

Attitudes Toward the Male Role and Their Correlates¹

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This study investigated relationships between college men's attitudes toward the male role and five theoretical concomitants of the role. It was expected that males endorsing traditional male-role norms would be more homophobic, more strongly support the Type A behavior orientation, support less self-disclosure to male and female friends, and approve of the maintenance of asymmetrical decision-making power with their intimate partner. Men from two liberal arts college in a New England metropolitan area (N = 223) provided the data to test the hypotheses. Endorsement of the traditional role was associated with all predicted concomitants, except the measure of disclosure to male friend. The results are discussed in terms of the pervasive nature of the antifemininity norm within the male role.

Considerable research has examined the nature and correlation of attitudes toward women, and attitudes about sex roles more generally (see Brannon, 1978; Pleck, 1978, for reviews). Much less empirical research has explored attitudes toward men and the male role. In fact, the saliency of the male role has not often been systematically tested. In view of the limited information

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on this topic, the present study has two major goals: (1) to determine the views of a sample of college men toward traditional male sex-role norms and (2) to examine if men's endorsements of the norms are related to theoretically defined concomitants of the role.

Beliefs About Men

The notion of a universal male sex role, distinct from men themselves and imposed upon men to shape the way they act, is largely grounded on theoretical premises rather than on empirical evidence. The premise is that there is a traditional cultural standard or a subjectively shared public image of what men should and should not be. Sawyer (1970) and Turner (1970), for example, hypothesized that the traditional cultural expectations scripting men's behavior centered on two orthogonal themes: Men should cultivate an independent nonconforming style of achievement, and men should cultivate incompetency in all feminine activities. Cicone and Ruble (1978) suggested that there are three dimensions to the public's beliefs about males and appropriate male behavior: Men should be active and achievement oriented, dominant and strong, and self-controlled. Another taxonomy (Brannon, 1976) suggests that the following four relatively homogeneous, though conceptually distinct, norms underlie the male sex role:

1. *No Sissy Stuff*: Males must avoid anything seem as vaguely feminine. A man who has interests or a career which society has labeled as feminine, or who shows emotional vulnerability is stigmatized.
2. *The Big Wheel*: Men must strive to be respected and admired. To gain this needed status, males must achieve. Traditional expectations demand that men be successful in all they undertake, especially as breadwinners.
3. *The Sturdy Oak*: This aspect of the expectations men encounter is best captured by the phrase "the strong silent type." Men must remain calm in the most hectic and frightening situations. They must be able to handle difficult problems on their own, never show any weaknesses, and keep intimate aspects of their personality to themselves.
4. *Give'Em Hell*: This dimension underscores a man's love of adventure, danger, and violence. A man is considered to be dull unless he is willing to take risks.

To provide empirical evidence that an independent male sex-role exists at the cultural level, several different scales assessing attitudes toward men have been developed (e.g., Allen, 1954; Villemez & Touhey, 1977; Doyle & Moore, 1978; Moreland & Van Tuinen, 1978; Fiebert, 1983). Most of the existing scales are subject to the criticism that they are conceptually indistinguishable in measuring attitudes toward women and attitudes toward sex roles generally (Pleck, 1981, p. 142). The majority of the scale items involve explicit comparisons between men and women (e.g., "men are naturally better drivers than women"). The scales assess what the public believes to be men's stereotypical attributes and behavior, rather than normative expectations for men. These scales cannot be interpreted as reflecting the norms defining the male role as distinct from the female role; nor can they be viewed as directly assessing prescriptions and proscriptions.

Brannon and Juni (1984) have developed a measure which is free of these criticism and based on Brannon's (1976) four-dimensional model of the male role. Using this scale, the present study examines a sample of college men's perceptions of the male role, and whether endorsement of the male-role norms predictably covary with a variety of theoretically attributed concomitants of the role.

