A STATUS DYNAMIC FORMULATION OF SEX ROLES:
PUTTING SEX ROLES IN THEIR PLACE

Corlis R. Sapin and John R. Forward

ABSTRACT

One major problem with theories of androgyny as alternatives to traditional sex role approaches is that androgyny is still defined in terms of traditional sex role descriptors. A Status Dynamic approach to sex differences is presented that accounts for both sex-typed and non-sex-typed behavior as an alternative to current efforts to describe non-sex-typed behavior as a mixture of sex-typed behaviors. Several critical distinctions between the concepts of status and role are discussed, and a reformulation of the concept of sex role as part of the more comprehensive concept of status is suggested. Preliminary research is presented which assesses the importance of distinguishing between the Significance and Performance parameters of behavior in appraisals of sex-differences.

The concept of "traditional sex roles" and related research has been useful in understanding how a large number of people actually treat

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gender differences in our society (Ruble, Frieze, & Parsons, 1976). But what of the people who do not use traditional sex role expectations as a cognitive template for interpersonal and social behavior? The concept of "androgyny" has been developed as one way of describing non-sex-typed behavior (Bem, 1974, 1977) and has advanced thinking in this area in a number of respects (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). However, there are several drawbacks to the concept and related operationalizations that limit its usefulness.

One major problem that Sandra Bem (1981) has raised is that androgyny is still defined in traditional sex role terms. What is needed is a conceptual reformulation that accounts for both sex-typed and non-sex-typed behavior rather than attempting to describe non-sex-typed behavior exclusively in sex-typed language.

Another problem is that current measures of androgyny are fairly obvious (face-valid) for many college students nowadays. There is a growing tendency for students to give lip-service to egalitarian ideas (Helmreich, Spence, & Gibson, 1982) and to avoid appearing to be too sex-typed in their responses to the tests. This has resulted in a growing percentage of students who rate all characteristics on the tests (M and F) as highly characteristic of themselves.

To meet the need for a conceptual reformulation we will present a distinction between status and role based on the conceptual resources of Descriptive Psychology (Ossorio, 1981). The distinction is presented at some length by Sapin (1979) and Roberts (1982) and is briefly summarized by Forward (1983). The following formulation provides for a more comprehensive account of sex differences in behavior than that provided by conventional sex role theories. The Descriptive Psychological concept of status permits more distinctions and discriminations to be made about actual behavior than the role concept as conventionally defined. In this formulation, the term "sex role" will carry its conventional definition as; "a set of culturally (group) prescribed or scripted gender-related behaviors", to clearly distinguish it from some uses of role that are close to the concept of status as used here.

The first section below will elaborate upon some important distinctions between the concepts of status and role. The next section will then consider relationships between the concepts of status and role since they are not mutually exclusive but are part-whole relationships. The third section will apply the formulation specifically to current sex role theories and to contemporary research and/or thinking about sex differences in behavior. The final section will summarize some preliminary research.

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN STATUS AND ROLE

Status assignments and negotiations involve choosing among potentially appropriate behaviors to exemplify a given significance, whereas conventional role scripts preclude choice. We frequently use the word "role" when we are talking about plays. Since some elements of plays are characters, roles, and plot, we will use the relationships between those elements to elaborate on the description of roles. We will begin with the concepts of character and role. A character in a play has a role to enact. The actions of a character are all meaningful with respect to a specific act and the plot. When a role is defined for a character, specific actions pertaining to the real life activities in which that sort of character would participate are selected for the character in the play to perform in his or her role. For example, a character in the role of a mother might be shown in activities with her children. In the play, as contrasted with real life, the specific activities are already selected by the author from the very large set of possible activities a mother may engage in with her children.

The real world (which includes the dramaturgical world) has many more distinctions to be made about people than a play can make about characters. Thus, an analysis of roles in the dramaturgical world alone will not give us a comprehensive description of what people do in the real world although it can serve as a useful illustration of some aspects. The main reason there are more distinctions to be made in the real world is that we are all involved in the real world as actors, paradigmatically choosing among alternative behavioral options on the basis of reasons (Ossorio, 1985). In contrast to the real world, the actors are working from a script and can't choose their behaviors from among the options which would be present in a real life situation corresponding to the situation portrayed in the play. In real life, we don't have that sort of predetermined script. Of course actors have some influence on their roles as they can choose how to enact the written lines to produce a given effect, but ultimately they must adhere to the script.

Just as the dramaturgical use of the concept of role is useful for understanding some uses and limitations of the psychological terms "sex role" or "sex scripted behavior", the concept of character in a play is a starting point for elaborating the concept of status. *Assigning a status or enacting a status can be compared to being a particular character in a play for which no script has yet been written.* This is sometimes done in "freeplay" or practice where an actor is assigned a character and asked to engage in the kinds of behavior that specific character would do. The actor will then choose various options and versions of behavior

appropriate for that kind of character, much as we all do in everyday life.

