

AN EXAMINATION OF
"
MOTIVATIONAL BARRIERS TO NEGATIVE ASSERTION IN WOMEN

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Mary Jo Moeschl

1976

APPROVAL SHEET

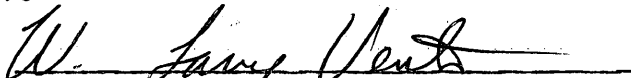
This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts




Author


Approved, May 1976



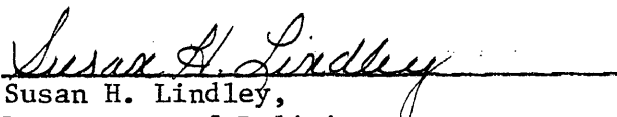
W. Larry Ventis



Virgil W. McKenna



Miriam Cardi



Susan H. Lindley,
Department of Religion

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	iv
ABSTRACT	v
INTRODUCTION	2
METHOD	9
RESULTS.	15
DISCUSSION	20
APPENDIX	26
REFERENCES	42

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Means and Standard Deviations Per Variable.	18

ABSTRACT

The present investigation was conducted to explore the relationship between women's sex-role orientations and the anticipated consequences of expressing negative feelings (negative assertion). The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), based on a conceptualization of masculinity and femininity as two independent dimensions, rather than as bipolar ends of a single continuum, was used to assign subjects to one of four sex-role orientations: Feminine-typed (possessing a high degree of femininity (F) and a low degree of masculinity (M)), Androgynous (high on F and high on M), Masculine-typed (high M and low F), and indeterminate (low M and low F). In addition, the subjects were presented with a verbal thematic lead to which they responded by writing a story. The lead varied as to the sex of the assertive person and the person confronted. The themes were scored for the presence of assertion anxiety, difficulty of assertion, and negative affect on the parts of the asserter and the person confronted.

Since assertiveness is considered a stereotypically masculine trait, and since the female stereotype describes women as being very uncomfortable about expressing aggression, or appearing dominant, it was thought that women who describe themselves as possessing a high degree of masculine traits in combination with a high degree of feminine traits (androgynous) would be less anxious about engaging in the stereotypically masculine behavior of negative assertion. Following Horner's theorizing about fear of success, it was felt that women become anxious in anticipation of negative consequences (such as social rejection and feeling unfeminine) they expect will follow violating the prescribed norms for their sex role. It was hypothesized that for the female lead, androgynous women would report fewer negative consequences than would the feminine-typed women. It was further hypothesized that sex-typed women would report more negative consequences to the female cue than to the male cue.

While 51% of the subjects did show evidence of assertion anxiety, neither the subjects' sex-role orientations nor the sex of the asserter seemed a primary determinant. Androgynous women tended to attribute more negative affect to the asserter, regardless of sex. There was a tendency for responses to the female cue to reflect more difficulty with assertion, which supports one of the assumptions of this investigation. On self-reported ratings of assertiveness, the androgynous group reported themselves significantly more assertive than did the sex-typed group. Those subjects who showed evidence of assertion anxiety, or attributed negative affect to either the asserter or the person confronted also tended to report themselves as more assertive. It appears that women who experience themselves as more assertive are more aware of and concerned about the negative consequences of the act of assertion.

AN EXAMINATION OF
MOTIVATIONAL BARRIERS TO NEGATIVE ASSERTION IN WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

The topic of assertion has received considerable attention in recent years, with most of the research being focused on assessment and determining the relative efficacy of various treatment procedures. Alberti and Emmons (1970) define assertiveness as "behavior which enables a person to act in his own best interests, or stand up for himself without undue anxiety, to express his rights without denying the rights of others". In reviewing the literature, two notable trends emerge, both of which reflect a refining process in the conceptualization of assertiveness. The first involves a clarification of the types of behaviors which may be called assertive. The earlier conceptualizations focused on the expression of negative feelings, such as anger or resentment (negative assertion). In fact, most of the published case histories focus on problems in this area (see Rimm and Masters, 1974, for a review). The current trend, however, is toward viewing assertive behavior as also including the expression of positive feelings, such as affection and appreciation (positive assertion). Wolpe (1969) views assertiveness as a type of emotional freedom, and, as such, includes the "outward expression of practically all feelings other than anxiety".

The second trend is toward viewing assertiveness as situation-specific, rather than as a general personality trait. As originally conceptualized, assertiveness was seen as a global trait (Salter, 1949); a person was either generally assertive or generally inhibited. More recent research in the

area has contradicted this view (Rimm and Masters, 1974; Wolpe, 1969). Assertiveness is not a pervasive trait; a person may be quite assertive in one situation, and quite ineffective in a seemingly similar situation. Problems in assertion are specific to the individual and to the context of the situation.

