This study examined the relative contribution of parental warmth, non-authoritarianism, and approval of sex-typed behavior to children's sex role knowledge and preference. Subjects were 45 married couples, and their 25 male and 20 female preschool children. Parental attitudes toward child-rearing and sex role behavior were assessed with the Parent Attitude Research Instrument (PARI) and the Parent-Child Interaction Survey (PCIS). Children's sex role acquisition was assessed with the Sex Role Learning Index (SERLI) and the It Scale for Children (ITSC).

Multiple regression analyses were used to identify variables which contributed to children's sex role knowledge and preference. SERLI results indicated that the less fathers approved of feminine behavior, the more stereotypic their sons' knowledge of the feminine role. Moreover, the less maternal warmth and paternal approval of feminine behavior, and the more maternal approval of feminine
behavior, the more stereotypic sons' knowledge of the masculine role. Regression analyses failed to reveal parental variables predictive of daughters' sex role knowledge. SERLI preference results revealed that the more paternal warmth and non-authoritarianism, and the more maternal approval of feminine behavior, the greater sons' preference for masculine adult activities. Moreover, the less paternal approval of feminine behavior, the greater daughters' preference for feminine child activities. No parental variables were found to be predictive of sons' preference for child activities, daughters' preference for adult activities, or sex role preference assessed with the ITSC measure.

Overall, results indicated that boys' sex role acquisition was more likely to be predicted by parental variables than girls', and fathers played a more influential role in sex role acquisition than mothers. Findings were interpreted from social learning and reciprocal role theory perspectives.
Parental Warmth, Non-Authoritarianism and Approval of Sex-Typed Behaviors and Children's Sex Role Acquisition

by

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A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Science

June 1979
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Date thesis is presented August 4, 1978
Typed by Margi Wolski for Paula M. Rudloff
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative Data on Sex Role Acquisition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Roles/Parental Attitudes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Influence of Mothers and Fathers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Sex Role Acquisition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>METHOD</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESULTS</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Role Discrimination</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Role Preference</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DISCUSSION</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Role Discrimination</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Role Preference</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIBLIOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Regression Model of Boys' Sex Role</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Discrimination of Feminine Objects (SERLI)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discrimination of Masculine Objects (SERLI)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Preference for Adult Activities (SERLI)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Preference for Child Activities (SERLI)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PARENTAL WARMTH, NON-AUTHORITARIANISM AND APPROVAL OF SEX-TYPED BEHAVIOR AND CHILDREN'S SEX ROLE ACQUISITION

INTRODUCTION

Sex role identity is an important aspect of a child's personality development. Sex role acquisition is the process by which young children become aware of cultural sex role standards, develop sex role preferences and behaviors, and establish an identity which is partially based on the cultural stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Family researchers have hypothesized that parental attitudes toward child-rearing and sex role behavior influence the young child's sex role acquisition. The purpose of this study was to examine the relative contribution of parental warmth, non-authoritarianism and approval of sex-typed behavior to children's sex role knowledge and preference.

Normative Data on Sex Role Acquisition

The acquisition of sex role identity is a dynamic process which has been described as involving four major aspects: (1) sex role discrimination, (2) sex role preference, (3) sex role adoption, and (4) sex role identification.

Sex role discrimination refers to a child's relative awareness of the cultural standards associated with the male and female roles.
within our society (Schell and Silber, 1968). In contrast to sex role discrimination, sex role preference refers to a child's relative desire to adhere to these sex role standards (Brown, 1956b; Lynn, 1959). The third aspect of sex role acquisition, sex role adoption, refers to the degree to which the behavior displayed by a particular child is judged by members of society as being masculine or feminine. Finally, sex role identification refers to the actual incorporation of sex-stereotypic traits and behaviors into the child's personality (Lynn, 1959).

The present study will limit its focus to examining the development of sex role discrimination and sex role preference among preschool children. Research suggests that preschool children are able to discriminate between the sexes, and identify objects associated with each sex. For example, Schell and Silber (1968) found that by three to four years of age children have learned to dichotomize objects and activities into clear-cut male-female categories. This ability was found to increase with age, with no difference between the sexes in their discrimination of items considered appropriate for their own sex role. However, girls have been found to be more proficient in opposite sex role discrimination than boys (Schell and Silber, 1968).

In addition to their ability to discriminate between the sexes, children also display a clear preference for sex-stereotyped objects and activities at an early age. While both sexes prefer activities
associated with their own sex, several studies indicate that boys are more masculine in their sex role preference than girls are feminine (Hartup and Zook, 1960; Sugawara, O'Neill and Edelbrock, 1976). While boys consistently increase in their preference for masculine objects and activities during the early elementary school years, girls have been found to reach a peak in their preference for the feminine role at about six years of age, followed by a steady decrease in preference for this role until ten years of age (Brown, 1957). The socio-cultural explanation of this difference between the sexes has emphasized the greater prestige, power, clarity, and attractiveness of the masculine role (Brown, 1957; Parson and Bales, 1955). On the other hand, social learning theorists have stressed the greater parental pressure placed on boys to adopt sex-typed behavior (Goodenough, 1957; Maccoby and Jacklin, 1964). While young girls are relatively free to express some masculine role behavior, effeminacy in boys is discouraged, and even punished (Hartley, 1959).