The distinction in Descriptive Psychology between the Performance and Significance parameters of behavior is useful for an elaboration of choice of behavior options (Ossorio, 1981, Silva, 1983). Performance is the observable activity as given in the second half of the observation that: "It was his turn to cook the dinner and he burnt it to a crisp." The Significance of this performance (or any other isolated performance description) is not immediately clear since there are many possibilities. Technically, the Significance is given by the more comprehensive behavior description that the dinner-crisping performance may exemplify. For example, the cook may claim it was an accident and assign himself the status of careless or unmindful person. On the other hand, his spouse may assign the cook the status of hostile person who burnt the dinner to punish her for spending too much money. There are many more possible significances and corresponding statuses that might be either claimed or assigned for this performance, and given the differences stated in this case, a lot of status negotiation could be done. A possible accommodation might be for him to re-describe the significance as a case of motivated clumsiness and for her to re-describe it as a clumsy attempt at revenge. After all, he has to eat it too.

In contrast to status accounts, sex role theories attempt to directly tie performances to prescribed significances without any intervening negotiation among the parties involved as to the significance of the performance or the status claims/assignments involved. In traditional sex role theories, a male's burning the dinner is to be expected since domestic cooking is automatically assigned a feminine significance and any red-blooded male would not be caught dead engaging in such activities. Conversely, a female who burnt the dinner would automatically be assigned the status of incompetent wife, lover, or mother and would be dealt with accordingly. After all, domestic cooking is taken conventionally to exemplify female nurturant activity.

In sum, status accounts treat status claims and assignments for particular performances as choices that participants make about the significance of the performances and corresponding statuses. The choice may be among different significances for the same performance (as in the case above) or for different ways to act on or exemplify the same or shared significance. Role accounts preclude the aspects of choice and negotiation in behavior by assuming a one-to-one correspondence between particular performances and given significances or statuses.

In actual social intercourse, status negotiations and sex role ascriptions can be contrasted in terms of behavior potential. In this formulation, as in many others, sex roles are treated as specific, concrete characteristics

and expectations that are routinely ascribed to a person solely on the basis of gender. As such, sex roles are highly restrictive of behavior potential in that they ignore the actual characteristics of people, the significance of their behavior and the circumstances or context of their behavior. In Descriptive Psychology, personal status is a summary term for a person's *place* or *standing* within one relationship or a whole set of relationships. In these relationships, people assign each other (and negotiate) statuses with respect to: (a) what kind of people they are, (b) what *that* kind of person can be expected to do, and (c) how they are to be treated in everyday interactions. To the extent that status assignments are made taking into account the actual characteristics and competencies of the person and the actual circumstances involved, then behavior potential is maximized in the relationship, group, or community. In sum, conventional sex roles limit choice and restrict a person's behavior potential, whereas status negotiation requires choice and negotiation among behavior standards and options and can therefore increase behavior potential.

Status descriptions can be applied to any kind of relationship between people. Role descriptions cannot. For example, it makes some sense to speak of the role of a mother or parent. There are some conventional behaviors (e.g., feeding children, dressing them, etc.) which are generally an accepted part of being a parent and can be described as the role of the parent. There are also, however, many things a parent could do, which are not conventional parenting behaviors (e.g., breaking down barricades), but one could say, "under these circumstances, it makes sense for a parent to do that". A lot of what parents do is describable in conventional role terms even though such descriptions may miss much of the subtleties.

Some social statuses do *not* carry with them roles in terms of conventional behaviors that one is expected to perform. In the case of "a friend", some behaviors will be fitting while others will not, depending on the kinds of people involved and the nature of the friendships. Therefore, instead of talking about the role of a friend in terms of conventional behaviors one must perform (which would be impossible to do sensibly) we talk about the experience of being a friend. Similarly, we can talk about the status of being a friend although there is no one distinctive set of acts to define this status. Friendship is a type of relationship, not a set of prescribed behaviors (Roberts, 1982).

A person who attempts to assign specific roles to friends will soon discover that this behavior is likely to be taken as a violation of the status of friendship. This may account for a common observation among young women that it is easy to find "dates" among men they know but hard to find friends. Dating behavior is most often defined by

conventional sex roles and is easier to enact for young men who are uncertain as to how to treat young women or who simply have "one track minds".

Since any relationship can be described in terms of status but not conventional roles, and since some statuses include roles but not vice-versa, status descriptions are more comprehensive accounts of behavior than role descriptions.

The distinction between status and role corresponds to the distinction between being and doing. The contrast between status and role corresponds roughly to the contrast between *who you are* and *what you do*. To separate who you are from what you do, we must talk about how and why people do what they do. In a status formulation, a person is described paradigmatically as acting deliberately on his/her observations, reasons and judgements about his/her and others' behavior. Although we have been talking mostly about behavioral performances, in one sense status is entirely independent of behavioral performances in that status assignments have the character of appraisals or decisions (e.g., choice of significance and status) and are not mere observations or descriptions of some "external", "objective" reality.

The appropriateness of a given behavior and even *which* behavior it is depends on the status of who does it. For example, when a minister says, "I now pronounce you husband and wife", what he does is a different behavior (has a different significance, is given a different status) than if the man off the streets does it. Similarly the locution, "I love you", takes on different significances depending on the status of the speaker, e.g., your lover or a used car salesman.