Theoretical Concomitants of the Male Role

We selected from the literature on men and masculinity five possible correlates of the male role: homophobia, or the fear of homosexuality and the fear of one's being perceived as homosexual (Morin & Garfinkle, 1978; Weinberger & Millham, 1979); the Type A behavior pattern, or the behavioral predisposition to emphasize the instrumental self at the expense of the communal and expressive self (Matthews, 1982; Sattel, 1976); self-disclosure to the respondent's closest male friend and to his closest female friend (Fischer & Narus, 1981; Jourard, 1971); and men's attitudes toward decision-making power in intimate relationships (Peplau, 1979). These characteristics, assessed by self-reports, met the following criteria: (1) The construct must be commonly cited as a theoretical concomitant of the male role, (2) the construct should have a specific theoretical relationship to at least one of Brannon's four dimensions, and (3) a reliable scale for assessment of the construct must be available.

Homophobia is not unique to males (Davis, 1980; Gramick, 1983; Nutt & Sedlacek, 1974). However, most studies which examine specific attitudes towards homosexuals find that men are more homophobic than

women (Krulowitz & Nash, 1980; Minnigerode, 1976). Morin and Garfinkle (1978), Lewis (1978), and Lehne (1976) comment that societal pressures require American males to conform to a heterosexual life-style, and condemn those who do not. Homophobia seems, therefore, to be an attitude which could be associated with respondents' endorsement of male-role norms, and particularly related to the no sissy stuff norms outlined by Brannon (1976). Hypothesis 1 states, "Homophobia will be positively related to endorsement of the traditional male role"; Hypothesis 2 states "Homophobia will be most strongly associated with the no sissy stuff norm within the male role."

Despite its adverse effects, an instrumental, mastery orientation has long been regarded as a central component of men's ascribed sex role (Jourard, 1971; Turner, 1970; Harrison, 1978). In medical circles, Friedman & Rosenman (1974) describe this instrumental behavior pattern as a response to the male role and as a risk factor of coronary heart disease in similarly aged patients. The Type A behavior pattern is typified by rapid speaking, impatience, preoccupation with work, concern about the evaluation of peers and supervisors, and by generally "aggressive, competitive" actions. In a review of Type A research, Matthews (1982) also notes an emphasis on the use of rationality and logic and the expression of anger in current conceptualizations of the construct. Thus, we anticipated that men's attitudes toward the Type A behavior pattern would covary with their endorsement of male role norms. Hypothesis 3 states, "Approval of the Type A behavior pattern and agreement with the traditional male role will directly covary." Hypothesis 4 states, "Approval of the Type A behavior pattern will have a strong positive relationship with the big wheel, sturdy oak, and give 'em hell norms defining the male role."

Many researchers have examined whether women report that they disclose more about themselves than men (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Plog, 1965; Henley, 1973; Cozby, 1973; Derlega & Chaikin, 1976; Hacker, 1981). Many of these studies concluded that men disclose less than women, and none found men disclosing more than women. Men, especially those who adhere to the "strong and silent" masculine stereotype, are said to have difficulty disclosing personal details about themselves, even to significant others (Bell, 1981; Fischer & Narus, 1981). Thus, Hypothesis 5 states, "Attitudes favoring self-disclosure in close relationships will be inversely related to endorsement of the traditional male role." Hypothesis 6 states, "Favoring self-disclosure in close relationships will be most strongly correlated with the sturdy oak norm."

The aura of personal control and rugged independence said to characterize the traditional male (Cicone & Ruble, 1978) bears on men's behavior

in a wide range of activities at work and home. Behaviors and attitudes associated with maintaining power and control are exhibited in any number of situations, including love relationships (Falbo, 1982; Peplau, 1979; Gross, 1978). Komarovsky (1976) cites the drive to be self-assured, decisive, and independent as the main reason men tend to use greater decision-making power and assume leadership roles in interpersonal relationships. Thus, we expected that a measure of men's attitudes toward the use of power in intimate relationships would covary with their endorsements of male role norms. Hypothesis 7 states, "Supporting asymmetrical decision-making power in an intimate relationship will directly covary with endorsing the traditional male role." Hypothesis 8 states, "Support for unilateral control of the decision making in an intimate relationship will most strongly covary with endorsement of the big wheel and sturdy oak norms of the male role."

