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THE ATTITUDES OF MEN AND WOMEN CONCERNING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN GRIEF

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ABSTRACT

Attitudes concerning gender and grief were investigated using a convenience sample of 106 men and women ages 23 to 82 years. Participants rated conjugal grief behaviors of target figures for sympathy and appropriateness on the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale, rated their own sex-role type on the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and provided demographic information and a brief grief history. Results from factor analysis of the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale showed evidence for the construct validity of the scale by yielding three factors: sympathy, appropriateness of instrumental grief, and appropriateness of intuitive grief. The hypothesis that factor analysis of the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale would show that vignettes describing gender-stereotypical grief behavior would load positively on factors for sympathy and appropriateness was not confirmed. However, the hypothesis that female participants would give more sympathy to grieving people than males was confirmed. Contrary to expectation, participants did not give female target figures more sympathy than male figures; women did not give the most sympathy to female target figures; and men did not give male target figures the least sympathy. As hypothesized, feminine sex-typed and androgynous participants gave more sympathy to grieving people than masculine sex-typed participants. Findings were discussed in terms of evolutionary, developmental, and sex-role socialization theories.

INTRODUCTION

Grief responses to loss have long been a focus of psychological research. Researchers have formulated stages or tasks through which grievers must progress in order to successfully complete the grieving process (Parkes, 1970; Rando, 1993; Worden, 1991). The theory of grief with which these researchers work defines grief as an ongoing reorientation on the part of the survivor to the loss of a loved one. This reorientation occurs in two spheres: the internal sphere of emotions, beliefs, and cognitions; and the external sphere of roles and behaviors. Such reorientation takes place in the context of family, work, friends, and activities and can be directed, to some extent, by the informed griever.

Studies of gender and grief have looked at differences in grief reactions between widows and widowers, or differences between fathers and mothers of deceased children. In studies of elderly bereaved spouses, some researchers found that bereavement was harder on women than on men (Carey, 1979; Lopata, 1973; Parkes, 1970). Widows complained of greater negative health symptoms than widowers and were more prone to psychological illness (Gilbar & Dagan, 1995; Parkes & Brown, 1972). Other researchers, however, found that widowers fared worse than widows in risk of mortality (Bowling & Windsor, 1995; Stroebe, 1994) and other measures (Cummings & Henry, 1961; Sanders, 1989; Stillion, 1985).

In research involving bereaved parents, one study showed that women scored higher than men on all but one of the bereavement scales of the Grief Experience Inventory (Sidmore, 2000). Another study found that mothers cried much more than fathers, were more likely to cope by writing and reading about loss and grief, reached out to help others more frequently, and overall used a wider variety of coping mechanisms than fathers (Schwab, 1990). Yet another study showed that mothers scored higher on measures of coping difficulty, active grief, depression, preoccupation, sadness, difficulty in functioning, and finding resolution than fathers, whereas fathers scored higher on measures of specific anger. This study also found that fathers received higher scores than mothers on a measure of most severe grief two years post loss, indicating that mothers' grief over the death of a child decreases over time while fathers' increases. The authors concluded that men may deny grief over the death of a child, in part because of gender stereotypes calling for men to be strong and unemotional, and thus are prevented from adaptively coping with their loss (Stinson & Lasker, 1992).

Carroll and Schaefer (1994) found that bereaved mothers were more likely than fathers to seek support both outside and within the family, including crying with friends and asking for prayer, holding their partner or spouse, and accepting support from their partners or spouses. These findings, generally supporting higher levels of affective response, distress, and support seeking in mothers than in fathers, were corroborated in similar studies by Irizarry and Willard (1998) and Kavanaugh (1997). Research on other populations, including middle-aged adults reacting to the death of a parent (Douglas, 1990; Moss, Resch, &

Moss, 1997) and adolescents responding to the death of a parent (Lenhardt & McCourt, 2000; Meshot & Leitner, 1993); Recklitis & Noam, 1999) have demonstrated similar findings. Both age groups have shown the typical gender-related grief patterns reported for widows and widowers and mothers and fathers grieving the death of a child.