These examples of status assignment clearly demonstrate that the same performance or sets of performances (roles) can be taken to have very different significances or meaning depending on *who* is doing it, i.e., depending on the status of the actor and relevant standards of judgement. By contrast, role accounts provide performative descriptions without any reference to the status of the person or people performing. This is somewhat like trying to describe a play to someone by describing acts without any reference to characters and relations among characters. It would be impossible. Yet, this is what a conventional sex role description is—a list of abstracted characteristics and acts assigned only to gender categories. Role theories provide no place formally for status dynamic considerations and as such provide little or no information about the variety of ways that people behave in real world settings.

Status assignments involve the application of "standards of judgement" to behavior. Role attributions involve matching observable performances to conventional (objective) norms. The notion of a standard of judgement is crucial in talking about the difference between statuses and roles as

accounts of the behavior of people. We can elaborate on the notion of standards by referring to perspective, i.e., how a person "sees" the world, what he/she takes to be a given set of facts which makes his/her world coherent. Alternatively, we can talk about how a person's standards will be expressed in what he/she counts as being a case of those facts. When we talk about statuses, we are talking about relationships with corresponding behavior potential, e.g., mayor, mother, relative, friend, etc. Having a particular status, e.g., mayor, mother, etc., means that what a person does will be judged as appropriate or inappropriate according to whatever standards of judgement are assigned to that status. Thus, it is the status assignment, e.g., mayor, that determines the standard of judgement for evaluating what a person does (e.g., as successful or as a failure) and also for determining *what* behavior that behavior is. Whether or not the mayor's behavior is appropriate for a mother is irrelevant to judgements of his/her behavior as a mayor. A comparable point can be illustrated in judging a tree a failure because it doesn't get people from one place to another; that is, judging a tree by the standards appropriate for a car.

The granting or maintaining of a status for a person is contingent upon his/her meeting standards of judgement for the appropriateness of his/her behaviors in that status. For example, a mayor who spanked constituents who disagreed with him would probably be judged as behaving inappropriately as a mayor and lose that status quickly. Similarly, a friend who acted in a hostile way persistently would probably not be accepted or treated as a friend for long.

While a change in status necessarily includes a change in corresponding standards of judgement, it may also be the case that a change in standards may lead to a change in status. Consider the heuristic of "spitting on the sidewalk" (Ossorio, 1976). It's a common saying that you can't legislate morality or that you can't prevent people from spitting on the sidewalk by passing a law i.e., changing the legal standard. That is misleading, however, in the sense that whereas yesterday people were merely spitting on the sidewalk, if we pass a law making it a felony, then today they are committing a crime. It is tempting to say "But you haven't changed their behavior one bit." But we have changed their legal status. One day they are innocent citizens, the next day criminals. Furthermore, not only have we changed how the behavior is counted, but we are now committed to prosecute them for violating the law we have passed. Changing the standard simultaneously changed their status and the way the very same set of performances are evaluated and treated by us.

Such difficulties often arise in relationships where one of the partners changes his or her standards of judgement for what counts as "loving" or

simply tolerable behavior in a relationship. Consider a wife who has been sensitized to the female-degrading implications of much male sexual humor through a consciousness-raising group. Her previously "decent husband" who occasionally lapsed into telling "dirty jokes" might now be treated as a "chauvinistic male who makes no attempt to hide his contempt for women".

Although this might be an extreme case, it is noted that if the participants treated the conflict in terms of status dynamics, many possible satisfactory outcomes could be negotiated. The differences in values, standards, circumstances, and significances could all be recognized and negotiated either verbally or otherwise. However, if either party treated the differences solely in terms of conventional sex role attributions, no resolution would be possible. The respective behaviors of the spouses would be locked into prescribed scripts that would make negotiation next to impossible (She being a typical complaining woman and he a typical insensitive male.).

In status assignments, judgement of success or failure in meeting standards can be either normative or individual. In that way, we can make anybody a success, a failure, or almost anything else (including a friend) by introducing new standards and thereby committing ourselves to treat them accordingly. That is, success and failure (and other status assignments) have meaning only within a social context, i.e., when people judge behaviors by some standard.

In contrast, for sex role attribution, what seems to correspond to the concept of standard of judgement is the matching of observable performances to some "objective" normative standard that is taken to be independent of the people making or receiving the role attribution. ("This is the way things are", "have always been"). In practice, however, the "objective" source is an appeal to conventional standards, which implies that a more illuminating term for this use of "objective/subjective" might be conventional/nonconventional. Thus it seems that the terms "objective" and "subjective" in role theory (Biddle & Thomas, 1966) merely obfuscate the issue which is that people must observe and judge by standards of some sort. The "objective" source or observer that confers "truth value" is a hypothetical construct which some role theories have perpetuated in line with parallel notions of science (Ossorio, 1985).

