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ALTRUISM AND SEX ROLES

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Recent experiments in the area of altruism have attempted to clarify and explain some of the relationships between sex and helping (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7), primarily by considering sex of *S* and requester in the design. The present study attempted to assess the effects of sex roles on helping by varying not only the sex of the *S* but also the femininity of the request, dress, and general appearance of the female *Es*. Two women, one tall and large and one short and petite, dressed either in masculine dress of man's shirt, jeans, tennis shoes, and straight hair or in feminine dress of ruffled blouse, high heels and curly hair made either a neutral ("Do you have change for a dime?") or relatively feminine ("My shopping cart is stuck. Can you help me?") request of 80 male and 80 female shoppers at a large discount store. *Ss* were randomly assigned to the request condition in a 2(request) \times 2(*E*) \times 2(dress) \times 2(sex of *S*) design. Responses to each request were scored by *E* as either providing help or not.

Chi-square tests, all using Yates' correction, indicated that *Es* were helped more when wearing feminine than when wearing masculine dress ($\chi^2 = 11.32, p < .001$) but that helping was not significantly related to *E* ($\chi^2 = 0.28$), the request ($\chi^2 = 1.54$), or sex of *S* ($\chi^2 = 0.28$). The effect of dress on help was significant for male *Ss* ($\chi^2 = 8.07, p < .01$) but not for female *Ss* ($\chi^2 = 2.92$). Similarly, the effect of dress on help was significant for the feminine request of help with the shopping cart ($\chi^2 = 9.63, p < .01$) but not for the neutral request of change for a dime ($\chi^2 = 1.79$).

It appears that the likelihood of an altruistic response is indeed affected by sex-role stereotypes. Women wearing feminine attire are more likely to be helped, particularly by men and particularly if they make a feminine request for help; this was not due to significant main effects of sex of helper or the nature of the request. These results support others (6), showing that male *Es* in deviant dress were less likely to be helped than those dressed conventionally. It appears that deviance from the appropriate dress for female *Es* also reduces the probability of being helped, especially in situations where the sex-role expectations are particularly marked, such as making a feminine request of a male *S*.

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