Of Men, Women, and Motivation:
A Role Congruity Account

Alice H. Eagly
Faculty Fellow, Institute for Policy Research
Professor of Psychology and Department Chair
Northwestern University

Amanda B. Diekman
Assistant Professor of Psychology
Miami University

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Abstract

To the extent that the sexes typically occupy different social roles, these roles frame individual opportunities in ways that foster differences in motivations and different methods of fulfilling those motivations. From the role congruity perspective, the motivation to achieve role congruity—to align behavior with the demands of roles—is an important force. Our role congruity account of sex differences and similarities in motivation focuses on how roles influence the goals and methods of goal pursuit elected by men and women. First, we examine support for the idea that role congruity yields various positive effects. Next, we examine the mechanisms by which placement in different roles might foster differences in motivation. Finally, we examine evidence documenting role-congruous motivational orientations, specifically agency for men and communion for women. In general, we find that fitting important social roles is a critical motivational force, and the opportunities for goal pursuit afforded by these social roles shape the kinds of goals and methods of goal pursuit elected by individuals.

The questions "what do men want?" and "what do women want?" abound in the popular culture. One prevalent belief is that men and women prioritize different life goals – for example, that women primarily seek close relationships and intimacy, whereas men desire prestige and power. In this chapter, we review the scientific evidence about the similarities and differences in the motivations of men and women. For both sexes, good fit to the opportunities afforded by their society yields rewards in terms of ease of completing important tasks and building satisfying interpersonal relationships. Individuals thus (consciously or not) assess the ways in which they can gain rewards and avoid costs, given the opportunities and constraints of the current role system. To the extent that the sexes typically occupy different social roles, these roles frame opportunities in ways that foster differences in motivations as well as different methods of fulfilling those motivations. Specific roles afford particular opportunities to pursue goals, and individuals are more likely to seek and attain the goals that are afforded by their roles.

From the role congruity perspective, the motivation to achieve role congruity – to align behavior with the demands of roles – is an important force. In the tradition of many attitude-behavior researchers (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein, in press; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), we assume that behavior is influenced by the beliefs about the outcomes of behaviors as well as beliefs about important others' approval of behaviors (i.e., *subjective norms*). Although role congruity should motivate behavior across different types of roles, we focus here on fit to gender roles. The importance of gender roles stems from their ubiquity across different types of interactions and specific roles, their potential applicability to nearly everyone, and their consensually held content as standards for behavior (see Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000, for a review). The widespread agreement about gender roles lends them particular power: Even individuals who have not internalized societal gender norms are susceptible to their influence because others bring them to

bear on interactions (e.g., Deaux & Major, 1987).

Gender roles follow from the division of labor between the sexes, which reflects the specialization of each sex in activities for which they are physically better suited under the circumstances afforded by their society (Wood & Eagly, 2002). One outcome of this division of labor is that men and women may strive for different goals that are relevant to their sex-differentiated roles. In particular, the roles of men and women diverge in their fostering of *agency* and *communion* motives. Agency motives focus on mastering the environment and promoting oneself, whereas communion motives focus on maintaining interpersonal relationships and benefiting others (Bakan, 1966). From the social role perspective, these agentic and communal orientations stem from the roles typically held by men or women. Men's greater agency orientation results from their occupancy of male-dominated roles, especially higher-status roles and roles yielding authority, whereas women's greater communion results from their occupancy of caretaking roles (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2000).

In contrast to specific roles based on occupations, family relationships or membership in other groups such as volunteer organizations, gender roles are *diffuse* because they apply to people who belong to the extremely general social categories of men and women. These roles, like other diffuse roles based on demographic characteristics such as age, race, and social class, have great scope because they can apply to all portions of one's daily life. In contrast, more specific roles based on factors such as family relationships (e.g., father, daughter) and occupation (e.g., kindergarten teacher, police officer) are mainly relevant to behavior in a particular group or organizational context–in the workplace, for example, in the case of occupational roles. Gender roles co-exist with specific roles and are relevant to most social interactions, including encounters that are also structured by these specific roles. Consistent with this claim, a meta-

analysis of studies of physician behavior revealed that female physicians were more likely than male physicians to enact communal behaviors, including engaging in more positive talk, more medical and psychosocial questions, and more smiling and nodding (Roter, Hall, & Aoki, 2002). Even in the context of the specific occupational role of physician, the impact of the diffuse gender role was reflected in the expression of more communal behaviors among female physicians than male physicians.

