ABSTRACT
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protocols (93 ss X 3 cues = 279) were coded blindly for existence of
conflict and evaluation of outcome. Interrater reliability was 96
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CONFLICT, OUTCOME, AND
PERCEPTION OF WOMEN'S ROLES

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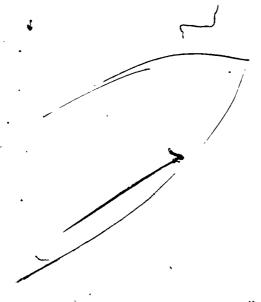
2

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Most of the research on women's role conflict focuses on the conflict between the roles of worker and mother (Nye & Hoffman, 1963; Siegel & Hass, 1963). More recent studies on women's role conflict associated with roles or arising from role combinations focus on identifying other conflicts associated with roles or arising from role combinations (for example Hall, 1972; Gordon & Hall, 1974; Neyill & Damico, 1974). In general, the results of the research throw some light on the existence and nature of conflicts women experience and are willing to report.

The present study differs from previous research in the area of women's role conflict in two ways. First, an attempt was made to control for the difficulties inherent in self-reporting methodology. A variation of the Thematic Apperception Test technique was used in order to minimize these difficulties. Second, unlike previous research, women's perceptions of roles was considered, regardless of whether the women had experienced the roles. This enables a consideration of whether there is a similarity with respect to perception of conflict and outcome between women who have and who have not experienced a role.

The purpose of the study was to determine the existence of conflict and
evaluation of outcome associated with the roles of girl-friend/wife, work-
er and mother. In addition, the relationship between these role perceptions
and women's age, marital status, and maternal status was considered.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 93 female graduate students or recipients of a graduate
degree. Most of the $\underline{S}$ s (87%) were graduate students in the School of Educa-
tion at New York University. The frequency of subject characteristics in
Table 1 indicate that the majority of $\underline{S}$ s are single (55%) and childless (80%).
Moreover, most of the $\underline{S}$ s with children (79%) are, in the oldest age range.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Instrument

Most of the research on women's role conflicts is subject to the
difficulties inherent in self-report measures. Therefore a variation of the
Thematic Apperception Test technique was selected in order to minimize these
difficulties. A total of three pictorial cues were used. The pictures are
described below in the order they were administered:

(1) Girl-friend/wife role: Woman and man adjacent to each other
     in living room setting.

Conflict, Outcome and Perception
of Women's Roles

(2) Worker role: Woman sitting at paper filled desk.

(3) Mother role: Woman with young child, sex unspecified, in the

background.

Development

The method for development was consistent with the guidelines for
custom-built projective methods for research (Forer, Rabin, GoldStein, & Lesser
1961). The measure was developed as outlined below.

Four steps were involved in the selection and piloting of pictorial
cues. First, 21 magazine pictures depicting woman alone or with
people (male, male and child, child) and in two settings (home, office were
selected. That is, pictures which depicted women in a variety of role and
role combinations were chosen. Second, for purpose of picture selection a
pilot was conducted. Ten females told stories to the pictorial cues accord-
ing to standard TAT directions. Prior to piloting, the investigator knew
some of the conflicts the women associated to roles. Therefore pictures which
elicited these conflicts in one or all women were maintained. Generally,
pictures minimal in complexity and ambiguous in both affect and activity were
maintained. Third, for purpose of further picture selection, a second pilot
was conducted. Two forms were developed from pictures maintained from pilot
one and from additional pictures added from personal files and from a commercial
picture agency. The forms had five pictures in common. The additional five
pictures in each form were matched for setting and number, sex, and age of
characters. Forms 1 and 2 were administered to 20 and 12 females respectively.
Following, ten pictures which elicited the most material relevant to a study
of role related conflicts were selected.

Finally, three pictures were selected for purposes of large

scale research. That is, seven pictures depicting a combination of

roles (for example, woman as mother and wife) were eliminated since

scoring of these was complex and inter-rater reliability appeared dif-

icult to achieve.

Development of Scoring System

. The thematic appreciation measure was developed for purposes

of comprehensive, large-scale research on women's role perceptions.

Although the present paper concerns women's perceptions of conflict

and outcome only, the general procedure for developing thecomprehensive

scoring system is briefly explained.

The procedure for developing the scoring system is an adaptation

of the method used by Schaw & Henry (1956). The initial development was

based on 60 stories told by 20 $\underline{S}$ s (three pictorial cues x 20 $\underline{S}$ s = 60

stories.) Refinement of the original system was based on 219 stories told

by an additional 73 $\underline{S}$ s (three pictorial cues x 73 $\underline{S}$ s = 219 stories).