Status descriptions take into account all major parameters of behaviors. Role descriptions are based on performative parameters only. In role theories as well as other positivistic psychological theories, the term "behavior" is restricted to that aspect of a behavior that can be observed by others, i.e., the observable acts or concrete performance. As indicated above, problems with restricting the term "behavior" to this parameter

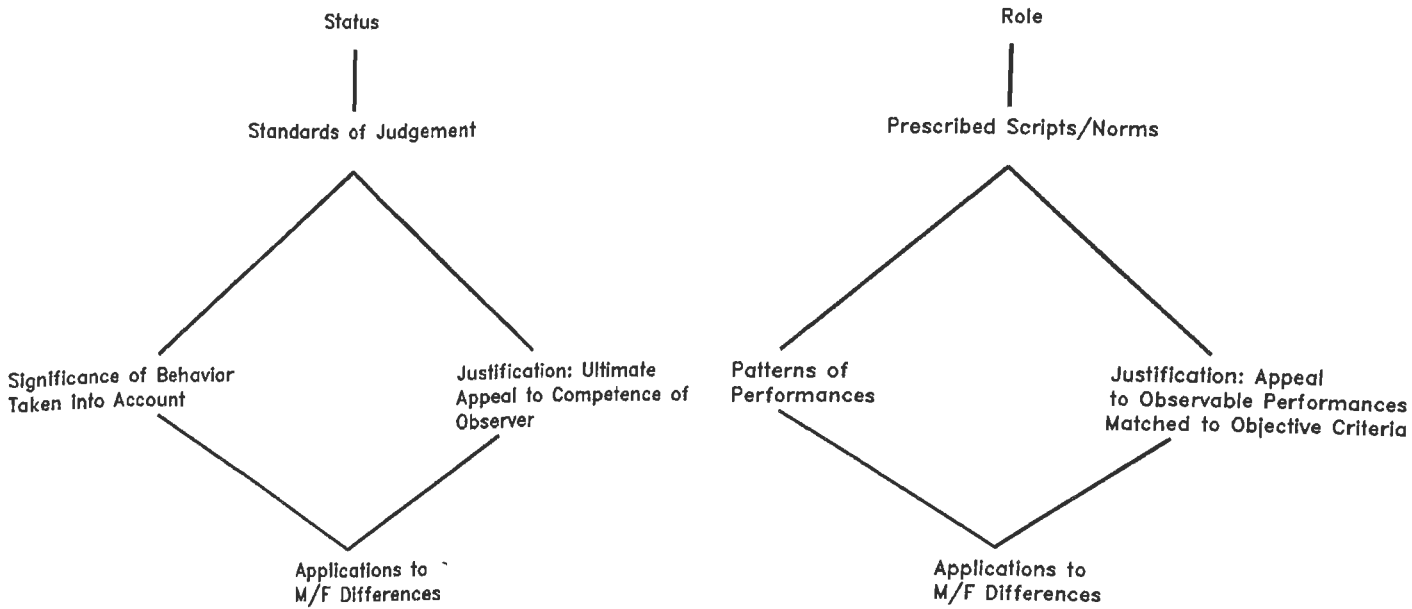
can be seen in the fact that the same observable performance can mean different things depending on the context, the motivations of the actor(s), and the perspective of the observer. The performance "he hit her on the arm" may indicate aggression, playfulness, recognition of irony, testing of reflexes, and accidental contact, etc., depending on the overall state of affairs.

In Descriptive Psychology, these differences in context and meaning can be accounted for by a more complete parametric analysis of behavior (c.f., Ossorio, 1981). In order to distinguish between arm-hitting as play or violence, one may need to assess the state of any or all of the following parameters: *Achievement (A)*, the product or consequence of the performance; *Knowledge (K)*, the knowledge state of the actor; *Know-How (KH)*, the skills of the actor; *Wants (W)*, the motivation of the actor. It may also be useful to know the *Identity (I)*, i.e., who the actor is, and some of the relevant *Personal Characteristics (PC's)* of the perpetrator. Most importantly, it is useful to know what is the *Significance (S)* of the arm-hitting performance, i.e., what is the larger behavior that the performance of arm-hitting represents. Or more pragmatically, what was he doing by doing that? Determining the significance of a particular performance most often leads to connecting the observable activity to specific intrinsic social practices which is a concept that will be suggested below as an alternative way of conceptualizing sets of roles.

In light of the Descriptive Psychology parametric formulation of the concept of behavior, the practice in role-theories of coordinating behavior to performance (P) descriptions only may be seen as a most limited form of behavior description and conceptualization. The same holds for people interacting with other people in real life. For a man to automatically assume that a woman crying represents a form of typical feminine weakness is a deficient form of behavior analysis. It may be the case that one significance of the woman's tears is angry frustration that the man cannot see it otherwise.

Competence at assessing the significance of particular behaviors, which connect to relevant standards of judgement being used in particular Social Practices, is an integral part of status assignment and negotiation. Role attribution as conventionally defined is a defective judgement process that simply connects performative aspects of behavior directly to stereotyped versions of social practices.

Figure 1. Comparisons of Status Dynamic and Role Formulations



1. Differences in masculine/feminine behavior lies in the significance of the behavior and related standards of judgement not in men and women doing different things.

2. Change is brought about by increasing the competence of observers to judge appropriateness of given behaviors for men and women.

1. Men and women do different things, have different behaviors according to performative criterion.

2. Change is brought about by having men do more "feminine" things and women do more "masculine" things, i.e., combine traditional sex-roles into a new role; androgyny.

Status dynamic accounts are justified by appeals to competence in appraisals whereas role theories are justified by appeals to principle and custom. The major conceptual differences between status and role are summarized in Figure 1 together with the implications for understanding how conventional concepts of masculine and feminine may be changed. Differences in standards of judgement and concepts of behavior have been discussed above. In order to discuss justification and change issues, we need to elaborate on typical methodologies or epistemologies used in the application of Descriptive concepts such as status, standard of judgement, etc., and contrast them with typical justifications of sex role concepts in terms of theory, principle, and custom. The Descriptive framework for this task is the "ladder of appeals" (Ossorio, 1976).