One consequence of sex-differentiated role occupancy is that men and women internalize different goals, which are reflected in self-descriptions that include traits consistent with these internalized goals. Demonstrating sex differences in goals are the well documented male-female differences in self-reported communal and agentic traits. For example, a meta-analysis of standardized personality tests (Feingold, 1994) detected greater self-reported assertiveness among men than women ($d = .50$ for standardized personality test norms) and greater self-reported tender-mindedness and nurturance among women than men ($d = -.97$ for standardized test norms). In one of the few studies to examine agentic and communal goals directly, Pöhlmann (2001) found that men and women differed in relative levels of agency and communion. In this study, agentic goals included power, achievement, and seeking new experiences or excitement; communal goals included intimacy, affiliation, and altruism. Although participants of both sexes considered both sets of goals important, the majority of women (60.2%) rated communal goals as more important than agency goals, whereas a majority of men (61.6%) rated agency goals as more important. As in other findings of sex differences, a substantial minority of each sex showed a gender-atypical pattern. Although the sexes may differ on average in terms of agentic or communal orientation, individual differences are large within both sexes, and the sex differences are most accurately described as overlapping distributions.

Our role congruity account of sex differences and similarities in motivation focuses on how roles influence the goals and methods of goal pursuit elected by men and women. First, we examine support for the idea that role congruity yields various positive effects. Next, we examine the mechanisms by which placement in different roles might foster differences in motivation. Finally, we examine evidence documenting role-congruous motivational orientations, specifically agency for men and communion for women.

Consequences of Role Congruity and Incongruity

The argument that individuals are motivated to maximize role congruity rests upon the assumption that rewards stem from role congruity and punishments from role incongruity. The standards used to evaluate role congruity can be set by others in the social environment, by oneself, or shared by both. In addition, the consequences of succeeding or failing to meet these standards are both intrapersonal (e.g., negative affect) and interpersonal (e.g., ridicule from others).

As a general principle, individuals experience enhanced well-being when they progress toward specific goals that are congruent with their motivational drives. For example, Brunstein, Schultheiss, and Glassman (1998) found that agency-oriented individuals reported greater emotional well-being with progress toward agency-congruent but not communion-congruent goals. In contrast, communion-oriented individuals reported greater emotional well-being with progress toward communion-congruent but not agency-congruent goals. Consistent with the self-concordance model (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), individuals who pursue goals that are congruent with important aspects of the self are more likely to sustain effort toward the goals, attain the goals, and experience positive changes in well-being with goal attainment.

Behavior that is congruous with gender roles can yield positive outcomes for individuals. For example, an experience-sampling study of the daily lives of high school students found that self-reports of quality of experience diverged for boys and girls who were high in affiliation motivation (Wong & Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Across situations of being alone or with friends, highly affiliative girls reported more positive affective states than other girls, whereas highly affiliative boys tended to report less positivity than other boys. The authors interpreted this finding in terms of the congruence of affiliation with the communal theme of the female gender role. In a direct test of the affective consequences of fit to gender norms, Wood, Christensen, Hebl, and Rothgerber (1997) found that for individuals who internalized gender norms, remembering or witnessing a gender-typical interaction (i.e., communion for women and dominance for men) led to more positive affective states. In studies of elementary and middle school children, feeling typical of and content with one's gender were positively associated with well-being (Carver, Yunger, & Perry, 2003; Egan & Perry, 2001).