**Sex Roles/Parental Attitudes**

While the process of sex role acquisition is multi-dimensional in nature, involving a wide variety of sociocultural, familial and child variables, one major variable related to children's acquisition of sex role behavior is parental attitudes. Some social learning theorists (Bandura and Walters, 1959) have suggested that warm and
non-authoritarian parental attitudes are positively related to children's acquisition of sex role behavior. A warm parent is accepting, affectionate and child-centered. S/he makes frequent use of explanations in guiding a child's behavior, responds positively to a child's dependency needs, and makes use of praise and reasoning in discipline (Becker, 1964). Likewise, a non-authoritarian parent is one who does not attempt to shape or control the behavior of a child according to an absolute standard. Such a parent is non-punitive in his/her child-rearing techniques, and does not demand respect for parental authority, but encourages verbal give and take, and respects the child's abilities and rights (Baumrind, 1971).

Commencing with the proposition that a child is more likely to identify with his/her same-sex than opposite-sex parent, social learning theorists argue that the identification process will be enhanced if a child's same-sex parent is warm and non-authoritarian. In such a situation, the acquisition of stereotypic sex role behavior by young children should be facilitated. Support for this proposition has been obtained in a number of investigations, using subjects from preschool (Biller, 1969; Mussen and Distler, 1959, 1960; Mussen and Parker, 1965), elementary school (Freedheim, 1961; Mussen and Rutherford, 1963), and adolescent age groups (Bandura and Walters, 1959; Payne and Mussen, 1956). In each of these studies children with warm and non-authoritarian parents were more stereotypic on
measures of sex role acquisition than children whose parents did not possess these traits.

While the previous studies support the influence of various child-rearing practices on children's acquisition of sex roles, the research suffers from one notable limitation. With the exception of one study (Mussen and Rutherford, 1963) all of the previous research has assumed that subjects' parents were sex-stereotypic in their own behavior, and more importantly, approved and encouraged sex-stereotypic behavior in their children. The considerable change in views of female (and to a lesser extent male) roles within the last ten years suggest that parents may vary considerably in their approval of "sex-stereotypic behavior" in their children. The general failure to consider the role of parental attitudes concerning sex-appropriate behavior on children's sex role acquisition is especially surprising in light of the principles of social learning theory. In addition to stressing the importance of the parental variables of warmth and non-authoritarianism, social learning theory also indicates that parental approval or disapproval of stereotypic sex role behavior should have an important impact on the development of sex role discrimination and preference in preschool children (Mowrer, 1950). Parents may communicate that they approve and respect certain kinds of behavior in their children, while other behavior is considered inappropriate.

A review of the literature indicates that only Mussen and
Rutherford (1963) have attempted to explore the impact of parental attitudes about sex roles on children's sex role acquisition. Fifteen years ago these researchers identified groups of high and low masculine first grade boys, and high and low feminine first grade girls using the children's It Scale for Children (Brown, 1956a) scores. They then compared parents of high and low masculine boys and high and low feminine girls on the basis of their encouragement for their child's participation in sex-appropriate games and play activities. Results of this study indicated that fathers of daughters high in femininity provided more encouragement for participation in feminine activities than fathers of daughters low in femininity. However, maternal encouragement of sex-typed activities was not related to the sex role preference of daughters or sons, nor was paternal encouragement of masculine activities related to sons' masculinity. In evaluating this study, it should be noted that encouragement of appropriate sex-typed activities was measured on the basis of parental support for engaging in masculine or feminine play activities and games. A more comprehensive measure of parental encouragement for sex-typed activities might examine a broader range of children's behaviors.

The current study will examine the relative contribution of parental warmth, non-authoritarianism and approval of sex-typed behavior to children's sex role knowledge and preference. On the basis of previous research, it is predicted that parental warmth and
non-authoritarian child-rearing attitudes and parental approval of sex-typed behavior will be significant predictors of stereotypic sex role discrimination and preference in preschool boys and girls.

**Comparative Influence of Mothers and Fathers on Sex Role Acquisition**

A review of the literature also suggests that fathers and mothers may differ in the extent to which they influence the development of sex-appropriate behavior in preschool children. According to the reciprocal role theory of sex-role typing (Johnson, 1963), the father is the critical parent in sex-typing of both boys and girls. This theory suggests that the mother responds with equal affection and permissiveness to both sons and daughters, while the father responds differentially to each sex. During the latter preschool years, the father demands competence and mastery of the environment from his son, but remains warm and indulgent with his daughter. Other research confirms that fathers are more interested in their children's sex role conformity than mothers, and put forth stronger efforts to influence their sex role learning (Biller, 1969; Goodenough, 1957; Lansky, 1964). Mussen and Distler (1960) found the father-son relationship to be more significant in sex-typing than the mother-son relationship. Likewise, several studies suggest that the father plays a more prominent role in the sex-typing of girls than the mother.
(Hetherington, 1967; Mussen and Rutherford, 1963). In view of this research, it is hypothesized that fathers' attitudes toward child-rearing and sex role behavior will be more important predictors of children's sex role acquisition than mothers' attitudes.
METHOD

Subjects

Forty-five married couples, and their twenty-five male and twenty female preschool children, participated in the study. All families were classified as middle- or upper-middle class (Levels 1-3) on the basis of Hollingshead’s (1957) Two Factor Index of Social Position. The children were all enrolled in preschool programs associated with the Child Development Laboratories of the Family Life Department at Oregon State University. The children's ages ranged from 36-60 months, with mean ages of 49 and 50 months for male and female subjects, respectively. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn, 1965) was used to assess I.Q. of all subjects. The mean I.Q. score for males was 116 and for females 117.

