

Dimensions of Masculinity and Major Choice Traditionality

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We sought to extend the existing research on men who pursue female-dominated careers by examining three masculinity-related constructs which have received little attention in the literature: masculinity ideology, masculine gender-role conflict, and homophobia. Two groups of 50 men, classified as career-traditional or career-nontraditional, were compared in terms of their scores on the Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS), the Gender-Role Conflict Scale (GRCS), and the Index of Homophobia-Modified (IHP-M). Consistent with predictions, results revealed that career-traditional men endorsed antifemininity and toughness norms, reported difficulties concerning restrictive emotionality and restrictive affectionate behavior between men, and indicated homophobic attitudes to a greater extent than did career-nontraditional men. Contrary to prediction, career-traditional and career-nontraditional men did not indicate different endorsement of status norms; difficulties concerning success, power, and competition; or conflicts between work and family relations. Implications for future research and counseling are discussed. © 1998 Academic Press

Traditionally, men and women have been distributed differentially across occupations, which has created and perpetuated a sex-segregated and economically unequal labor market (Hayes, 1989). Throughout the past two decades, however, an increasing number of women have entered male-dominated professions (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980), stimulating considerable research on personality and background factors that may influence the gender traditionality of women's career choices (e.g., Auster & Auster, 1981; Barak, Golan, & Fisher, 1988; Chusmir, 1983; Lemkau, 1979, 1983; Mazen & Lemkau, 1990; O'Brien & Fassinger, 1993). Conversely, few studies have illuminated the distinguishing characteristics of men who choose gender-nontraditional careers (Betz, Heesacker, & Shuttlesworth, 1990; Hayes; Lemkau, 1984).

This article was based on LaRae M. Jome's master's thesis, completed under the direction of David M. Tokar.

We are grateful to Susan I. Hardin and Linda Mezydlo Subich for helpful comments, to Rosalie J. Hall and Andrea F. Snell for statistical consultation, and especially to Ann R. Fischer for research consultation and extensive feedback on earlier drafts of this article.

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Gaining a better understanding of such men is important for a number of reasons. First, the movement toward a more gender-balanced labor market necessarily involves the occupational selections of both sexes (Fitzgerald & Cherpas, 1985). As more women enter male-dominated careers, more men will be forced to consider female-dominated occupations (Basow, 1986; Chusmir, 1990; Hayes, 1989). Second, it seems likely that the factors influencing men's nontraditional career choices differ from those of their female counterparts. Women who pursue "masculine" careers are generally seen as improving in status (Hayes, 1986) as well as in salary and advancement opportunities (Chusmir, 1983; Lemkau, 1983). Conversely, men generally are discouraged from entering female-dominated occupations, which typically are seen as lower in status and salary (Chusmir, 1990; Hayes, 1986). Also, men who enter so-called "feminine" fields are more likely than women who enter male-dominated fields to be devalued and even ridiculed for engaging in "gender-inappropriate" behavior (Brannon, 1976; Chusmir, 1990; Hayes, 1986, 1989). The purpose of this study was to extend current understanding of men who choose gender-nontraditional careers by examining psychologically meaningful individual-differences variables hypothesized to differentiate these men from those who have opted for more traditional careers.

Although some researchers have sought to identify empirical correlates of the traditionality of men's career choices, previous studies have revealed few background or person factors that consistently distinguish career-nontraditional men from their more traditional counterparts. For example, some studies have reported personality and/or demographic differences (e.g., Dyer, Monson, & Van Drimmelen, 1972; Lemkau, 1984; Mlott, Rust, Assey, & Doscher, 1986), whereas others have not (Aldag & Christensen, 1967; Doverspike, Cellar, & Miguel, 1996; Hayes, 1989; Robinson & Canaday, 1978). However, one factor has emerged consistently: Empirical studies have indicated that, in comparison with career-traditional men, men who were either in or pursuing female-dominated professions self-reported lower masculinity scores (e.g., Lemkau, 1984), higher femininity scores (Aldag & Christensen; Dyer et al.; Wertheim, Widom, & Wortzel, 1978), higher androgyny scores (Lemkau), and held less traditional gender-role attitudes (Hayes, 1989). Taken collectively, results of these studies suggest that men's decision to enter gender-nontraditional fields may be part of a larger pattern of lower adherence to traditionally masculine gender roles.

The notion that gender role traditionality influences career choice traditionality is consistent with several major career-choice theories. For example, both Super (1957) and Gottfredson (1981) regard the implementation of one's self-concept, of which gender role self-concept is a relevant aspect, as central to the process of occupational aspiration and choice. Thus, it is reasonable to postulate that individual differences in men's gender-role orientation may contribute, in part, to their willingness to pursue gender-nontraditional careers.

Despite the theoretical and empirical linkage of gender roles to the tradition-

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