Conversely, role incongruity can lead to negative affective consequences. Illustrative of this principle, one early explanation of women's avoidance of high-status careers proposed that women experience "fear of success," as shown by female participants' inclusion of more fear imagery in essays about a woman in medical school, compared with male participants' essays about a man in medical school (Horner, 1969). Later work revealed that this fear of success was confined to settings that are conventionally gender-inappropriate. When the experimental design was enlarged so that participants wrote about either a male or a female target student's success in either a female- or male-dominated field (i.e., nursing or medical school), the results were more complex. Greater fear imagery appeared in both of the gender non-normative conditions – specifically, for the woman in medical school and the man in nursing school (Cherry & Deaux,

1978). Concerns about gender role incongruity thus can be relevant to both sexes.

Individuals who demonstrate their fit to gender roles tend to benefit because attributes thought to facilitate role success elicit positive evaluation from others. In experimental studies that manipulate the requirements of different occupational roles, individuals or groups who possess characteristics congruent with the occupational demands are valued more than those who possess role-incongruent characteristics (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2004a; Glick, 1991; Judd & Oswald, 1997). In addition, the degree to which women are perceived as occupying male-dominated roles is positively correlated with positivity toward women's adoption of agentic characteristics (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2004b). From the perspective of perceivers, role congruity leads to positive evaluation.

Although some cases of misfit to one's gender role are simply ignored, other cases are more severely punished. Children's deviations from gender-normative behavior are negatively evaluated by their peers (Blakemore, 2003; Levy, Taylor, & Gelman, 1995) and by college-aged adults (Levy et al., 1995; Martin, 1990). Similarly, women who succeed at male-typical jobs are liked less than their male counterparts or than women in female-typical or gender-neutral jobs (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). Also, a meta-analysis found that women who displayed a male-stereotypical assertive and directive leadership style were evaluated more negatively than men who displayed the same style (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). In addition, men are often penalized for behaving passively and expressing negative emotions such as shame, fear, and embarrassment (e.g., Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Maracek, & Pascale, 1975).

In general, role incongruity can be a source of prejudice because observers devalue individuals with role-incongruent characteristics (Eagly & Diekman, 2004). Rewards are more

likely for role-normative than non-normative behavior. Individuals thus will generally tend to seek to fulfill other basic human needs by gender-normative means. In addition, as we explain in the next section, the placement of men and women in differing social roles can lead to different motivational drives and behavioral expressions.

How Do Roles Lead to Motivation?

To examine the processes by which the social roles of men and women lead to different motivations, we explore both external mechanisms, which derive directly from the surrounding role environment, and internalized mechanisms, which emanate from the individual's self. As we show, the strategies of men and women for pursuing goals are influenced by qualities they internalize and qualities that are externally afforded by their environment (Cantor, 1994).

External Mechanisms

From the social structural perspective, the division of men and women into different social roles is the root cause of sex differences. Even in childhood, roles are differentiated by sex, and children are generally encouraged to pursue gender-normative activities. Parents use reward and punishment to encourage gender-typed activities and interests—for example, chores, toys, games, and sports (Lytton & Romney, 1991). For example, adolescents report that parents tend to assign outdoor chores to boys and indoor chores to girls (Peters, 1994). In this section, we explore how certain role environments afford different types of goal pursuit.

Environmental affordances. The different contexts of male- and female-dominated roles allow for the pursuit of distinctive goals. For example, although caretaking roles do not afford many opportunities for self-promotion, they do provide opportunities for understanding others' thoughts and feelings and fostering others' development. To the extent that roles differ in the

goal achievements that they afford, individuals should be most attracted to roles that they

perceive as affording the pursuit of goals that they personally regard as important. A meta-

analysis of sex differences in preference for job attributes (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigall,

2000) found that these preferences tend to follow gender-normative patterns: Men more than

women valued male-typical attributes such as earnings, promotions, freedom, and power,

whereas women more than men valued female-typical attributes such as interpersonal

relationships and helping others. Likewise, college students' career interest is predicted by

participants' projected competence in the career as well as the extent to which the career was

perceived as involving other people (Morgan, Isaac, & Sansone, 2001). For physical and

mathematic science careers, interest was also predicted by the perceived high pay and status of

the careers. For all careers, taking into account the perceived goal affordances reduced sex

differences in career interest. To the extent that people perceive that occupational roles afford

opportunities to pursue their important goals, they more likely enter and remain in the

occupation.