A number of tests have been used to assess levels of assertiveness, ranging from paper-and-pencil format (Galassi, et al., 1974; McFall and Lillesand, 1971; Rathus, 1973) to more elaborate behavioral measures (McFall and Marston, 1970). Most of the scales are designed to measure a general tendency across a wide variety of situations. To some degree this is desirable, for this approach covers many of the various forms of non-assertiveness. Total scores are the criterion for classifying individuals as assertive or non-assertive, and specific problem areas are not the focus of attention. Individual differences in specific problem areas are indistinguishable under this method, as two individuals scoring the same total score may have very different problems. One may have a severe problem in only one situation, whereas the other may have rather mild difficulties in several situations.

Another difficulty in the present scales is that a disproportionate number of items are devoted to negative assertion, and relatively few deal with positive assertion situations. Therefore, a person who experiences difficulty only in expressing positive feelings could easily be erroneously classified as assertive on the basis of his total score.

Few of the existing scales provide normative data, despite their frequent use as clinical scales and research instruments. In analyzing their data, investigators typically neglect individual differences, as one's total score is the criterion, rather than the distribution of an individual's scores in sub-areas measured by the test. Even such a gross

analysis as sex-differences is seldom made, although a few studies have noted the tendency of men to score lower (more assertive) than women (Galassi, 1974; Rathus, 1973). In a study that was refreshingly thorough in its data analysis, Butler (1973), using the Wolpe-Lazarus Assertiveness Scale, found that among her subjects men were significantly more assertive than women. A further analysis of the various sub-areas revealed that men reported more difficulty expressing positive feelings, while women reported more difficulty expressing negative feelings. There appears to be a striking parallel between these results and the sex-role stereotypes held for men and women.

There is considerable evidence in the literature of the existence of highly consensual norms and beliefs about the differing characteristics of men and women (Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman & Broverman, 1968; Seward & Larson, 1968). To be considered a stereotypic behavior trait, the criterion is 70% or better agreement as to whether the characteristic best describes men or women (Rosenkrantz et al., 1968). The feminine stereotype includes such traits as: not at all aggressive, very submissive, very uncomfortable about being aggressive, very aware of the feelings of others, and easily expresses tender feelings. The masculine stereotype includes the following traits: very aggressive, very dominant, not at all uncomfortable about being aggressive, not at all aware of the feelings of others, and does not express tender feelings at all. It is interesting to note at this point that aggressiveness is one of the few areas in which sex-differences have consistently been found, with males being more aggressive, although it is not clear whether this is a product of differential social conditioning or reflects an innate tendency (Maccoby, 1975).

For a woman to effectively express negative feelings towards another, she must violate the prescribed norms for her sex role. Being comfortable with expressing aggression is considered a masculine trait. In expressing her feelings, it is quite possible that she would cause uncomfortable feelings in the person she is confronting; yet one of the highly valued feminine traits is being aware of others feelings, and being gentle and tactful. On the other hand, it is quite in keeping with her role to easily express tender feelings or positive assertion. In contrast, negative assertion is quite permissible for men, as they are supposed to be not at all uncomfortable about being aggressive or dominant. Since the masculine stereotype describes men as not at all aware of the feelings of others, and as being very blunt and rough, negative assertion should not pose as much as a problem. It is expected that men would have problems with asserting positive feelings, since the norms also describe men as not expressing tender feelings at all. For a man to express positive feelings (tenderness, gentleness, affection), he must also violate the norms for his sex, as these behaviors are considered feminine.

These findings are based on a conceptualization of masculinity and femininity as bipolar ends of a single continuum. An individual is either masculine or feminine, but not both. Bem (1974a) raises the point that a person may be masculine or feminine depending on the appropriateness of these behaviors in a given situation. A person whose self-concept includes both masculine and feminine traits is termed "androgynous". She has devised a scale which treats masculinity and femininity as two independent dimensions, which do not assume an

inverse relationship between masculinity and femininity. Using this method, 65% of the subjects have been classified as sex-typed, while the remaining 35% are androgynous. In a subsequent study, strongly sex-typed individuals were seriously limited in the ranges of behavior available to them, whereas androgynous individuals were able to effectively deal with a wider range of situations (Bem, 1974b).

It is apparent that the expression of negative assertiveness (with its implied aggression) is incompatible with the commonly held view of femininity. Defying the conventions of sex-appropriate behavior creates internal conflict and anxiety in women (Maccoby, 1963). Horner (1968) incorporated this concept in her formulation of the "motive to avoid success". Her study was designed to explain sex-differences in achievement motivation, proposing a psychological barrier to achievement in women. Women have a motive to avoid success - a disposition to become anxious about achieving success because they expect negative consequences (such as social rejection, or feeling unfeminine) as a result of succeeding. "The expression of achievement-directed tendencies... is inhibited by the arousal of a thwarting disposition to be anxious about the negative consequences they expect to follow the desired success" (Horner, 1972). Subjects responded to the verbal lead "After first semester finals, Anne finds herself at the top of her medical school class". For the men in the sample, the name "John" was substituted for "Anne". The responses were scored according to whether fear of success imagery was present or absent. A "present" score was given if the subjects made statements showing conflict about success, the presence or anticipation of negative consequences because of the success, denial of the cue itself, or some other bizarre or inappropriate response to the cue. Fear of success imagery dominated the

female responses and was relatively absent in the male responses (Horner, 1972). Replications of Horner's study have yielded results that were inconsistent with her findings. In general, evidence of fear of success has decreased for female subjects, and increased for the males in the samples. One likely explanation for this inconsistency is that this is a reflection of the changing roles for both men and women. The female role has become less constricted, and being successful in one's profession is more acceptable. Similarly, the role of the striving breadwinner whose professional goals are achieved at the expense of his personal growth is declining in popularity. These results may reflect the changing conceptions of sex roles rather than inadequacies in Horner's research. Her method seems to be a valid one, which provides a possible explanation for the existence of sex-differences in achievement.