The "ladder of appeals" was originally developed to account for how people may proceed in accounting for or justifying social change, and so it is especially appropriate for a discussion of sex differences. The ladder starts at the top with competence/standard/perspective, and then goes down to principle/theory/custom, and individual judgement, in that order. It justifies social change by pointing to the fact that in changed times, it takes new customs to implement the same principles or the same theory (e.g., the new custom of androgyny). Change is justified by appealing upwards, the lower limit being individual judgement and the upper limit competence, standard, or perspective. We do not have to appeal to each step of the ladder but can in fact skip to higher levels to justify change. In the final analysis, we are stuck, not at theory or principle, but at the level of our own perspective and competence in mastering the use of the concepts in question.

For example, in justifying doing something as an expression of being a mother, a woman is in the most fundamental respect only limited by her own mastery (her competence) in using the status concept of mother. She is also, of course, limited by opportunities, by conflicting demands, etc. Even if acting on this concept violated the prevailing customs, a woman could justify her behavior by appealing to our competence as observers, saying; "Can't you see that this is what a mother would do?"

Normatively, it is from perspective and competence in the relevant domain that we make judgements in that domain. That is, a change in perspective will change our discriminations and therefore our judgement. For example, if we change our standards for friendship, we will judge behavioral performance and customs differently as expressions of friendship. On the other hand, a change in custom, behavioral theory, or principle may change our performances but will not necessarily change perspective, standards, or competence. For example, a person could

change from a principle of "always be the first to say hello" to "speak only when spoken to" without changing standards for what counts as friendship or his/her competence to act friendly or appraise acts of friendship. Thus, change in the lower levels will not necessarily result in change in the upper levels.

One of the background sources of difficulty in implementing a competence approach may be that people are *not* usually taught to make judgements in accordance with a perspective which takes explicit account of the significance of behaviors, but rather are given, and look for, procedural prescriptions (e.g., customs, theories) for how to go about deciding matters. The competence approach is more difficult to characterize and learn than the performative/procedural approach since there are no prescribed procedural or performative ways to proceed! But the capacity to recognize perspectives and standards different from one's own, and the ability to discriminate different instances of the same standard or how the same performance can represent different standards, is what is involved here. This ability to apply knowledge can be called "mastery of concepts" and should be distinguished from the knowledge per se of the concepts, e.g., prescriptions and prohibitions. In sum, the difference between the procedure-oriented (theories, principles, customs) and significance oriented view of behavior corresponds to the difference between knowledge as information processing and as mastery of the concepts, i.e., competence in appraisal.

The differences in the appraisal and justification of concepts discussed here is directly relevant to the distinction between status and sex role. As indicated on the right hand side of the diagrams in Figure 1, sex role formulations are typically justified in academic literature by appeals to customs (conventional performances) principles or behavioral theories (theories about performances). On the other hand, a status formulation of sex differences considers the standards of judgement and significances of the observable performances, and justifies the analysis by appealing to the competence of the observer to make these kind of appraisals.

Also in Figure 1, it is noted that, in a status formulation of sex differences, social change is brought about by increasing the competence of people to take into account significance and standards in judging what is appropriate behavior for men and women. This contrasts with the best attempt at social change made by androgyny theorists, which has been to encourage men to perform more "feminine" activities and for women to engage in more "masculine" performances. While this may replace traditional customs with a less restrictive principle or custom, it does not change the performative perspective or the competence of people in making judgements about the appropriateness of sex differences in behavior. Only a basic change in perspective and epistemology as

outlined here will lead to basic changes in social behavior as well as a more scientific study of sex differences.

APPLICATIONS OF STATUS DYNAMIC FORMULATION TO CURRENT SEX ROLE RESEARCH

The major features of a status dynamic approach to sex differences have been outlined above and summarized in Figure 1. In this section, a critique of current sex role research based on the status reformulation is given and an attempt is made to provide a more useful conceptualization of the notion of role.

Deficits In Sex Role Approaches to Sex Differences

The observable procedural view of behavior has prevailed in psychology and has encumbered our attempts at analyzing and negotiating sex difference issues. Role theories merely describe traditional customary procedures or appeal to the "objectivity" of principles reflected by their theories. For example, without an appeal accounting for differences in standards and perspectives, the justification for a set of customs, theories, or principles can seem arbitrary and confusing. Further, by emphasizing observable criteria rather than people's competence in judgement, role theory seems a dehumanizing and non-compelling account of people as persons.

Traditional role theorists don't consider that "the same" behavior might be assigned a masculine status in one context and a feminine status in another context. A man, for example, comforting another person may be seen as protective and masculine when the person is a child but may be seen as feminine and overprotective in the course of a bar fight. Similarly, the significance of nurturant acts may vary considerably across situations. Consider a pat on the back in the context of a student successfully completing a project, as a gentle warning to a troublesome child, or as reassurance in a scary situation. In traditional role theories, particular performances are assigned to *either* masculine or feminine roles (e.g., nurturant acts are feminine) and the above distinctions cannot be made. Furthermore, if people attempt to act on the basis of role conceptions, they are severely restricted in behavior potential. Thus, wanting to be masculine could prevent a man from engaging in behaviors labeled feminine, even when acting in that way is "called for" (i.e., appropriate), and a woman could have a similar approach to femininity.

