

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: SOME PROBLEMS IN ROLE ANALYSIS*

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The history of Linton's and Parsons' role analysis exemplifies a familiar pattern in the intellectual development of humanistic sciences (Linton, 1936; Parsons, 1949, 1951; Parsons and Shils, 1951). A line of theory and investigation becomes widely adopted, eventually induces criticism and, in the course of the polemic, undergoes further development.

This paper attempts to trace several strands in this historical pattern of role analysis, first from a general viewpoint and then in relation to my recent study of masculine role strains.

I use the phrase "role analysis" instead of "role theory," advisedly. Role theory is likely to develop only with regard to the formal, Simmelian aspects of roles. Indeed, we have the beginnings of such theory in socialization into roles, role conformity, and deviance, and conditions moderating or intensifying role strain. As contrasted with these formal aspects, the obligations and rights that constitute the substantive content of roles would appear to span much of the subject matter of sociology. For example, the American president and the French prime minister, the factory manager in the United States and in the Soviet Union, kinship obligations of an adult male in a patri- or matri-lineage — any theoretical propositions concerning the normative content of these roles would hardly be distinguishable from the general fields of political, economic, or family sociology.

One other preliminary caveat. To limit the scope of this paper to manageable proportions, I shall deal only with institutionalized

roles, linked to recognized social statuses. Excluded, then, are many "regularities in interpersonal relationships" (Newcomb, 1966) or forms of interaction like "the family scapegoat," "the big wheel," or "the rebel," lacking the normative content of institutionalized roles (Popitz, 1972). Moreover, the emphasis will be primarily on social structural analysis rather than on symbolic interactionism of the descendants of Cooley and Mead. The latter have been concerned with such processes as the variable capacity for role-taking, the acquisition of roles, the emergence of informal roles, and the like (Rose, 1962). Another example of an interactionist approach to roles is Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Institutionalized roles are implicit in Goffman's analysis. His purpose is to reveal the processes in social encounters between role partners, seen from the vantage point of "... impression management, of contingencies which arise in fostering an impression, and of the techniques for meeting these contingencies" (Goffman, 1959:80). By contrast, for Gross, Mason, and McEachern, for Preiss and Ehrlich, Merton, or Goode, the interest lies in institutionalized roles.

The theoretical developments in role analysis selected for consideration have come from two sources. Some were caused by forces endogenous to the field. Others, more dramatic, reflected shifting emphases and polemics in the discipline as a whole. We shall consider them in turn.

Endogenous Sources of Change in Role Analysis

As long as the literature on social roles consisted of highly abstract essays, the con-

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cept of role could remain imprecise and inclusive. The growth of empirical research and the need to operationalize the concept were bound to lead to conceptual clarification. This is not the place to review the rich vocabulary for role analysis proposed by various studies (Biddle and Thomas, 1966; Gross, Mason and McEachern, 1958; Preiss and Ehrlich, 1966). But this conceptual specification raised new theoretical problems. For example, Gross, Mason and McEachern challenge the postulate of role consensus and maintain that the degree of consensus about a given role in a social group is itself a variable (Gross, et al., 1958:43). Viewing consensus as a variable raises a series of theoretical questions concerning the causes and effects of varying degrees of consensus for the actors or social system. Similarly, I shall presently illustrate the theoretical yield of distinguishing between the objective fact of social disorganization, on the one hand, and the experience of role strain, on the other.

Other endogenous sources of change stemmed less from empirical research than theoretical continuities. For example, the very emphasis on the pervasiveness of role conflict may have led Robert Merton to observe that a degree of social orderliness, nevertheless, does obtain and, hence, to seek to identify the "social mechanisms" that minimize conflict (Merton, 1957).

The exogenous sources of change raise more polemical issues.

Exogenous Sources of Change in Role Analysis

Intellectual currents in the general field of sociology produced repercussions in role analysis. Several writers in the late 1950's and in the 1960's challenged, what they alleged to be, some untenable premises of Parsonian theory. Rolf Dahrendorf, C. Wright Mills, Alvin Gouldner, Dennis Wrong, Judith Blake, Kingsley Davis, and William J. Goode have all agreed on two issues. Using Wrong's phraseology (1961), Parsons' theory in the opinion of these critics, presented an overintegrated view of society and an oversocialized view of man.

These currents led a small minority of writers to urge abandoning the concept of role as not merely redundant but a distorting

dramaturgical analogy. In the words of one such radical critic:

The concept of role with its reliance on a view of man as a role conformer and of society as integrated system is a distortion. It is time that these inadequacies were recognized and the concept of role was abandoned by sociologists. *Without it* we are able to examine the relationships between expectations which members of different groups hold of the incumbents of a particular position in a more flexible and dynamic way . . . (Coulson, 1972:119).

Another states:

. . .one has but to omit the word "role" or the phrase "the role of" from passages selected at random from social science literature to discover that this often changes the meaning not at all, and on occasion clarifies it (Dewey, 1969).

I do not find this position persuasive. Indeed, once a critic states that members of groups hold certain "expectations" of the "incumbents of a particular position" it does not matter how we designate this phenomenon, provided we pursue the scientific quest it entails.