Instruments

Children's sex role acquisition was assessed with two instruments.

The Sex Role Learning Index (SERLI), a recently developed sex role acquisition test, provided one measure of sex role discrimination and preference (Edelbrock and Sugawara, 1978). This test consists of 60 black and white drawings organized into three sections: (1) the Objects Section, (2) the Adult Figures Section, and (3) the
Child Figures Section. The Objects Section includes 20 objects associated with the activities and roles familiar to preschool children. Half of the objects are traditionally associated with the masculine role (e.g., saw, police badge, hammer and nails) and half are traditionally associated with the feminine role (e.g., broom, iron, dishes). The subject is required to assign each of the 20 objects to one of three sex role categories: (1) objects for boys, (2) objects for girls, or (3) objects for both boys and girls. The responses are scored from most egalitarian (one point) to most stereotypic (three points). Two scores are obtained from this measure: a masculine sex role discrimination score and a female sex role discrimination score. Scores for masculine and feminine discrimination may range from 10 to 30.

The Adult Figures Section of the SERLI provides a measure of preference for adult activities. Subjects are shown an array of 10 activities in which adults of the 'subject's own sex are pictured. The same procedure is used to obtain the subject's preference for activities in the Child Figures Section. Sex role preference scores, whether obtained from the Adult or Child Figures Section, are based on the degree to which the order of a child's choices of activities and roles deviate from purely random choosing. Range of scores on the measure of sex role preference (Adult or Child Figures Section) is from 20 to 80 (Edelbrock and Sugawara, 1978).
Items included in the SERLI were initially chosen on the basis of previous research on sex role acquisition among young children (DeLucia, 1963; Honzik, 1951; Rosenberg and Sutton-Smith, 1959; Ward, 1969). Measures of validity and reliability have been obtained by Edelbrock and Sugawara (1978). All items included in the test were stereotyped by the children as appropriate for males and females at the $p < .01$ level of significance. Test-retest reliability coefficients for the instrument, using a three-week time interval for sex role discrimination and preference scores, ranged from .43 to .90 for both boys and girls. In addition, it has been found that the variable of sex of experimenter has no significant impact on children's sex role acquisition scores.

The It Scale for Children (ITSC), a picture preference test developed in the mid-fifties, provided an additional measure of sex role preference (Brown, 1956a). This test consists of pictures of toys and activities associated with the male and female roles in our society. Test procedures require the child to choose from among the pictures presented, those which a figure presumed ambiguous with respect to sex ("It") would like best. It is assumed that when the child makes his/her choices for the "It" figure, he/she is projecting his/her own sex onto the "It" figure and thus revealing his/her own sex role preference.

The ITSC is divided into three parts. The Toy Pictures Section
consists of 16 black and white sketches of toys. A set of four toys, two characterized as masculine and two characterized as feminine, are presented to the child. The child is asked to "choose a toy 'It' would like to play with." Two choices are made for each set of four pictures. In this section, one point is given for each choice of a toy representing the child's own sex.

The Eight Paired Pictures Section consists of eight pairs of pictures, one considered masculine and the other feminine in each pair. As the child is shown the pair of pictures, s/he is asked to "choose what 'It' would like to be or use." The scoring procedure for this section involves a score of eight points for each sex-appropriate choice.

In the third section, the Four Child Figures Section, pictures of four child figures are shown simultaneously to the subject: a boy wearing pants, shirt and a tie; a boy wearing a dress; a girl wearing pants, shirt and a tie; and a girl wearing a dress. Again the child is asked to "choose the one 'It' would rather be." If the subject is a boy, choice of the first alternative is scored 12 points, the second 8 points, the third 4 points and the fourth zero points. The scoring is reversed for a female subject. Total score on the ITSC for each sex ranges from zero (representing an exclusively inappropriate sex role preference) to 84 (representing an exclusively appropriate sex role preference).
The ITSC's validity is based primarily on the assumption that objects and activities characterized as feminine or masculine by our society provide an appropriate means for defining sex role preference (Brown, 1956b). Items selected were based on the behavior patterns culturally identified with male or female roles. With respect to reliability, the ITSC has been shown to have a test-retest reliability of .69 for boys and .82 for girls (Brown, 1956b).