Horner's research provides a framework in which problems in assertiveness may be explored. It is possible that fears of negative assertion and success stem from the same basis - in actuality conflict about violating the norms of one's sex role. There is much anecdotal evidence to support the idea that women feel conflict about asserting themselves because they fear being perceived as unfeminine (Fodor, E.; Goldstein, A.; Williams, K.; personal communication). Indeed, many assertion training groups for women are based on this premise (Fodor, personal communication). Yet the premise remains to be substantiated empirically. It is to this end that the present study is directed, in hopes that it will increase our understanding of the phenomenon.

The present investigation is being conducted to: 1) develop a test using a thematic lead similar to Horner's but differing in that assertion, not achievement, is the theme; 2) discern what the antici-

pated consequences of asserting negative feelings are for women; and

3) see how androgynous and sex-typed women differ on this measure.

METHOD

Subjects. The subject population consisted of 114 junior and senior women enrolled at the College of William and Mary. Approximately half of the subjects were randomly selected from the College directory, contacted by telephone, and asked to participate in a psychology experiment. Very few (approximately 1%) refused to participate in the study. The remaining subjects were contacted in person in the College dormitories. About 25% of these subjects declined to participate.

Materials. (see Appendix A) As the questionnaire contained three sections, each will be described separately.

Part 1. The cover sheet asks several background information questions, such as age, sex, and birth order. This portion was specifically designed to camouflage the purposes of the study, and lead subjects to believe that these variables were a part of the experimental manipulations.

Part 2. This section included the following thematic leads, presented in random order:

1. In the course of a conversation with Anne, Bob makes several remarks that Anne believes are erroneous and with which she strongly disagrees. She speaks up and questions Bob's remarks.
2. Jennifer has just been informed that her three-act play will be produced in New York this coming season.
3. A young woman is talking about something important with an older person.

The subjects were asked to write stories around the following ques-

tions:

1. What is happening? Who are the persons?
2. What has lead up to this situation? What has happened in the past?
3. What is being taught? What is wanted? By whom?
4. What will happen? What will be done?

Half of the subjects were given leads with a male stimulus person (John), while the remainder received materials containing a female stimulus person (Anne).

The first thematic lead portrayed an assertive act, and was selected from a pool of eight such leads. Four raters participated in the selection process: three out of the four agreed on this item. For the purposes of the present investigation, only the assertion lead was scored.

The second and third items were used primarily as filler items. The second item was one that has been previously used in assessing fear of success: the responses to this lead may be analyzed at some time in the future to explore the relationships between the variables in the present study and fear of success. The last item was drawn from the Thematic Apperception Test, and served exclusively as a filler lead.

The subjects were given the following instructions:

You are going to see a series of verbal leads or cues and I would like you to tell a story that is suggested to you by each one. Try to imagine what is going on in each. Then tell what the situation is, what led up to the situation, what the people are thinking and feeling and what they will do. In other words, write as complete a story as you can, a story with plot and character. You will have 20 seconds to look at each verbal cue and then five minutes to write your story about it. Write your first impressions and work rapidly. I will keep time and tell you when it is time to finish your story and to get ready for the next cue. Remember there are no right or wrong answers or kinds of stories, so please feel free to write whatever

story is suggested to you when you look at the cue. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar are not important. What is important is to write out as fully and as quickly as possible the story that comes into your mind as you imagine what is going on in each cue.

Two raters who were blind as to which group (androgynous or sex-typed) the subjects belonged rated the stories, and an initial rater reliability coefficient of .754 was obtained. The raters discussed the scores with which they disagreed and only themes for which 100% scoring agreement was reached were used. The responses were scored in accordance with the method described by Horner (1968), and the following scoring directions were given to the raters:

You will be scoring the content of these fantasies by deciding whether or not a certain type of imagery is present in the responses. Any imagery (i.e. statement in a story) which suggests or anticipates negative consequences as a result of assertion is considered fear-of-assertion imagery. More specifically, this means that someone in the story is being placed in an undesirable or negative situation (e.g., losing the friendship of close associates; being socially rejected, especially by men; feeling guilt, despair; or doubting one's normality or femininity) because of asserting one's self.

