich theoretical speculation which this model has generated, especially in analyzing and accounting for male-female differences in development. The same-sex parent has been joined by other family figures in masculinity-femininity research. Models emphasizing the sex and ordinal position of siblings, or the role of the opposite-sex parent (complementation), have been proposed. It is reasonable to include a broader range of inputs to sex role identity development than same-sex parental identification alone. But it should be noted that there is as yet no research consensus on the power of these supplemental models. For example, while Rosenberg and Sutton-Smith (1964) found that boys with older male siblings were more masculine, such boys in Harrington's (1970) sample were *less* masculine — with plausible interpretations in both studies. Rychlak and Legerski's (1967) findings on the relationship between father characteristics and masculinity-femininity in daughters could not be replicated by Williams (1973).

### *3. Effects of Father Absence on Boys*

One specific corollary of the identification model which has been studied in considerable detail is the hypothesis that boys who grow up without fathers will experience difficulties in masculinity-femininity development and more general personality adjustment. Many governmental family programs and policies have been based on the notion that the research literature clearly shows that father absence leads to a variety of social and personal pathologies. Recent reviews such as Biller's (1970, 1971) indeed suggest that the literature supports

this conclusion. However, a detailed review of the effects of father absence in three areas relevant to social policy — academic performance, delinquency, and sex identity development — conducted by Herzog and Sudia (1970) for the federal Office of Child Development concluded that there is little evidence that father absence in itself depresses academic performance; that father absence may be slightly associated with increased delinquency, but to so small an extent as to have no practical significance; and that the evidence that father absence leads to difficulties in boys' developing masculine identity as measured by *M-F* tests is much weaker and more ambiguous than is usually supposed. (It may be that father absence does have effects in other domains of personality adjustment and functioning outside the three major areas covered by their review.) Simply controlling for social class, which has been done adequately in very few of the studies in these three areas, calls into question a major portion of the predicted effects of father absence. Just as the long-standing consensus that maternal employment has negative effects on children has been reevaluated in recent years (most recently, Howell, 1973a, 1973b), the even longer-standing consensus about the negative effects of father absence is also beginning to be reevaluated. Major reviews of the same area are coming to radically different conclusions — perhaps the signal for a fruitful period of future work.

To say that many of the negative effects of father absence have been called into question in the research literature does not mean that greater male involvement with children is not a desirable goal, only that it should be encouraged for different reasons than it usually is. As Seifert (1973) points out, greater male participation in child rearing is supported both by those who want to loosen and change traditional sex role norms and by those who want to reinforce them. It is ironic to recall that in an earlier era it was feared that too *much*, rather than too little paternal contact would make boys soft and weak. While increased male participation in childcare should be and is proceeding, we should be cautious about justifying it by the father absence literature.

#### 4. *Masculinity-Femininity and Adjustment*

It has traditionally been argued that gender-appropriate traits and interests are associated with good adjustment. Bem's (1972; 1974) recent review of this literature concludes that high sex-typed interests are actually associated with *poor* adjustment throughout the life cycle for females (see also Vincent, 1966), and in all phases of the life cycle except adolescence for males. In both women and men, high sex-typed interests are negatively associated with intellectual performance.

The relationship between sex-typed traits and adjustment throughout the life cycle for men is especially interesting. Mussen's (1961, 1962) longitudinal analysis of data from the Berkeley Growth Study indicated that males rated

highly masculine show somewhat better adjustment than low masculine males in adolescence, but later in life the highs seem to lose ground psychologically, showing less dominance, less self-acceptance, and greater need for abasement than low masculine males. Mussen suggested that the high masculine males show positive adjustment in adolescence because their masculinity itself confers status on them in adolescent male culture. But because of their automatic high status they do not develop the interpersonal skills that low masculine males are forced to. Later in life, the highs' lack of these skills causes them considerable difficulty, and the low masculine males come out ahead. Projecting Mussen's speculation further, we can also hypothesize that traditionally masculine males are especially vulnerable to poor adjustment in aging since the physical skills central to traditional masculinity decline more rapidly than intellectual or interpersonal skills.