The Parent Attitude Research Instrument (PARI) was used to assess the parental child-rearing attitudes of warmth and non-authoritarianism. The short form developed by Cross and Kawash (1968) was used. This short form is a revision of the original PARI devised by Schaefer and Bell (1958). It includes a non-authoritarian scale, consisting of six subscales, and a warmth scale, consisting of two subscales. The subscales associated with both the non-authoritarian and warmth scales are summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Authoritarian Scale</th>
<th>Warmth Scale</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subscales</strong></td>
<td><strong>Subscales</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging Verbalization</td>
<td>Warmth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equalitarianism</td>
<td>Reversed Irritability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reversed Deification of Parents</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reversed Excluding Outside Influences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Excluding Outside Influences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deification of Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to the scoring procedures of the PARI, the subscale items are answered in terms of the degree to which the subject agrees with the statements listed on the PARI form. Points are assigned as
follows: strongly agree (four points); mildly agree (three points); mildly disagree (two points); and strongly disagree (one point). In the subscales designated as "Reversed" the scoring procedure is reversed. A subtotal for each subscale may range from a score of 5 (strongly disagree with all items) to 20 (strongly agree with all items). For the non-authoritarian scales, the total score may range from 30 (low non-authoritarian child-rearing attitudes) to 120 (high non-authoritarian child-rearing attitudes). For the warmth scales, the total score may range from 10 (low warmth) to 40 (high warmth).

Schaefer and Bell (1958) calculated Kuder-Richardson Formula-20 reliabilities for the twenty-three original scales. The PARI was administered to sixty primipara mothers and sixty multipara mothers. The range for the primipara mothers was .34 to .77, median .65; for the multipara mothers the range was .40 to .77, median .68. Construct validity was supported when hypothesized relationships were found significant in a comparison of PARI factor scores with scores on the Californian F Scale, the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, and a measure of self-acceptance designed by Zuckerman (Zuckerman and Oltean, 1959).

The measure used to assess parental approval of children's sex role behavior was the Parent-Child Interaction Survey (PCIS) developed by Atkinson and Endsley (1976). Fourteen "sex appropriate" situations are presented in questionnaire form. Two separate forms have been
developed, one form for the parents of sons and one for the parents of daughters. The wording of items is identical in both except that the pronoun "he" is used in parent-son forms, and "she" in the parent-daughter forms. Of the 14 situations in the PCIS, seven illustrate "feminine" stereotyped behavior (e.g., dependency, shyness, obedience) and the remaining seven illustrate "masculine" stereotyped behavior (e.g., socially adventurous, independent, inquisitive). These behaviors were depicted as appropriate for males and females by Maccoby (1966) and Baumrind and Black (1967).

Each item or situation in the PCIS involves either a parent-child interaction or a peer-child interaction viewed by the parent. Following the situational passage, a 7-point scale is marked by the parent, indicating what degree s/he like or disliked the child's behavior in the passage. This study will utilize two subscales of the PCIS: parental approval of masculine behavior and parental approval of feminine behavior. The range of scores is from 7 ("strongly dislike" all the behaviors) to 49 ("strongly like" all the behaviors) for approval of both masculine sex-typed behavior and feminine sex-typed behavior. Test-retest reliability coefficients for the PCIS have been found to be .86 for mothers and .87 for fathers (Atkinson and Endsley, 1976).
Procedure

Children

All children were randomly assigned to either a male or a female experimenter who had been trained to administer both measures of sex role learning. Subjects were tested individually in a room adjoining the preschool classroom, where disruption and external stimuli were minimized. Standardized administration procedures were used in testing the children with all instruments. The ITSC and SERLI were administered in one session, with the order of the two instruments randomly determined. Approximate testing time for administering these instruments to each subject was 15-20 minutes.

Three months after administration of the ITSC and SERLI, the PPVT was administered individually to children in the same testing room to obtain I.Q. scores. Testing time for administering the PPVT to each individual child was 10-15 minutes.

Parents

The socioeconomic status of parents was determined from parental records on file in the Oregon State University Child Development Laboratories. Four evening meetings, during the period in which the children were given the ITSC and SERLI, were set aside for administering the PARI and the PCIS to parents. A university classroom
at Oregon State University was used for this purpose. Male and female experimenters first administered the PARI and then the PCIS using standardized testing procedures. Parents were asked not to discuss their responses with their spouses or other parents. Administration time for the two questionnaires was approximately 40 minutes, with the PARI and PCIS requiring about 20 minutes each.
RESULTS

A multiple regression approach was used in data analysis to identify parental variables which best predict the sex role acquisition of preschool children. The eight independent variables placed in the original regression equation were: maternal warmth, maternal non-authoritarian child-rearing attitudes, paternal warmth, paternal non-authoritarian child-rearing attitudes, maternal approval of feminine behavior, maternal approval of masculine behavior, paternal approval of feminine behavior, and paternal approval of masculine behavior. There were ten dependent variables in the current study: boys' sex role discrimination of feminine objects, boys' sex role discrimination of masculine objects, girls' sex role discrimination of feminine objects, girls' sex role discrimination of masculine objects, boys' sex role preference for child activities, boys' sex role preference for adult activities, girls' sex role preference for child activities, girls' sex role preference for adult activities, boys' sex role preference (ITSC), and girls' sex role preference (ITSC).