Androgyny accounts, (Bem, 1974, 1977) which challenge the traditional accounts, unfortunately and inadvertently are caught in the conceptual

trap just described. The intention of androgyny theorists was to propose a way of expanding the options available to men and women and to justify non-sex-stereotypic behaviors as being more "healthy". As an alternative to talking in the manner of traditional sex roles, androgyny accounts attempted to (1) present a formulation addressing the limitation of assigning a particular sex to a particular role, (2) transcend role theories. For some reason, however, androgyny theorists kept the labels "masculine" and "feminine" for traditional roles and described androgyny in terms of a *mixture* of traditional roles to resolve the issue.

Although it is in many ways innovative in its conceptualization, androgyny theory simply goes along with the custom of talking about sex differences in terms of behavioral performances, though to be sure, it refers to a mixture of the traditional role behaviors. Thus, it does not address the issue of how people can make judgements about which behaviors are appropriate and what significance is exemplified in which situations by a given procedure. Instead, androgyny theory just states (prescribes?) that a "healthy" person should be able to perform these behaviors, e.g., acting assertively, when they are called for. The crucial issue of how a person could be expected to know when a given behavior was called for, i.e., competence in judgement, is not actually addressed.

Another unnecessary problem for androgyny accounts is their failure to distinguish between the performative, significance, and achievement aspects of behavior. Their claim that one ought to be able to do any of these things if one is called upon is valid only in achievement terms as a useful prescription. What is described as being assertive, for example, is an achievement by someone's standards. In talking about assertive *performances*, they fail to make the distinction that what is assertive depends on the context and significance of the act. Thus, a person could assert himself/herself without performing a conventional assertive action. It could be more indirect, more subtle.

Originally the significance of androgyny was generated by the judgement that the roles of men and women should be expanded to include some of the rights and duties of the other sex. Under a role formulation, behaviors are equated with conventional sex-typed significances. Thus, in accepting role theorists' assumptions, androgyny theorists could not present new formulations of "masculine" or "feminine" roles because they don't talk about significances or achievements of performative behaviors as making sense given a "masculine" or "feminine" perspective (e.g., complementarity, etc.). The logical conclusion they came to was that we should no longer talk about masculine or feminine when we characterize non-sex-stereotypic people or make cross-sex distinctions, but rather distinguish between androgynous vs. traditional masculine and feminine people.

Caught in the traditional conceptualization problems of role theory, the androgyny formulation could go wrong by potentially generating new androgynous customs and concrete details of a new mythology. In practice, the new androgynous customs could be exemplified by people who (a) merely act according to prescriptive procedures and don't really "see" the significance of the theory or principles. (b) assimilate the customs to extrinsic motivations such as dominance or power (e.g., superpersons), and (c) are not competent to make appropriate judgements about what would be non-conventional androgynous behaviors. That is, the emphasis on procedures and "objective" descriptions of significance, e.g., assertiveness = masculinity, etc. could result in people's acting in ways which would violate the original intention of androgyny to expand the range of behavioral options for people.

The Status Approach. As discussed in a previous section, what is considered appropriate is related to the status of a person. Thus, our standards are reflected by our status assignments. The appropriateness of a behavior, and even which behavior it is, are connected to the status of the actor. For example, arguing a point may be aggressive and inappropriate for a woman traditionally, but assertive and appropriate for a man. For that kind of traditional status assignment, feminists are judging the status of women as being too handicapping with respect to other statuses, e.g., eligibility to negotiate an issue.

This discussion proposes that in order to fulfill its intent of transcending traditional sex-typed roles and promoting greater behavior potential for both sexes (i.e., giving new perspectives on performative behaviors traditionally judged masculine or feminine), androgyny theory could be reformulated according to our status formulation. Under a status description, we can make the following recommendations to help resolve the issue of how people can act appropriately and expand their range of behavior potential. That is, people can be explicit about their judgements about which behaviors are appropriate for the status of man or woman and what they take to be the significances of appropriate behaviors. For justification of the appropriateness of the exemplifications, people can take into account differences in standards, perspectives, and competence in appealing to customs, theory, and/or principle.

Further, the status formulation can provide us with a way to legitimize the distinctions of masculine and feminine as applying to people behaving in certain ways and not to disembodied behaviors. Thus, we can describe a woman as both feminine and assertive or a man as masculine

and nurturant as an alternative to defining a person as feminine when he/she is nurturant or masculine when he/she is assertive.

Relationship Between Status, Role, and Social Practices

The question now arises, "When is it necessary to talk about role?" In order to develop a more appropriate conceptual place for role it might be useful to relate it to the descriptive concept of *intrinsic social practice* (Ossorio, 1981; Putman, 1981). Conventional role theories characterize sex roles by lists of specific performances or sometimes personal characteristics. However, these leave the reader up in the air as to what behaviors the performances exemplify (recall the arm-hitting example). Linking smaller behaviors to more encompassing behaviors is achieved by determining the significance of each unit (e.g., "what is he doing by doing that?"). When there is no longer an instrumental answer to the question about significance, an intrinsic social practice has been identified (e.g., "he did that because that is the way he is, what he enjoys most, etc."). Intrinsic social practices are not explicable in terms of exemplifying larger practices or behaviors. They are engaged in for their own sake and are therefore important indicators of types of social behavior and community memberships.