Some roles afford a range of acceptable female- and male-stereotypical behaviors. For

example, leadership roles can be enacted in a variety of more masculine and feminine styles (see

Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, for a review). Transformational leadership, a style marked

by inspiring subordinates and developing their skills and creativity, includes qualities that are

consistent with the female gender role, including close mentorship and support of subordinates;

women tend more than men to enact this transformational leadership style (Eagly, Johannesen-

Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). Such flexibly-enacted roles might be appealing to both men and

women, possibly resulting in relatively equal representation of the sexes.

Social interaction. Interacting with others who hold gender-stereotypic beliefs can elicit

behaviors that confirm these beliefs (Geis, 1993). In this way, gender-normative goals may be sought or fulfilled even among those who have not internalized gender norms. Such processes may underlie the tendency for interaction partners divide tasks according to gender stereotypic assumptions. In the classic study by Skrypnek and Snyder (1982), task partners negotiated a more traditional division of labor when they were led to believe that they were interacting with a partner of the other sex, regardless of their partner's actual sex (see also Hollingshead & Fraidin, 2003). Moreover, female physicians' more communal behavior, which was noted above, might be exacerbated by patients' tendency to speak more to female than male physicians, disclose more information, and make more positive comments (see meta-analysis by Hall & Roter, 2002). The pleasant social interactions that result from confirming interaction partners' stereotypic assumptions can increase the likelihood of pursuing those behaviors. The gender-normative expectations of people in interaction thus elicit gender-normative actions and reinforce these expectations (Deaux & Major, 1987). Moreover, specific interactions can lead to widespread, consensually-shared beliefs about group differences as people participate in and witness these stereotype-confirming interactions (Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000).

Automatically activated goals. Goals relevant to roles that individuals occupy can be automatically activated by cues inherent to the role or its physical or social environment, without awareness or intention to pursue the goals. Specifically, the automotive model posits that nonconscious goals elicit behavioral goal pursuit (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2004). Goals can be automatically activated by physical or social environments, both of which are likely to vary with different roles. Individuals primed with nonconscious goals to visit certain environments (e.g., library) have shown greater accessibility of mental representations of behaviors normative in these environments and greater likelihood of engaging in such behaviors

(Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2003). The social environment also influences the types of goals that are nonconsciously activated. Individuals are more likely to perform goal-consistent behavior (e.g., helping) when primed with a close other who is associated with that goal (e.g., friend) (Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003). In addition, when an individual is implicitly primed with a close other who values a goal, that goal is perceived as more attainable, and goal persistence and performance are enhanced (Shah, 2003a, 2003b). The different roles that individuals occupy may automatically activate role-congruent behavior and cognition, thus facilitating individuals' fit with their physical and social environments.

Internalized Mechanisms

With greater exposure to sex-typed roles, the activities and rewards associated with those roles become chronically associated with the self, so that individuals internalize sex-typical goals (see Bussey & Bandura, 1999, for a review). In this section, we discuss the consequences of these internalized goals.

Self-concept. A rich history of work has explored the consequences of defining the self in terms of the female or male gender role (e.g., Bem, 1974; Crane & Markus, 1982). In their social cognitive model of gender development, Bussey and Bandura (1999) posit that children learn to identify their gender category and the personal and social evaluative consequences of conforming or deviating from the characteristics associated with this category. Children self-regulate their behavior in order to comply with these personal and social standards. To the extent that gender role is an important aspect of the self-concept, individuals are expected to be especially motivated to pursue gender-normative goals and avoid gender non-normative goals.