The BACKSTEP multiple regression enabled a determination of the extent to which the various independent variables accounted for the variance in preschoolers' sex role discrimination and preference. In this procedure variables are eliminated, one at a time, in decreasing order of their contribution to the equation. Student's t tests were
performed on the regression coefficients in each regression equation. Selection of the best set of predictive variables involved locating a regression equation significant at the .05 level. Other factors contributing to choice of the best model were the coefficient of determination ($R^2$) and significance of the regression coefficients. Since selection of the best equation was not based exclusively on $t$ values of the regression coefficients, it was possible for variables with non-significant coefficients to be included in the best model.

**Sex Role Discrimination**

Children's sex role discrimination of masculine and feminine objects was assessed with the SERLI (Edelbrock and Sugawara, 1978). Results of the multiple regression analysis for the dependent variable, boys' sex role discrimination of feminine objects, are presented in Table 1. The best regression model was found to be significant, $F(1,23)=5.90, p < .025$. Only one variable, paternal approval of feminine behavior, $p < .025$, was found to be a significant predictor of boys' discrimination of feminine objects. The negative regression coefficient for paternal approval of feminine behavior indicates the less the fathers approve of feminine behavior, the more stereotypic their sons' knowledge of the feminine role. The $R^2$ for this regression model was .204, indicating that about 20 percent of the variance in boys' discrimination of feminine objects could be accounted for by
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>S.E. of Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Approval of Feminine Behavior</td>
<td>-0.3413</td>
<td>0.1405</td>
<td>-2.42</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ F = 5.90 \quad p < .025 \quad R^2 = .204 \]
Table 2 presents results of the regression analysis of boys' sex role discrimination of masculine objects. The best regression model was significant, $F(3,21)=3.19, p < .05$, and included three variables: paternal approval of feminine behavior, maternal warmth, and maternal approval of feminine behavior. Since the variables paternal approval of feminine behavior and maternal warmth had significant regression coefficients, they may be considered more important predictors than maternal approval of feminine behavior. The regression coefficients indicate that the less maternal warmth and less paternal approval of feminine behavior, and the more maternal approval of feminine behavior, the more stereotypic sons' knowledge of the masculine role. The $R^2$ for this model was .313, indicating that the three predictor variables accounted for about 31 percent of the variance in boys' discrimination of masculine objects.

In contrast to results found for boys, none of the regression models for girls' discrimination of feminine objects or masculine objects were significant at the .05 level.

**Sex Role Preference**

Sex role preference of the preschool-aged subjects was assessed with three measures: SERLI preference for child activities, SERLI preference for adult activities (Edelbrock and Sugawara, 1978), and
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>S.E. of Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Approval of Feminine Behavior</td>
<td>- .5258</td>
<td>.2119</td>
<td>-2.48</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Warmth</td>
<td>- .2616</td>
<td>.1275</td>
<td>-2.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Approval of Feminine Behavior</td>
<td>+ .3085</td>
<td>.2178</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ F = 3.19 \quad p < .05 \quad R^2 = .313 \]
the ITSC (Brown, 1956a). None of the regression models for boys' preference for child activities on the SERLI was significant. This lack of significance indicates that none of the independent variables was a significant predictor of boys' preference for child activities.

Results of the regression analysis for boys' preference for adult activities on the SERLI are shown in Table 3. The best model was found to be significant, $F(3, 21) = 6.36, p < .005$, and included three significant predictor variables: paternal warmth, $p < .01$, paternal non-authoritarianism, $p < .005$, and material approval of feminine behavior, $p < .005$. These results indicate that the more paternal warmth and non-authoritarianism, and the more maternal approval of feminine behavior, the more sons prefer stereotypic masculine adult activities. The $R^2$ of .476 for this regression model indicates that the combination of these three variables accounted for approximately 48 percent of the variance in boys' preference for adult activities.

None of the regression models for boys' sex role preference on the ITSC was significant. Thus, there were no parental variables predictive of boys' sex role preference on this measure.

Table 4 presents the best regression model for girls' preference for child activities on the SERLI. The model was found to be significant, $F(1, 18) = 4.79, p < .05$, and revealed one significant predictor variable, paternal approval of feminine behavior, $p < .025$. The
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>S.E. of Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Non-Authoritarianism</td>
<td>+ .6626</td>
<td>.1893</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>.005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal Approval of Feminine Behavior</td>
<td>+1.2973</td>
<td>.4493</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Warmth</td>
<td>+ .8753</td>
<td>.3156</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$F = 6.36 \quad p < .005 \quad R^2 = .476$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>S.E. of Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Approval of Feminine Behavior</td>
<td>-1.8184</td>
<td>.8307</td>
<td>-2.18</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$F = 4.79 \quad p < .05 \quad R^2 = .210$
negative regression coefficient for paternal approval of feminine behavior indicates that the less fathers approve of feminine behavior, the more girls prefer stereotypic feminine child activities. The $R^2$ for the model was .210, indicating that about 21 percent of the variance in girls' preference for child activities could be accounted for by the one significant predictor variable.

None of the regression models for girls' sex role preference for adult activities on the SERLI was significant. These results indicate that no parental variables in the equation were significant predictors of girls' preference for adult activities.

