

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND SEX ROLES

(A sociological study of college students)

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The role-played by a male and female in society have clearly delineated. Sex roles are deeply entrenched across cultures and time. It does not imply that they are natural and inherent. Social environment such as war, major social movements, Govt. policies has facilitated changing of sex roles specially the female roles. For the purpose of this study a 193 male and 286 female college students were selected and the result was that women are more egalitarian than college men in their attitude towards sex-roles. It is interesting to note that areas where women are becoming more modern are exactly where men want less change. Reallocation of responsibilities between the sexes and traditional role expectations disintegrate. **Keywords :-** Environment, Sex Role Traditional and Modernity

INTRODUCTION—The role-played by a male and female in society have clearly delineated. Sex roles are deeply entrenched across cultural and time it does not imply that they are natural and inherent. Social environment such as war, major social movements, government policies has facilitated changing of sex roles, specially the female roles. Females are supposed to do perform traditional feminine role. In sharp contrast men are to be aggressive, independent and suppressive of strong emotions. According to the national committee on the status of women in India 1975 a woman is primarily associated with the home responsibilities for domestic chores and her typical roles are of those house wives and mother. The role of men is seen as primarily outside home.

It is quite clear from the literature that traditionally personality difference are posited for both the sexes. In addition the arena for action is the home for women and the world for men. But as the social and environmental changes take place we swift away from stereotyped thinking about masculinity and femininity. A greater participation of women in the public sphere accompanied by men's orientation towards the domestic sphere can be taken as indicating changes in sex-roles.

The purpose of the present study was to explore attitudes towards sex-roles and to see if there are any systematic differences between the environment of subjects with traditional and non traditional attitudes.

Methodology - For the purpose of this study 193 male and 286 female college students were drawn from different colleges and represented the Arts, Commerce, science and home science discipline. The respondents were interviewed through a interview schedule. The questions were classified into three broad classes measuring attitudes towards different spheres were job-situation personality trait and household work. For the sex role modernity the data obtained from the total sample has been analyzed and discussed. In order to relate sex role modernity to family environment the total sample was divided into three groups.

Results and discussion :- The mean overall sex-role modernity of the total sample was 2.61 (Table 1) This score represents a considerable shift in the attitudes of college students from the stereotyped pattern to a more egalitarian one. The scores of the sample in the three areas indicate that this shift is largely due to their changing ideas and change in social environment. The ideas have also changed in the sphere of household responsibilities. Comparing the scores of the two sexes we observe a difference in the attitudes of men and women towards sex-roles.

Table No. 1

Mean scores on attitudes towards sex-roles.

Spheres of Sex-Role Behaviour	Male	Female	t-ratio	Total sample
Overall Modernity	2.50	2.67	4.71*	2.61
Personality traits	2.32	2.71	7.12*	2.55
Household work	2.57	2.68	2.84*	2.63
Job situation	2.68	2.64	0.77*	2.65

When we study the differences between the sexes in each area a clearer picture emerges. In the area of personality traits women are significantly more modern than men. This could be interpreted in two ways. Traditional feminine traits such as dependency, passivity are being rejected as they have a low social value, or women think that these traits are distributed more or less equally among the two sexes. Men continue to adhere to the position that are personality traits which are typically male' or typically female'. As far as household responsibilities are concerned

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women have a significantly more egalitarian attitude than men. According to women domestic chores and child care, are responsibilities to be shared by both the sexes. It is interesting to note that the areas where women are becoming more modern are exactly where men want less change. This could be a source of tension between the sexes, only in the area of job situation, both men and women have similar attitudes. The medium of instruction in school can be considered as special significance for changing traditional sex roles. Adjustments can be made only by reallocating responsibilities between the sex and traditional role expectations disintegrates.

The percentage of the college men and women who had English as a medium of instruction in school were 54.1 percent were non traditional whereas only 39.0 percent of Hindi Medium were non traditional. This could be seen as a consequence of the women's movement most of the literature and information about the movement filters in through English magazines and books. The influence is

understandably is stronger on the students who actively use the language. Family is more exposed to the pressures of a changing society

Respondents with a joint family environment 37.9 percent were non traditional whereas 52.7 percent of those coming from nuclear families were non traditional. This difference is found to be significant nuclear family is more exposed to the pressures of changing environment.

According to one study (Almquist and Angriest) mothers of career salient women and fathers of non career salient women had slightly higher educational attainment but in either case the trend was not significant. To summarize college women are more egalitarian than college men in their attitudes towards sex-roles. It would seem that a college student with non traditional sex-roles, attitudes is likely to have had English as the medium of instruction in school comes from nuclear family. In addition women students with non traditional sex roles attitudes are likely to be professional.

Table No. 2
Percentage of liberal and traditional subjects with English and Hindi medium of instruction in school.

Type of Behaviour	Percentage of Subjects with English as medium of instruction in school	Percentage of subjects with Hindi as medium of instruction in school
Non-traditional	54.1	39.0
Traditional	45.9	61.0

Chi-Square : 5.69

Table -3
Percentage of liberal and traditional subjects from joint and nuclear families

Type of Behaviour	Percentage of subjects form joint families	Percentage of subjects form nuclear families
Non-traditional	37.9	52.1
Traditional	62.1	47.9