Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 49, No. 3, 1993, pp. 31-52

Sex Role Attitudes in Dating and Marriage: A 15-Year Follow-Up of the Boston Couples Study

Letitia Anne Peplau
University of California, Los Angeles

Charles T. Hill
Whittier College

Zick Rubin
Brandeis University

This longitudinal research investigated the personal and relationship correlates of sex role attitudes first during college and then 15 years later. The original sample of 231 college-age dating couples was studied intensively in 1972-1974, and individual participants were recontacted in 1986-1987. Results provide evidence for the reliability and validity of the 10-item Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale. In college, significant links were found between sex role attitudes and dating relationships, including patterns of self-disclosure, power, and cohabitation, but not relationship satisfaction. Fifteen years later, sex role attitudes assessed while in college were largely unrelated to general patterns of marriage, childbearing, and employment for either sex, but did predict women's educational attainment and the long-term outcome of the college romances.

Spurred by the rapid entry of women into the paid labor force and by the modem feminist movement, many Americans have been rethinking traditional

The original daia coiiection was supported by National Science Foundation grant GS27422 to Zick Rubin. Collection of the 15-year follow-up data was supported by grants to Charles T. Hill from the Haynes Foundation and Whittier College, and by a University Research Grant from UCLA to Anne Peplau. The authors would like to thank Julie Clarke, Kim Aitken, Richard Simon, and Ted Charak for their help in the collection and analysis of the 15-year follow-up data. We are grateful to Khanh Bui and Paula Vincent for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Anne Peplau, Department of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1563.

0022-4537/93/0900-0031 $07 00/1

rules for male-female relations. Should married women devote themselves full time to homemaking and child care, or divide their time between their family and a paid job? Should the man take the lead in couple decision making, or is an egalitarian balance of power preferable? There is currently a wide range of public opinion on these and related questions. An understanding of how Americans define standards for appropriate male-female behavior would shed light on a core feature of heterosexual relationships. Yet surprisingly little is known about ways sex role attitudes affect male-female relations in dating and marriage.

In this article, we examine sex role attitudes, defined as an individual's beliefs about appropriate behavior for women and men. Illustrations include the belief that men should open doors for women, or that fathers and mothers should participate equally in childcare. Sex role attitudes indicate a person's adherence to culturally based norms prescribing standards of conduct in male-female relations. Two basic themes are central to traditional sex role ideology. One theme emphasizes a gender-based division of labor. In marriage, for instance, homemaking and child care have traditionally been defined as "women's work" and paid employment as "men's work." A second theme is male dominance, commonly reflected in the belief that the husband should be the "head" of the family and should take the lead in making decisions. We, like other researchers (e.g., Buhrke, 1988), conceptualize sex role attitudes as varying along a continuum from strict adherence to traditional norms to a rejection of old norms in favor of principles of equality.

This paper presents findings from the Boston Couples Study, a project initially begun in 1972. At that time, a large sample of white college-age dating couples provided extensive information about themselves and their current romantic relationship. To assess the longevity of these college romances, couples were followed over a two-year period. More recently, we conducted a 15-year follow-up to obtain information about patterns of education, marriage, child rearing and employment. This report examines the sex role attitudes these young adults held in college, and explores their correlates both during college and 15 years later.

Analyses addressed four broad issues. First, we examined variability in sex role attitudes among our college student sample in 1972, and assessed preliminary evidence for the reliability and validity of our Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale. Second, we investigated individual correlates of adherence to traditional vs. egalitarian sex role attitudes, including personal goals concerning marriage and careers. Third, we investigated relationship correlates of sex role attitudes. We considered, for example, whether traditional men disclose less to a girlfriend than nontraditional men, and whether the balance of power between dating partners is correlated with sex role attitudes. Fourth, we analyzed the extent to which sex role attitudes held during college predicted the life course of men and women 15 years later. Would we find, for instance, that people with traditional

attitudes married at younger ages or had more children? In the sections that follow, we describe each of these four issues in turn, reviewing previous research as relevant to help formulate predictions and to interpret our findings.

Initial Data Collection in 1972-1974

Data reported in this article come from the Boston Couples Study, a project begun in the spring of 1972 by Zick Rubin, Letitia Anne Peplau, and Charles T Hill. Details of recruitment and sample characteristics are described more fully in Hill, Rubin, Peplau, and Willard (1979). Members of 231 college-age dating couples were recruited by letters mailed to a random sample of 5000 sophomores and juniors, half males and half females, at four colleges in the Boston area, and by advertising at one of the schools. The colleges included a large private university, a small private university, a Catholic university, and a state college enrolling commuter students. Reflecting the religious composition of these colleges, 44% of respondents were Catholic, 26% were Protestant, and 25% were Jewish. Virtually all participants (97%) were white. About half the participants' fathers had graduated from college and one-fourth of fathers held graduate degrees. When the study began, the modal couple was a 20-year-old sophomore woman dating a 21-year-old junior man. Couples had been dating for a median of eight months.

At group testing sessions held in the spring of 1972, both members of each couple independently completed identical versions of a 38-page questionnaire concerning their background, attitudes, and dating relationship. Follow-up questionnaires were administered six months, one year, and two years later. Two-thirds of the original participants completed the one-year questionnaire administered in person, and four-fifths returned the two-year mail questionnaire. These repeated contacts with participants plus project newsletters helped to foster a sense of identification with the research.

Long-Term FolIow-Up in 1986-1987

Fifteen years after the initial data collection, a brief mailed follow-up was conducted. The questionnaire assessed the person's history of education, employment, marriage, and child rearing. To locate participants, the alumni offices of the colleges attended by participants were contacted to obtain current mailing addresses. When new addresses were not available, parents' addresses from 1972-1974 were used. At the time of the follow-up, four participants were known to have died. Questionnaires were returned by 70% of the remaining 458 original participants, representing at least one partner from 87% of the original 231 couples. Among the 138 questionnaires not completed, 81 were undeliverable due to invalid addresses. This response rate compares favorably with other

longitudinal studies. For example, the 15-year response rates of the National Longitudinal Surveys of Labor Market Experience were 69% for the young women cohort and 65% for the young men cohort (Center for Human Resource Research, 1987).

