

Tangri S. S. Determinants of occupational Role Innovation among college women.
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[Richmond College, City University of New York, NY]

College women who make non-sextypical occupational choices (Role Innovators) were found to be more autonomous, individualistic, and motivated by intrinsic achievement demands. They have greater career commitment and as many male friends as traditional. Role support appeared to come from faculty, female college friends, boyfriends, and working mothers with a higher level of education. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI)® indicates that this paper has been cited in over 135 publications since 1972.]

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My interest in diversification of women's public roles began in India in 1962 with the surprising (to me) observation that there were more women in high public office in that presumably traditional society than in the "modern" US. My dissertation advisers, Pat Gurin and Joe Veroff, wisely counseled against a cross-cultural study of women in politics for very practical reasons. So the question was converted to a comparison of more and less innovative occupational choices by women within the US. An ideal sample presented itself in the generous offer of Jerry Gurin and Ted Newcomb to share data from the Michigan Student Study with me.¹

Because of the extensive coverage of their questionnaire, to which I added the Thematic Apperception Test and other measures, I was able to explore a very wide range of predictors for occupational choice. This is one of the reasons, I believe, that the article (which is based on my dissertation) has been so widely cited. Due to its broad approach, the study refuted a number of then-current myths about "career-oriented" women: that they were father—rather than mother—identified, that they were compensating for not having boyfriends, and that they were "bookworms" without non-academic interests. The personality portrait that emerged

was predominantly favorable. It also demonstrated an achievement displacement effect in traditionally oriented women.

The study was also one of the first to change the focus of women's employment from the simple distinction between who did and who did not plan to work outside the home to the varieties of employment women wanted. The dimension on which I concentrated—the sex ratio in the occupation—proved to be highly correlated with prestige rankings and was a simple way to measure what was a traditional and what was an innovative occupational choice for women. At that time, aside from a few studies of women in a particular male-dominated field,² only Rossi³ had looked at male-dominated vs female-dominated as classes of occupations.

Another reason for the interest in the article was timing: Its appearance coincided with the swell of interest in women's roles and options that accompanied the modern women's movement. It also coincided with the recognition that employment was becoming the dominant life pattern for a majority of American women. Thus, the problems that most traditional female occupations are lower-paid, less secure, and lacking in upward mobility and that they often underutilize female training and education were exacerbated. The pressure to open new occupational territory to women was intense.

This article appeared in a special issue of the *Journal of Social Issues* that Martha Mednick invited me to co-edit and was later reprinted in *Women and Achievement*.⁴ Since then, the literature on women and achievement, and barriers to that achievement, has burgeoned. Two recent and thorough reviews of this literature are those by Nieva and Gutek⁵ and Kaufman and Richardson.⁶

My own respondents have been re-interviewed twice: in 1970 and 1981. The latter follow-up was made possible by the collaboration of Jan Hitchcock, Sharon Rae Jenkins, and Josephine Ruggiero. I am now working on a book that will cover the entire longitudinal study.

- 1 Gurin G. *A study of students in a multiversity* (Final Report.) Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, August 1971
- 2 Helson R M. Creativity, sex, and mathematics. *Proceedings of the Conference on the Creative Person*, 13-17 October 1961, University of California, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961 p IV-1-IV-12
- 3 Rossi A S. Barriers to the career choice of engineering, medicine, or science among American women (Mattfeld J A & Van Aken C G, eds.) *Women and the scientific professions*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965 p 51-127
- 4 Tangri S S. Determinants of occupational Role Innovation among college women (Mednick M T S, Tangri S S & Hoffman L W, eds.) *Women and achievement: social and motivational analyses*. Washington, DC: Hemisphere Press, 1975, p 255-73 (Cited 10 times)
- 5 Nieva V F & Gutek B A. *Women and work: a psychological perspective*. New York: Praeger, 1981 177 p
- 6 Kaufman D R & Richardson B L. *Achievement and women: challenging the assumptions*. New York: Free Press, 1982 188 p