In scoring stories where there is negative imagery reflecting concern about the assertive act, the following scoring criteria will be used:

- a. Negative consequences because of assertion
- b. Negative affect (feeling) because of assertion
- c. Anticipation of negative consequences because of assertion
- d. Instrumental activity away from present or future assertiveness
- e. Any direct expression of conflict about being assertive

Also score any evidence of:

- f. Denial of the situation described by the cue
- g. Bizarre, inappropriate, unrealistic, or non-adaptive responses to the situation described by the cue

No score will be given when the stories contain no indication of negative consequences, negative affect

or concern about negative consequences of assertion. A score of 1 indicates that the responses reflected mild concern about possible negative consequences of assertion. A score of 2 is given when there is mention of severe negative consequences of assertion. A score of 3 is assigned to those stories of a bizarre, inappropriate, or unrealistic nature.

Stories receiving a score of 3 were not included in the data analysis.

The themes were also scored for four additional categories: difficulty of assertion, intensity of negative affect (for both the asserter and the person confronted), resolution of feelings, and the presence of a sexist theme. Both difficulty of assertion and intensity of affect categories were scored on a five point scale ranging from none to severe. Since a number of the themes depicted Bob as a sexist, the stories were also scored for the presence of this theme. Both the resolution of feelings and sexist theme categories were scored on a simple present/absent system. The initial rater reliabilities of these categories were .86, .74, .72, .86, and .91, respectively; the final reliability coefficient was 1.00 for all categories.

Part 3. The final section of the questionnaire contained the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). Subjects were presented with a list of sixty personality traits, and asked to describe themselves by indicating, on a scale of one to seven, how true each trait was of them. The scale contains 20 stereotypically masculine traits, 20 stereotypically feminine traits, and 20 traits that were neutral with respect to sex.

Scoring of the BSRI. As was previously discussed, Bem (1974) has devised a scoring method whereby each subject obtains two scores: Femininity (F) and Masculinity (M). Using her method, the M score is subtracted from the F score, and the resulting difference between the two determines whether one is sex-typed or androgynous. A female subject

whose F score is significantly higher than her M score is termed sex-typed. If, however, the difference between her M and F scores is not statistically significant, she would be classified androgynous. In a recent paper, Spence (1975) refined the concept of androgyny and limited the term to those individuals who scored highly on both M and F scales, creating a new category, indeterminate, for those whose M and F scores are low. Using this scoring method, there are four possible categories into which subjects may be placed: Androgynous (high F, high M), Feminine-typed (high F, low M), Masculine-typed (low F, high M), and Indeterminate (low F, low M). The M and F scores are separately ranked, and split at the medians. Subjects whose score falls above the median are classified as high; conversely, those below the median are considered low. In this manner, one can distinguish between androgynous and indeterminate individuals; this is not possible using Bem's technique, as both androgynous and indeterminate subjects would have M and F scores that were not significantly different (her sole criterion for androgyny) and therefore both would be categorized as androgynous.

Bem is concerned about the balance between M and F scores; an androgynous person's score on one scale should not differ significantly from the other. She has devised a convenient method whereby one can readily determine by means of a t score if the two scores differ significantly. Spence argues that by definition an androgynous person possesses both M and F traits to a high degree; her concern is with the strength of the two scores. Unfortunately, using Spence's median-split method ignores the balance issue. Many subjects whose scores are above the median for both scales differ significantly in their endorsement of M and F items. The present investigator would argue that both balance

and strength are necessary for defining androgyny. It is further suggested that the two methods can be combined to obtain the advantages of both. In the current study, the subjects' scores were split at the medians ($F = 99.5$, $M = 92.5$), and then each subject's F and M scores were compared using the t ratio described by Bem. In this sample, nine subjects who would be classified androgynous using Spence's method had F scores which were significantly higher than their M scores. Two subjects whose scores were close to both medians and who would have been classified by Spence as sex-typed, were termed androgynous using this method.

On the basis of their scores on the BSRI, subjects were categorized into the four previously described groups (see Appendix B for the distributions between categories). Only the data from the androgynous and sex-typed subjects were analyzed and their responses to the thematic lead compared. The frequency of responses containing negative consequences for these two groups were contrasted by means of the Chi square statistic.

It is hypothesized that androgynous women will have less negative imagery in their responses to the female cue than will the sex-typed women. It is further hypothesized that sex-typed women will have more negative imagery in their responses to the female cue than in their responses to the male cue.

RESULTS

Assertion thematic lead. In all of the previously discussed categories, the scores were strongly skewed in a positive direction, as can be seen

Insert Table 1 about here.

in Table 1 (see also Appendix D). Analyses of variance and t-tests were performed on the data, but since the severe skewness violates the basic assumptions of both of these analyses and could distort the results, the Chi square statistic was used in comparisons involving these skewed scores.

The results did not confirm the proposed hypotheses. There was no significant difference between the androgynous and sex-typed groups as to levels of assertion anxiety in response to the female cue ($\chi^2 = .191$, 1 df). In addition, a comparison of the sex-typed groups' responses to the male and female cues showed no significant difference in assertion anxiety ($\chi^2 = .24$, 1 df). There was no overall difference in assertion anxiety between the male and female cues ($\chi^2 = .17$, 1 df); the androgynous and sex-typed groups did not differ significantly in terms of evidencing assertion anxiety ($\chi^2 = 1.14$, 1 df).