Analyses investigated whether individuals who responded to the follow-up differed systematically from nonrespondents on the many characteristics assessed in 1972. Only two differences were found. First, slightly more women (73%) than men (67%) participated in the follow-up, but this difference was not statistically significant (x^2 (1) = 2.2, $p > .10$]. The second difference concerned the few participants who were not college students in 1972, but were recruited through a dating partner who was in college. These individuals were less likely to participate in the 15-year follow-up, in large part because we could not obtain their current mailing addresses from a college alumni office. Beyond these patterns, no systematic differences were found in the background characteristics, sex role and other attitudes, or relationship experiences of respondents vs. nonrespondents.

Sex Role Traditionalism in 1972

The early 1970s were a time of social activism on college campuses as many students protested the war in Vietnam and civil injustice at home. The modern feminist movement was also gaining public attention. In Boston, where our research took place, women's centers, consciousness-raising groups, and feminist newsletters proliferated. Feminist speakers appeared on college campuses, and a few women's studies courses emerged. Although some college students were strongly affected by the women's movement, others seemed indifferent to feminist concerns.

At the time of our research, standardized measures of sex role attitudes such as the Attitudes toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1972) were not yet available. So to assess attitudes about the rules that should govern male-female relationships, we constructed our own 10-item Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale. Respondents indicated on 6-point scales (from —3 to +3) their agreement or disagreement with such statements as follow:

> When a couple is going somewhere by car, it's better for the man to do most of the driving
>
> If both husband and wife work full-time, her career should be just as important as his in determining where the family lives.
>
> It's reasonable that the wife should have major responsibility for the care of the children.

Half the items were worded in a traditional direction and half in a nontraditional direction. Responses to nontraditional items were scored in reverse so that high scores always indicate greater traditionalism.

The Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale was internally consistent, with an alpha of .83 for women and .84 for men. We readministered our Traditionalism Scale to participants at a follow-up in 1973, and obtained test-retest correlations over a one-year period of .80 for women and .79 for men. For women in our sample, the mean total scale score in 1972 was — 11.0 *(SD* — 11.9; range from —30 to + 23), indicating mild disagreement with traditional statements. For men, the mean was —4.9 *(SD* = 12.6; range from —30 to +29). The sample as a whole tended to reject traditional sex roles, but women were significantly more egalitarian than men [/(213) = 7.6, $p < .001$].

Most of the analyses that follow used the full range of traditionalism scores in correlations. In some cases, however, it was more useful to divide participants into categories based on their traditionalism scores. This approach permits us to compare sex role traditionalists (scores of 0 to +30), those with moderately liberal views (scores of —1 to —15), and egalitarians (scores of —16 to —30). Using these categories, 46% of men and 17% of women were classified as traditionalists; 31% of men and 44% of women as moderates, and 23% of men and 38% of women as egalitarians.

Today, we might refer to individuals with egalitarian sex role attitudes as feminists, but the term "feminist" was not widely used in the early 1970s. Using the language of the time, we asked participants to rate their personal opinion of "the goals of the women's liberation movement" on a 6-point scale from *strongly oppose* (—3) to *strongly favor* (+ 3). Most participants were at least moderately supportive of the goals of the women's movement, and the small difference between women *(M* = +1.45, *SD* = 1.60) and men *(M* = +1.24, *SD* = 1.51) was not statistically significant. Nonetheless, some participants opposed the goals of the women's movement: 15% of women and 22% of men had scores of — 1 or lower. Scores on the Traditionalism Scale correlated substantially with opinions about the goals of the women's movement (r = — .61, $p < .001$, for men and for women).

Additional questions revealed that about 15% of women in the sample had been a member of a "women's liberation consciousness-raising or discussion group," and 7% belonged to an organization such as the National Organization for Women that was "specifically concerned with women's issues." Answers to these two questions were significantly correlated with sex role traditionalism *(r* = -.34 and *r* = -.18, respectively, both *ps* < .01).

To compare our Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale and the widely used AWS, we administered both measures to a new sample of 186 UCLA college students in 1980. We used the short form of the AWS (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973), which is closer in length to our own 10-item measure. The AWS is scored so that high scores reflect egalitarian attitudes. The two scales were highly correlated *(r* = —.86 for women and *r* = —.81 for men, both *ps* < .001). Further, the reliability of our measure administered to the Boston Couples sample in 1972 is virtually identical to the alpha of .83 reported by MacDermid, Huston,

and McHale (1990) for the short form of the AWS administered to a sample of young married couples.

In sum, the picture of sex role attitudes that emerged in 1972 was one of great variability. Some students were fairly traditional in their views of the sexes, endorsing a gender-based division of activities and leadership in male-female relations. Others were strong supporters of feminist goals who rejected traditional distinctions between "his" and "her" activities in male-female relations. Many students were in the moderately liberal middle range. Analyses also provide evidence of the internal consistency of the Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale and its reliability over a one-year period. Support for the validity of the scale as a measure of gender ideology comes from its correlations with support for the women's movement and with the well-established AWS.

Individual Correlates of Sex Role Attitudes

We begin by examining the links between sex role traditionalism and the person's family background and religious involvement. Then we consider how gender traditionalism is tied to other forms of conservatism, to the individual's self-perceptions, and to plans for education, careers, and marriage. Table 1 summarizes these correlations, which are all based on data obtained in 1972.

Family Background

Because parents are an important agent of socialization, we might expect that family background would strongly influence the sex role attitudes of young adults. Past research, however, has often found weak or inconsistent parental effects on sex role attitudes. For example, several researchers have examined the impact of the mother's education and employment history on adolescent and grown children's attitudes. Some studies have found that higher maternal education and more extensive employment are associated with more egalitarian attitudes in children (e.g., Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). In contrast, other studies have found no effects of maternal employment or education (e.g., Lipman-Blumen, 1972).