Such "expectations" (of "incumbents") raise a set of theoretical problems concerning variations from group to group and from time to time, their interrelations, the extent to which incumbents of particular positions actually conform to or deviate from them, and the like. The task of unraveling these relationships is central to the concept of role, a task well nigh unmanageable without it.

The great majority of recent critics, however, do not reject the concept of role altogether. They direct three major criticisms at social structural role analysis. I shall identify all three, though I have time to assess only the first two.

Three Criticisms of Social Structural Role Analysis

To begin with, role analysis is said to obscure and neglect the importance of individuality. "Is there no man behind the mask?" ask the critics. "Are men so programmed and passive that sociologists can afford to neglect the intrusion of self into the role or the

individual innovations which may inaugurate social changes?" (Bradbury et al., 1972). And again, "Are [roles] not played parts in a play being written in the act of being played? Do they not contain marks of individuality?" (Naegele, 1966).

The second criticism alleges that role conformity and stability have been over-emphasized and, conversely, that deviation, malintegration and social change have been minimized or neglected.

The third criticism focuses less on the extent of role conformity than on explaining such conformity as does exist. In the phrase of Blake and Davis (1964), traditional role analysis is characterized by the "fallacy of normative determinism," an assumption that the major explanation of conformity to roles, and, indeed, of the existence of social order, is to be found in the internalization of social norms. "Societies as we know them," write Blake and Davis,

are . . . filled with conflict, striving, deceit, cunning. Behavior in a given situation tends . . . to be strongly affected by individual interests, to be unpredictable from a knowledge of the norms alone.

Far from being fully determinant, the norms themselves tend to be the product of constant interaction involving the interplay of interests, changing conditions, power, dominance, force, fraud, ignorance, and knowledge (1964:464).

If some criticized this overemphasis on normative consensus, others questioned identifying such consensus with social integration and, the reverse implication, that normative dissensus was a major source of social disorganization. A study of stable working-class married couples with a high degree of value consensus was cited as a case in point. In that group, not anomie or dissensus but precisely the rigidity of role conformity in a period of social change, was judged to be a major cause of family disorganization (Komarovsky, 1967:335-8).

Similarly, Desmond P. Ellis cites several sources to support his contention that "shared values may lead to disorder and fragmentation" (1973:697).

Time will not permit the assessment of this third current of criticism save to note the swings in theoretical emphases that it reflects. The issue underlying role conformity is the

problem of order. Beginning with *The Structure of Social Action*, Talcott Parsons challenged the assumption that enlightened self interest, contract, and exchange were enough to ensure social order (1937:89-102). Instead, he stressed internalized, shared values as the cement of society. The recent criticism of this normative solution of the problem of order left a theoretical vacuum being filled, in part, by a return to a more sophisticated theory of exchange (Homans, 1961; Blau, 1967).¹ It would almost appear that the discipline develops in a series of discontinuous approximations. A particular theoretical orientation offers a useful, if one-sided analysis. It elicits criticism, and is superceded by an over-emphasis on the previously neglected variables. With regard to exchange, we may have come full circle when a reviewer of a book on the theory of exchange cautions sociologists not to exaggerate the role of calculated exchange in human behavior. Such exchange, the reviewer asserts, could be dominant only in a wholly uninstitutionalized society in which all social relations are conducted ab initio and without established norms The institutionalization of roles into statuses, of power into authority or precedent into norm reduced the role of calculated exchange (Bierstedt, 1965).

William Goode, in his article, "A Theory of Role Strain" attempts to combine the two approaches to role conformity (1960). He questions whether normative commitment of individuals would ensure conformity in a complex, urban society. Goode proposes that a role relationship be viewed as a transaction or "bargain" in which the individual allocates his scarce resources among his various role obligations in light of the rewards or penalties he anticipates from his role partners. Goode does not rule out norm commitment but combines it with the theory of exchange by considering role obligations, demands, rewards, and penalties as the currency of exchange.

So much for an overview of the three main critical attacks on structural role analysis. I shall begin by assessing the first, the contention that role analysis neglects psychological variables. This allegation expresses an age-old issue in American sociology, reminiscent of

¹ Force, the third explanation of the social order, has also received renewed attention (Goode, 1972).

Floyd Allport's spirited attack in 1927 on what he termed, the "institutional fallacy," and George Homans' recent presidential address, "Bringing Men Back In" (1964). I have no illusions that the proposal I am about to make will put this persistent issue forever behind us.

The Interplay of Psychology and Sociology in Role Analysis – General Remarks

Let me begin by describing the place of psychology in Merton's structural and functional model of role analysis, as revealed in such works as "The Role Set: Problems in Sociological Theory" (1957) or "Sociological Ambivalence" (his paper with Elinor Barber, 1963).

Psychological variables enter Merton's model first, as epiphenomena, or the "mental side" of sociological facts. There is no trace of reification in the essays cited – it is the individual and not the role-set who acts, feels, or suffers. Merton and Barber, the authors of "Sociological Ambivalence," explicitly refer to the psychological experience of being pulled in opposite directions. They are concerned, however, with those characteristic psychological conflicts that are socially induced; and their purpose is to reveal "...the ways in which ambivalence comes to be built into the structure of social statuses and roles." In that effort Merton and Barber make a variety of psychological assumptions, e.g., that the helping professional, by virtue of his authority over his client, becomes an agent of frustration or that a state of anxiety in which a client seeks the help of a professional, makes him sensitive to the latter's behavior.