A comparison of the two groups (androgynous and sex-typed) showed a tendency for the androgynous group to attribute more negative affect to the asserter ($\chi^2 = 3.48$, $p < .10 > .05$), but no difference between the groups on levels of negative affect for the person confronted ($\chi^2 = .80$, 1 df). There was no difference between the responses to the male and female cues on these measures ($\chi^2 = .40$, 1 df; $\chi^2 = .82$, 1 df).

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES PER VARIABLE

Assertion anxiety	0	1	2	3	
Androgynous					
Male cue	2	2	2	1	
Female cue	5	7	0	0	
Sex-typed					
Male cue	11	4	4	3	
Female cue	8	5	3	0	
Difficulty of assertion	1	2	3	4	5
Androgynous					
Male cue	6	0	0	0	0
Female cue	8	1	1	2	0
Sex-typed					
Male cue	15	2	1	0	1
Female cue	10	3	2	0	1
Intensity of negative affect (asserter)	1	2	3	4	5
Androgynous					
Male cue	1	1	2	1	1
Female cue	6	1	4	1	0
Sex-typed					
Male cue	12	2	3	2	0
Female cue	11	0	2	2	1
Intensity of negative affect (person confronted)	1	2	3	4	5
Androgynous					
Male cue	2	1	2	0	1
Female cue	7	2	3	0	0
Sex-typed					
Male cue	11	2	2	1	3
Female cue	11	1	4	0	0

Resolution of feelings	Present	Absent
Androgynous		
Male cue	2	4
Female cue	8	4
Sex-typed		
Male cue	11	8
Female cue	12	4

Sexist theme	Present	Absent
Androgynous		
Male cue	2	4
Female cue	3	9
Sex-typed		
Male cue	3	16
Female cue	3	13

The groups were further compared as to the difficulty of assertion shown in their responses. While there was no difference between the responses of the androgynous or sex-typed groups ($\chi^2 = .24$, 1 df), the analysis revealed a tendency for the female cue to reflect more difficulty with assertion ($\chi^2 = 2.63$, 1 df, $p < .20 > .10$). A chi-square comparing incidences of stories showing some resolution of feelings revealed no differences between the two groups or the two cues ($\chi^2 = .998$, 1 df). overall, 62% of the themes included a resolution: 56% of the androgynous themes and 66% of the sex-typed themes.

The themes were also scored for the presence of a sexist theme, one which depicts Bob (regardless of his role) as being sexist. A chi-square was performed on this data, showing no significant difference between groups or cues ($\chi^2 = .484$, 1 df). A total of 21% of the responses included this theme, 28% of the androgynous themes and 17% of the sex-typed themes.

The BSRI. The mean femininity (4.933) and masculinity (4.588) scores for the subjects in the present study were consistent with those of Bem's normative sample (5.01 and 4.57, respectively).

In addition to being balanced for the social desirability of the M and F items, the BSRI also includes a brief social desirability measure which is independent with regard to sex. The 20 neutral items comprise this scale, and a social desirability score may be derived by reversing ten of the items and scoring the total 20-item scale. Congruent with Bem's findings, the correlation between androgyny difference scores and social desirability was insignificant ($r = -.371$, 17 df).

One of the traits within the masculinity scale of the BSRI is "assertiveness". The androgynous group rated themselves significantly

higher on this item (more assertive) than did the sex-typed group ($t = 10.271, 54 \text{ df}, p < .001$). Interestingly, the subjects whose themes showed the presence of assertion anxiety report themselves as significantly more assertive ($t = 3.011, 50 \text{ df}, p < .01$). Subjects whose stories reflected some difficulty of assertion did not differ in levels of self-reported assertion from those whose stories contained no evidence of assertion difficulty ($t = 1.298, 50 \text{ df}$). Those whose themes attributed negative affect to either the asserter or the person confronted tended to rate themselves as more assertive ($t = 1.375, 50 \text{ df}, p < .20 > .10$; $t = 1.388, 50 \text{ df}, p < .20 > .10$, respectively).

DISCUSSION

It was hypothesized that sex-typed women would show more assertion anxiety in response to the female cue than the androgynous women. The data fails to support this hypothesis, raising several questions about the assumptions implicit in this hypothesis. It was presumed that androgynous women are not anxious about violating the norms of their sex role, and that such anxiety would tend to inhibit those behaviors which are stereotyped as masculine. Thus, one who feels anxious in this regard would adhere closely to the prescribed norms, keeping their behaviors in line with the feminine role. In retrospect, it also appears that the androgynous woman would be likely to experience this discomfort, since it is she, not the stereotyped woman, who is violating the norms by including "masculine" behaviors in her repertoire. According to Maccoby (1963), violating the prescriptions of one's sex role creates conflict and anxiety in women. It is quite possible that both of these explanations are valid, but for different individuals. If this is the case, then it would not be possible to detect differences between the groups with the method employed in the present study.