In our research, there was much variation in parents' level of education, from those who had not finished high school to those with graduate degrees. However, neither the mother's nor the father's education was significantly correlated with their children's scores on the Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale. Nor was traditionalism related to other aspects of family life including the mother's employment history or the individual's birth order. In 1972, most participants (84%) had intact, two-parent families; 8% had experienced the death of a parent; and 8% were children of divorce. Analyses of variance found no significant differences in the sex role attitudes of men or women in these three family types.

Table 1. Background Correlates of Sex Role Traditionalism

	Women (*N* = 231)	Men (*N* = 231)
Family background		
Mother's educational level	-.06	-.07
Father's educational level	-.10	-.04
Extent of mother's employment	-.09	.12
Birth order	-.02	.03
Perception of parents' marital satisfaction	.18**	.10
Closeness to mother	.11	.13
Closeness to father	.17**	.12
Parents' approval of dating partner	.18**	.03
Father dominance in parents' marriage	.01	.17*
Similarity of current dating partner to parent of same sex	.11	.20**
Conservatism		
Traditional (vs. alternative) lifestyle	.36*	.35**
Authoritarian submission (12-item F scale)	.61*	.52**
Positivity toward marijuana use	-.02	-.19*
Frequency of religious attendance	.25*	.25**
How "religious" are you?	.18*	.09
Attitudes toward premarital sexual permissiveness (2 items)	-.30*	-.23**

Note. All data are from 1972.
*$p < .05$. **/? < .01.

In contrast, qualitative aspects of family relations were significantly associated with sex role attitudes. Traditional women rated their parents as having a more satisfying marriage and reported feeling closer to their father than did nontraditional women. Traditional women also perceived their parents as more approving of their current dating partner. Among the men, traditionalists were more likely to report that their parents' marriage was father dominant and to describe their current girlfriend as similar to their mother.

The family background results from our study are remarkably similar to those from Lipman-Blumen's (1972) detailed study of sex role ideology among women college graduates. Both studies suggest that structural and sociodemographic characteristics of family background are less important to the formation of sex role attitudes than more qualitative features of children's experiences. Lipman-Blumen (1972) concluded that "women who emerge with the contemporary ideology tend in adolescence to achieve a certain psychological distance from their family, to evolve a sense of separateness as individuals" (p. 39). We also found that egalitarian women reported less closeness to their father.

Our data also suggest that contrary to a simplistic "role model" perspective,

young adults do not necessarily imitate their parents' lifestyles and attitudes. Nor do important life experiences such as divorce or maternal employment have uniform effects on all children. A more fruitful perspective may be to examine the "lessons" that young adults draw from their parents' lives. For example, Lipman-Blumen and we both found that women who perceived their mothers as happily married were more likely to endorse traditional prescriptions for male-female relations. Women who perceived their mothers as less happily married tended to reject traditional standards.

Conservatism

Many researchers have found that sex role attitudes are part of a broader set of liberal vs. conservative beliefs. For example, traditional sex role attitudes are associated with political conservatism (Antill, Cotton, & Tindale, 1983) and with higher scores on versions of the F scale measuring authoritarianism (e.g., Larsen & Long, 1988; Worell & Worell, 1977). Our results are similar (see Table 1). Students used a 9-point scale to rate the extent to which their personal lifestyle was *traditional* vs. *alternative.* Sex role traditionalism was significantly correlated with reporting a traditional lifestyle. Traditionalists also scored higher on a 12-item scale of authoritarian submission similar to items on the F scale. There was also a significant tendency for traditional women (but not men) to have more conventional living arrangements: 71% of the traditional women lived either at home or in a single-sex dorm, compared to 47% of moderates and 45% of egalitarians $fx^2(2) = 7.9$, $p < .02$]. For men only, traditionalism was associated with less positive attitudes about marijuana use.

Previous research has found that strong adherence to conservative religious values, which often emphasize male authority and distinctive roles for men and women, is associated with traditional sex role attitudes (Fleming, 1988; Plutzer, 1988; Thornton, 1989). In our sample, religious background (e.g., being raised as a Catholic, Protestant, or Jew) was not associated with sex role attitudes. However, frequent attendance at religious services was correlated with gender traditionalism. In addition, among women only, traditionalists rated themselves as more "religious" than egalitarians. Traditional women were also more likely than other women to have attended a single sex (almost always religious) high school: This was true of 24% of traditionalist women, 31% of moderates, but only 7% of egalitarians [$x^2(2) = 16.3$, $p < .001$].

Like other researchers (e.g., Smith, Resick, & Kilpatrick, 1980), we found that sex role traditionalism was correlated with less permissive views of sexuality, as assessed by a 2-item measure of attitudes toward premarital sexual behavior (see also Peplau, Rubin, & Hill, 1977). For women only, traditionalism was also significantly linked to personal sexual experience: 21% of traditionalists, 17% of moderates and only 6% of egalitarians were virgins when our study began [$x^2(2) = 7.3$, $p < .03$].

Taken together, these results indicate that traditional gender ideology is associated with conservatism in many other domains, including religion, sexuality, and lifestyle. The magnitude of these correlations ranged from small to moderate, but the patterning of results is predictable and the effects appear to be reliable.

Personal Attributes

In the 1970s, negative stereotypes often depicted supporters of women's liberation as unhappy and unattractive women with troubled relations with men. Twenty years later, we still know remarkably little about the personal characteristics that may distinguish traditionalists and egalitarians of either sex. Our findings, summarized in Table 2, addressed this issue.