Self-construal also varies by sex, with the general finding that men possess a more collective self-construal that focuses on the self as a member of a group or organization and

women a more relational self-construal that focuses on the self as embedded in dyadic and close relationships (Gabriel & Gardner, 1999; Gardner & Gabriel, 2004). To the extent that women define themselves more relationally than men, close relationships exert a stronger motivating force on them and thus attract their attention to relational opportunities afforded by roles.

Incorporation of gender norms into the self-concept enhances the appeal of gender-typical interactions. In Wood et al.'s (1997) study of the affective benefits of conformity to sex-typed norms, participants who valued conformity to same-sex ideals reduced the discrepancies between their actual and ideal self-concepts when they remembered or witnessed gender-normative interactions. Thus, internalized gender roles may increase the likelihood of an individual engaging in gender-normative interactions by increasing positive self-regard from conforming to personal standards.

Self-efficacy. If people generally seek to maximize perceived utilities, they would choose to engage in behaviors that they believe they will perform successfully. The resulting self-efficacy beliefs stem in part from actual skill at the behavior, which can be shaped by socialization and experience performing the behavior. Additionally, group stereotypes about task ability shape self-efficacy beliefs (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). The sources and consequences of achievement self-efficacy beliefs have been examined by Eccles and colleagues (Eccles, 1994; Eccles, Barber, & Jozefowicz, 1999). In their model, one of the major predictors of achievement choices is expectation of task-related success, which in part stems from beliefs of important others. For example, parents' endorsement of gender stereotypes fostered beliefs that their children had sex-typed abilities in various domains, including mathematics, sports, and social activities (Jacobs, 1991; Jacobs & Eccles, 1992). In turn, parental ability beliefs predicted children's self-perceptions, which predicted their mathematics performance.

Support for the critical function of self-efficacy beliefs in career selection comes from several studies. For example, across careers in science, math, education, social services, and medicine, participants' perceived competence strongly predicted career interest (Morgan et al., 2001). Likewise, in Giles and Rea's (1999) study of interest in caring- and action-oriented careers, men intended less than women to pursue careers related to caring for other people and reported lower self-efficacy in these careers. In particular, men were more likely than women to report that they lacked the patience for the work and feared the responsibility and stress involved in the work. In contrast, men and women showed similar interest and similar self-efficacy in action-oriented careers.

The Intersection of Internal and External Mechanisms

Interactions between internal and external mechanisms occur in various ways. Individuals who are repeatedly exposed to certain roles internalize role-relevant goals, and those who have internalized such goals are likely to structure their environment to facilitate these motivations. This bidirectional relationship is clearly illustrated in longitudinal studies examining relationships between women's career trajectories and their need for achievement (Jenkins, 1987) and need for power (Jenkins, 1994). Women higher in need for power or achievement tended to select careers that provided opportunities to meet these goals. Moreover, women in occupations that aroused these motives showed the greatest increases in these needs over 14 years. Specifically, women in college teaching or entrepreneurial roles especially increased in need for achievement (Jenkins, 1987), and women in occupations allowing the exercise of interpersonal power with immediate feedback especially increased in need for power (Jenkins, 1994). Motivational strivings thus influence the roles people select, but these roles also continue to shape motivational strivings.

Other data also support the idea that people who internalize goals prefer environments that fulfill those goals. For example, individuals high in affiliation motivation reported more often that they thought about friends and wished to be with friends (Wong & Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). These intrapsychic states attract people to social interactions, which in turn reinforce affiliative motivation. Likewise, college men with stronger affiliative needs preferred and obtained living situations that allowed more social interaction and less privacy (Switzer & Taylor, 1983). From the perspective of these various internal and external mechanisms by which social roles facilitate some motivations and inhibit others, we now examine sex differences in the important domains of agentic and communal orientations.

Sex Differences in Agency and Communion

Following from the argument that roles shape motivation is the hypothesis that variation in roles corresponds to variation in motivational orientations. To explore this hypothesis, we examine evidence for sex differences in agency and communion, with particular attention to change and stability over time. Moreover, we examine the extent to which individuals seek to fulfill motivations in ways that align with their gender roles.