So far the psychological variables entered this structural model in the Durkheimian tradition of intervening variables, linking social facts, or as patterned psychic responses to social facts. Let us lay aside for the present George Homans' view that sociological propositions probably derive from the more general psychological theories. I would make a more modest and pragmatic case for psychology. More specifically, sociologists should try to make explicit the psychological assumptions implied in linking social facts. Let me illustrate the heuristic value of doing so. A relationship between two social phenomena may involve the psychological assumption that frustration induces aggression. Recogniz-

ing this proposition would reveal its problematic or contingent character. Frustration may, after all, result not in aggression but resignation or retreat. Such recognition, in turn, will stimulate the search for social determinants of various reactions to frustration and hence lead to a refinement of the original sociological generalization.

Neil J. Smelser has correctly stated that a sociological generalization invariably contains an "almost interminable list of assumptions about aspects ... outside the accounting model that do *not* vary" (1968). Far from suggesting so impossible a procedure as the questioning of all such assumptions, I propose the scrutiny of only the most relevant and proximate psychological propositions assumed to link social facts.

Psychological variables, however, enter into role analysis more actively, as additional independent variables increasing the explanatory power of the model to account for observed social behavior. I thus distinguish between psychological factors as intervening and independent variables.² Among the numerous studies actually combining sociological and psychological independent variables, I select William T. Smelser's laboratory investigation of problem-solving interaction. Smelser used personality tests to divide the participants into dominant and submissive types. The experiment was designed to include dominant and subordinate role assignments. The dependent variable was the problem-solving ability of the group. "The most productive group" concludes Smelser,

was composed of pairs in which the dominant subject (as rated on the personality test) was assigned the dominant role and the submissive role. . . . It was concluded that congruence of role and personality pattern within subject and complementarity of patterns as between subjects were major determining variables in cooperative achievement (1961:541).

For our purposes the significant fact was the combined use of independent psychological and sociological factors. Used together, these explained more of the variance in the dependent variable, i.e., group productivity, than either could have explained alone.

² Neil J. Smelser has made a similar distinction between intervening and, what he termed "primary" or "operative" variables (1968).

The potential of psychological independent variables to raise the explanatory power of an austere Durkheimian model carries considerable risk. It may prematurely halt a structural explanation. Take, as an illustration Rose Coser's analysis of Erving Goffman's concept of "role distance," designed to avoid that tendency (Coser, 1966). Goffman's concept originally referred to "actions which effectively convey some disdainful detachment of the performer from a role he is performing" (Goffman, 1961:110). Coser has persuasively used ideas of social structure to reinterpret an instance of role distance cited by Goffman, the use of humor by the surgeon in charge of an operation. The surgeon faces, she alleges, a sociologically ambivalent situation. He must control subordinates, while helping them maintain their poise. Far from manifesting detachment from his role, argues Coser, the surgeon's use of humor enables him to conform to his role even more effectively. Put more generally, in situations of sociological ambivalence, using humor can increase the effectiveness of the person in command and in effect reflect commitment to, rather than his detachment from, his role. Similarly, Coser questions whether the clowning of the eight-year-old boy on the merry-go-round illustrates defiance of role expectations. The normative features of this behavior become manifest when this situation is seen as involving a succession of statuses. The eight-year-old must demonstrate that he has outgrown kid stuff. Yet to refuse a ride on the merry-go-round would transform him into "a big shot." "Clowning" or "role distance" is his way out of the ambivalent situation. The boy on the merry-go-round is taking "role distance" from a status he aspires to but hasn't quite the right to claim (especially before others who possess a legitimate claim to it).

In taking issue with Coser's structural analysis, Robert A. Stebbins fails to make the necessary distinction between the two uses of psychological variables: as intervening variable and additional independent variable (1967). Stebbins, I would urge, rightly insists on spelling out the psychological assumptions linking sociological ambivalence and the "role distance" of the boy, clowning on the merry-go-round: "people do not like to make fools of themselves" or "people are concerned about the image they present to others or about their own self-conceptions." But he

adopts quite another theoretical position when he continues: "We cannot study *actual role behavior* [emphasis mine] very effectively from a structural and institutional point of view as it seems Coser is suggesting with respect to role distance" (1967:249). Here he argues for including psychological variables not as intervening links but as additional independent variables. Obviously, attitudes towards a given role differ among individuals. The incorporation of the actor's own interpretation of his role, built into the design of the study will, equally obviously, increase our power to account for variance in "actual [i.e. concrete] role behavior." Its increased power to account for variance is precisely the distinguishing feature of an independent as contrasted with an intervening psychological variable. The latter supplies a psychological explanation of the association between social facts. Thus, for example, the eight-year-old, finding himself in a sociologically ambivalent situation, clowns, because "people don't want to make fools of themselves." The intervening variable may explain but does not, in itself, increase the predictive value of a sociological generalization, as does introducing relevant psychological independent variables. To repeat, however, my earlier caution, the benefit of psychological independent variables carries the risk of premature "psychologizing." I shall presently illustrate from my own research how this temptation to stop at a plausible psychological explanation had to be fought. But, first, one final general observation on the interplay of sociology and psychology.