To assess participants' self-perceptions, they completed a version of the Rosenberg (1979) Self-Esteem Scale. For women, traditionalism was unrelated to self-esteem. For men, there was a positive correlation between traditionalism and self-esteem. Whether traditional men's security in conventional attitudes

Table 2. Personal Correlates of 1972 Sex Role Tradition

	Women	Men
Personal attributes (assessed in 1972)	(*N* = 231)	(*N* = 231)
Self-esteem scale (10 items)	.03	.17*
Self-ratings		
Desirability as dating partner	.04	.09
Desirability as marriage partner	.21**	.17*
Physical attractiveness	.03	.23**
Intelligence	-.17*	-.13*
Creativity	-.08	-.05
Self-confidence	-.06	.09
Partner's rating of person's attractiveness	.01	-.02
Partner's rating of person's intelligence	-.14*	-.18*
Attractiveness rating from photo	.00	.03
College grade point average	-.07	-.12
SAT verbal score	-.16*	-.15*
SAT math score	-.04	-.22**
Attitudes about marriage and children (assessed in 1973)	(*N* = 150)	(*N* = 157)
Satisfaction if wife had higher salary	-.38*	-.54*
Satisfaction if wife had more prestigious job	-.42*	-.55*
Number of children I would like	.30*	.20*
Importance to me of having children	.24*	.18*
How long after marriage until have children	-.32*	-.30*
Wife should do more day-to-day care of children than husband	.33*	.29*
If possible, a mother should not work full time for pay until children leave home	.48*	.40*

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

boosts self-esteem or whether men who reject conventional patterns show greater modesty is uncertain.

Participants also rated themselves (and their partner) on six qualities including physical attractiveness and intelligence (see Table 2). In general, participants gave themselves high marks, with average scores in the 6-7 range on a 9-point scale. But traditionalists and nontraditionalists perceived themselves as having somewhat different strengths.

Traditionalists of both sexes evaluated themselves relatively higher on "desirability as a marriage partner." We do not know whether traditionals were objectively more socially desirable than their nontraditional peers, or whether they just fel< more self-confident about their place in the "marriage market." That the partners Of traditionalists did not give them significantly higher ratings on this attribute argues for the latter interpretation. Traditional men also rated themselves as more physically attractive," although their girlfriends did not give them significantly higher ratings on looks. An objective measure of physical attractiveness was also available. We took full-length color photos of each individual, which were then rated on physical attractiveness by a panel of four male and four female undergraduate raters. No significant associations were found between observer-rated physical attractiveness and sex role attitudes.

Egalitarians of both sexes rated themselves higher on "intelligence," and their dating partners also gave them higher scores on intelligence. To provide a more objective assessment, we considered students' college grades and SAT scores. Traditionalism was not significantly related to college grades for either sex, although there was a tendency for egalitarian men to report higher grades *(r* = .125, p = .06). However, egalitarians reported significantly higher scores on the SAT verbal test and, for men only, on the SAT math test as well. In other words, egalitarians' higher self-ratings on intelligence may, in some measure, have been warranted.

Educational Plans

The attitudes that young women have about sex roles may set them on distinctive life paths. We expected that for women, sex role traditionalism would be associated with lower educational aspirations. As predicted, only 44% of traditional women planned to attend graduate school, compared to a majority of women with moderate (74%) and egalitarian (74%) sex role attitudes fx^2(2) = 14.2, p < .001]. Many women planned to end their graduate work with a master's degree. However, more egalitarian women (25%) than moderates (18%) or traditionalists (3%) aspired to a doctoral degree tx^2(2) = 8.9, p < .01]. Sex role attitudes were also linked to the woman's college major. Traditionalists were more likely to have "feminine" majors in education and nursing: 38% of traditionalists were in these majors, as were 35% of moderates, but only 21% of egalitarians *l\$^2$(2)* = 5.9, p = .05].

In contrast, we anticipated that men's plans for education would not be affected by their sex role attitudes, since all men are expected to become breadwinners. As anticipated, we found no links between men's traditionalism and their educational plans. Half the men expected to pursue some form of graduate education, and sex role attitudes were unrelated to these plans. However, traditionalism was associated with men's choice of a college major. A higher proportion of traditional men majored in the "masculine" fields of business, engineering, and natural sciences than did either moderates or egalitarians [47%, 25%, and 38%, respectively; x^2(2) = 8.4, p < .02].

Attitudes about Romance, Marriage and Children

A 6-item Romanticism Scale assessed beliefs in a romantic ("love conquers all") vs. pragmatic ideology about love relationships (Rubin, Peplau, & Hill, 1981). Traditional sex role attitudes were significantly correlated with romantic beliefs about love for men *(r* - .17, p < .01) but not for women *(r* - . 10, *ns).*

Most participants expected to marry at some point in their lives. Nonetheless, we anticipated that traditionalists would give greater importance to family life than egalitarians. Participants indicated the likelihood they would ever marry on a 4-point scale from *definitely no* to *definitely yes.* Significant links were found between these certainty ratings and sex role attitudes for both sexes. All traditional and moderate women said they would "probably" or "definitely" marry, compared to 89% of egalitarian women (x^2(2) = 12.4, p = .002]. A similar but nonsignificant tendency occurred for men, with 97% of traditionalists, 94% of moderates, and 90% of egalitarians expecting to marry (x^2(2) = 2.4, p = .31]. Traditionalists also expected to marry sooner than egalitarians. Among women, 83% of traditionalists expected to marry within 5 years, compared to 76% of moderates and 54% of egalitarians (x^2(2) = 13.9, p < .001]. A similar pattern was found for men, with 71% of traditionalists, 65% of moderates, and 40% of egalitarians expecting to marry in 5 years fx^2(2) = 12.6, p < .02].

Participants were asked about their personal preferences for a dual-career vs. traditional marriage. As shown in Table 3, most women and men preferred that the wife work at least part time. Men's preferences were somewhat more conventional, with higher proportions of men than women preferring a wife who is a full-time homemaker. Sex role attitudes were strongly related to the preferences of both women and men. For instance, whereas 80% of the most egalitarian women wanted to be a married career woman, only 36% of the most traditional women chose this option. Among men, 71% of egalitarians preferred a career wife, compared to only 27% of traditionalists.