Researchers have labeled these gender differences in grief "masculine" and "feminine" (Corr, Nabe, & Corr, 2000; Nolen-Hoeksema & Larson, 1999; Stinson & Lasker, 1992). The consensus of most research has been that so-called feminine grief, characterized by open displays of intense affect, support seeking, and sharing of emotions with others, is necessary for any griever regardless of sex (Staudacher, 1991). According to this point of view, people, usually men, who fail to express their grief in this affective manner are considered to be responding in an inappropriate, unhealthy way (Corr et al., 2000; Martin & Doka, 1996).

Models of grief therapy that have developed from this consensus encourage grievers to experience the pain of the loss and to vent emotions of grief. While these models do not explicitly state that intense, open, affective responses are the only way to grieve, they all include some component that emphasizes deeply experiencing the pain of the loss as one of the necessary steps of grieving—Parkes' yearning and searching, Worden's working through the pain of grief, and Rando's reacting to the separation.

More recently, some researchers, although noting general differences in grief responses between most men and women, have questioned whether it might not be more useful to characterize grief reactions as a continuum stretching from instrumental grief (cognitive, problem-solving ways of dealing with loss; so-called masculine grief) to intuitive grief (emotive, help-seeking ways of dealing with loss; so-called feminine grief) (Martin & Doka, 1996, 2000). This model, while allowing for the fact that most men react toward the instrumental end of the continuum and most women toward the intuitive end, would recognize the validity of a variety of grief responses for both sexes. Grief therapy incorporating this model aims at encouraging each griever to find outlets for grief that correspond to his or her place on the continuum. An instrumental griever might explore activities honoring the deceased such as building a memorial, discussing implications of the loss for the griever, or discovering ways of solving problems arising out of the loss, and even finding safe (i.e., private) situations where affective responses can comfortably be expressed. An intuitive griever, on the other hand, might experience the pain of the loss more deeply, vent emotions openly, and seek support from individuals and groups (Golden, 1996; Martin & Doka, 2000).

Western social and cultural norms, though perhaps becoming less rigid than formerly, discourage bereaved people from displaying extreme grief reactions (Aros, Buckingham, & Rodriguez, 1999; Bierhals et al., 1996). General cultural avoidance of the notion of death and dying combines with stereotypes of masculine and feminine behavior to influence expressions of grief and forces men

and women to find socially acceptable outlets for grief. Women, traditionally raised to be more passive and dependent as well as more emotionally expressive than males, often find ready-made outlets of support through networks of friends. Men are raised to be decisive, strong, successful, and inexpressive (Stillion & McDowell, 2001-2002; White & Stillion, 1988). Already influenced by their need for independence, autonomy, and protection of their place on the hierarchy, males are discouraged from expressing grief so as not to be seen as lacking independence and being feminine. Instead, males are allowed the outlet of action, which is respected as being masculine (Golden, 1996).

A study by White and Stillion (1988) explored reactions of male and female participants to suicidal and non-suicidal adolescent male and female target figures. Results showed that female participants sympathized more than male subjects with all target figures, male or female, suicidal or not. Male participants reported more sympathy for troubled males who did not attempt suicide than for males who attempted suicide, or for females in either condition. These results supported the researchers' hypothesis that males stigmatize other males who attempt suicide. White and Stillion concluded that attempted suicide by troubled males may be viewed by other males as violations of sex role norms of strength, decisiveness, success, and inexpressiveness. Later research reported by Canetto and Sakinofsky (1998) supports the contention that attempted suicide is generally viewed as a feminine act in Western culture, as do consistent findings of a four-to-one ratio of female to male suicide attempts (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

An earlier study by Kubitz, Thornton, and Robertson (1989) assessed the impact of college-age subjects' expectations about grief on their evaluation of the interpersonal attractiveness of a grieving peer. Grievers were described as displaying either low or high intensity symptoms. Low intensity symptoms included feeling slightly sad and withdrawn, having reduced feelings of anger and guilt, having a tightness in the stomach, and thinking of the deceased. High intensity symptoms included feeling very sad and depressed, experiencing anger and guilt, sitting alone and crying, hearing the deceased, experiencing loss of appetite, and getting headaches. Additionally, grievers were divided into those responding to an anticipated death and those responding to an unanticipated (sudden) death. Results showed that males were rated as more interpersonally attractive if their grief was low intensity and especially if the death involved was unanticipated, which the authors suggested may relate to the stereotype that men should be strong, quiet, and unemotional in grief. Female grievers were considered more interpersonally attractive if the death was anticipated and symptoms were low intensity. If the death was unanticipated, however, females with high intensity symptoms were seen as more attractive than those with low intensity symptoms. The authors concluded that the subjects expected that grief responses would be different in men and women. It would be considered appropriate for women to show high intensity symptoms of grief after an unanticipated death, and thus they

could still be considered attractive. Men, on the other hand, are expected to behave more stoically. When they show high intensity grief symptoms, they are believed to behave inappropriately and thus become less attractive.