In his presidential address, "Bringing Men Back In," George Homans states: "I now suspect that there are no general sociological propositions, propositions that hold good of all societies or social groups as such, and that the only general propositions of sociology are in fact psychological" (1964:817). This being the case, Homans maintains, explaining sociological findings would entail deriving them from psychological propositions (1964:815).

Homans' critics generally base their opposition on the extreme complexity or downright impossibility of such a derivation (see, for example, Murray Webster, Jr., 1973; Peter M. Blau, 1970). But suppose we grant Homans' maximum position that "sociological propositions . . . can in principle be derived from, reduced to, propositions about the behavior of individuals" (1970:325). Even were this

thesis valid, it may not be crucial to theoretical sociology. Our sociological task is to account for aggregate phenomena on as general a level as we can. Homans makes no reference to the fact, though he would perhaps concede it, that without sociological concepts the generalizations about aggregates could hardly have been anticipated from psychological premises. I refer to propositions such as "the increasing size of organizations promotes structural differentiation along various dimensions at decelerating rates" (Blau and Schoenherr, 1971), or "the less cohesive a society the higher the rate of egoistic suicide." To take still another example, it is no accident that the traditional psychologist, using the model of the individual as a stimulating and stimulated organism, studied speech acquisition but left it to others to explore speech as a device in socialization (Newcomb, 1954).

But, once formulated, can these sociological propositions be deduced, as Homans surmises, from the more general psychological constants? The main issue, it would seem to me, is the utility of such derivation for sociology. The dominant sociological concern lies in comparative explanations (why social phenomenon A, rather than B). This being the case, it is as a rule, not the invariant and constant principles, though they may apply, but precisely the special ones that will illuminate our sociological interest in the difference between aggregates. I question, therefore, the utility of directing the process of explanation towards those invariant and constant psychological propositions. An explanation of an empirical finding is, after all, not an absolute, single act of derivation but a relative matter. Some investigators experience a sense of closure only when the process of derivation reaches a psychological proposition, but this may be a subjective reaction. Such relativity of explanation is, I take it, the import of P. W. Bridgman's words in *The Logic of Modern Physics*: "The essence of an explanation consists in reducing a situation to elements with which we are so familiar that we accept them as a matter of course, so that our curiosity rests" (1927).

I said at the outset that I will report some actual research probings of the first two polemical issues. By way of summarizing the preceding discussion and anticipating the forthcoming illustration — this, in brief, is my answer to the critics who claim that role

analysis neglects "the man behind the mask." This danger is not intrinsic to the concept of role. Quite the contrary, role analysis allows us all the more clearly to identify "the intrusion of self into the role" because it encourages a full exploration of social structure and prevents premature "psychologizing." My answer goes beyond the familiar contention that social structural and psychological perspectives are complementary and, used together, can account more fully for concrete behavior than either perspective alone. I urged that a clearer distinction be made between intervening and independent psychological variables and that even a Durkheimian role analyst would do well to specify his usually latent assumptions about the most proximate or relevant psychological variables (or propositions) linking related social facts. It may be contested that the latter proposal returns me to Homans' position. The intervening psychological proposition, linking two social phenomena may in fact constitute a psychological explanation of their relationship. But my proposal, unlike Homans', does not stem from the thrust towards increasing the level of theoretical generality. Mine is a limited and pragmatic strategy aimed less at explaining than refining sociological generalization. Behind this strategy is the hunch that the psychological assumptions generally made by sociologists, represent not psychological constants, but contingent propositions. Hence, making the psychological assumptions explicit would stimulate the refinement of sociological propositions in the manner illustrated in the "frustration-aggression" case.

Turning to my research, I shall use its materials to illustrate two issues: the interplay of role analysis and psychological factors and the problem of malintegration and social change. With regard to the latter, I should like to show that role analysis, far from obscuring malintegration and social change, can lead to a direct analytical confrontation with these phenomena.

The Interplay of Psychology and Sociology in Role Analysis: The Study of Masculine Role Strains

The study I shall draw on was undertaken to ascertain the nature and extent of masculine role strains. The emphasis was on the distinctively male strains, those that men experience in a given social milieu, at a certain

stage of the life cycle, precisely because they are men and not women. The data consisted of elaborate case studies of a small sample of sixty-two men, randomly chosen from the senior class of an Ivy League college. In each case the search for strains covered a variety of statuses: student, son, sibling, male to male peers, male to females and others.

Role strain was defined, modifying William J. Goode's (1960) definition in two respects, as latent or felt difficulties in fulfilling role obligations or a sense of insufficient rewards for role conformity. The search for such role strains proceeded through several steps. We began by inquiring into the typical behavior of each person in a given sector, e.g. initiative on meeting with women friends at various stages of the relationship, and the range of variation in this behavior. We assumed that the actual behavior of each individual, even if patterned, is the complex result of multiple factors. We tried to determine only a few: his normative expectations in the given area, his actual preferences, his cognitive beliefs, whenever relevant, his perception of the normative expectations of his female friend and of her preferences, and his perception of the attitudes of "significant others."