The basic themes were identified from reading all stories to a

given pictorial cue and noting variety of responses to the themes. The

stories were analyzed without knowledge of respondent's characteristics.

The scoring system is based on the recurring themes, which are more fully

described in Richardson and Alpert (in Press).

For purposes of the present study two categories were coded: (1)

existence of conflict (conflict, no conflict) and (2) evaluation of outcome

(postitive, negative). For the first category, "conflict" was scored for

stories in which a difficulty was experienced by one of the characters and

the difficulty was a central part of the story, regardless of how trivial it

appeared. The remaining stories were coded "no conflict".

Conflict, Outcome and Perception
of Women's Roles

All stories were then coded for evaluation of outcomes. "Positive" outcome
was coded for story outcome which contained no negative elements, from
the main character's perspective. The outcomes were either positive or
uncertain. All stories coded "no conflict", as well as some stories coded
"conflict" were coded "positive" outcome. "Negative" outcome was coded for
story outcomes which contained negative elements from the main character's
perspective.

Per cent agreement was at least 96% between coders for stories to each
of the three cues. Establishment of inter-rater reliability was based
on 30 stories (10 S s x 3 pictorial cues). Moreover stories were analyzed
without knowledge of respondent's characteristics.

Procedure

Standard TAT instructions were used. That is, S s were asked to
name the protagonist, tell what led up to the event, what the protagonist
was thinking and feeling, what was happening, and how the story ended.
All S s wrote stories to the mimeographed pictorial cues in test booklets.
To facilitate maintenance of five minutes time limit per story, S s were
asked to record "time begin" and "time end" for each story. Code numbers
were used throughout testing. Following testing, S s completed a background
sheet concerning demographic information.

Seventy-three S s (79%) and 20 S s (21%) responded to pictorial
cues in group administration or individual administration respectively.
Since stories were written rather than verbalized in both group and indivi-
dual administration, it is unlikely that this difference in administration
altered performance.

8

Results

Data relating to existence of conflict and evaluation of outcome
will be dealt with first. Then data relating to the existence of conflict
and evaluation of outcome as a function of respondent's age, marital status
and maternal status will be considered. The content of conflict associated
with each pictorial cue will be considered in the discussion section of the
present paper.

The number of women whose protocols were classified "conflict" or
"no conflict is shown in Table 2 for each pictorial cue.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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The Cochran's Q test result indicates dependence of pictorial cue and exist-
ence of conflict. Table 2 reveals that more conflictual stories were told
to the pictorial cue "woman with man" than the other two pictorial cues.
Further, only the pictorial cue "woman at work" resulted in more studies
classified "no conflict" than "conflict".

The number of women whose protocols were classified "positive" outcome
or "negative" outcome is shown in Table 3 for each pictorial cue.

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Insert Table 3 here

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9

The Cochran's Q test result indicates dependence of pictorial cue and

evaluation of outcome. Table 3 reveals that more story outcomes were

negative to the pictorial cue "woman with child" than the other two

pictorial cues, and that respondents gave more negative than positive

outcomes to this pictorial cue only. The results of Tables 2 and 3 to-

gether indicate that most of the conflictual stories to the pictorial

cue "woman with man" resulted in positive outcomes, while only two of

the conflictual stories told to pictorial cue "woman at work" (41-39)

and five of the conflictual stories told to pictorial cue "woman with

child" (65-60) had positive outcomes.

The summary results of the Chi-square analyses presented in Table

4 indicates the independence of respondent's age, marital status, and

maternal status to the two coding categories at the .05 level.

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Insert Table 4 about here

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The existence of conflict or evaluation of outcome noted in stories does

not vary sigifigantly as a function of respondent's age, marital status,

or maternal status. That is, women who have experienced a role do not

perceive it differently, with respect to conflict and outcome, than wo-

men who have not experienced a role.

Discussion

The results indicate that more women, the majority of whom are

single and childless, perceived conflict in pictorial cue "woman with man"

than in pictorial cues "woman at work" or "woman with child". Moreover

only in pictorial cue "woman at work" was there a majority of stories
that did not have conflict as its central theme. Further the results
indicate that more women perceived positive outcomes in pictorial cues
"woman with man" and "woman at work" than in pictorial cue "woman with
child", and that only to the latter cue did women give more negative than
postive outcomes. Thus the majority of stories with conflict told to
pictorial cue "woman at work" have positive outcomes. While the cue
"woman with child" elicited fewer conflictual stories than the "woman
with man" cue, the majority of resolutions to conflict in the former cue
were negative.