As in the results obtained for boys, the regression analysis failed to reveal a significant model for girls' sex role preference on the ITSC. Thus, none of the independent variables was found to be a significant predictor of girls' sex role preference on this measure.
DISCUSSION

Sex Role Discrimination

The present study suggests that certain parental variables are predictive of young boys' knowledge of the feminine and masculine role. Specifically, results indicate that the less fathers approve of their sons displaying feminine behavior, the more stereotypic sons' knowledge of the feminine role. Boys with stereotypic views of the feminine role perceived traditionally feminine objects and toys as appropriate only for girls, rather than as appropriate for boys or both sexes. This finding is consistent with theories proposed by Lynn (1964) and Hartley (1959) concerning the development of the masculine role. These researchers suggest that a primary task of male socialization is learning "how not to be a girl." The current data suggests that in order to avoid the feminine behavior of which fathers disapprove, boys may acquire significant knowledge about activities associated with the feminine role. Paternal disapproval of feminine behavior may therefore encourage boys to categorize traditionally feminine objects and activities as exclusively for girls.

In this study, boys' knowledge of the masculine role could be predicted by three parental variables: paternal approval of feminine behavior, maternal warmth, and maternal approval of feminine behavior. Specifically, boys displayed the most stereotypic knowledge
of the masculine role when fathers expressed disapproval of feminine behavior, while mothers were low in warmth and displayed approval of feminine behavior. It is important to note that fathers' disapproval of their sons' engaging in feminine behavior was again the most significant predictor of boys' stereotypic knowledge of sex roles. Interestingly, mothers' approval of feminine behavior was also predictive of more stereotypic knowledge of the male role. While these results may initially appear perplexing, any attempts to interpret the findings must consider the third predictor variable, maternal warmth. Low maternal warmth was found to be predictive of more stereotypic views of masculine objects and activities. Previous research indicates that mothers low in warmth are less affectionate, less accepting, less likely to use explanation in guidance, and less responsive to a child's dependency needs (Becker, 1964). Such parental attitudes cannot be expected to facilitate a more flexible view of the sexes or exploration of activities traditionally associated with the opposite sex. Social learning theory further suggests that in a family where a mother displays little nurturance towards her son, the son may adopt his father as a predominant role model. In this case, the father's disapproval of the son's feminine behavior may increase his son's tendency to perceive objects and activities according to rigid gender categories. Thus, sons may view traditionally masculine objects as only for boys, rather than for girls or both sexes.
In contrast to results found for boys, no parental variables were found to be predictive of girls' knowledge of the feminine and masculine roles. This finding suggests that girls' acquisition of sex role knowledge may be a more complex process than for boys. Research indicates that society has attached greater value and advantages to the masculine role (Broverman et al., 1972). Moreover, young females are relatively free to engage in stereotypic "masculine" activities while young males may be punished or discouraged from participation in "feminine" activities (Fling and Manosevitz, 1972). Greater opportunities for young girls to explore stereotypic masculine and feminine activities seem likely to reduce the impact of parental variables on girls' knowledge of sex roles.

It can be seen that results in the area of sex role discrimination provide partial support for the original hypotheses. For sons, the most predictive variable of knowledge of the feminine and masculine roles was fathers' disapproval of feminine behavior. This finding supports predictions based on both social learning and reciprocal role theories of sex-typing. It is also consistent with previous research which indicates that fathers exhibit significant interest in their sons' conformity to sex roles (Goodenough, 1957; Maccoby and Jacklin, 1964). Interestingly, fathers' attitudes toward child-rearing were less influential than their attitudes toward sex role behavior. Although there was no measure of the information provided by parents to
children about sex-appropriate behavior, it may be speculated that fathers who disapprove of sons' feminine behavior gave feedback about the sex-typing of objects and activities in the child's environment. Contrary to predictions, no parental variables were found to be predictive of girls' knowledge of the feminine and masculine role. This finding may be a product of the greater freedom experienced by young girls in exploring both feminine and masculine activities.

**Sex Role Preference**

As in the case of sex role discrimination, results indicate that certain parental variables were predictive of boys' sex role preference for adult activities. Specifically, the more paternal warmth and non-authoritarianism, and the more maternal approval of feminine behavior, the greater boys' preference for traditionally masculine adult activities. Previous studies have also found that paternal warmth and non-authoritarianism are associated with a high level of sex-role stereotypy in sons' preference for activities (Biller, 1969; Mussen and Distler, 1959, 1960; Mussen and Parker, 1965). Presumably, when fathers are nurturant, affectionate, and non-punitive, sons will be more likely to establish close relationships with their fathers. It may be speculated that in such relationships boys have greater opportunity to spend time with their fathers and to learn more about the work and leisure roles of adult males. Social learning theory
suggests that paternal warmth and non-authoritarianism will facilitate identification with the father and imitation of his behavior, thereby increasing sons' preference for traditionally masculine activities.