Is the method an effective one for assessing anxiety about assertion? The cue did elicit a wide variety of responses, revealing differences between the subjects in the sample. Approximately half (51%) of the subjects showed evidence of assertion anxiety, as defined in the scoring directions (the remaining 49% accounted for the skewness of the data). The analyses concerned themselves with the relative proportions

of the subjects within groups, as there is no current theory to predict the proportions of women in the general population who experience this difficulty. It is quite conceivable that 51% is an accurate reflection of the incidence of assertion anxiety. In Horner's research, approximately 80% of the women evidenced fear of success; since that time, the figures have progressively diminished, reflecting changes in our society's perceptions of the sex roles. In the eight year interim between Horner's work and the present investigation, the sex role zeitgeist has changed considerably. It may well be the case that the incidence of assertion anxiety too is on the decline, and presently occurs in about 50% of women.

This figure may have been deflated by a number of factors. There has been an increase in public awareness about assertiveness due primarily to the numerous popular books on the topic which have been recently published. It is possible that some of the subjects' responses describe ideal social behavior rather than how they themselves would react in the situation. It is also conceivable that some subjects who were less assertive had difficulty identifying with the stimulus person. Since the act of assertion in the cue is a given, these subjects' responses may simply reflect what one should do rather than how they actually would behave.

The scoring of the themes posed a few problems. The categories used were those previously developed by Horner. The scoring system is ambiguous and somewhat difficult to interpret. The categories themselves are not well defined. The categories are: none, mild, severe, and bizarre or inappropriate. While the difference between mild and severe anxiety can be considerable, there is no provision for intermediate responses

which are moderate in anxiety, thus in some instances, necessitating a rather arbitrary classification of these responses into the mild or severe categories. The bizarre or inappropriate category is especially difficult, as the criteria are ill-defined. The lack of clarity and realistic categories may have contributed to inaccurate scoring, thus increasing the error variance.

Assertiveness (or lack of it) is situation-specific. Since this study is in one sense an exploratory one, only one instance or situation requiring assertive behavior was presented. Providing a wider variety of cues to which to respond would increase the probability of providing a salient situation to a larger number of subjects.

It is possible that the sample in this study was unrepresentative of women in general; being composed of very bright women who are close to obtaining their degrees at a highly competitive institution. It is also possible that the suggested revisions in the assessment technique, in both design and scoring, would yield a more sensitive and subtle instrument.

It will be recalled that the androgynous women rated themselves significantly more assertive than did the sex-typed women. This finding may be valid at its face value or it may reflect a response set of the androgynous women as a group, since the androgynous group by definition is comprised of individuals who score highly on both the M and F scales. To investigate the possibility that this group could be extreme responders irrespective of content, the scores of the two groups on the 20 neutral items of the BSRI were compared. These items are neutral with respect to sex. The sex-typed group scored significantly higher than the androgynous group on these items ($t = 2.211$, 54 df, $p .05$). Thus, one cannot attribute

this finding to a response set on the part of the androgynous group.

Perhaps the most interesting result in the study is that subjects whose themes showed evidence of assertion anxiety rated themselves significantly more assertive than those whose themes showed no anxiety about assertion. It is possible that those women who are aware of the possible discomfort and anxiety that assertion can entail are also aware of the necessity for asserting one's feelings. Since assertiveness for these women is associated with anxiety, it appears that assertiveness is also highly valued by them. The positive aspects of assertion in some way mitigate the negative feelings the act of assertion engenders.

There were several trends in the data which were not significant but provide more information about the phenomenon. First, regardless of the sex-role orientation of the subject, the act of assertion was more difficult for the female stimulus person than it was for the male stimulus person. Because this finding did not reach significance, it cannot be seen as supporting the overall assumptions of the study, but reflects a trend in that direction. As was previously discussed, androgynous women reported themselves significantly more assertive. This group's themes attributed more negative affect to the asserter. Subjects in either group who showed evidence of assertion anxiety also described themselves as significantly more assertive. Finally, subjects whose themes attributed negative affect to either the asserter or the person confronted rated themselves higher on assertiveness. It thus appears that those who experience themselves as more assertive are perhaps more realistic about the possible discomforts, for both parties, involved in assertion.

There are several improvements which could be made in the design of the study, in hopes that future research could determine the parameters of the phenomenon. The thematic lead which was used to assess assertion anxiety was designed to resemble as closely as possible the achievement lead used by Horner. Thus, the subject is presented with a given situation, an event which has already occurred. Horner's stimulus person had already achieved success. The implicit logic is that being faced with a given situation (a high degree of success) arouses anxiety regarding success. The lead in the present study was similar, in that the subject is given a situation in which the act of assertion has already taken place (He/She speaks up and questions Anne's/Bob's remarks). Assertion is a given, not a possibility. In this manner, it was hoped that the anticipated consequences of assertion would be revealed. If the cue was ambiguous as to whether he or she asserted themselves, the themes might simply reveal whether or not the person spoke up and not what consequences the subject expects. The method is a projective one; one critical quality of projective tests is their ambiguity. This lead is not at all ambiguous; although Horner's lead was not totally ambiguous, it certainly was more ambiguous than the assertion cue. It is possible that had the decision of whether or not the stimulus person spoke up been made by the subjects, the themes may have revealed more information. For example, one could examine the logic behind the decision and determine whether or not anxiety about assertion is at play. One extension of this research, therefore, could use a lead that was more ambiguous, and leave the decision as to whether or not assertion takes place with the subject.