Additional questions about marriage were included in a lengthy questionnaire administered in 1973. One question asked if a woman should keep her maiden name after marriage. Most men and women preferred that the woman take her husband's name, but this tendency was much stronger among tradi-

Table 3. "Fifteen years from now, what would you like to be?" (Percentages)

	Traditional	Moderate	Egalitarian
Women (# = 231)			
A housewife	15	7	1
A housewife with a part-time job	49	28	7
A married career woman	36	62	80
A single career woman	0	3	11
Men (# = 231)			
Married — wife doesn't have a job outside the home	34	11	8
Married — wife has part-time job ,	35	24	6
Married — wife has career	27	63	71
Single	4	2	14

Note. All data are from 1972. For women, x^2 (6) = 43.8, $p < .001$; for men, χ^2 (6) = 49.7, $p < .001$.

tionalists (90% of women and 93% of men) than among moderates (78% of women and 65% of men) or egalitarians (41% of women and 28% of men). Chi-square tests were significant for both sexes [$x^2(4) = 31.8$, $p < .001$, for women, and $x^2(4) = 45.9$, $p < .001$, for men]. Participants also rated how satisfied they personally would be with a marriage in which the wife had a higher salary than the husband, or the wife's job was more prestigious. Traditionalists of both sexes expressed more dissatisfaction with these unconventional marital arrangements. Most participants (91 % of women and 96% of men) wanted to have at least one child. As shown in Table 2, traditionalism was associated with wanting a larger number of children, giving greater personal importance to having children, and wanting to have children sooner after marriage. Traditionalists also endorsed more strongly the view that wives should provide the daily care of children and that a mother should not work for pay until children leave home.

Sex Role Attitudes and Dating Relationships

A unique contribution of this study was to compare the dating relationships of sex role traditionalists and egalitarians. Although other researchers have investigated sex role attitudes among married couples (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 1988; Huston & Geis, this issue; MacDermid, Huston, & McHale, 1990; Van Yperen & Buunk, 1991), little is known about dating couples. In our sample, dating partners were matched on traditionalism scores *(r* = .46, p < .001). It was unusual for a staunch traditionalist to date a committed feminist. Nonetheless, as we saw earlier, boyfriends often held somewhat more traditional attitudes than their girlfriends.

Dating Goals

Participants rated the importance they personally gave at the time they started dating their current partner to each of six possible reasons for having an opposite-sex relationship. For all respondents, the most popular reasons for dating were the desire to have "a good time with someone" and the desire to have "a friend of the opposite sex.'* As shown in Table 4, traditional sex role attitudes were significantly correlated with four goals. Women generally gave relatively little importance to finding a marriage partner (mean 1.7 on 9-point scale) or having sex (mean 3.1) as reasons for dating. But consistent with their generally conservative attitudes, traditional women scored higher than nontraditionalists on finding a mate—and lower on having a sexual partner. Similarly, men in general gave low ratings to having a "guaranteed date" (mean of 3.2), but traditional men scored relatively higher on this goal than other men.

Love and Satisfaction

In general, traditionalists and egalitarians were equally likely to have successful—or miserable—dating relationships. No correlations were found between participants' traditionalism and their satisfaction with the relationship, current feelings of closeness to their partner, scores on a 14-item index of possible problems in the relationship, or estimates of the likelihood of ever marrying their dating partner (see Table 4). Asked if they were "in love" with the current partner, 70% of participants said yes, and answers were unaffected by gender or traditionalism.

For men only, sex role egalitarianism was associated with wanting somewhat more closeness in the future, something desired by 62% of egalitarian men, 57% of moderates, and 41% of traditional men $fx^2(8) = 15.5$, $p = .04$]. A similar pattern emerged for men's expectations about how much closeness they would have in the future ($x^2(8) = 22.1$, $p = .004$].

For women only, sex role traditionalism was correlated with scores on Rubin's (1970) Love Scale and Liking Scale (see Table 4). Compared to egalitarian women, traditionalists rated their boyfriend significantly higher on the Liking Scale, a measure of respect and admiration. Traditional women also reported greater love for their boyfriend on the Love Scale, which assesses feelings of dependency, caring and intimacy toward the partner.

Self-Disclosure

There is some evidence that traditional sex role attitudes may restrict self-disclosure in dating and marriage, especially by men (Fitzpatrick, 1988; Thompson, Grisanti, & Pleck, 1985). In our study, participants indicated on a

Table 4. Relationship Correlates of Sex Role Traditionalism

	Women	Men
Dating goals		
Desire to find a marriage partner	.16*	.12
Desire for sexual activity	-.17*	.02
Desire to have a guaranteed date	.12	.20**
Desire to fall in love	.01	-.09
Desire to have a good time with someone	.16*	.21**
Desire to have a friend of the opposite sex	-.03	.05
Satisfaction with relationship	.08	-.02
Current closeness of relationship	.00	.06
Relationship problems (14 items)	-.02	-.07
Likelihood will marry partner	.12	.10
Rubin's Love Scale (9 items)	.16*	.01
Rubin's Liking Scale (9 items)	.14*	.06
Self-disclosure Scale (17 items)	-.08	-.21**
Extent of living with partner	-.16*	-.25*
Ever had sexual intercourse with partner (No/yes)	-.24**	-.13
If haven't had sex with partner yet		
It is against moral or religious convictions	.31*	.07
Likelihood of having sex in next 6 months	-.36**	.03
Boyfriend took greater initiative in relationship	.09	.13*
Man has "more say" in relationship	.11	.28**
Man has more power in 5 domains (scale)	.08	.23**
Man has more power in 5 situations (scale)	.20**	.14*

Note. All data are from 1972.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

3-point scale how much they had revealed to their partner on each of 17 topics, ranging from political attitudes to "the things in life I am most afraid of." Participants also rated how much their partner had disclosed to them on the same topics. A "total disclosure" index was created for each measure by summing across the 17 items. In general, the couples reported high levels of disclosure, with more than half the couples indicating that they had disclosed themselves "fully" on the total disclosure index (Rubin, Hill, Peplau, & Dunkel-Schetter, 1980). There was also a strong pattern of reciprocity: When one partner had disclosed at a high level, so had the other. The correlation between partners' total disclosure scores was .48 *($p < .001$)*. Despite these tendencies toward full and equal disclosure, traditional men tended to disclose Jess than other men (see Table 4). In addition, the girlfriends of traditional men also tended to disclose less *($r = —, 16$, $p < .05$)*, perhaps as a result of reciprocity pressures. Women's own traditionalism was not related to their level of self-disclosure.