The assumption underlying use of the projective methodology is
that perceptions are projections and that social reality directs projec-
tions. Further, use of the projective technique minimizes superficial
responses and purposive distortion of responses. In that light, the data
indicate that women perceive more conflict in the role of girl-friend/wife
than in the role of worker and mother. Women perceive least conflict in
the role of worker. In addition, the data indicate that, generally, women
perceive positive resolutions to the conflict associated with girl-friend/
wife role. In contrast, while women perceive less conflict associated with
the role of mother, the resolutions, in general, are perceived as negative
or nonexistent from the women's perspective. These results, together, sug-
gest that educated women, the majority of whom are single and childless, per-
ceive the worker role as the least problematic. These results are consistent
with Kenniston's (Note 1) clinical data and Ross's (1968) position.

Further, the results indicate that such variables as respondent's age, marital status, and maternal status are independent of perception of conflict and outcome. Similar stories with respect to experience of conflict and evaluation of outcome are told by women, whether or not they occupy a role. That is, for example, stories told by mothers and nonmothers to the "mother with child" cue do not differ in the two dimensions investigated. In light of the Projective assumption, the data indicate that women, whether they have occupied a role, perceive certain aspects of a role similarly. It may be that women who choose to approach a role do so with a realistic expectation of the conflict and the outcome associated with that role.

An analysis of the content of conflict across pictorial cues was done, in order to throw more light on role associated conflicts. Most of the conflictual stories (60%) elicited by pictorial cue "woman with man" concerned conflict in a relationship. A smaller percentage (29%) concerned conflict experienced by the woman. That is, woman is more often perceived as nurturer to man than nurtured by man.

Conflict to the pictorial cue "woman at work" generally concerned blocks to women's success. Most of the blocks were blocks within the women themselves (63%). A minority (37%) concerned blocks created by significant others. This data seems to support that women experience more intrapsychic difficulties in relating to work than non-intrapsychic difficulties. Content analysis of the stories indicate that more of the intrapsychic difficulties concern fear of success than fear of failure. Non-intrapsychic difficulties concern barriers created by family and friends. Lastly, the majority of the conflict stories (76%) to the pictorial cue "woman with child" concerned conflicted and negative feelings about the child and boredom with the mother role.

Conflict, Outcome, and Perception
of Women's Roles

Whether men experience similar conflicts in corresponding roles
or associate more conflict in their role with women than in other roles
is not known. Also not known is how the results of the present investi-
gation would vary with a less educated sample , or a sample engaged in a
field traditionally considered masculine. What this study has indicated
is that women who share an educational background and education as
a professional field of interest, in general, perceive least conflict
in the worker role and fewer positive outcomes in the maternal role, that
variables such as women's age, marital status, and maternal status are
independent of perception of existence of conflict or evaluating outcome,
and that the nature of the conflict across roles differs.

13

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Notes

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Table 1

Frequency of Subject Characteristics

Marital and Maternal Status	Age			
	19-24	25-30	31 and older	Total
Single				
No children	17	19	13	49
Children	0	1	1	2
Total	17	20	14	51
Married				
No children	4	11	3	18
Children	0	1	10	11
Total	4	12	13	29
Divorced/separated				
No children	2	3	2	7
Children	0	5	6	6
Total	2	5	6	13
Total	23	37	33	93

Table 2

Classification of Subject Perception

of Conflict by Pictorial Cue

| Pictorial Cue | Coding Category | | Cochran's Q value |
	Conflict	No Conflict	Q value
Woman with man	79	14	
Woman at work	41	52	
Woman with child	65	28	37.56*

* $p < .001$

17

Table 3

Classification of Subject Perception

of Outcome by Pictorial Cue

	Coding Category		Cochran's Q Value
Pictorial Cue	Positive Outcome	Negative Outcome	Q value
Woman with man	56	37	
Woman at work	54	39	
Woman with child	33	60	14.54*

* p < .001

18

Table 4

Chi-Square Valves for Relationship

of Respondent's Age, Marital, and

Maternal Status to Coding Categories

Pictorial Cue and Coding Category	x^2 Value		
	Age	Marital	Maternal
Woman with man			
Conflict	1.12	4.98	.03
Outcome	2.93	2.74	.00
Woman at work			
Conflict	2.44	.89	1.12
Outcome	1.56	.08	.06
Woman with child			
Conflict	2.43	1.45	2.35
Outcome	2.08	4.89	6.26