Agency

One of the most prominent forms of social change of the 20th century was the increasing prevalence of women in the paid labor force; contrasting with this change is the stability of men's presence in the paid labor force, which has declined only slightly (England, 2003; Fullerton, 1999). This asymmetric role change leads to the social role theory prediction of increased levels of agency for women but stable levels of agency for men over the latter half of the 20th century. Evidence pertaining to agency-related characteristics largely corresponds to this

prediction. A meta-analysis of self-reported personality traits from 1973 to 1993 found that the sex difference in masculine or instrumental characteristics decreased over this time period, predominantly because of women's adoption of these characteristics (Twenge, 1997). Similarly, a meta-analysis of the personality trait of assertiveness (Twenge, 2001) found that women's self-reported assertiveness and dominance rose from 1931 to 1945, dropped from 1946 to 1967, and rose again from 1968 to 1993; men's assertiveness remained stable over this time. Moreover, as shown by relating women's assertiveness to role indicators such as educational attainment, the trends in women's assertiveness mirrored the fluctuations in women's roles and status throughout this period.

Also consistent with increasing agentic motivation among women is evidence from a longitudinal study of sex differences in desire for control (Burger & Solano, 1994). The initial assessment in 1980, when participants were undergraduates, revealed that men reported significantly greater desire for control than women. In 1990, this difference had disappeared because of women's increase in desire for control and men's stability. In addition, the career plans of male and female college students converged from 1966 to 2001, primarily because of women's increased aspiration for traditionally male-dominated careers, especially law, medicine, and business (Astin, Oseguera, Sax, & Korn, 2002). In fact, a recent study of college students found that women more than men rated personal education as an important goal, consistent with women's higher rate of obtaining university degrees (U. S. Department of Education, 2001). In addition, college-aged women ranked being well-educated as more important than getting married or having children (Abowitz & Knox, 2003).

With respect of achievement motives, cross-temporal research employing thematic apperception methods revealed that women's achievement imagery rose from 1957 to 1976,

whereas men's remained stable (Veroff, Depner, Kulka, & Douvan, 1980). In recent research, men and women show similar levels of achievement motivation: For example, a study of gifted high school seniors found no sex differences in reports of desiring to work hard, mastering challenges, or fearing success, although senior boys reported higher levels of competitiveness than senior girls (Mendez & Crawford, 2002). Another study of college students found no sex difference in the importance of economic success (Eskilson & Wiley, 1999), although earlier studies had found that men value economic success more than do women (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, 1993).

To the extent that role fit is an important motivation, men and women should display aggressive behaviors in ways that are compatible with gender roles. Meta-analyses have typically found an overall tendency for men to be more aggressive than women (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996, d = .23; Eagly & Steffen, 1986, d = 29). However, this sex difference is moderated by several factors. In Eagly and Steffen's (1986) meta-analysis, men were particularly more likely than women to aggress physically, compared with psychologically (or verbally). In addition, the sex difference was exaggerated to the extent that women believed that aggression would cause harm to the target, cause guilty or anxiety to themselves, or endanger themselves. Meta-analyses have also found that certain contexts reduce the sex difference in aggression–for example, when there is a clear provocation to aggress (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996) or when physical aggression occurs in the context of close heterosexual relationships (Archer, 2000).

Corresponding to our role congruity predictions, women and girls tend more than men or boys to employ relational aggression – that is, they use elements of relationships to harm others, such as ostracism or gossip (Crick & Rose, 2000). The tendency has been documented across various developmental stages, beginning as young as the preschool years (Crick, Casas, &

Mosher, 1997). Aggressing in the context of relationships allows women or girls a mode of aggression that is more gender-normative than physical aggression. Illustrative of the sex-typed norms pertaining to aggression, even children are able to specify what kinds of aggression are more appropriate for girls or boys (Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996). Following these gender norms for aggression also has benefits: Children who aggress in gender-atypical ways have lower levels of social adjustment than those who aggress in gender-typical ways (Crick, 1997).

