

MACHO AND HIS MATE**P H Harvey, Colorado State University****ROLE RECIPROCIITY**

To occupy a role with its expectations and performances requires the reciprocal features of another's role. To be a husband requires a wife; the mother role requires a child. When a rock group sings about wanting to be a "macho man," they imply the presence of macho's mate to fulfill the macho role. Who is the obliging female who serves as macho's consort, and what does this pair have to tell us? Feminists are well aware that macho survives not only through his own efforts, but through those of women who want to sustain his position. The macho code is expressed in Farrell's (1974)

Ten Commandments of Masculinity:

- 1) *Thou shalt not cry or expose other feelings of emotion, fear, weakness, sympathy, empathy or involvement before thy neighbor.*
- 2) *Thou shalt not be vulnerable, but honor and respect the "logical", the "practical" or "intellectual" as thou definest them.*
- 3) *Thou shalt not listen except to find fault.*
- 4) *Thou shalt condescend to women in the smallest and biggest of ways.*
- 5) *Thou shalt control thy wife's body, and all its relations, occasionally permitting it on top.*
- 6) *Thou shalt have no other egos before thee.*
- 7) *Thou shalt have no other breadwinners before thee.*
- 8) *Thou shalt not be responsible for housework before anybody.*
- 9) *Thou shalt honor and obey the straight and narrow pathway to success: job specialization.*
- 10) *Thou shalt have an answer to all problems at all times.*

The figure who emerges is domineering, exploitive, narcissistic, obsessed with a personal image of strength, and independence based on an alleged superiority of performance.

MACHO'S AGGRESSIVENESS

The behavioral outcomes of aggressiveness allow macho to prove masculinity. The behaviors validate self image and social status. At the same time, this aggressive masculine mystique begets war. Aggression turned deviant begets crimes of violence: rape, wife beating, child abuse, assault, and

murder. There are well established links between the macho image and juvenile delinquency. Dysfunctional outcomes for men include disability and death in war, stigmatized identities, and the criminal's lost social and vocational opportunities.

For macho's mate there are some tradeoffs. Society's protective posture toward women bars them from joining combat in war. Past socialization encourages female passivity, which makes women less likely to commit the violent crimes which are most costly in punishment. At the same time, such passivity may bring sorrows related to male control. Men decide when and where wars are projected. Women surrender husbands and sons to them. Women may be victims of aggression turned against them or their children, and suffer the status and opportunity losses of their criminal men. Society loses to perpetuation of war, crime, violence and many other ways.

**TOLERANCE OF PAIN;
DENIAL OF ILLNESS**

Ignoring pain and denying illness serve self image by providing another test of masculinity which is visible and impressive. G Gordon Liddy may have been an abnormal extension of pain tolerance with his trick of allowing his hand to be burned while appearing nonchalant about the pain. This attitude is typical of the sports arena with the competitive pseudo-team testing site for maleness. How we applaud the battered athlete who rises unbowed, to complete the game in spite of his injuries. An article extolling a solid veteran of the National Basketball Association playoffs suggests that League coaches are most impressed by the player's willingness, just before the game, to apply ice packs to bring down his fever enough to play. Do fans expect self-sacrifice which leads to the physical destruction of the player? Macho and his managers believe that they do.

Goldberg (1976) cites three basic processes which contribute to physical deterioration of men: 1) intellectualization, making a machine of one's body; 2) macho rigidity, to perform at all costs, denying bodily pain; and 3) guilt

for allowing onwself be become the well-fed infant of an "earth-mother wife." From these processes, all based on tradition, men become prime candidates for bodily harm related to poor diets, high stresses, and actual physical assaults on their bodies. Men lose status by not being tough enough. They give less attention to the care and maintenance of their bodies than to their cars and technical equipment.

Are women ever served by this pain/illness trait? Where they are relieved of responsibility for painful tasks, should they clamor to acquire them? Macho's mate, by serving a complementary role, can get a great deal of attention by accepting the illness role. Her frailty validates his strength. She needs and deserves his reward. Since we all become ill occasionally, and all have pain thresholds, mate's role allows her to accept these conditions of pain and illness. Her role is less demanding, and she can nicely exploit it. There are potential costs in the resentment from her more sorely burdened partner, and in the peculiar dichotomy for the woman who sees a way to amass partial power by becoming a covert source of strength to the man who must appear above the need for help. One cannot simultaneously be a pillar of strength and a wilted lily.

Are there costs to society? There are, if we define addiction to pain killers, disability, death via coronary failure and strokes, and other potentially controllable ills as problems for society. There are problems is we recognize that requiring tolerance of pain and illness reduces the likelihood of finding solutions for the causes of illness and pain.