In addition to interviews and schedules, each senior was given two psychological tests, the California Personality Inventory and the Gough Adjective Check List for "my ideal man" and "my real self."

The finding I have selected for this presentation permits us to examine the interplay of sociological and psychological variables. It concerns only one of several strains experienced by male seniors in relationships with women friends. Nearly one-half of the sample (45 per cent) expressed mild to acute anxiety over their failure in relationships with women, to live up to the traditional ideal of superior masculine assertiveness, determination, decisiveness, courage, independence, aggressiveness and stability in the face of stress. This cluster of "manly" virtues has been variously termed "ascendancy," "competence," leadership and the like. It would be a mistake to assume that the half of the sample who did not express anxiety on this score was composed solely of men who in fact exemplified those virtues. Some did; but other types included among the adjusted were, for example, men who enjoyed satisfactory relationships with stronger and supportive women.

Let us view the nature of the strain more closely. The troubled seniors were so classified, first on the basis of feelings of inadequacy admitted to in their detailed descriptions of relationships with women friends. This sense of inadequacy may have permeated the total relationship or surfaced in specific subroles, such as, in initiating contacts, in decision-making on dates, and in sexual behavior. Occasionally, their weakness originated in other statuses (an excessive dependence on parents, or low occupational ambitions), but disrupted their male-female ties.

The troubled men not only felt inadequate but felt that they violated their own or their partners' normative expectations. It is generally believed that the ideal of masculinity has been changing among undergraduates. The emergence of the counter-culture with its disdain for competitive aggression and for "machismo" is one sign of the change. Studies including my own, show that the male ideal of masculinity now includes some qualities hitherto largely defined as feminine, such as sensitivity, patience and artistic appreciation (John P. McKee and Alex C. Sherriffs, 1959; Inge Broverman, et al., 1972). Nevertheless, the comparison of the Gough Adjective Check Lists, filled out by the seniors, for "my ideal" man and "my real self," reveals that the "feminine" virtues have not so much replaced as have been added to the familiar masculine stereotype. For most of these seniors the ideal man was still "assertive," "strong," "courageous," "aggressive," and "masculine." Of the traits men wished they could have but lacked (those attributed to the "ideal man" but most often missing from the description of "my real self") 40 per cent fell into the cluster of the "manly" traits similar to those enumerated.

That the role strain in question was not merely the result of an unfulfilled desire for greater power in interpersonal relationships was especially clear when the pressure for the traditional masculine behavior came from women friends. "She likes to be dominated," remarked one man about his current friend: "And she wants me to be more decisive. When I become pushy she does yield. But I believe in more equalitarian relationships and I would prefer one in which neither party had to hassle." "One thing that bothers me," declared another youth, "is the way they always picture men as having to be dominant and

strong. That puts a lot of strain on a man. I'd like to share things and you cannot dominate and share at the same time. But girls like a hard exterior in a man."

A small minority of the troubled men yearned to play the traditional role even though they were intellectually committed to an equalitarian ideology. These seniors experienced a double strain: low self-confidence vis-a-vis women and guilt over their psychological need to dominate them. One such senior explained perceptively: "Despite my egalitarian proclamations, tugging at my psychic strings is the thought that I am really most comfortable when I maintain a margin of dominance over a woman. My basic insecurity conflicts with my liberated consciousness making me feel like a double-talking hypocrite."

The use of psychological tests enables us to compare men troubled about their lack of assertiveness, with others at ease on this score. The "troubled" men had lower scores on aggressiveness, self-confidence, dominance, and several other traits in the ascendancy cluster. The full data will be published elsewhere, but a few comparisons are cited here by way of illustration. On the Adjective Check List for "my real self," only 14 per cent of the "troubled" men, as against 74 per cent of the "adjusted," scored above the mean for our sample on Self-Confidence. The scores on Self-Abasement show a similar contrast. Seventy-three per cent of "troubled" as compared with only 32 per cent of the "adjusted" fell above the mean of the total sample on Self-Abasement ratings. The California Personality Inventory shows the "troubled" group to be low on Dominance, with 52 per cent scoring below the mean for the sample on this trait. By contrast, only 14 per cent of "adjusted" men scored below the mean on Dominance.

Conceivably the lower self-confidence of the troubled men manifested in these tests, may have been the result rather than the cause of their failure to attain the masculine ideal. Granting such circular causation, one finding suggests that these psychological characteristics were rooted in childhood experiences and thus antedated feelings of inadequacy in heterosexual relationships. This telling finding pertains to parent-child ties. Relationships with each parent were classified into three categories: unsatisfactory, average, and good.

Men troubled on the score of assertiveness, in comparison with the adjusted men, reported a higher proportion of unsatisfactory relationships with their mothers and fathers. For example, 48 per cent of the "troubled" as against only 18 per cent of the "adjusted" men had unsatisfactory relationships with their mothers.³

The mode of role strain of these "troubled" men could be defined as a malfit between the idiosyncratic personality and social role. But again the temptation to stop with this plausible psychological explanation had to be resisted. If nothing else, the very extent of the strain, involving as it did nearly one-half the sample, raised the probability of social determinants.