Living Together and Sexuality

Traditionalists and egalitarians reported seeing their partners with equal frequency. However, as shown in Table 4, traditionalists were less likely to live with their partner. For example, 36% of egalitarian men reported living with their partner all or most of the time, compared to only 18% of the traditional men. A majority (82%) of the couples were having sexual intercourse with each other when the study began. Women's sex role attitudes—but not men's—were a significant factor in whether or not a couple had sex (see also Peplau et al., 1977). Among those women not having sex with their boyfriend, traditionalists were significantly more likely to cite "moral or religious" reasons, and were less likely to believe they would have intercourse with their partner in the future. Among those having intercourse, sex role attitudes were unrelated to sexual frequency or satisfaction for either men or women.

Power

Male dominance is a core idea of traditional sex role ideology (Peplau, 1979). Thompson et al. (1985) found that college men with traditional attitudes toward masculinity reported relatively greater power in their romantic relationships than did nontraditional men. Would sex role attitudes predict partners' perceptions of power in our sample?

Our questionnaire included several questions about power (see Table 4). In general, sex role traditionalism affected men's reports of power more often than women's reports. When asked which partner had taken more initiative in the couple's first getting to know each other, traditional men were more likely than other men to say that they had taken the lead. To assess the balance of power in the relationship, participants were asked who "has more say about what you and your partner do together?" Response options ranged on a 5-point scale from / *have much more say* to *my partner has much more say.* Traditional men reported greater male influence in their relationship. For example, 58% of traditional men described the relationship as male dominant, compared to 49% of moderates and 18% of egalitarians. In contrast, only 31% of traditional men described their relationship as equal in power, compared to 34% of moderates and 62% of egalitarian men [$x^2(4) = 28.4$, $p < .001$J. Women's *own* sex role attitudes were not related to this measure of power, although women dating more traditional men tended to report greater male dominance than women dating non-traditional men($r = .21$,/> $< .01$).

The questionnaire also included five questions about the balance of power in particular domains: recreation, conversation, sexuality, activities with others, and time together. A summary measure of perceived power in these areas was

significantly related to men's sex role attitudes, but not to women's. Also included were questions about influence in five hypothetical situations involving a conflict of interest between partners. Summary scores on hypothetical power were correlated with traditionalism for both sexes. In short, sex role traditionalism did contribute to the balance of power in these dating relationships, although other factors also clearly play a role (see Pepiau, 1979).

Relationship Stability

Other analyses investigated links between traditionalism and the longevity of dating relationships. Two years after our initial study, 117 couples were still together, 103 had broken up, 10 had an unknown dating status, and 1 partner had died (Hill, Rubin, & Pepiau, 1976). Previous research might suggest that couples who are well matched on their sex role attitudes would be more likely to stay together than those whose attitudes were mismatched. Contrary to this prediction, however, the degree of matching was not predictive of breakups during the two-year period.

A closer inspection of the data provided an explanation, shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Matching on Sex Role Attitudes in 1972 and Relationship Status Two Years Later: Percentage of Couples Still Together in 1974

Women's traditionalism in 1972	Men's traditionalism in 1972		
	Traditional	Moderate	Egalitarian
Traditional	64%	56%	[no cases]
Moderate	43%	82%	33%
Egalitarian	46%	50%	45%

Note. In this analysis, men and women were trichotomized based on their scores on the Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale in 1972. The dependent measure was the proportion of couples still together in 1974. An SPSS statistical program was used to test the nonlinear interaction revealed above. Specifically, a classical experimental analysis of variance was performed with trichotomized men's and women's traditionalism scores as the independent variables and relationship status (0 = breakup, 1 = together) as the dependent variable. This procedure automatically dummy codes the categories of the independent variables and uses them in a multiple regression in which the main effects are entered first. The procedure subtracts 1 from the degrees of freedom in the interaction term whenever a cell is missing. The resulting means are proportions of couples still together (shown here as percentages). This yielded an interaction term of $F(3, 195) = 2.7p < .05$, based on 203 couples for whom all variables were available.

Among those with a known dating status, 53% of couples stayed together. Matching on sex role attitudes *increased* the chances of staying together among sex role moderates (82% stayed together) and traditionalists (64%), but *decreased* the likelihood of staying together among egalitarians (only 45% stayed together). In other words, the impact of matching depended on the specific content of the person's sex role attitudes. More generally, individuals with egalitarian attitudes tended to break up, regardless of whether their partner had similar or dissimilar attitudes. Additional analyses investigated whether the differential effects of matching among traditionalists and moderates vs. egalitarians resulted from egalitarians having lower levels of love, liking, or satisfaction. None of these analyses was statistically significant, suggesting that the impact of egalitarian attitudes on breakups was not due to lesser satisfaction with the relationship.

A possible explanation is that egalitarian men and women are less ready than other college-age adults to make long-term commitments, perhaps because they have other activities—notably graduate school or careers—on their personal agenda. Whereas traditionals and moderates may see college as providing their best opportunities for finding a mate, egalitarians may postpone serious romantic entanglements until plans for graduate study are determined. Another possibility is that the rejection of traditional husband-wife roles leads egalitarians to be more cautious about selecting a mate.

In summary, three themes emerged from these relationship data. First, sex role attitudes were not related to couple satisfaction. Traditionalists, moderates, and egalitarians were all able to create rewarding dating relationships. Second, sex role attitudes were linked to qualitative differences in the nature of dating relationships. Traditionalists were less likely to have sexual intercourse or to live together, and more likely to perceive their relationship as male dominant. Traditional men disclosed relatively less about themselves to their partner, and received somewhat less disclosure in return. Although these findings were statistically significant, they were sometimes small in magnitude. It is possible that the effects of sex role attitudes on dating patterns were somewhat attenuated in our sample, since most participants were white college students, and few participants had the most traditional attitudes possible. Stronger associations might be found in samples with greater diversity in education, social class, and ethnic background.