COMPETITION: MACHO'S DAILY BREAD

Competition simplifies the standards for gauging self-worth. Occupational success and its visible proof in money and status symbols move macho in a required direction. By making a competitive fetish of what one must do anyway, the base for success or failure narrows to more manageable limits. Consider the plight of "Supermom", whose base for success or failure is extraordinarily wide by comparison. It is in the nature of competition that one's highest excellence is always open to challenge, and must be vigilantly sustained.

That which confers status can also be the

source of failure. It is this duality which becomes the instrument of macho's mate. His mate basks in his success, with little attendant effort in most cases, and with status advantages to herself. Failed husbands confer their failed status and perhaps their displaced aggressions on their wives, but the mate who has picked one who can win knows that she can whip up his will to win by manipulating another variable. She can work with his private need for support, contrasted with his public disclaimer of any need for help, least of all, from a woman.

INDEPENDENCE VS CONFLICT

Macho's mate can generate power for herself by being his "helpmeet", as she appears to respond to an anxiety she helps to beget - his fear of failure and fear of loss. In a system where men are constrained, where self-disclosure to others, especially, to other men, makes one vulnerable to betrayal, macho's mate has a strong hand. The competitive role simplifies by estranging men from each other, and from their traits historically viewed as feminine. For one to win, another must lose. Independence training is a necessary adjunct to the development of the competitive male. Denial of help is a response to the perception that competitors are unlikely to give help.

The burden of proof of interpersonal skills is reduced. Contempt toward and dominance of women in occupational settings reduces the competitive pool. But the source for human caring has become concentrated in the mate, who can privately share the distresses which cannot be publicly admitted. Men are denied affectionate relations with equals. Failed men are likely to scapegoat spouse victims of their shared plight. But men with success potential may find themselves caught in the trap of working harder and harder to acquire the conditional love and assistance of their mates. Where the mate withholds such love, men blame themselves or external causes; not their wives. Because she is not viewed by macho as the source of wisdom, since men are presumed smarter than women, her costs of giving unsuccessful aid are not high, and her intent is perceived as good. But she must be clever. If he truly sees his relation to her as subservient, he will fear her power and shrink

from it.

For women with confused identities, the duality of helper/helpless is difficult. Seeing themselves as inept, but genuinely hoping to help, women are in a difficult strait. For women who see themselves as strong and instrumental, the nurturant role can be deftly corrupted into a power dynamic.

At the societal level the independence, no-help wanted motif has obvious consequences in that many problems which require cooperative effort and maximum sharing of ideas will not be solved. Jealous guardians of their own ideas, furtive thieves of others' best achievements do not create solidary societies. Competition builds better technologies, perhaps, but poorer organizations, and poorly integrated societies. No-help people blunder to lesser rather than to optimal decisions.

DO OTHERS DIRTY; DO NO DIRTY WORK

This macho motto, "Do others dirty, and shun dirty work," which fosters the isolation of competitors, also allows macho to redirect unpleasant domestic work, such as cleaning and drudgery and sticky interpersonal problems to his mate. If he accepts an occasional exercise in cooking creatively, he can claim to be a gourmet chef, leaving the mundane kitchen chores to his mate. In doing so, however macho estranges himself from the realities of household life, and the understanding of the work required to create the home environment. The homemaker's pride in her principal living space is understandable. Should macho find that he must take on household duties, he is unfit for it, and finds that his image suffers.

For many women there is a psychological burden of knowing that domestic work involves high expectations from macho. "What else does she have to do all day?" The recognition is very low, since the housewife has machinery to ease her low status work.

For the wife of the successful macho man, the picture is somewhat different. She feeds his ego by providing the cozy environment appropriate for this man who does such important work. She carves out her domain without competing with or threatening her spouse. The more successful he is, the more likely it is that she can encourage him to provide

conspicuous leisure by hiring servants to do her housework.

MACHO'S SEX DRIVE

Macho and his mate have a role relation affected by *his allegedly uncontrolled sexual nature versus her passion constrained within marriage*. Macho's typical package of appearance and mannerisms suggests a highly sexed person who requires sexual outlets. Having established these expectations as basic to his nature, and beyond personal control, macho is free to express himself sexually to reduce his tensions. In contrast to our earlier views of women as creatures of very little passion, who were constrained to purity, macho has a less debilitating role on the surface. But macho creates troubles for himself with this image all the same.

He has tied sexual needs to his sexual prowess, and to his ability to seduce and produce. Validation of status and self-image require proof of success with women, not mere acquisition of them. Even acquisition is a problem. The ability to reject a man gives a woman a source of power (Farrell 1982). Some men are led to seek women who are *lookers*, who will consent, and who will validate their status, but are likely to be manipulative and exploitive themselves, rather than providers of adequate and enduring emotional support.