METHOD

Sample

Data were gathered in spring 1983 from a 20% random sample ($N = 400$) of the men attending two small liberal arts colleges in a New England metropolitan area. The study population was drawn from the same two colleges that Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkrantz (1972) utilized earlier and, to a lesser extent, parallels Komarovsky's (1976) undergraduate population. Self-administered questionnaires were hand delivered to students who lived in campus housing and mailed to the remainder, providing an overall response rate of 58% ($N = 233$). Analyses comparing students recruited by the two distribution methods showed no significant differences across sociodemographic characteristics or response patterns.

Respondents appeared to be quite representative of the general undergraduate population at the two institutions. There were nearly equivalent response rates for the freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior classes. The vast majority of subjects were under 25, and no student was over 30. The sample was predominantly white (96%), Catholic (84%), and middle to upper middle class. Almost three-quarters of the respondents' fathers had completed college, and half had completed some type of graduate or professional training. Nearly half the mothers held a B.A./B.S. and 20% held an advanced degree.

Measurement of Major Variables

The short form of the Brannon Masculinity Scale (BMS) measures the strength of an individual's endorsement of the traditional male sex role as the ideal for males. It indicates that extent to which respondents support 58 "mainstream" social expectations men face by virtue of being males. Using Likert-type responses (1 = very strongly disagree; 7 = very strongly agree), subjects report their attitudes toward statements such as "In an emergency a man should always take charge." Higher scores indicate stronger endorsement of male-role norms. The scale's reliability and other psychometric qualifications are discussed in detail by Brannon and Juni (1984).

In the BMS, the no sissy stuff, big wheel, and sturdy oak dimensions of Brannon's theoretical model are each assessed with two subscales, while the give 'em hell dimension is assessed with a single subscale. For this investigation, we pooled items for the pairs of subscales assessing common theoretical dimensions, yielding a 16-17-item subscale for each of the first three male-role norms. The give 'em hell dimension is based on the single available subscale, consists of 8 items, and will be interpreted with more caution. The internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alpha) are presented in Table I.

The Smith Homophobia Scale (Smith, 1971) was used to measure the subjects' attitudes toward homosexuality. We modified the dichotomous "yes" and "no" response alternatives to 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from very strongly disagree to very strongly agree, and found the change reliable (see Table II). The Type A behavior pattern was measured by the 9-item Scales Type A Behavior Scale (Sales, 1969). Though this scale has not been validated in cardiovascular research, it has been used in major studies of job stress by Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison, and Finneau (1975). A shortened version of Jourard's self-disclosure measure was used to assess respondents' self-reported level of disclosure. Subjects evaluated how much they disclosed their feelings about their "Personality" and "Body and Appearance," two of the six disclosure topics Jourard and Lasakow (1958) originally examined. The scale was administered twice—once to evaluate the reported level of disclosure of intimate topics to the respondent's closest male friend, and again to measure reported disclosure to his closest female friend. Finally, one part of the Boston

³Brannon and Juni (1984) detail the psychometric properties of the BMS, including test-retest reliability, homogeneity coefficients for the subscale (similar to those reported in Table I), and preliminary behavioral validity estimates. Although the scale has not been validated in a wide range of studies, its initial psychometric characteristics show it to be highly reliable and useful.

Couples' Study questionnaire (Peplau, 1979) was used to assess the power and control theme. Respondents who had been involved three months or more in a love relationship within the last two years were asked to identify the extent to which they exercised decision-making power. Evaluating five items on a 9-point scale (1 = partner always decides, 5 = we mutually decide, 9 = I always decide), respondents indicated which partner decides such issues as the type and frequency of the couple's sexual activity and how much time they spend together.⁴

Data Analysis

Our analysis first examines the correlations between the primary study variables and the sociodemographic variables: father's education, mother's education, respondent's age, race (White/other), and religion (Catholic/other). An a priori concern which guided the main analysis is that men's male-role attitudes may spuriously appear to be associated with the theoretical concomitants, because both are related to other variables, particularly sociodemographic measures. To avoid such effects, our main analysis employs partial correlations, controlling for the minor sociodemographic differences in the sample.