In summary, research has shown that most males grieve in a masculine or instrumental manner, and most females grieve in a feminine or intuitive manner. Other research suggests that this apparent sex difference is related to male and female sex roles that are taught and heavily reinforced within the culture. It is believed, therefore, that gender-stereotypical grief behavior may result in more sympathy and may be considered to be more appropriate than gender-atypical grief behavior.

The present study addressed attitudes toward the grieving behaviors of men and women. Ratings of sympathy and appropriateness given to target figures, considered to be grieving in gender-stereotypical or gender-atypical ways, were explored. The study also investigated the relationship between the sex of the participant and the sex of the target figure on ratings of sympathy and appropriateness. These questions were investigated using a new instrument, the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale. Also, comparisons were made between the sex type of the participants, measured by the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and ratings of sympathy for grief behaviors.

Hypotheses

1. A factor analysis of the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale will show that vignettes describing gender-stereotypical grief behavior (i.e., men who are stoic and women who are expressive) will load positively on factors for sympathy and for appropriateness, and that vignettes describing gender-atypical grief behavior (i.e., men who are expressive and women who are stoic) will load negatively on factors for sympathy and appropriateness.
2. Female participants will give higher levels of sympathy than male participants to all of the grieving individuals described in the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale vignettes.
3. Female target figures described in the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale vignettes will receive more sympathy than male target figures from all participants.
4. Female target figures described in the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale will receive their highest sympathy ratings from female participants, and male target figures will receive their lowest sympathy ratings from male participants.
5. Participants showing a feminine sex type and those showing an androgynous sex type on the Bem Sex Role Inventory will give higher ratings of sympathy to all target figures on the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale vignettes than participants showing a masculine sex type.

METHOD

Participants

A convenience sample of 106 volunteer participants comprised of 42 males (39.4% of the total sample) and 64 females (60.6% of the total) was recruited from churches, civic organizations, and retirement communities in western North Carolina. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 82 (Mean = 54.37 years, *SD* = 14.81 years). The mean age of males was 55.79 (*SD* = 14.91), and the mean for females was 53.44 (*SD* = 14.78).

Responses to a questionnaire about previous grief experiences indicated that 34 males (79.1%) and 54 females (81.8%) had experienced grief in the past, but were not grieving at the time they participated in the study. Six males and seven females reported that they were experiencing grief at the time of participation in the study, and two males and three females reported that they had never experienced significant grief.

Instruments

Sex Role Inventory (SRI)

The Sex Role Inventory is a self-report measure of identification with personality traits traditionally associated with stereotypical masculine and feminine sex roles (Bem,1974). The SRI consists of 20 phrases which are associated with stereotypical masculine traits, 20 associated with stereotypical feminine traits, and 20 associated with neutral (neither stereotypical masculine nor feminine) characteristics. Participants rated themselves on each item on a scale of 1 (Never) to 7 (Always) according to how closely they identified with the item. Each participant received a summed score for Masculine responses, a summed score for Feminine responses, a score for Androgyny (a *t*-score estimate calculated by Feminine score minus Masculine score multiplied by 2.322, a conversion factor empirically derived by Bem from a normative sample), and a Sex Type score from 1 to 4 (1 = masculine sex-typed, 2 = feminine sex-typed, 3 = androgynous, 4 = undifferentiated).

Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale (ATGGS)

The Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale is a new instrument developed by the second author to measure attitudes toward gender-stereotypical and gender-atypical grief responses of men and women. The scale includes 20 vignettes that describe individuals' responses to conjugal bereavement. Half of the widowed target figures in the vignettes are men and half are women. Half of the vignettes for each sex describe gender-stereotypical grief responses (i.e., women who are expressive and men who are stoic), and half describe gender-atypical responses (i.e., men who are expressive and women who are stoic). Participants

were asked to read each vignette and indicate their feelings of sympathy for the target figure and to rate the appropriateness of the target figure's grief response. A Likert-type rating was used for both the Sympathy and the Appropriateness scales with 1 = the lowest possible rating of sympathy or appropriateness and 5 = the highest rating of each.