Parallel to Mussen's speculation, several theorists have suggested there is a major discontinuity in cultural demands placed on males over the life cycle, the discontinuity between the physical and athletic skills esteemed in childhood and adolescence and the intellectual and interpersonal skills necessary for adult functioning (Hacker, 1957; Hartley, 1968, pp. 142-144; Knox & Kupferer, 1971). What is adaptive on one side of this discontinuity is not necessarily adaptive on the other. This perspective more generally means that in considering the relationship between sex-typed behavior and adjustment, we must examine how a particular sex role orientation will help the individual deal with the full range of demands and experiences that accrue over the whole life cycle, not just during those periods when sex role demands are most rigid and conventional, i.e., childhood and adolescence.

This analysis of the life cycle correlates of masculinity also calls for some rethinking of Sexton's (1969) thesis that highly masculine boys are discriminated against in the schools because of the schools' domination by females. In reading Sexton's case studies, one senses that one is witnessing concretely the process that Mussen described more abstractly: highly "masculine" boys encountering an adult world that now expects intellectual and interpersonal skills which they never developed, and learning to devalue themselves as a result. Sexton's solution is to remasculinize the schools, so that highly masculine boys continue to be rewarded. It would make equal sense, however, to argue that it is traditional male role socialization, which has left such boys so unequipped to adapt to the real adult world, that should be changed.

Sexton correctly notes that it is lower socioeconomic class boys — more traditionally masculine — who have greater problems of adjustment in schools than do middle-class boys. Lower-class boys have fewer resources for dealing with the sex role discontinuities of the male life cycle, and Sexton's empathy for them is justified. The fact that middle-class males are less "masculine" than lower-class males, and middle-class females less "feminine" than lower-class



women — one of the most consistent findings in the *M-F* literature — should have been a clue that traditional sex-typed interests have negative correlates, since it is middle-class values that set the norm for the rest of society.

### 5. Cross-Sex Identity

One subarea of research on masculinity-femininity and adjustment which has received special attention concerns cross-sex identity in males. This research hypothesizes that (1) the child's early identification with the mother makes the male child vulnerable to "unconscious" femininity, as distinct from conscious masculinity-femininity, and that (2) this unconscious femininity generates defense mechanisms which are distinctive and maladaptive. These might include generalized cognitive rigidity (a thesis in *The Authoritarian Personality*, by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950, for example) and hypermasculine strivings, including predisposition to violence (Toby, 1966).

In support of the hypothesis that men are particularly vulnerable to cross-sex identification, it is often noted that more biological males than females are transsexuals or apply for sex change operations. However, it is also true that more females than males respond to a common *M-F* item — with much larger and more representative samples than applicants for transsexual surgery — that they have wanted to be of the other sex at some time in their lives. Further, the basic course of sex role development is that boys show consistent and continuous development of gender-appropriate interests through childhood and adolescence, while girls show an important phase of relatively preferring traditionally "male" interests during middle childhood (Kohlberg, 1966). It may be that there are extreme cases of cross-sex identification, reflected in transsexuality, which are more prevalent among males, but that in the less extreme and more typical case, girls have greater cross-sex wishes than boys as suggested by the other data. In this more typical case, which is more relevant to understanding normal developmental processes, cross-sex wishes derive, not from identification processes, but from girls' realistic perception of the relative social value and privilege of the other sex.

The empirical literature of the 1950s and early 1960s, using the Franck drawing completion test as the measure of unconscious masculinity-femininity (Franck and Rosen, 1949), did find that unconscious femininity in men had correlates which could be interpreted as defensive (Harlow, 1951; Miller and Swanson, 1960, chaps. 7, 12; Sanford, 1966). Some of these studies have argued that unconscious femininity per se leads to defensive behavior, while others have argued that unconscious femininity leads to defensive behavior only if conscious masculinity-femininity (assessed by traditional *M-F* scales) is masculine. Why unconscious femininity is associated with conscious masculinity in some individuals but with conscious femininity in others — in effect, under what

conditions unconscious femininity needs to be defended against or not — is typically not specified, however. One major attempt to account for these differences in conscious masculinity-femininity (and therefore defensive behavior) in unconscious feminine adolescent boys, yielded negative results (Harrington, 1970).

More recently there has been a major reconsideration of cross-sex identity research within personality psychology. In the major series of studies in the recent literature (Lipsitt & Strodbeck, 1967; Strodbeck & Creelan, 1968; Bezdek & Strodbeck, 1970; Strodbeck, Bezdek, & Goldhammer, 1970), Strodbeck and his colleagues began with the traditional hypothesis that unconscious femininity as measured by the Franck test generates conflict, but concluded on a much more guarded note. Strodbeck most recently suggests that the Franck test is best interpreted as tapping a fundamental value dimension of idealism-pragmatism, which is relevant to individuals' dispositions to social action but is not related to personality adjustment in any simple way. In addition to this reexamination of cross-sex identity theory in personality psychology, Young (1965) has also presented a major critique of its application in cultural anthropology.