I should like to propose the hypothesis that the seniors suffered from another mode of role strain, a socially structured scarcity of resources for living up to the norm of male ascendancy. Let me identify this type of strain before giving evidence of its relevance to the problem. Some social roles are difficult to fulfill, quite apart from scarcity of time or energy or from, what Goode termed, the general "overload" of role obligations. A clear case in point would be the problem of a doctor called on to treat a disease for which contemporary medicine has no cure. His failure to fulfill his role is caused neither by the competing claims of other roles, nor by personal inadequacy, nor yet by his low position in the social hierarchy. It might be instructive to compare various social roles in a given society with regard to their "utopian" components. Given the state of technical skills, the inherent risks, and other scarcities of facilities, some social roles present wider gaps between prescribed goals and available means than others.

In Merton's classical essay, *Social Structure and Anomie*, the distinction is posited between widespread aspirations in a given society, and differences in access to legitimate means of realizing them at various levels of

³The psychological profiles drawn by a clinical psychologist on the basis of the two psychological tests, suggest numerous hypotheses about the etiology of this strain and other psychodynamic processes characterizing the troubled as against the adjusted men. These suggestive results deal precisely with the "man behind the mask" and with the "intrusion of self into the role."

social stratification. In our case, the normative aspirations are those linked to a given role, with difficulties tending to be experienced by a sizeable proportion of actors in that role.

As for our seniors, the social advantages males still enjoy may, at first blush, argue against the hypothesis that social resources for exercising masculine assertiveness were lacking. Quite apart from whatever genetic sex differences may exist in assertiveness, the sexes are still socialized to maximize ascendancy traits in boys and mute them in girls. Certain masculine privileges remove decisions from contest and cede advantages automatically to the male. For example, the majority of young women in our study granted priority to their mates' careers and, in case of conflict, were prepared to scale down their own occupational aspirations. Again, the self-esteem of young women is probably still more dependent on their popularity with men than the reverse. The prerogative of initiating contacts, though it exposes the man to the risk of rejection, nevertheless implies and carries a degree of power. The woman's bargaining power declines more precipitously with age.

Given these masculine advantages, we might have expected a deviant minority but not nearly half the men to feel anxious about their inability to play the masculine role. But though the foregoing inventory of male advantages is no doubt accurate, this story has another side.

The men gave abundant illustrations of perceived inadequacies in intellectual and emotional relationships with women. After all, these women were generally also college students, if anything more rigorously selected in terms of their high school performance and of nearly the same age (*Princeton Alumni Weekly*, 1971). The trend towards earlier cross-sex interaction has increased the dependence of the young man on the emotional support of his female friend as against the male clique. Our study of self-disclosure revealed that for all aspects of the self, especially in the most sensitive area, the closest female friend was the preferred confidante over closest male friends, siblings of either sex, or parents. The ability to grant or withhold this expressive function gives some advantage to the female. Moreover, the increase in pre-marital sexual experience of female undergraduates creates stress because it may challenge the still-dominant expectation

that the male be the more sexually experienced partner (Kaatz and Davis, 1970). Finally, the women's liberation movement leads an increasing number of college women to challenge traditional male privileges, which are no longer ceded as a matter of course but must be contested and won by personal strength.

These challenges confront the male at a vulnerable stage of his life. He is still economically dependent on his family. Neither his role as student, nor as part-time worker can bolster his sense of "manhood" in a culture that anchors it so largely in economic independence and occupational success. Superior physical strength is not an effective resource in a milieu that censures its use with women. In time these men may in fact acquire superior power and status since present family life generally restricts the access of married women to independent sources of accomplishment, status, and economic power. These socially-rooted advantages and privileges, later in life, will probably give many of these men the desired edge. But during college years, at the modal age of twenty-one, the ideal of masculine leadership was not attainable for a large proportion of the sample.

So far the difficulty of conforming to the ideal of masculinity has been considered in relation, first, to the special handicap of some personality types and, second to a socially-structured scarcity of facilities for role fulfillment. But the presence or absence of such strains is affected also by other structural features of the social environment, not directly derivable from psychological theory. These are features that make it more or less difficult to live up to role requirements or make the failure to do so more or less traumatic. The latter depends on the visibility of role performance to "significant others" and on availability of cultural alternatives, i.e., other esteemed roles for those not successful in heterosexual relationships. To cite a few illustrations, interviews with students who transferred from other colleges suggested that of the structural variables affecting the extent of stress, the ratio of males to females may be a dominant factor, either raising or lowering the bargaining position of each sex. Opportunities for relatively informal contacts with women is another factor. Even a timid youth may bolster the courage to invite a coed in his class for a cup of coffee; whereas, a more

formal dating system puts greater demands on self-assurance in initial contacts. A large and impersonal campus may shield a timid youth from surveillance of his strategy with women or conceal his failures from his peers. The size of the campus has other implications in interplay with psychological factors. The more specialized the psychic needs of the individual, the larger must be the pool of eligibles to increase the chances of finding congenial partners; and social environments vary in size and access to eligible mates.