Third, matching on sex role attitudes was associated—in somewhat complex ways—with relationship stability over a two-year period. Contrary to the notion that attitude matching is always beneficial to relationships, our results suggest that the *content* of the attitudes makes an important difference. For individuals endorsing traditional or moderately liberal views of male-female relations, having a like-minded partner was associated with relationship stability. In contrast, when either or both partners rejected traditional sex roles, the likelihood of staying together was reduced.

The 15-Year FoIIow-Up

Do sex role attitudes held during college affect the lives of women and men as they approach their mid-30s? Our longitudinal follow-up enabled us to investigate the extent to which attitudes held in young adulthood predicted patterns of marriage and work 15 years later.

By the time of our follow-up, 73 of the original dating couples had married each other, and 50 of these couples were still married. Another 148 dating couples (64%) had broken up, and 9 dating couples (4%) had an unknown outcome. (These figures exclude one couple in which the woman died while still dating but do include two couples in which the man died after breaking up and one couple in which the man died after marrying his college partner.) Many participants married someone other than their college dating partner. In 1987, 74% of the women and 79% of the men were currently married, whether to their original college partner or to someone else. Eighteen percent of the women and 16% of the men had been divorced at least once, and 63% of men and 63% of women had at least one child.

Education

Participants were a highly educated group, although men were more likely than women to have graduate degrees [$x^2(3) = 18.3$, $p < .001$]. Orfly 6% of men did not complete college, 35% were college graduates, 32% had master's degrees, and 28% had doctorates or law degrees. Among women, only 8% did not complete college, 48% were college graduates, 34% had master's degrees, and 10% had doctorates or law degrees.

We saw earlier that during college, women with more traditional sex role attitudes had lower educational aspirations. Women's actual educational attainment was consistent with this pattern. Traditional women were less likely to complete college and less likely to have a graduate degree. For instance, whereas 68% of moderates and 62% of egalitarian women went to graduate school, only 36% of traditional women began graduate study [$I\backslash^2(2) = 11.2$, $p = .003$]. For men, traditionalism was unrelated to educational accomplishments.

Marriage

We noted earlier that in 1972 virtually all participants expected to marry, but traditionalists were more confident about eventually marrying and expected to marry at an earlier age. Fifteen years later, however, traditionalism was not related to the marital histories of either women or men. No association was found between sex role attitudes and the likelihood of marrying within the 15-year period, or the timing of a person's first marriage. Traditionalists did not, in fact, marry at a younger age. Additional analyses investigated whether marital stability was related to sex role attitudes. Although divorce was less common among traditional women (8%) than among moderates (18%) and egalitarians (24%), this trend was not statistically significant [$fx^2(2) = 2.7$, $p = .26$]. The notion that individuals with egalitarian sex role attitudes are opposed to marriage or undesirable as marriage partners received no support in this study.

Table 6. Women's Sex Role Attitudes in 1972 and Relationship to College Partner in 1987

	Women's sex role attitudes in 1972		
	Traditional	Moderate	Egalitarian
Relationship ended before marriage	57%	69%	71%
Married in 1987	43%	26%	13%
Once married but now divorced	0	4%	13%

Note, x^2 (4) = 18.0, $p < .01$, $N = 167$.

However, sex role attitudes did play a significant role in the fate of the person's college dating relationship. As shown in Table 6, traditional women were more likely than other women to marry their college sweetheart, and to stay married to him during the 15-year period of our study. Fully 43% of traditionalist women married their college boyfriend, and not a single one of these marriages ended in divorce! In contrast, only 26% of egalitarian women married their boyfriend, and half these marriages ended in divorce. Similar but weaker trends were found for traditional, moderate, and egalitarian men.

We can only speculate about the reasons for this pattern linking the woman's traditionalism to the outcome of her dating relationship. In college, the typical traditional women was oriented toward marriage and did not have plans for graduate education or commitment to a career. These factors increased the likelihood of the woman marrying her college sweetheart. If a traditional woman found a compatible partner in college, there was no reason to delay marriage. In contrast, although egalitarian women and most men also expected to marry, their immediate plans usually emphasized graduate study and launching a career. Consequently, they were less likely to marry a college romantic partner—but not less likely to marry someone else during a 15-year period.

Children

In college, most respondents said that they wanted eventually to have children, although traditionalists gave greater importance to children, were more interested in having a large family, and wanted to have children sooner after marriage. Fifteen years later, two-thirds of women and of men had at least one child. Among those with children, the mean number of children was two: 30% of respondents had only one child, 49% had two children, and 21% had three or

more children. However, neither men's nor women's sex role attitudes were related to the number of children a person had, the timing of the birth of a first child, or plans for having more children in the future.

Work History

The follow-up questionnaire assessed the person's work history. As anticipated, sex role traditionalism was unrelated to men's patterns of work. Contrary to expectation, however, women's sex role attitudes were not a major factor in their work history either. Half of the women had been employed full time continuously since completing their education, and most other women had been in the labor force to some degree. Variations in work history were not affected by sex role attitudes held in college. For instance, traditionalism did not affect the extent of a woman's paid employment since marriage or since becoming a parent.

Discussion

This research contributes to knowledge about sex role attitudes, dating, and marriage in several ways. The Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale appears to be a reliable and valid measure of gender ideology with predictable personal correlates. In young adulthood, sex role attitudes were associated with features of dating relationships, including self-disclosure, power, and cohabitation, but were unrelated to measures of couple satisfaction.

Sex role attitudes appear to have stronger and more consistent links to women's beliefs and experiences than to men's, especially after college. Compared to other young women, traditional women gave greater emphasis to marriage and less emphasis to graduate education and a full-time career. They were more likely to select traditionally "feminine" college majors, and endorsed more conventional ideals for marriage, valuing the husband's role as primary breadwinner and the wife's role as homemaker.