This research is in some respects a pioneer effort in a previously unexplored field. It is hoped that its limitations as well as its findings

provide an impetus for further investigation in this important area.

APPENDIX A
THEMATIC LEAD AND
BEM SEX-ROLE INVENTORY PACKET

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SEX: MALE _____ FEMALE _____

AGE: _____

MAJOR: _____

NUMBER OF SIBLINGS: _____

BIRTH ORDER: _____

A young man is talking about something important with an older person.

1. What is happening? Who are the persons?

2. What has led up to this situation? What has happened in the past?

3. What is being taught? What is wanted? By whom?

4. What will happen? What will be done?

John has just been informed that his three-act play will be produced in New York this coming season.

1. What is happening? Who are the persons?

2. What has led up to this situation? What has happened in the past?

3. What is being taught? What is wanted? By whom?

4. What will happen? What will be done?

On the following page is a list of personality traits and characteristics. You will be asked to describe yourself, using these characteristics. For each characteristic or trait, please indicate (on a scale of 1 to 7) how true that characteristic is of you. For example:

Critical	<input type="text"/>
----------	----------------------

Mark a 1 if it is NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE that you are critical.

Mark a 2 if it is USUALLY NOT TRUE that you are critical.

Mark a 3 if it is SOMETIMES BUT INFREQUENTLY TRUE that you are critical.

Mark a 4 if it is OCCASIONALLY TRUE that you are critical.

Mark a 5 if it is OFTEN TRUE that you are critical.

Mark a 6 if it is USUALLY TRUE that you are critical.

Mark a 7 if it is ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE that you are critical.

Thus, if you are sometimes but infrequently critical, you would respond by placing the number 3 in the box next to the characteristic "critical".

Please respond with only one number, and do not leave any characteristic unmarked.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

NEVER OR
ALMOST NEVER
TRUEUSUALLY NOT
TRUE SOMETIMES
BUT
INFREQUENTLY
TRUEOCCASION-
ALLY TRUEOFTEN
TRUEUSUALLY
TRUEALWAYS OR
ALMOST
ALWAYS TRUE

SELF-RELIANT		RELIABLE		WARM	
YIELDING		ANALYTICAL		SOLEMN	
HELPFUL		SYMPATHETIC		WILLING TO TAKE A STAND	
DEFENDS OWN BELIEFS		JEALOUS		TENDER	
CHEERFUL		HAS LEADERSHIP ABILITIES		FRIENDLY	
MOODY		SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS		AGGRESSIVE	
INDEPENDENT		TRUTHFUL		GULLIBLE	
SHY		WILLING TO TAKE RISKS		INEFFICIENT	
CONSCIENTIOUS		UNDERSTANDING		ACTS AS A LEADER	
ATHLETIC		SECRETIVE		CHILDLIKE	
AFFECTIONATE		MAKES DECISIONS EASILY		ADAPTABLE	
THEATRICAL		COMPASSIONATE		INDIVIDUALISTIC	
ASSERTIVE		SINCERE		DOES NOT USE HARSH LANGUAGE	
FLATTERABLE		SELF SUFFICIENT		UNSYSTEMATIC	
HAPPY		EAGER TO SOOTHE HURT FEELINGS		COMPETITIVE	
DOMINANT		CONCEITED		LOVES CHILDREN	
LOYAL		STRONG PERSONALITY		TACTFUL	
UNPREDICTABLE		SOFT SPOKEN		AMBITIOUS	
FORCEFUL		LIKABLE		GENTLE	
FEMININE				CONVENTIONAL	
MASCULINE					

APPENDIX B

DISTRIBUTION OF SUBJECTS WITHIN SEX ROLE CATEGORIES

SEX ROLE CATEGORY	SPENCE'S CRITERIA	SPENCE'S + BEM'S CRITERIA
Androgynous	29	18
Feminine-typed	28	38
Masculine-typed	29	
Indeterminate	28	

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE THEMES PER RATING CATEGORY

THEME SHOWING NO ASSERTION ANXIETY

RATING CATEGORY = 0

Anne and Bob met at a party. Anne starts talking about astrology which is a hobby of hers. Bob doesn't believe in "all that junk." Bob and Anne argue for about ten minutes about this before their host came up and changed the subject. Anne and Bob continued the argument later after their host left. Bob calls Anne the next day and invites her to go to dinner with him "to finish their argument." Bob and Anne didn't talk about astrology at all over dinner.

THEME SHOWING MILD ASSERTION ANXIETY

RATING CATEGORY = 1

Bob and Anne have just met and were attracted to each other. Bob asked Anne to lunch to get better acquainted. And it is here that Anne feels Bob does not really understand the plight of women in professional fields. She likes Bob very much and is a little reluctant to speak up but soon can't help it. Bob is abashed at first but then as he listens and they continue to talk he sees her point of view and the two talk of other things.