The major explanation in personality psychology for hypermasculine behavior, especially violence, has been that it is a defense against unconscious femininity (e.g. Toby, 1966). However, Harrington's (1970, pp. 80–81) study and review suggests that this application of cross-sex identity theory requires particular caution, and seems least supported by the available data. Perhaps hypermasculine behavior would be better understood not as individual males' defense against unconscious femininity but rather as the result of structured strains in the culture which lead many men to "overconform" to their sex role (Russell, 1973).

### *6. Sex Identity Problems in Black Males*

Pettigrew (1964, pp. 17-24) summarizes the traditional argument that black males are more psychologically feminine than white males, using data from studies based on *M-F* scales. This traditional perspective has been strongly rejected by black social scientists (Hare, 1971; Vontress, 1971), who point out the culture-bound nature of *M-F* scales and the ways individual items interpreted as feminine (such as "I would like to be a singer") may have a different meaning in black culture. White social scientists are beginning to reject the traditional perspective as well. For example, the social anthropologist Ulf Hannerz first studied, in the traditional manner, father absence as a source of psychological femininity in black males (Hannerz, 1969). More recently, however, he has explicitly rejected this approach and developed an extremely provocative alternative analysis of sex roles in the black community (Hannerz, 1970, 1971).

It is interesting to note that the observation that black males have lower average masculinity scores than white males has led to the conclusion that black males have sex identity conflicts, but the parallel observation that middle class men have lower masculinity scores than working class men has led either to the conclusion that there are different norms for masculinity for different socioeconomic groups, or to the conclusion that working class males are hypermasculine. White middle class behavior is always the standard to which other groups are compared, whatever the direction of difference. The traditional argument for sex identity problems in black males reasons, in effect, that since black men answer certain questionnaire items in the same ways which differentiate white women from white men, they are higher in femininity. It has not been noted that this argument can be reversed: that since black and white males respond differently on the average to some questionnaire items, these items measure the hypothetical trait "negritude." Since white females answer these items more like black males than white males, white females are thus higher than white males in negritude, and thus have racial identity conflicts. This example should show the pitfalls of using norms for one group on others.

### ALTERNATE PARADIGMS

The empirical and conceptual difficulties in these different areas are brought together to suggest that, following Kuhn's (1962) analysis of the development of scientific theories, after several decades in which the psychological masculinity-femininity paradigm has been constructed and consolidated, significant anomalies — data which cannot be accounted for by the dominant paradigm — are beginning to appear. While the critiques of these six lines of research are not exhaustive, the combination of questions from these areas taken together suggests that alternative paradigms can be fruitfully considered.

Two major alternate paradigms for understanding the etiology and significance of sex-typed interests, traits, and attitudes have already been proposed — Mischel's (1970) social-learning model and Kohlberg's (1966) cognitive-developmental model. Each has been ably presented by its proponent and need not be restated here. Neither model makes the predictions about same-sex parent identification, father absence, cross-sex identity, and sex identity conflicts in black males which have generated anomalies for the traditional paradigm. Further, neither the social-learning nor the cognitive-developmental model views *M-F* as a trait, though for different reasons, and neither makes predictions about the relationship between sex-typed traits and adjustment, the two other areas which have produced anomalous data. Research on these alternatives to the dominant identification paradigm should and will continue.

Two additional paradigms are sketched here. A distinctive feature of these models is that they are particularly suited to describe *change* in sex role behavior and norms, at both individual and cultural levels. The first paradigm analogizes masculinity-femininity development to moral development, going beyond the cognitive-developmental model already proposed by Kohlberg (1966), and hypothesizes the development of gender-typed traits through three phases of the life cycle. The second paradigm analogizes the acquisition of gender-typed traits to language acquisition.

### *Three Phases of Sex Role Development*

Both Kohlberg (1966) and Block (1973) suggest that sex role development has much in common with the more general processes of cognitive and ego development. To extend their arguments, we can hypothesize sex-typed traits as developing through a series of phases analogous to one particular developmental process which has been studied in detail: moral development (Kohlberg, 1968). Briefly, it has been shown through analyses of children's responses to moral dilemmas presented in story form that moral thinking develops through three broad phases: a *premoral* phase in which moral thinking is dominated by avoiding punishment and gratifying impulses; a second phase of *conventional role conformity*, oriented to maintaining the approval of others, especially authorities; and a final *postconventional* phase in which moral judgments are made on the basis of self-accepted moral principles.