RESULTS

The sociodemographic measures were not sizably correlated with endorsement of the traditional male role (the total BMS score), but several significant correlations were noted for the specific norms (or subscale scores). Father's education was positively correlated with the give'em hell theme ($r = .12, p < .05$), respondent's age was negatively related to the big wheel theme ($r = -.15$, and white males more strongly endorsed the big wheel and sturdy oak norms (r s, respectively, $.13$ and $.12, p < .05$). The only significant correlations between the sociodemographic measures and the five male-role concomitants showed that homophobia significantly covaried with father's education (positive) and mother's education (negative). Both coefficients were small, each accounting for less than 3% of the variance in respondent's homophobia. These small, though

⁴The psychometric properties of the five scales selected have been reported elsewhere by the original authors. Detailed information on each scale we used can also be obtained by writing the first author.

Table I. Intercorrelations Among the Brannon Masculinity Scale (BMS) and Subscales, Controlling for Father's Education, Mother's Education, Respondent's Age, Race, and Religion ($N = 233$)

	BMS	No Sissy Stuff	Big Wheel	Sturdy Oak	Give 'Em Hell
BMS	—	.807	.772	.866	.617
No Sissy Stuff		—	.412	.544	.448
The Big Wheel			—	.631	.267
The Sturdy Oak				—	.451
Give 'Em Hell					—
Mean	3.94	3.88	3.82	4.09	4.29
Standard deviation	.66	.86	.75	.83	1.03
Cronbach's alpha	.90	.81	.74	.80	.67

nonchance, preliminary findings confirm the need to partial out the effects of the sociodemographic variables.

As Table I shows, the distribution of BMS scores suggests that the study population neither fully endorses nor rejects outright traditional male sex-role norms. The sturdy oak and give 'em hell subscales had means slightly above the midpoint; the remaining subscales, no sissy stuff and big wheel, have means slightly below the midpoint. A series of paired t tests indicated that men disagreed with the no sissy stuff norms more than the sturdy oak expectations ($t(230) = 3.95, p < .001$) or the give 'em hell expectations ($t(230) = 3.07, p < .01$). Similarly, they disagreed with the big wheel expectations more than the sturdy oak expectations ($t(230) = 6.15, p < .001$) or give 'em hell expectations ($t(230) = 3.71, p < .001$).

The basic correlation matrix describing the relationships among each of the concomitants of the male role is presented in Table II. While several are significantly correlated, with one exception the r values are low, suggesting that the focus of each of the selected scales is discrete and measures a somewhat different male-role characteristic. The exception was the moderate correlation between the two disclosure measures.

Correlates of Male-Role Attitudes

Partialing out the effects of the sociodemographic variables, the matrix presented in Table III shows interesting relationships between respondents' perception of the male role and their attitudes toward the theoretical characteristics of the role. First, respondents' endorsement of the traditional male role (the total BMS score) was correlated with four of the five measures. Endorsing the traditional role directly covaried with homophobic anxieties (Hypothesis 1), approval of the Type A behavior

Table II. Intercorrelations Among the Five Characteristics of the Male Role, Controlling for Father's Education, Mother's Education, Respondent's Age, Race, and Religion ($N = 233$)^a

	Self-disclosure (Jourard)				Power in relationship
	Homophobia (Smith)	Type A behavior (Sales)	Male friend	Female Friend (Peplau et al.)	
Male role					
Homophobia	—				.15 ^d
Type A behavior		.17 ^c	-.18 ^c	-.15 ^d	.01
Self-disclosure to Male friend		—	.11	.01	
Female friend			—	.51 ^b	.00
Power in relationship				—	-.15 ^d
Mean	3.47	4.69	1.10	1.15	1.11
Standard deviation	1.21	.94	.45	.47	.20
Cronbach's alpha	.89	.74	.88	.88	.60

^aWith the exception of the power measure, N s vary slightly between 227 and 233 respondents; only respondents who were involved in relationships completed the power in relationships scale ($N = 164$).
^b $p < .001$.
^c $p < .01$.
^d $p < .05$.