THEME SHOWING SEVERE ASSERTION ANXIETY

RATING CATEGORY = 2

Bob and Anne are very close friends. They have known each other for about four years and have done a lot of activities together. But Anne always tries to dominate the situation. Bob, finally with his back against the wall, expresses his opinion. Anne blows up. Both individuals will try to get along better and avoid sources of controversy. Bob realizes that it is often better to not express his opinions to others if they contradict them and instead just smile and make others feel well and then do exactly what he wants. This will make him better liked by others.

BIZARRE OR INAPPROPRIATE THEME

RATING CATEGORY = 3

The two are discussing anthropological theory having to do with cultural relativism. Both are anthropology majors in an anthropology theory class. The professor began this conversation in class hoping to get a response and collective reaction. Cultural relativism is what is being taught by the professor of the course. He wants the whole class to participate. Continued discussion results in further dissension among the group in their views until the professor clears the air with his concluding remarks which tie together all that was said previously.

APPENDIX D

DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES PER CATEGORY

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>N</u>
Intensity of Negative Affect (person confronted)	31	6	11	1	4	53
Intensity of Negative Affect (asserter)	30	4	11	6	2	53
Difficulty of Assertion	39	6	4	2	2	53
	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>		
Assertion Anxiety	26	18	9	4		57

APPENDIX E

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS PER VARIABLE

Assertion anxiety	X	S.D.	N
Androgynous			
Male cue	1.000	.817	6
Female cue	.583	.493	12
Sex-typed			
Male cue	.632	.808	19
Female cue	.688	.768	16
Difficulty of assertion	X	S.D.	N
Androgynous			
Male cue	1.000	.000	6
Female cue	1.750	1.164	12
Sex-typed			
Male cue	1.420	.991	19
Female cue	1.690	1.102	16
Intensity of negative affect (asserter)	X	S.D.	N
Androgynous			
Male cue	3.000	1.291	6
Female cue	2.000	1.080	12
Sex-typed			
Male cue	1.737	.965	19
Female cue	1.875	1.097	16

Intensity of negative affect (person confronted)	X	S.D.	N
Androgynous			
Male cue	2.50	1.080	6
Female cue	1.67	.882	12
Sex-typed			
Male cue	2.11	.962	19
Female cue	1.56	.876	16

REFERENCES

- Alberti, R., & Emmons, M. Your perfect right: A guide to assertive behavior. San Luis Obispo, Calif.: Impact, 1970.
- Bem, S. The measurement of psychological androgyny. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1974, 42-2, 155-162.
- Bem, S. Sex-role adaptability: One consequence of psychological androgyny. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1974, 634-643.
- Butler, P. Assertive training: Teaching women not to discriminate against themselves. E.R.I.C., 1973.
- Galassi, J., DeLo, J., Galassi, M., & Bastien, S. The college self-expression scale: A measure of assertiveness. Behavior Therapy, 1974, 5, 165-171.
- Horner, M. Sex differences in achievement motivation and performance in competitive and non-competitive situations. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968.
- Horner, M. Toward an understanding of achievement-related conflicts in women. Journal of Social Issues, 1972, 28-2, 157-175.
- Maccoby, E. Women's intellect. In S. M. Farber & R. H. L. Wilson (Eds.), The potential of women. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963.
- Maccoby, E., & Jacklin, C. The psychology of sex differences. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975.

- McFall, R., & Lillesand, D. Behavior rehearsal with modeling and coaching in assertive training. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 1971, 77-3, 313-323.
- McFall, R., & Marston, A. An experimental investigation of behavior rehearsal in assertive training. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 1970, 76, 295-303.
- Rathus, S. A 30-item schedule for assessing assertive behavior. Behavior Therapy, 1973, 4, 398-406.
- Rimm, D., & Masters, J. Behavior therapy. New York: Academic Press, 1974.
- Rosenkrantz, P., Vogel, S., Bee, H., Broverman, I., & Broverman, D. Sex role stereotypes and self-concepts in college students. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1968, 32, 287-295.
- Salter, A. Conditioned reflex therapy. New York: Farrar, Straus, 1949.
- Seward, G., & Larson, W. Adolescent concepts of social sex roles in the United States and the two Germanies. Human Development, 1968, 11, 217-248.
- Spence, J. Ratings of self and peers on sex role attributes and their relation to self-esteem and conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1975, 32-1, 29-39.
- Wolpe, J. The practice of behavior therapy. New York: Pergamon Press, 1969.

VITA

Mary Jo Moeschl

The author was born in Washington, D. C. on January 21, 1950. She graduated from J. E. B. Stuart High School in Falls Church, Virginia in June, 1967. She attended the University of South Carolina and Northern Virginia Community College, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts from George Mason University, with a concentration in Psychology, in 1974.

In September, 1974, the author entered the College of William and Mary where she is presently a candidate for the Master of Arts Degree in Psychology.