Macho's mate may have difficulty coping with his sexual demands, needs for sexual reassurance, and with her fears that he may stray to other women. The perpetual anxiety about his sexuality requires perpetual validation of his worth. Perhaps she cannot provide enough. She is urged by popular writers to control her mate's sexuality as a *total, positive, fascinating* woman. She is bombarded with media messages suggesting that if other women succeed in luring their husbands away, that the wife is to blame for not being "woman enough."

Still, some macho mates realize that they can increase their power by validating macho's sexual prowess. They may win the prize of marriage via sexual bargaining and promises, and may be encouraged to continue the use of sexual bargaining for power. She supports his hatred of homosexuals to detach him from the potential nurturance in himself and other men, requiring him to seek comfort in women,

especially his helpful, agreeable mate. She offers the great treat. She accepts his sexual nature, demonstrates her own passion, but loves him alone, so much so that she conveys it all to him. He senses power; she *has* power.

THE TYRANNY OF NARCISSISM

As years pass, macho becomes increasingly concerned with creating status and self-image through cosmetic manipulations of himself. Industry applauds and invites his continuing effort. To be seen as handsome, youthful, or having a special presence opens doors giving access to women and occupational opportunities. Hair transplants, body-building courses, and macho dress are among the supportive techniques. Men can buy beauty as women do, packaged for the macho image. But vendors who reduce anxiety via commercial products know that it serves their interest to spend much effort to induce anxiety. Men take longer to pay the costs of aging, but learn at an early age to dread them. They also risk rejection for more successful competitors. And they face the same fear which they generate in their mates with regard to self versus other women. But some mates are served by macho's narcissism. As with sexual bargaining, they hold power in communicating the continuing appeal of macho over other men. The adoring, faithful, passionate mate soars on macho's fragile ego.

Self-preoccupation and competitive fears estrange macho from others. The interests of business, advertising and media set people against each other in a race for youth, beauty, and superiority which ultimately cannot be won. Power asymmetry of macho and his mate is not always in the predicted direction. He may dominate and intimidate, and make his mate a victim of tyranny, brutality, and slavery to his concerns and whims. Her place is no stronger than that of her failed husband, and she bears his consequences.

For the macho male defined as successful by society, there is much room for a mate to manipulate power, to dominate, to victimize the insecure male. As he grows more successful, she can hire servants. She becomes free to generate personal anxieties in macho which will enhance her power as the agent for conferring status and self-image, in terms of her attractiveness, sexuality, covert emotional

and practical assistance. Thus she sustains his public presentation of self. She gains leisure time by urging him on to more and more profitable work. She can generate much personal power merely by creating anxieties in him, and benevolently helping him to reduce them. It is easy to do since it is macho's compulsion always to do more and better. His successes become hers with little effort on her part. She is allowed to provide instrumental help, without the burden of having to be right, or technically adequate, which is forced on macho. If she succeeds in generating such control, she may overlook occasional infidelity as a low price for her high rewards.

CONCLUSION

The macho role is more dysfunctional than functional, but is less dysfunctional for women. Those who attain power behind a successful macho have no wish to relinquish their combat soldiers. They have trained them to fight the competitive wars which they help create in being willing to shore up a social and occupational world dominated by the macho mystique. They contribute heavily to defeating women's issues for social equality.

What future has macho-mate role reciprocity, compared with other roles? For those who want alternatives, the future holds some hope but many concerns. College men and women in my sex role classes are more questioning of traditional sex role stereotypes, but a recent poll among college students refutes the idea that androgeny has wide support. Feminists criticize the androgeny notion, saying that it reinforces male-female stereotype attributes over individual opportunities for development of mutually rewarding relations of men and women which are not mutually destructive. Androgeny requires high scores on traits typically assigned to both males and females.

We still wait for cultural attitudes and conditions favorable to production of nongendrous selves. The cultural question is whether favoring masculine and feminine dimensions is to minimize or maximize human malfunctions in the macho-mate relation. They seem to deserve each other. But do they serve the rest of us, and do we deserve them?

Wars, planets simply serve as theaters of war. They are a stage for resolving human contradictions, where planets are destroyed or changed for the combatants' use. A final theme asserts a natural superiority of humans. American industrialized values win in Star Wars through Luke Skywalker and Han Solo. Non-humans appear either as teddy bears, barbarians, drifters, or wizards. The aliens are obviously more advanced than the humans. But this is not the result of species ascription, since humans are about to join the galaxy on the road to cosmic ascendancy.

CONCLUSION

A fully developed exo-sociology may prove revitalizing to the profession. In the larger cultural setting, the dangers of mythological preconceptions concerning ETIS or any peoples classed as alien should be apparent from this review of the earlier European first contact with the "aliens".

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HARVEY

Continued from Page 170

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