As women enter male-dominated roles, the sex difference in physical aggression may diminish somewhat, consistent with Hyde's (1984) meta-analytic finding (but see Eagly & Steffen, 1986). In addition, women and girls have increasingly appeared in the criminal justice system. From 1993 to 2002, the rates of arrest for women rose 14.1%, whereas the rates for men decreased 5.9% (FBI, 2003). Female juveniles' rates of arrests for serious violent crimes steadily increased since 1980, although the arrest rate for male juveniles dropped since 1994 (Lynch, 2002). Although men's self-reported crime and conviction still far exceed women's, the rate of violent crime has risen among women but fallen among men.

Research relevant to agency reveals that, although men tend to behave somewhat more male-stereotypically than women, such sex differences may be decreasing over time. Agentic behaviors by women accompany their entry into male-dominated roles as their behaviors shift to reflect the affordances of these new roles.

Communion

The roles associated with communal orientations – primarily caretaking roles – have not changed their gender composition over recent decades as much as those associated with agentic orientations. One reason for this stability is that even when women enter paid work roles, they tend to work in occupations, such as teacher, nurse, and social worker, that emphasize communal

characteristics (Cejka & Eagly, 1999) or caring for others (England, Budig, & Folbre, 2002). In addition, the division of labor in family roles has changed little in comparison to changes in paid work roles (England, 2003). Comparisons of time use diaries from 1965 to 1998 found that women's time with children as a primary activity declined little over this time period; men's comparable time increased but did not equal women's at the later time point (Bianchi, 2000). Also, women, more than men, are responsible for caretaking of their elderly parents (Brewer, 2001; Cancian & Olinker, 2000).

Consistent with this stability in the female dominance of caretaking roles are findings that sex differences in communal orientations have remained relatively unchanged over time. Women's affiliation motivation, as assessed by thematic apperception tests, remained stable from 1957 to 1976, although men's decreased (Veroff et al., 1980). A meta-analysis of self-reported personality characteristics found that feminine or communal characteristics were fairly stable from 1973 to 1993 (Twenge, 1997). Similarly, women's greater tendency to endorse self-reports on caring personality traits show stability over time (Feingold, 1994). Sex differences in communally-oriented values also persisted from the 1970s to the 1990s (Beutel & Marini, 1995). In analyses of sociopolitical attitudes assessed by the General Social Survey from 1973 to 1998 (Eagly, Diekman, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Koenig, in press), women, relative to men, consistently endorsed attitudes supportive of both social compassion (i.e., support for disadvantaged groups) and traditional morality (i.e., support for conventional sexuality, restrictions on drug use or suicide). Other life goals concerning family also retain traditional sex differences: For example, college women, more than men, rated family as an important life goal (Eskilson & Wiley, 1999).

Despite the relative temporal stability of caretaking roles and communal orientation,

some specific roles enhance or inhibit communality. For example, the transition to parenthood involves greater emphasis on family goals, especially for women, whose role responsibilities tend to change more after childbirth (Salmela-Aro, Nurmi, Saisto, & Halmesmaeki, 2000). In our study of sex differences in social and political attitudes (Eagly et al., in press), markers of societal status (e.g., ethnicity) were associated with socially compassionate attitudes, whereas markers of traditional family responsibility (e.g., a child in the home) were associated with traditionally moral attitudes.

The evidence for women's greater communal orientation does not obviate men's needs for affiliation and intimacy. In research using thematic apperception tests, individuals of both sexes who are higher in the need for affiliation place importance on building and maintaining relationships (Stewart & Chester, 1982). In Hill's (1987) delineation of different types of affiliation motivation, women reported affiliating more than men for emotional support and positive stimulation but the same as men for attracting attention and social comparison. Even so, both sexes regarded positive stimulation as the most important reason for affiliation.