Table III. Partial Correlation Coefficients between Brannon's Masculinity Scale (BMS) and Subscales and Five Male-Role Characteristics, Controlling for Father's Education, Mother's Education, Respondent's Age, Race, and Religion

	Homophobia (Smith)	Type A be- havior (Sales)	Self-disclosure (Jourard)			Power in relationship ^a (Peplau)
			Male friend	Female Friend	Friend (Peplau)	
BMS	.59 ^b	.26 ^b	-.10	-.15 ^c	.18 ^d	
No Sissy Stuff	.54 ^b	.13 ^d	-.11 ^d	-.28 ^b	.22 ^c	
The Big Wheel	.49 ^b	.24 ^b	-.05	-.06	.17 ^d	
The Sturdy Oak	.47 ^b	.29 ^b	-.10	-.07	.11	
Give 'Em Hell	.30 ^b	.15 ^d	-.01	-.04	.00	

^aOnly respondents who were involved in relationships completed the power in relationships scale ($N = 164$).

^b $p < .001$.

^c $p < .01$.

^d $p < .05$.

pattern (Hypothesis 3), and approval of unilateral power in love relationships (Hypothesis 7). Respondents' endorsement of the traditional sex role was also inversely related to the self-reported measure of disclosure to a close female friend (Hypothesis 5), but unrelated to the self-reported level of disclosure to a male friend.

Second, the coefficients in Table III indicate that the hypothesized relationships between the specific male-role norms (the BMS subscales) and the concomitants were not fully supported. As predicted in Hypothesis 2, homophobia was related directly and most strongly to endorsement of the no sissy stuff norms. It was, however, also significantly correlated with the other three norms. Similarly, attitudes favoring the Type A behavior pattern covaried with endorsement of the big wheel, sturdy oak, and give 'em hell norms, as predicted in Hypothesis 4; approval of the Type A pattern also covaried with the no sissy stuff norm.

The correlations between the self-reported measures of self-disclosure and male-role norms were not expected. In Hypothesis 6, we anticipated both measures of self-disclosure to covary inversely with the sturdy oak norm, thus supporting the assumption that norms encouraging the "strong-and-silent" type would also impact upon men's attitudes toward the level of disclosure of intimate information. The two measures of self-disclosure covaried with only the no sissy stuff norm.

Though men's approval of using unilateral power in love relationships correlated with endorsement of big wheel norms (as predicted in Hypothesis 8), we did not find a significant relationship with the sturdy oak norms, nor did we expect the correlation with the no sissy stuff dimension.

DISCUSSION

This study is grounded on the premise that there is a traditional cultural standard or a subjectively shared public image of what men should and should not be. Sawyer (1970) and Turner (1970) anticipated two basic themes within this role, while Brannon (1976) proposed four normative standards.

The findings show that college men's attitudes toward the traditional male role are neither strongly endorsing or rejecting of this cultural standard. However, the extent to which men agree with the proscriptions and prescriptions appears to be allied with their approval of several commonly cited sex-role characteristics. The extent of men's agreement with the role (the total BMS score) was found to be statistically related, as predicted, to homophobic feelings, approval of the Type A behavior pattern, the attitude that self-disclosure to a female friend is unmanly, and

approval of the maintenance of asymmetrical decision-making power in intimate relationships. These correlations only reflect the extent to which respondents approve of male sex-role characteristics and do not reflect their behavioral adherence to them.

Endorsing the traditional cultural standard for men most strongly covaried with the two general attitude measures, homophobia and Type A orientation, and showed markedly weaker associations with the three sex-role characteristics found in the specific contexts of a close relationship. Methodological explanations for this pattern include the expectation of larger coefficients between more common attitudinal measures, as well as between measures using common scaling. Thus, one might assume that the observed relationships are statistically significant, but do not reflect significant (nontrivial) magnitudes. An alternative explanation would support the theoretical premise that the traditional male role is predictably and markedly correlated with general sex-role characteristics, as well as having an effect on men's lives in interpersonal contexts where one would anticipate more situationally specific norms to operate. Finding a small, though statistically significant, correlation between attitudes supporting asymmetrical decision-making power in an intimate relationship and endorsement of the traditional role is, therefore, theoretically important. Public male-role expectations are salient norms, even inside close private relationships.