Intrinsic social practices may themselves be parts of larger social practice networks, some of which may be labeled Institutional practices since they are organized around meeting basic needs in a society (e.g., social practices exemplifying the status of mother are part of the institutional practices of family life in a community or society). Even more comprehensive are Ways of Life which include the types of practices above, in addition to others, and which represent in their totality the way a person or community of persons puts the whole "game of life" together.

One way to replace specific references to a role with social practice language is to make the role an institution, e.g., motherhood or the presidency (the role of leader of the country). Another way would be to start with the status of a mother and give a package of behaviors that would be considered appropriate by customary standards for that status.

Generally, a role is a bigger package (a larger unit) than a social practice, i.e., it usually involves more than one social practice. In this way, it is similar to institutions and ways of life in the sense that role, like institutions and ways of life, implies some chronological organization to the practices. A role is a sequence of behaviors, each of which is chosen from a set, enacted over time. For example, one must first give birth or adopt children and then take care of them until they are adults in order to be enacting the role of a mother. One cannot first take care of children until they are grown and then adopt them to be

enacting the role of a mother as prescribed by convention. Thus, the concept of a role as a package of behaviors which are related in specific ways is a more comprehensive and generalized description than is the concept of social practice which describes a more basic and generally smaller range of facts. Sometimes it can be useful and less cumbersome to describe behavior at the level of role descriptions, as we can see when we try to describe the customary social practices of a mother.

A role description can also be given as a package of behaviors with which an individual can discharge his or her duties and uphold his or her rights. Because of this, role language could be useful in describing certain status assignments when those status assignments entail certain rights and duties which are contingent upon prevailing customs and which can be used as criteria to judge how well a person is expressing that status. We might then describe a status by saying, "You can uphold your rights and discharge your duties by enacting role Y." That is, sometimes, the role description could be the more efficient way of talking, although it would also he possible to give a description of the rights and duties which go along with a given status in terms of behaviors, i.e., social practices. In fact, sometimes it might be necessary to elaborate the social practices rather than evoke the role for reasons of clarifying a definition of a particular role.

As a package of behaviors, the role is connected to historical particulars and can be said to change with time. What is taken to he the conventional role of mother will vary among different relationships and groups. This contrasts to status, which can and usually does remain constant even though a role associated with it may change with time. As a package of behaviors, a role is defined for the character only after the performance of the behavior by the observer's perspective. On the other hand, the status assignment, not being merely a function of performative behaviors, isn't limited to being decided after the fact. It can be said, then, that the role prescribes certain social practices according to historical contingencies and is justified by some observer's description of performative behaviors. These historical behaviors constitute a package which can he described then hy role language.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

Sapin (1979) conducted a study to determine whether sex-stereotyping by ohservers was related to their tendency to categorize specific acts in terms of socially prescribed roles (the *Performative* orientation in ohservational judgement) or in terms of the larger context of the specific performance under consideration (the *Significance* orientation).

An example of an individual with a *Performative* orientation would be one who categorizes direct confrontation of a bothersome smoker as aggressive, but who does not recognize the possibility that confrontation could also be a nonaggressive move in negotiation, or who does not recognize the possibility that more subtle forms of expressing dissatisfaction (e.g., coughing loudly and glaring) could also be categorized as aggressive.

An example of an individual with a *Significance* orientation would be one whose categorization of behavior as aggressive would take into account the larger context. This kind of person would categorize direct confrontation as aggressive or not, for example, depending on the purpose and personal characteristics of the one doing the confronting.

In order to test the question of whether observers who differed in orientation (*Performance vs. Significance*) would differ in the degree of sex-role stereotyping they manifest, a two-stage experiment was conducted. First, potential observers were tested to determine their observational orientation; second groups of observers with each orientation were tested to determine the characteristic degree of sex-stereotyping engaged in by each orientation.

First Phase: Testing Observational Orientations

A set of eight interpersonal episodes was developed. Each episode was composed of (a) a scenario relating a problematic situation and (b) a list of ten behaviors which were the response options in the situation. The ten response options were divided as follows: two sex-typed masculine behaviors; two sex-typed feminine behaviors; four neutral behaviors (representing neutral adjectives from the Bem adjective list); and two filler responses.

Of each pair of sex-typed behaviors and each pair of neutral behaviors, one was a *Performative* option and one was a *Significance* option. The *Performative* option was a direct and obvious response to the situation; the *Significance* option was a behavior taking the context of the situation into account. For example, in an anger provoking situation, the *Performative* options were: for the stereotypically masculine, direct expression of anger; for the stereotypically feminine, passive-aggressive behavior. Subjects rated each option on a 10-point scale of how appropriate the response was, and then indicated which of the options they would choose in that situation.