I have used my study to illustrate the interplay of sociological and psychological factors in a particular case of role strain. The second and final theoretical problem to be examined concerns malintegration and social change. The remaining time is too short to deal with this issue in a comprehensive and orderly manner but a few examples from the work in progress will suggest the links between role strain and social change.

Role Strain and Social Change – The Study of Masculine Role Strains

That role strain may be a source of social change has been recognized by many sociologists (e.g. Parsons, 1951:280-3). However, the overriding interest of writers on role conflict has been in mechanisms that hold conflict in check. There is no escaping the familiar lament that the problem of social change has been neglected.

As in other areas of role analysis, here also some distinctions will open the way for productive investigations. The first such distinction is between the existence of social disorganization, and the strain experienced by the actor. We have been too ready to identify the objective condition of malintegration (e.g. status discrepancy versus status crystallization, conflicting obligations, ambivalence) with felt strain (Treiman, 1966). The distinction gives rise to the question: What will determine whether a given instance of disorganization will be experienced as a stressful situation? Vulnerability to identical forms of disorganization may vary with the actors. This becomes, then, a special case of the well-recognized problem of differing reactions to similar objective stimuli. The concept of relative deprivation and reference group theory, applied to this area may prove a fruitful source of a whole range of hypotheses.

An illustration of differing reactions to an identical role conflict is found in Wallin's replication at a western university of research done earlier at an eastern college (Wallin, 1950; Komarovsky, 1946). In both studies an identical proportion of women reported that norms for academic and occupational success conflicted with norms for the traditional feminine role. The interview materials led Wallin to conclude that the conflict was not as stressful on the western campus where the respondents were primarily oriented to the traditional role, as it was in the eastern sample which contained a higher proportion of career-minded students.

But if similar forms of disorganization may be differently experienced, it is also true that forms of disorganization vary in their potential for stress. For example, dissensus over norms regulating the interaction of role partners would presumably be more disruptive, and hence more stressful, than similar dissensus in imagery peripheral to such interaction. It is not surprising that Preiss and Ehrlich found relatively low consensus in such images held by policemen about their occupational role as advancement opportunities, freedom to express feelings, and the like. The same research revealed higher consensus on instrumental than on expressive role expectations (1966:170).

Similarly, the normative components of most roles are ordered in importance from mandatory to discretionary. Insofar as the former, the core elements, tend to be more deeply internalized or more severely sanctioned than the latter, difficulties in conforming to them will be more stressful.⁴

So much for a few illustrative hypotheses suggested by the distinction between the existence of social disorganization and the actor's experience of stress.

Given the experience of role strain, what are its implications for social change? What kinds of strain, and under what conditions, will dissolve traditional attitudes and catalyze change?

Weber's idea of elective affinity is consistent with our data. Weber maintained that attitudes tend to be adopted by groups whose interests they serve (Gerth and Mills,

⁴ In addition to such socially-mandated priorities, there are, of course, individual and idiosyncratic hierarchies (Ralph Turner, 1968).

1965:62-4). This elective affinity was observed in the endorsement by young men of some particular element in the new ideology of sex roles that served their interests, and the rejection of those new attitudes that threatened their power or self-conception. To illustrate, our society is moving towards less sharply differentiated and more symmetrical or partnership conceptions of masculine and feminine roles. The seniors, facing expensive and extended professional training and desiring to marry, were apparently able to accept some elements of the new partnership roles. Two-thirds of the seniors expressed no objection to being supported through graduate school by a working wife. They discarded the traditional view that economic dependence on a wage-earning wife violated the masculine role.

Significantly, seniors who were engaged (or committed to marry their current mates) sanctioned such a pattern more often than others still "playing the field." The latter, remote from the economic problems of early marriage, claimed that economic dependence on one's wife would give marriage a bad start and undermine their self-respect.

Whereas some two-thirds of the sample saw no objection to temporary economic dependence on one's working wife, the attitude that the husband must be the superior achiever in the occupational world was upheld by an overwhelming majority. Only seven per cent favored a marriage in which husbands and wives symmetrically shared economic and family obligations. Thus, changes in attitudes that serve one's interests are clearly more readily accepted than others entailing a greater sacrifice of power or more deeply identified with self-esteem.

The mode of strain is another factor helping or hindering social change. The study distinguished five modes of role strain,⁵ and each may have its distinctive relationship to social change. For example, sociological ambivalence, a subtype of role conflict, appeared to have a conservative influence, supporting the status quo. This effect seemingly confirms

the paralyzing influence of "cross-pressures" observed in other spheres.

The study suggested other hypotheses concerning the potential of role strain to effect change. Some seniors were attracted ideologically to more egalitarian sex roles which would have been functionally appropriate at their stage of life and in their milieu. However, male superiority in the occupational, political, and cultural institutions in the total society continued to form their masculine self-image and hindered attitudinal change. In general a new and appropriate adaptation in one institutional sector, or at one stage of life, might be readily accepted were it not for the fact that the traditional role is still rooted in more strategic institutions.