Although needs to affiliate may be similar in the sexes, they may be fulfilled through different means. For example, the need to belong has been posited as a fundamental human motivation occurring throughout various societies and historical periods (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). However, each sex may seek to fulfill this need with gender-normative relationships, such as groups for men and dyadic relationships for women (Baumeister & Sommer, 1997; Gardner & Gabriel, 2004). The friendships of men and women also reflect gender role differences (see Fehr, 2004, for a review): Men are more likely to engage in behavior or talk related to activities (e.g., sports), whereas women are more likely to engage in self-disclosure about personal topics. However, men and women agree that self-disclosure reveals intimacy and is prototypical of

intimacy, as compared to shared activities. Although men and women may define intimacy similarly, women may have greater opportunities in their gender role to pursue such intimacy goals across a range of situations.

Prosocial motivations are also expressed in different ways by men and women (see review by Eagly & Koenig, in press). The extent to which prosocial behavior involves agentic, risky behaviors or communal, empathic behaviors is associated with the direction of the sex difference A meta-analysis of helping behavior by Eagly and Crowley (1986) revealed an overall sex difference reflecting men's greater tendency to help (d = .13). Men tended to offer help more than women in off-campus settings or in situations that men were more likely than women to feel less endangered and more comfortable. Becker and Eagly (2004) examined heroism in real-life domains, including highly dangerous situations (emergency rescues resulting in Carnegie medals and aiding Jews in the Holocaust) and less dangerous contexts (volunteering for Doctors of the World and the Peace Corps and donating a kidney). Although men received Carnegie medals more often than women, women equally or more often than men participated in other heroic actions. In situations requiring long-term dedication, women tended to help more often. In particular, men's heroism appeared in situations that required immediate action or physical strength. These patterns suggest that features of the male gender role, especially confidence in physical abilities, contribute to men's greater performance of some types of heroic behaviors.

Conclusions and Implications

In general, fit to important social roles is a critical motivational force. Moreover, the opportunities for goal pursuit afforded by these social roles shape the kinds of goals and methods of goal pursuit elected by individuals. The sex differences in agency and communion reviewed

here consist of overlapping distributions, with large individual differences within each sex. Although individuals of both sexes may desire some level of agency and communion, their methods of pursuit may differ according to gender roles. In addition, agency and communion are much more than simple endstates; instead, these motivational orientations filter incoming stimuli and guide further social interactions. Individuals who vary in their agentic and communal orientations may thus pursue similar goals or experience similar situations quite differently. As Cantor (1994) has described, communal situations may afford the pursuit of agentic goals for some individuals, as in the case of individuals who use social support situations to bolster their academic goals.

Although the motivation to fit with one's social system is certainly functional, this conformity slows social change. One of the most challenging aspects of social change is that individuals who enter nontraditional roles meet with a great deal of resistance (Eagly & Diekman, 2004). Although they may possess the qualities necessary for excellent role performance, they may encounter harsh reactions from others. For example, a study of women in blue-collar occupations found that they experienced sexual harassment (60.0%) and sex discrimination (55.7%) much more than women in female-dominated occupations such as clerical work (Mansfield et al., 1991).

Despite this resistance, the evidence about cross-temporal changes reviewed here demonstrate that behaviors change when underlying roles change. Indeed, the expectation that roles will change may help people prepare for that eventual change. Although people are somewhat constrained by their current-day roles, they also possess a great deal of ability to adapt to changing roles (Eagly & Diekman, 2003). Experiments that manipulate the shape of role change in a novel society showed that observers project role-congruent traits to be especially

valued (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2004a). Expectations of role change also influence beliefs about the self: When people are led to believe that the role system will change in a particular fashion, they predict that they will have greater success in roles that align with the expected future of the group (Truax & Diekman, 2004). Individuals may thus be motivated to seek out roles that align with the anticipated future of their society.

The fact that individuals perceive themselves and others as malleable in the face of changing social roles offers hope in a rapidly changing world. One of the negative aspects of gender roles is that they constrain people from following individual inclinations that happen to be atypical of their gender. Unhappiness can result from denied or suppressed motives, and thus a humane society, respectful of individual potential, facilitates the ability of people of both sexes to achieve power and mastery, affiliation and intimacy.

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