Subjects were categorized as *Significance-oriented* if (a) their ratings of the two kinds of options were highly similar and (b) they chose a high percentage of *Significance* responses as the behaviors they would carry out in the situation. (See Sapin, 1979, for details concerning the exact

criteria used.) Of the 120 subjects who participated in phase one, ten met the criteria to be categorized as *Significance-oriented.*

Second Phase: Testing Sex-Role Stereotyping

Six episodes were developed to test sex-role stereotyping. Each episode was composed of a brief description of a problematic situation, followed by a number of response options, two of which were "critical" options—one was *Performative* and the other was a *Significance* response. (See Table 1 for examples.)

Table 1
Scenarios and Behavior Options*
(sample only)

1. Mary (or Steve) are sitting in a restaurant with a date. They are bothered by cigarette smoke being blown in their direction from the next table: She (He) responds by:

   a. Asking the person to stop blowing smoke in their direction (PERFORMATIVE).
   b. Coughs loud enough for the smoker to hear (SIGNIFICANCE).

2. Kevin (or Julie) is presenting a paper to a class discussion group. Whenever someone asks a question or makes a comment he (she):

   a. Cuts them off by telling them to stop interrupting (PERFORMATIVE).
   b. Waits till they finish and continues the presentation (SIGNIFICANCE).

3. Joan (or Paul) is visiting a friend in the hospital who is depressed following a serious accident. She (He) says:

   a. Everyone is waiting for you to get out and we hope you'll feel better soon (PERFORMATIVE).
   b. Talks about the good times they have had reminding the friend of the happy person they have usually been (SIGNIFICANCE).

*Abbreviated versions of 3 of the 6 scenarios (Sapin, 1979). Note that each scenario presented to subjects included only one character gender and one of the behavioral options. The scenario was then rated on the Bem Sex Role Adjectives. No subject received more than one version of the same scenario.

Twenty subjects were selected from the first phase for inclusion in the test of sex-role stereotyping vs. status assignment: the ten Significance-oriented subjects and ten others randomly chosen from among the Performative-oriented subjects. The subjects were presented with

Table 2
Performance Subjects: Comparison of
Adjective Ratings for Male and Female Characters*

Behavioral Options	Adjective	Male Character X	Male Character S	Female Character X	Female Character P	P
Performative	Total Feminine Adjectives	34.60	3.08	24.29	3.33	.031
	Assertive	4.93	.80	6.93	.58	.053
	Soft-spoken	5.73	.70	3.86	.60	.053
	Warm	6.33	.75	4.00	.75	.036
	Gullible	3.73	.72	2.00	.41	.050
	Indirect	4.40	.65	2.29	.47	.015
Significance	Total Masculine Adjectives	40.43	3.08	25.06	3.26	.010
	Total Female Adjectives	23.50	2.88	36.81	2.50	.002
	Aggressive	6.71	.41	4.12	.58	.001
	Assertive	7.00	.60	4.56	.66	.012
	Competitive	6.64	.61	3.82	.62	.003
	Dominant	6.36	.67	3.94	.54	.008
	Forceful	6.71	.61	3.80	.59	.002
	Gentle	4.50	.60	6.69	.61	.016
	Understanding	4.43	.76	7.62	.50	.001

*Total and individual adjective ratings are shown only for those that are statistically significant

different versions of the episodes, the genders of the characters in the scenarios being systematically varied. Then subjects were asked to rate all of the response options, including the critical options, relative to twenty adjectives taken from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). Approximately one third of the adjectives were "masculine", one third "feminine", and one third were neutral.

The findings are clear-cut. Performative observers sex-stereotyped the behavior of the characters in all scenarios, whereas Significance-oriented observers did not. They rated each situation in terms of the appropriateness of the behavior to the situation regardless of the gender of the characters in the scenarios. Table 2 gives the mean ratings of adjective descriptors for which the Performative observers rating differed statistically as a function of the gender of the character in the scenario. Data for the Significance-oriented subjects is not presented since there were no differences in their rating due to gender of the characters.

One additional interesting pattern was observed in the results. The Performative-oriented observers showed *counter*-stereotyping effects for the obviously Performative response options (cf. means for Total Feminine Adjectives when applied to male and to female characters). They showed a traditional stereotyping effect for the Significance response options.

DISCUSSION

Sapin's research clearly demonstrates that sex role typing depends on a person's competence to make certain kinds of distinctions regarding behavior. People who are not able to see the potential significance of particular behaviors in terms of actual personal characteristics and situational opportunities tend to use "ready-made" performative ascriptions (based on cultural scripts). However, people who can distinguish between Performative and Significance aspects of behavior (part/whole relationships) do not need role prescriptions to dictate their status assignments in particular situations.

The research also shed light on the methodological problems facing current measures of androgyny. It was noted earlier that college students especially want to present themselves in conformity to the popular "egalitarian" norms or roles of personal relationships even though their actual behavior is typically based on traditional sex-stereotypes. Current face-valid measures of androgyny are susceptible to this kind of social desirability bias.

The results in Table 2 demonstrate this kind of problem dramatically. For the obvious "performative" behavioral options, performative subjects (the vast majority in the initial college subject pool) counter-

stereotyped, i.e., they were leaning over backwards to avoid presenting themselves as traditional sex role typers. However, with the more subtle (significance) behavioral options, performative subjects fell back on their typical sex-stereotyped judgements. So the current measurement method is able to address the problem of social desirability by presenting performative/stereotyping subjects with behavioral options within specified scenarios that these types of subjects are not able to deal with except in their typical performative manner.

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