Whether or not an experience of stress will induce a change in norms or ideologies is affected by the actor's "definition of the situation." The tendency to place blame for role strain on personal inadequacy has, no doubt, a conservative effect. On the other hand, deflecting the blame from self to some feature of the social order activates the potential for change. In its macrosociological aspects, this is, of course, a basic problem of Marxian theory, i.e. the conditions hindering or facilitating proletarian class consciousness. Political sociologists address this general problem when they probe conditions under which economic or status frustrations lead to radical voting behavior or to social movements (Portes, 1971).

The final theoretical problem to be raised deals with the discrepancy between professed values and actual behavior in relation to social change. That words and deeds are not always in accord has been recognized throughout history. In American sociology, the interest in this discrepancy first surfaced in a methodological debate over the validity of questionnaires, especially in the area of race prejudice. Richard LaPiere (1934) questioned the usefulness of opinion and attitude surveys in predicting actual behavior. Other sociologists, most particularly C. Wright Mills, Robert Merton and Irwin Deutscher, identified this disjunction between verbal expressions and actual behavior, as a theoretical problem in need of systematic investigation. Mills stated that we needed to know "how much and in what direction disparities between talk and action will probably go" (1940). Merton speculated that "Northerners treat Negroes

⁵ The five modes are conflict, anomie or ambiguity, malfit between idiosyncratic personality and role requirements, low rewards for role conformity, and "socially structured insufficiency of resources for role fulfillment (other than those caused by scarcity of time or energy).

less 'favorably' than they talk about them and that Southerners talk about Negroes less 'favorably' than they treat them." He went on to inquire: "May we assume the amount and direction of spread between opinion and action to be relatively constant for members of different groups? . . . To my knowledge no systematic research on the problem has been carried out" (1940). Deutcher, still referring to the race problem and concerned with strategies of change, raised the question of "behavioral consequences of attitude change" and "attitudinal consequences of behavioral change," the latter as revealed, for example, in deliberately integrated housing (1970). To formulate the problem more explicitly and more generally, the disjunction between words and actions must be studied not merely in a cross sectional perspective but in relation to social change. In a period of change, verbal expressions of new ideologies, attitudes, or values sometimes anticipate and sometimes lag behind, corresponding changes in behavior. What are the manifold determinants of the direction of this disjunction? Phrased still more broadly, when do social structural changes precede and when do they follow related cultural changes? In the study of masculine roles, some seniors exemplified a familiar disjunction. They learned to pay lip service to modern sex role ideology, all the while remaining traditional in actual behavior. On a liberal campus, with sanctions against "old-fashioned" attitudes, this discrepancy was expected. Apposite is Erik Erikson's statement, made in another connection, that "it takes a much longer time to emancipate what goes on deep down inside us— that is, whatever . . . [has] become part of our impulse life and our identity formation—than the time it takes to re-define professed values . . ." (1965). Presumably those deeper layers of identity affect our actual behavior even as we learn to mouth the fashionable new beliefs.

That much was to be expected. But we encountered also the reverse pattern, that is, men who were egalitarian in behavior but traditional in ideology. A few of the latter admittedly surrendered to the superior power of their mates. But others in this category made a variety of novel egalitarian adjustments in behavior, seemingly unaware that they had departed from their professed traditional beliefs. The emotionally-charged stereo-

type of masculinity endured in the face of their contrary new adaptations.⁶ It is likely that in our case this discrepant combination of "modern" behavior and traditional ideology presupposed a satisfactory relationship with the woman. The reason is two-fold. A satisfactory relationship both increases the motivation to serve the interests of the mate and tends to conceal the full significance of these accommodations. A man adhering to traditional ideology is likely to view the egalitarian male as emasculated and defeated. Hence, the very self-esteem that the traditional man enjoys in a satisfactory relationship helps maintain the fiction that his egalitarian adjustments are minor changes, dictated by practical exigencies, which in no way violate masculine leadership. Erikson's insight about the resistant feelings of identity must, hence, be qualified by the human capacity to re-define situations and to maintain fictions. One is reminded of Sumner's insight that mores tend to be changed by ritual, by small variations in behavior and habit and, eventually, by changes in attitudes. Suggestive as these insights may be, the task of studying the disjunction between professed beliefs and actual behavior *in the perspective of social change* is clearly still ahead of us.

This paper singled out two issues of contemporary polemics, which, having originated in the general field of sociology, were reflected in the area of role analysis. Stated in the form of criticisms of existing orientations, the first referred to the alleged neglect of individuality in role analysis, and, the second, to a similar neglect of malintegration and social change.

I attempted to show that these dangers are not inherent in role analysis. Partly, perhaps, as a constructive result of recent criticisms, we can see that role analysis does not at all require us to neglect the "man behind the mask." If anything, it allows us to explore the social structure fully and thus specify more precisely the interplay of psychological and structural variables. Secondly, if role analysis

⁶This phenomenon is well recognized in studies of prejudice. Unfavorable stereotypes of minority groups or of older workers have been known to persist despite favorable encounters with members of these groups, who were defined as exceptions to the rule. But again, our emphasis is on social change and, more specifically, the differing rates of change in expressed attitudes, as against actual behavior.

begins with the search for the routine social patterns, it does not end there. Far from obscuring conflict, deviation, malintegration and social change, role analysis leads directly to the exploration of these phenomena. These broad theoretical issues were discussed on a general plane, and as reflected in my current research.

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