Correspondingly, in the first phase of sex role development, the child has amorphous and unorganized sex role concepts, including confusion over the child's own gender. In the second phase, children learn the "rules" of sex role differentiation and are motivated to make others and themselves conform to them. Such learning represents a great cognitive advance beyond the earlier stage, but in this intermediate stage persons are most rigid and intolerant of deviations from sex role norms in themselves and others. In the third and final stage of sex role development, individuals transcend these sex role norms and boundaries, and develop psychological androgyny in accordance with their inner needs and temperaments (Osofsky & Osofsky, 1972; Block, 1973; Bem, 1975a, 1975b). Such a model of sex role development could be operationalized by analyzing children's responses to stories presenting sex role dilemmas, corresponding to Kohlberg's moral dilemma technique.

From the point of view of this paradigm, an important limitation to the traditional view of sex role development is that it views rigid adherence to sex role boundaries as the final stage of development rather than as an intermediate stage which, under optimum conditions, is supplanted by loosened sex role definitions which are more responsive to individual needs and differences. It is as if

conventional role conformity were viewed as the goal of moral development rather than as a phase which ideally passes into a more humanistic and principled morality.

This phasic view of masculinity-femininity development is more in accord with the observed peaking of sex-typed interests and traits in adolescence than is the traditional view of the irreversible and stable internalization of parental traits. Terman and Miles (1936), for example, showed that sex-typed interests are highest during the eighth grade for women and during the eleventh grade for boys, decreasing thereafter. Change in sex-typed traits occurs, in fact, through the life cycle as individuals encounter the many life experiences that have sex role meaning — parenthood, same- and cross-sex intimacy, experience in work, adult psychosexual changes, and aging. These later life experiences can be experiences which enrich and loosen one's conception of oneself as a man or woman, or they can be occasions of still more distress, discomfort, and feelings of inadequacy. The traditional paradigm, which in effect views the sex role conceptions of eighth-grade girls and eleventh-grade boys as the models of mature sex role identity, does not help us to understand how persons adapt to this full range of life experiences.

The phasic model of sex role development should also help us to respond appropriately to the sex typing children develop (MacEwan, 1972). The needs children sometimes show to engage only in traditional sex-appropriate activities, or to exclude the other sex from them, should be viewed the same way we view the sometimes punitive morality or zealous overconformity children show in intermediate stages of moral development: as a phase that children go through, but which should not set the pattern for later living. Children may reject non-traditional sex role behavior when it is presented to them, just as they may reject or be confused by humanistic or relativistic moral reasoning. However, though the child may be unable to respond immediately to more advanced sex role or moral principles, he or she is often able to draw on them later in development as a resource for change and growth. In this perspective, it makes sense that some studies show that daughters of working mothers have traditional sex role conceptions while they are young (Hartley, 1959–60), while other studies show that maternal employment does predict daughters' instrumental traits or achievement later in life (Siegel, Stolz, Hitchcock, & Adamson, 1963).

The analogy drawn here between masculinity-femininity development and moral development suggests that though there is a developmental phase of traditional masculinity-femininity development, peaking in early adolescence, its role in the life cycle is limited. The great risk in development is not that persons may fail to reach this stage, but that they may never leave it. But let us look more closely at how traditional sex role identity is acquired in the hypothesized second phase. Can we conceptualize the acquisition of traditional sex role iden-

tity in a way that builds in the possibility of moving forward to the hypothesized final developmental phase of sex role transcendence and androgyny?

### *Sex Role Acquisition as a Symbol-Learning Process*

Language acquisition provides a fruitful model for traditional sex role acquisition in the hypothesized second phase of development. The system of sex role differentiation in any culture is a highly symbolic system which groups together different classes of behaviors and activities into broad categories, with certain rules for combining them. In this symbolic system, the meaning of individual features is modified by the context of other features in which they occur. That is, a particular combination and sequence of constituent elements is encoded and decoded as a meaningful sex role statement according to a sex role syntax. For example, "woman working" by itself is traditionally unfeminine, but if it is modified by "as a nurse" or by "husband disabled," its meaning is entirely different. Through studies of sex role stereotyping, the sex role meanings of individual traits and behaviors have been explored in isolation, but there has as yet been no systematic analysis of the combinatorial properties of sex role features.