The most noticeable findings were the consistent positive correlations between the specific male-role norms and the measures of homophobia and Type A behavior pattern. These findings conform to the two-sided "antifeminine and active" sex-role norms discussed most frequently in the theoretical literature (Turner, 1970).

Respondents' endorsement of any of the four male-role norms, but most directly the antifemininity, or no sissy stuff, norm (Hypothesis 2), significantly overlapped with their homophobia. Although causal order cannot be gleaned from the present work, the traditional male sex role seems to encourage homophobic anxieties. In this sample endorsing the traditional proscriptions and prescriptions for men and reporting homophobic feelings clearly overlap. Homophobia may thus be more than just the rejection of homosexuality. Homophobia is probably a specific component of a broader antifemininity theme within the male role. We observed that homophobia (see Table II) and the antifemininity norm (see Table III) were both strongly related to the other sex-role concomitants; antifemininity may thus be the nexus of the traditional male role, as argued by Turner (1970) and Morin and Garfinkle (1978).

In addition, the continuing impact of male-role norms on approval of the Type A behavior orientation—where the underlying theme encourages

rationality, tough-mindedness, and the risk of lethal side-effects—cannot be easily overlooked. The Type A behavior pattern is apparently supported by the instrumental prescriptions in male-role norms, as anticipated in Hypothesis 4 (cf. Cicone & Ruble, 1978; Moore & Nuttall, 1981). Furthermore, given the statistically significant correlation between the Type A measure and the no sissy stuff norm, the dynamics of the Type A behavior pattern, at least for men, are perhaps more closely tied than previously reported to a subtle pressure to conceal emotional vulnerability and avoid the appearance of anything feminine (cf. Henley, 1973; Hacker, 1981).

These results suggest that the antifemininity norm may be an underlying dynamic to other male characteristics, affecting not only men's general sex-role attitudes but also their intimacy skills, interpersonal relationships, and work roles. The antifemininity norm in this study was the only male-role norm consistently correlated with the assessed concomitants. The dynamic motivating men's behavior may thus not merely be the lure of some positive goal, such as control and power inside personal relationships (Falbo, 1982) or achieving status in public roles. Rather, a fundamental guide for men's behavior may be negative touchstone—anything feminine. This conclusion may first appear as a simple tautology that males endorsing the traditional male role are "antifeminine." While we must be cautious in our generalizations, the data do not suggest that males endorsing the male role are singularly anxious about being perceived as feminine, nor are they necessarily endorsing misogyny. The observed correlations were not that strong. Instead, the conclusion is that the antifeminine norm within the traditional male role is more pervasive and salient than other norms. Thus, we would expect that men endorsing the traditional male role are likely to always be guided by the antifemininity norm in conjunction with other situationally specific norms.

The give 'em hell norm, by comparison, does not appear in these data to be as integral to subjects' perception of the male role as the other three dimensions, nor as salient. Because this dimension taps an individual's predilection toward risk taking and violence, a survey among college students may not reveal as strong tendencies in this direction as would be found in a more representative population (cf. Yankelovich, 1974). Alternatively, this subscale contains the fewest items and has the lowest internal consistency of any of the BMS subscales, and this subscale taps a sex-role norm downplayed in the emerging "modern" male sex role (Pleck, 1981). Thus, we prefer to interpret the impact of this norm cautiously.

Brannon's (1976) four-dimensional conceptualization of male-role norms served as a very useful guide to understand which set of norms affect college men's attitudes toward the concomitant male sex-role characteristics. It is important to underscore that these results are based on a study of

college men enrolled in small liberal arts colleges. Additional research needs to reexamine which male-role norms are endorsed by different men at different points in their life cycle and what bearing these norms have on men's attitudes and behavior.

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