Fifteen years later, however, women's lives were only partially consistent with their earlier expectations. As anticipated, traditional women were less likely to obtain graduate degrees than other women. But, contrary to our predictions and to their own expectations, traditional women were just as likely to be employed full time. Perhaps equally surprising was the lack of association between sex role attitudes and patterns of marriage and childbearing over a 15-year period. Traditionalists were no more likely than other young adults to marry or to have children. We found no evidence that sex role egalitarians reject the goals of marriage and parenthood, or even postpone the timing of beginning these relationships. It may well be, however, that the current family lives of traditionalists and egalitarians do differ, perhaps in the division of labor at home or in the balance of power, just as their dating relationships in college had differed. For example, in a study of newly wed couples, Huston and Geis (this issue) found

that sex role attitudes were significantly correlated with the wife's involvement in housework and the spouses' patterns of socializing with friends and relatives. Unfortunately, our follow-up did not examine patterns of marital interaction. Because the original Boston Couples Study investigated a particular dating relationship in detail and over time, we were able to analyze both the short-term and long-term impact of sex role attitudes on staying together vs. breaking up. In an initial two-year follow-up in 1974, partner's matching on sex role attitudes predicted breakups. Traditional and moderate pairs were significantly more likely than other couples to stay together. Egalitarians were more likely to break up, regardless of their partner's attitudes. In the long-term follow-up of these couples, however, it was not attitude similarity that had significant effects on staying together, but rather the woman's traditionalism. Traditional women were more likely than other women to marry their college sweetheart. The divorce rate among the 73 couples who married their college partner was generally quite low. Most striking, however, is that not a single one of the traditional women in these couples was divorced. In sum, although gender ideology did not affect the marital status of our sample as a whole, the woman's attitudes significantly predicted the long-term outcomes of relationships begun in college.

References

Antill, J. K., Cotton, S., & Tindale, S. (1983). Egalitarian or traditional: Correlates of the perception of an ideal marriage. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 35,* 245-257. Buhrke, R. A. (1988). Factor dimensions across different measures of sex role ideology. *Sex Roles, 18,* 309-321.

Center for Human Resource Research. (1987). *NLS Handbook.* Columbus: The Ohio State University.

Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1988). *Between husbands and wives: Communication in marriage.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Fleming, J. J. (1988). Public opinion on change in women's rights and roles. In S. M. Dornbusch & M. H. Strober (Eds.), *Feminism, children, and the new families* (pp. 47-66). New York: Guilford Press.

Hill, C. T., Rubin, Z., & Peplau, L. A. (1976). Breakups before marriage: The end of 103 affairs. *Journal of Social Issues, 32(1),* 147-168.

Hill, C. T., Rubin, Z., Peplau, L. A., & Willard, S. G. (1979). The volunteer couple: Sex differences, couple commitment and participation in research on interpersonal relationships. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 42,* 415-420.

Kiecoit, K. J., & Acock, A. C. (1988). The long-term effects of family structure on gender-role attitudes. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50,* 709-717.

Larsen. K. S.. & Long, E. (1988). Attitudes toward sex-roles: Traditional or egalitarian. *Sex Roles, 19,* 1-11.

Lipman-Blumen, J. (1972). How ideology shapes women's lives. *Scientific American, 226,* 34-42.

MacDermid, S. M., Huston, T. L., & McHale, S. M. (1990). Changes in marriage associated with the transition to parenthood. Individual differences as a function of sex-role attitudes and changes in the division of household labor. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52,* 475-486. Peplau, L. A. (1979). Power in dating relationships. In J. Freeman (Ed.), *Women: A feminist perspective* (2nd ed., pp. 106-121). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing. Peplau, L. A., Rubin, Z., & Hill, C. T. (1977) Sexual intimacy in dating relationships. *Journal of Social Issues, 33(2),* 86-109.

Plutzer, E. (1988). Work life, family life, and women's support of feminism. *American Sociological Review, 53,* 640-649.
Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self.* New York: Basic Books. Rubin, Z. (1970). Measurement of romantic love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 16,* 265-273. Rubin, Z., Hill, C. T., Peplau, L. A., & Dunkel-Schetter, C. (1980). Self-disclosure in dating couples: Sex roles and the ethnic of openness. *'Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42,* 305-317. Rubin, Z., Peplau, L. A., & Hill, C. T. (1981). Loving and leaving: Sex differences in romantic attachments. *Sex Roles, 7,* 821-835. Smith, A. D., Resick, P. A., & Kilpatrick, D. G. (1980). Relationships among gender, sex-role attitudes, sexual attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors. *Psychological Reports, 46,* 359-367. Spence, J. T., & Helmreich, R. (1972). The Attitudes toward Women Scale: An objective instrument to measure attitudes toward the rights and role of women in contemporary society. *Journal Supplement Abstract Service Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology, 2,* 66-67 (Ms. No. 153). Spence, J. T., Helmreich, R., & Stapp, J. (1973). A short version of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS). *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society, 2,* 219-220. Thompson, E. H., Grisanti, C., & Pleck, J. H. (1985). Attitudes toward the male role and their correlates. *Sex Roles, 13,* 413-427. Thornton, A. (1989). Changing attitudes toward family issues in the United States. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51,* 873-893. Van Yperen, N. W., & Buunk,-B. P. (1991). Sex-role attitudes, social comparison, and satisfaction with relationships. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 54,* 169-180. Worell, J., & Worell, L. (1977). Support and opposition to the women's liberation movement: Some personality and parental correlates. *Journal of Research in Personality, 11,* 10-20.

LETITIA ANNE PEPLAU is Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles, and President-Elect of the International Society for the Study of Personal Relationships. In recent years she has served at UCLA as the acting Director of the Center for the Study of Women and as Director of the Graduate Program in Social Psychology. The co-author of both introductory and social psychology texts, she co-edited the 1977 *JSI* issue on Sexual Behavior.

CHARLES T. HILL received his Ph.D. in social psychology from Harvard University in 1975= He is now Professor of Psychology at Whittier College. His research interests include close relationships, sex roles, and research methodology.

ZICK RUBIN, who received his Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of Michigan, is Adjunct Professor of Psychology at Brandeis University and a practicing lawyer. He has published three books on close relationships *(Liking and Loving, Children's Friendships, and Relationships and Development)* as well as a 1993 introductory text, *Psychology.* In recent years he has pursued links between psychology and legal issues, including testimonial privilege, defamation, copyright and trademark law, and jury selection.