In addition to the paternal variables, maternal approval of feminine behavior was also found to be predictive of greater stereotypy in preference for adult masculine activities. Mothers who exhibit such approval are very accepting and tolerant of such behaviors as dependency, shyness and affection. These mothers appear to fit the role of the "loving and permissive" mother described in Johnson's reciprocal role theory of sex-typing (1963). Interestingly, previous studies have found maternal permissiveness in child-rearing to be associated with the development of such traditionally masculine characteristics as aggression, assertiveness, activity, achievement, and independence (Baldwin, 1949; Sears, 1961; Watson, 1957). Thus, it appears that when mothers are accepting of their sons' behavior, and fathers are non-punitive and high in nurturance, sons may identify closely with their fathers and express preference for stereotypic masculine adult activities. Social learning theory posits that paternal warmth and non-authoritarianism will have particular importance in the development of boys' adult preferences since father and son are of the same sex.

Parental attitudes toward child-rearing and sex role behavior were not found to be significant predictors of boys' preference for
child activities. These findings suggest that other variables, such as peer approval and behavior, may be more influential in determining boys' preference for child activities. The important role of peers in boys' sex role socialization has been suggested in a previous study by Fagot and Patterson (1969). In their research they discovered that teachers selectively encourage boys for participation in traditionally feminine activities (e.g., quiet games), while largely ignoring their involvement in traditionally masculine areas. However, peers encouraged boys' expression of masculine behaviors, and despite teachers' reinforcement patterns, interest in masculine activities was maintained. In another study of sex role socialization, Mussen and Rutherford (1963) failed to find a relationship between fathers' encouragement of masculine behavior and sons' involvement in traditionally masculine children's activities. These researchers also speculated that variables in the child's social environment may play a major role in the development of boys' sex role preference. In a society where male behavior is highly valued, peers, siblings, television, and other media encourage boys' conformity to the traditional sex role.

The final measure of boys' sex role preference was the ITSC. The ITSC differs from the SERLI in that it combines items depicting child and adult activities, rather than separating the two into independent sections. Results indicated that there were no significant
predictors of boys' sex role preference on the ITSC. This finding may be influenced by the higher percentage of child than adult items on this measure. As noted earlier, parental variables were predictive of boys' preference for adult activities on the SERLI but were not predictive of SERLI preference for child activities.

As with boys, girls' sex role preference was evaluated using the SERLI and the ITSC. No parental variables were found to be predictive of SERLI preference for adult activities or ITSC preference. Again, it may be suggested that parents, and especially fathers, are less concerned about their daughters' conformity to stereotypic sex role behavior. Parents are also less tolerant of misbehavior in sons than daughters (Baumrind and Black, 1967). Thus, their attitudes toward sex role behavior and child-rearing may be relatively unimportant in predicting girls' preference for adult activities.

One parental variable was found to be predictive of girls' preference for child activities on the SERLI. Results indicated that the more fathers disapproved of feminine behavior, the more stereotypic their daughters' preference for stereotypic feminine activities. This finding was surprising in that previous literature suggests paternal approval of feminine activities would be predictive of more stereotypic preferences (Mussen and Rutherford, 1963). In attempting to explain this finding, one might speculate that fathers' disapproval of feminine behavior increases daughters' awareness of the differences
between traditionally masculine and feminine behaviors. When daughters exhibit greater knowledge of child activities considered appropriate for girls, they may then express a preference for such activities.

One additional possibility is that variables not considered in the study have contributed to this finding. Factors such as peer behavior, sibling status, and sex of siblings may also play a role in the development of girls' preference for children's activities. For example, in the current study it was noted that girls who exhibited less preference for stereotypic feminine activities were more likely to have brothers in their families. Exposure to masculine games and activities in the home may stimulate girls' interest in boys' activities.

In summary, the results of this study suggest that parental attitudes toward child-rearing and sex role behavior are influential in the development of preschool children's sex role preference. Significant predictors of boys' preference for masculine adult activities were paternal warmth and non-authoritarianism and maternal approval of feminine behavior. Thus, it appears that when fathers are warm and non-punitive, and mothers are accepting of their sons' behavior, sons will exhibit more stereotypic preferences for adult masculine activities. The significant contribution of paternal warmth and non-authoritarianism to boys' sex role preference supports the predictions of social learning theory. Presumably such paternal
behavior will facilitate identification with the father and imitation of his behavior, thereby increasing sons' preference for masculine adult activities. In addition, the mother's acceptance of son's behavior was consistent with the maternal role in sex-typing posited in Johnson's reciprocal role theory (1963). No parental variables were predictive of sons' preference for child activities or sex role preference assessed with the ITSC measure. Previous research suggests that peers and siblings may be more influential than parents in the development of boys' preference for children's activities.

The only significant predictor of girls' stereotypic preference for children's activities was paternal disapproval for feminine behavior. This finding is not congruent with the predictions of social learning theory. Social learning theorists would hypothesize that greater disapproval of feminine behavior should be predictive of less stereotypic preferences for child activities. The failure to find parental behaviors which were predictive of daughters' preference for adult activities may be influenced by parents' greater tolerance of certain behaviors in daughters than sons. Research indicates that parents are less likely to punish girls than boys for misbehavior (Baumrind and Black, 1967; Sears, Maccoby and Levin, 1957) or for displaying behavior associated with the opposite sex role (Hartley, 1959).

