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INTRODUCTION

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In spite of widespread publicity given to the women's movement, statistics imply that the movement's influence upon our conceptions of men and women has thus far been relatively small. Larger numbers of women are working but they are still concentrated in the lower levels of the professional hierarchy, a situation which persists despite recent attempts to decrease discrimination in hiring and in the salaries of women. For example, the percentage of women in professional and technical occupations decreased from 42% in 1950 to 39% in 1972, yet during the same period the percentage of women clerical workers increased from 59% to 75% (U.S. Department of Labor, 1972). These figures are more striking when one considers that an even larger percentage of working women are college trained today. Furthermore, there have apparently been even fewer changes in women's traditional role within the home. In a sample of *Psychology Today* readers, most of whom identified themselves as political liberals, only 15% of the married men shared in the housekeeping and childrearing tasks, even though most said they favored equality in these responsibilities (Tavris, 1973).

In this issue, recent efforts to specify the factors responsible for the persistence of traditional sex roles will be discussed. One line of research deals with such societal impediments to changing roles as cultural expectations, discriminatory hiring practices, lack

of provision for childcare facilities, and the subtler pressures of peers. A second line of research focuses on psychological factors (personal values and choices) which influence role behaviors. We will examine how both these sets of factors influence sex-role behaviors and how they interact with each other to maintain traditional sex roles. Finally, this issue will focus on the necessity and potential for change. Even though few studies have directly addressed the problem of change (Holter, 1971; Ruble, Croke, Frieze, & Parsons, 1975), we feel that change in rigid social-role structures is imperative.

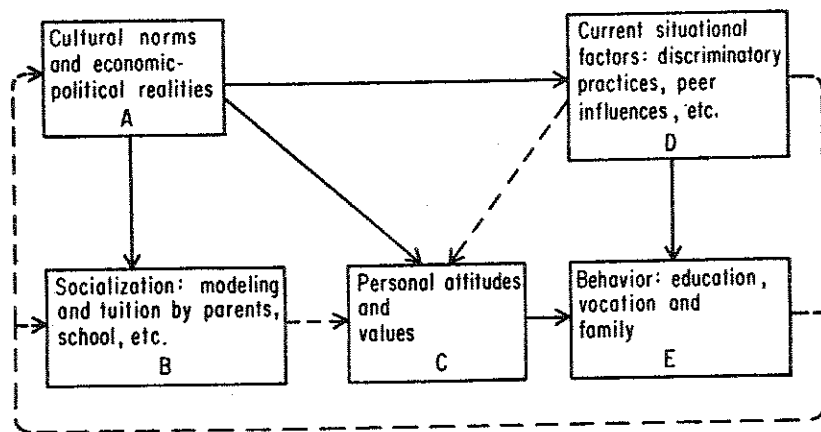


FIGURE 1

Development and expression of sex-role related behavior in college women.

Figure 1 presents a model, based on the work of M. Brewster Smith (1968), of how various factors may interact to maintain traditional behaviors. The top cluster of variables (A and D) mainly operates at the societal level. Cultural norms (A) provide the background against which one's choices are evaluated. Each culture has its own prescriptions of sex-role appropriate behaviors. In the process of acculturation, we come to accept these prescriptions about the roles of men and women as fact; we evaluate ourselves and others in terms of these prescriptions; we raise our children to fit the designated patterns; and we punish deviations from the cultural norm. By providing the evaluative framework for oneself and others, these cultural stereotypes affect men's and

women's judgments and beliefs regarding the appropriateness of various roles.

By influencing the political realities of one's society, the cultural standards affect situational factors (D), such as the existence of institutions which can either facilitate or inhibit various role choices. Consequently, even if an individual aspires to a nontraditional role, the necessary support institutions are not always available. For example, Poloma and Garland's (1971) observations suggest that women's attitudes regarding the demands inherent in the wife/mother role will predict occupational aspirations. Higher career aspirations should occur where career obligations are not perceived as interfering with the fulfillment of wife/mother role demands. If women believe that facilitative institutions are available which can lessen the burden of childcare without harming the child, they may choose a nontraditional life style. However, if these institutions are not available or if women feel that existing childcare facilities are inadequate in quality, acceptance of the cultural stereotypic role should preclude a career.

The bottom cluster of variables in the model concerns the processes involved in translating the cultural myths into personal attitudes and aspirations. Women acquire, through a process of socialization (B), a set of attitudes and beliefs (C) and choices and behaviors (E) which are consistent with sex roles they are expected to play in society. Parents provide cues by their own examples as well as by their expressed expectations for and reinforcement of the child's current behaviors and future goals. These cues form the groundwork for differences evident in men and women which then perpetuate our traditional stereotypic beliefs about the personalities and abilities of men and women.

The sex-role belief system operates in at least two ways to restrict female life styles. First, given a thorough socialization experience, the woman may never consider roles other than the traditional ones of wife and mother. Typically, socializing agents do not present alternative attitudinal-behavioral models nor do they require the child to question the validity of her beliefs. Therefore, this ideology is internalized by a woman nonconsciously, as fact rather than opinion, and the restrictions it places upon her self-development may be accepted as normal and irrefutable (Bem & Bem, 1970). In support of this notion, investigations have demonstrated an inverse relationship between sex-role ideology and achievement aspiration. For example, Parsons, Frieze, Ruble, and Croke (Note 1) found that the holding of traditional sex-role values was significantly related to a low level of aspiration

as defined by education, income, and work plans. These traditional values included a belief that women should not achieve greater recognition than their husbands and, among women who planned to marry, a belief that the emotional life of the family suffers when the woman works. Additional evidence is offered by Lipman-Blumen (1972), who found that women who believed they should achieve success vicariously through their husbands had significantly lower educational objectives.

Alternatively even if a woman does choose to pursue a career, nonconscious internalization of traditional values will inhibit the drive she needs for professional success. Several studies have indicated how this inhibition may occur. For example, both women and men have been shown to view women's traits and abilities as inferior (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Goldberg, 1968). It follows that women who share this negative view of themselves would perceive fewer levels of the professional hierarchy as appropriate for them and would devalue whatever accomplishments they had made. Also, women are stereotyped as passive, submissive, not skilled in business, and excitable during minor crises (Broverman et al., 1972). Clearly these traits would not be conducive to success in a career. Other inhibitory attitudes include fear of success (Horner, 1971), fear of loss of femininity (Tangri, 1972), and fear of an inability to fulfill the "primary" role ascribed to women (Epstein, 1971).

Each of the articles in this issue present theoretical work and/or supporting empirical data relevant to at least one portion of this model. We begin with three papers which discuss the relationship between cultural norms, institutional factors, and individual behavioral patterns, and provide an assessment of the historical underpinnings and the current status of traditional patterns. The next group of seven articles deals with the relationship between societal and psychological factors which operate to inhibit change in traditional behaviors. These papers consider the issue of how cultural norms and societal constraints are translated into individual behaviors. The impact of intrapersonal and interpersonal factors on achievement behaviors is examined in three papers; the remaining four address the role that situational characteristics play in limiting the expression of nontraditional behavior patterns. In the final section, we focus on the importance of and the potential for change. Three articles reassess the current status of sex roles for men, women, and children with a view toward changing this current state of affairs; one discusses the value of change for the individual; and two papers present theoretical models for change.

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