One current model in psycholinguistics (Chomsky, 1965) hypothesizes an innate but content-free language acquisition apparatus which, when presented with a body of spoken language, develops the syntactic and semantic structures which correspond to the presented language. Once these structures are developed, the child can generate and understand new sentences which it has never heard before. Likewise, we can conceptualize a sex role learning apparatus which, interacting with the corpus of sex role images and linkages visible to the child, generates sex role syntactic and semantic structures, permitting the child to produce and understand new sex role sequences in observable behavior, including his or her own. In hypothesizing such an acquisition apparatus for sex roles, we do not necessarily need to postulate an underlying "deep structure." The need for a deep structure, and what it would mean, have been matters of deep controversy in psycholinguistics, and we want to appropriate only the acquisitional part of the psycholinguistic model for our analogy.

According to this paradigm, parents provide a basic part of the sex role corpus the child observes — as they do with language — but their role is not paramount. Children learn sex roles through identification with the same-sex parent no more than they learn language through identification. The parents' role in language and sex role learning is supplemented by many other inputs, including direct teaching in socializing institutions. This is why children whose parents show deviant language or nontraditional sex roles still seem, in large part, to learn both "standard English" and "standard sex roles." The postulated innate

acquisition apparatuses seem motivated to generalize the correct semantic and syntactic structures in spite of random deficiencies in a particular corpus, as the corpus is broadened throughout development. Children's learning of the sex role syntax and semantics hypothesized here can be studied with methods similar to those used in language acquisition research.

This model for the learning of "sex role language" can also encompass individual differences in sex role development. There may be individual variation in the specific skills or capacities that a particular language or sex role system calls upon, as well as differences in the generalized acuity of the underlying acquisition apparatuses. In sex roles as in language, some stutter and stammer, some trip over their tongues or can never find the right word, and some simply never become quite fluent. Others become facile quite early; the risk here is depending on this facility too much, and failing to learn that it takes more than either verbal or sex role fluency to live successfully.

The linguistic model of sex role acquisition has implications for sex role change both at the individual level and at the more macroscopic cultural level. At the individual level, sex role behavior does change in response to new models and norms. The rate of change in sex role behavior is, on the one hand, faster than is consistent with models assuming a relatively irreversible internalization of parental traits in the individual. On the other hand, the rate of change is slower than is consistent with social-learning or other models which assume no internal structures and assume immediate responsiveness in the organism to environmental contingencies. Language acquisition provides a model for a dynamic mechanism which generates an organized, structured configuration of behaviors, but which is permeable to new input, and can evolve. In sex roles, as a language, while persons' performance is highly organized and structured, they can learn the new.

At the macroscopic cultural level, sex role norms have been changing over time, just as language changes. The linguistic term "lexicostatistical drift" describes the slow turnover in the vocabulary of a language, as some words fall into disuse and new words are created. We can conceptualize a parallel "sex role drift," as indicated by Rosenberg and Sutton-Smith's (1960) data about changes over time in the sex typing of many children's toys and activities. The observed drift in sex role norms over time, particularly dramatic in our own era, is hard to account for according to the traditional identification model. It is also difficult to account for according to Kohlberg's (1966) structuralist cognitive-developmental model, which argues that sex role differentiation represents, ultimately, a cognitive elaboration of the differences in the physical properties of men and women observable to the child.

The linguistic-symbolic perspective offered here leads to a view of sex roles as a symbolic system which has a concrete reality outside the individual in the same sense that language does. Individuals encounter these symbol systems and,

in internalizing them and displaying them to others, contribute to their propagation. While individuals use and alter these symbol systems in idiosyncratic ways, the symbol systems persist, evolving at their own slower rate.

### Comment

In the two new perspectives offered here, sex role development proceeds according to a phasic model toward sex role transcendence and androgyny, in which traditional sex role learning is seen as a symbol-learning process which allows new learning to occur. Both these related paradigms take a positive attitude toward the change in sex roles now underway for both women and men in contemporary culture. Women and men are increasingly exploring traits and interests formerly considered "unfeminine" or "unmanly." As sex role norms continue to loosen and change, our understanding of how sex-typed traits, attitudes, and interests develop and function in the personality must change as well.

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