Of some interest in this study is the comparison of findings on
the two measures of sex role preference. On the SERLI, parental variables were found to be predictive of boys' adult activity preference and girls' child activity preference, but not boys' child activity preference or girls' adult activity preference. On the ITSC, no parental variables were found to be predictive of boys' or girls' sex role preference. Several factors may have contributed to this discrepancy in findings. First, it should be emphasized that the ITSC combines child and adult items in the instrument. In combining these items, it becomes impossible to assess the relative contribution of parental variables to child and adult activity preference. Thus, a child with stereotypic preferences for adult activities and non-stereotypic preferences for child activities will obtain a score similar to that of a child who exhibits the reverse pattern of scores.

A second factor which may influence the disparity in SERLI and ITSC results is the "assumed" ambiguity of the "It" figure. Previous research (Lansky and McKay, 1963; Sher and Lansky, 1968) suggests that many children perceive the "It" figure as a boy, and choose a high proportion of masculine objects. In the current study, at least 20 percent of the female subjects referred to "It" as a boy, whereas none of the male subjects thought "It" was a girl. A third area of difference is the format of the two measurement devices. On the ITSC, a child is asked to make one or two choices from a set of two to four items. In contrast, the SERLI presents the child with an
array of ten items which are to be ranked on the basis of personal preference. The greater number of choices available to subjects on the SERLI would appear to facilitate the collection of more specific information about the subject's preference for child and adult activities. A final difference between the two sex role learning instruments is their scoring procedures. The ITSC has been criticized for its arbitrary assignment of weights to various sections of the test (Edelbrock and Sugawara, 1978). Moreover, on ITSC sections which require subjects to choose two items from an array, no consideration is given to the order of the child's preferences. SERLI scoring is based on the order of items selected and the degree to which this order deviates from purely random choosing. A consideration of all these factors suggests that the SERLI is the more sensitive measure for assessing children's sex role preference.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The major limitations of this study concern the nature of the sample population. The overwhelming majority of families who participated in this study were highly educated, associated with the university, and members of the middle- and upper-middle socioeconomic classes. Previous research indicates that such parents are more likely to utilize love-oriented/non-authoritarian child-rearing practices (Bronfenbrenner, 1961; Hess, 1970), and to hold more
flexible views of sex role behavior (Hall and Keith, 1964; Rabban, 1956) than lower-class parents. The current study confirmed that most parents expressed favorable attitudes toward non-punitive child-rearing methods and were accepting of their child's expression of both masculine and feminine behaviors. Use of a more diversified socioeconomic sample in future studies might be predicted to produce greater variability in parental attitudes toward child-rearing attitudes and sex role behavior. It appears possible that parental variables will be more significant predictors of sex role learning in lower-class children than middle-class children.

One additional limitation of this study was the failure to consider other variables which may contribute to children's sex role acquisition. Examples of these variables include the number, sex and birth order of siblings, peer behavior, participation in early childhood programs, and exposure to television and other media. Although it would be difficult to measure all of the variables which contribute to children's sex role acquisition, it would be possible to control for many of these variables in future studies.

One final limitation of the study was the relatively small sample size. Use of a larger sample size in future studies would increase the extent to which one could generalize from the findings.

In future studies examining the role of parents in children's sex role acquisition, attempts should be made to assess parents' actual
behavior toward their children. In the current study, questionnaires were used to assess parental attitudes toward child-rearing and sex role behavior. Whether or not such parental attitudes are indicative of parents' actual behavior toward their children has yet to be determined.

**Summary**

In a sample of middle- to upper-middle class families, certain parental variables were found to be predictive of children's sex role acquisition. Results indicated that boys' sex role acquisition was more likely to be predicted by parental variables than girls'. This finding may reflect parents' greater concern for sex-role conformity in boys than girls. Research also revealed that fathers' behaviors were more predictive of children's sex role discrimination and preference than mothers' behaviors. This outcome is consistent with the reciprocal role theory of sex-typing (Johnson, 1963).

As predicted by social learning and reciprocal role (Johnson, 1963) theories, fathers' disapproval of feminine behavior was the most influential predictor of boys' stereotypic knowledge of sex roles. Stereotypic knowledge of the male sex role was also predicted by low maternal warmth and maternal approval of feminine behavior. Johnson (1963) suggests that boys will be more likely to emulate their fathers when mothers are accepting and permissive of their sons'
behaviors. Moreover, social learning theory suggests that low maternal warmth will increase the likelihood of sons' identifying with their fathers.

Fathers' disapproval of feminine behavior was also predictive of girls' preference for feminine children's activities. It was noted that the direction of these findings is not consistent with social learning or reciprocal role theories. Finally, boys' preference for masculine adult activities could be predicted by paternal warmth and non-authoritarianism, and maternal approval of feminine behavior. The significant contribution of paternal warmth and non-authoritarianism supports the predictions of social learning theory. Moreover, the mother's acceptance of son's behavior was consistent with the description of the maternal role in sex-typing posited in Johnson's (1963) reciprocal role theory.

It was noted that the relationships between parent and child variables in this study may only exist in middle- to upper-middle class highly educated families. A different pattern of relationships might emerge in a more heterogeneous sample or a sample of exclusively lower-class families.
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