Grief Demographic Questionnaire (GDQ)

A Grief Demographic Questionnaire was used to collect demographic information that would be helpful in interpreting findings from the SRI and the ATTGS. Participants used this questionnaire to report sex, age, date of birth, and grief history.

RESULTS

Reliability of the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale

The Attitude Toward Gender and Grief Scale is comprised of 40 items which make up eight different subscales of five items each based on the sex of the target figure, the gender stereotypicality of the grief response, and ratings of sympathy and appropriateness for the griever described in the vignette. The eight subscales are labeled as follows: Male Characteristic Appropriate Total (MCAT); Female Characteristic Appropriate Total (FCAT); Male Uncharacteristic Appropriate Total (MUAT); Female Uncharacteristic Appropriate Total (FUAT); Male Characteristic Sympathy Total (MCST); Female Characteristic Sympathy Total (FCST); Male Uncharacteristic Sympathy Total (MUST); and Female Uncharacteristic Sympathy Total (FUST).

Because the ATGGS is a new scale, Alpha reliability coefficients were computed for the overall scale and for each of the eight subscales to determine internal consistency. The reliability estimate for the overall scale was .92. Coefficients for seven of the eight subscales ranged from .66 to .83, and one scale (MUAT) showed a reliability coefficient of .50.

Factor Structure of the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale

Data from the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale were factor analyzed, using the eight subscale scores (MCAT, FCAT, MUAT, FUAT, MCST, FCST, MUST, and FUST) in order to investigate construct validity. The data were analyzed by a principal components analysis using the Varimax rotation method with Kaiser Normalization. Factors were created from each component that accounted for 10% or more of the total variance.

Because previous research has suggested that males and females may have different attitudes toward grief, the subscale scores of the ATGGS were first analyzed for male and female participants separately. The rotated component matrices resulting from the factor analyses of the ATGGS for male and female participants separately yielded identical factors for each sex. Three components that accounted for 10% or more of the variance and, cumulatively, for 89% of the variance emerged for both male and female participants.

Because the factor structure of male and female responses on the ATGGS was not different, the data were then factor analyzed for male and female participants combined. As expected, the analysis yielded three components which accounted for at least 10% of the total variance. Components 1, 2, and 3 accounted for 54%, 23%, and 11% of the total variance, respectively, and, cumulatively, for 89%.

The rotated component matrix from the factor analysis of data for male and female subjects combined is presented in Table 1. As shown in this table, the four sympathy subscales of the ATGGS load heavily on Component 1, indicating that the first and strongest factor yielded is a relatively pure measure of sympathy for grieving people. This component was designated Sympathy. Table 1 shows also that Component 2 primarily reflects ratings of the appropriateness of instrumental grieving behavior, as indicated by heavy loadings from the MCAT and FUAT subscales, which measure the appropriateness of instrumental (i.e., masculine characteristic and feminine uncharacteristic) grief. This component was designated Appropriate/Instrumental. Table 1 shows that the third Component primarily reflects appropriateness ratings for intuitive grief, as

Table 1. Rotated Component Matrix from Factor Analysis of the Eight Subscales of the ATGGS for Male and Female Participants Combined

	Components		
Subscales	1	2	3
MCST	.92	.00	.24
FCST	.88	.00	.39
MUST	.86	.00	.35
FUST	.84	.37	.00
MCAT	.00	.94	.20
FCAT	.26	.29	.85
MUAT	.28	.21	.87
FUAT	.00	.93	.21

indicated by heavy loadings from the FCAT and MUAT subscales, which measure the appropriateness of intuitive (i.e., feminine characteristic and masculine uncharacteristic) grief. This component was designated Appropriate/Intuitive. Factor scores, labeled Sympathy, Appropriateness/Instrumental, and Appropriateness/Intuitive, were generated from these three components for use in further analyses.

Hypotheses Regarding the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale

Hypothesis 1 was that a factor analysis of the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale would show that vignettes describing gender-stereotypical grief behavior (i.e., men who are stoic and women who are expressive) would load positively on factors for sympathy and for appropriateness, and that vignettes describing gender-atypical grief behavior (i.e., men who are expressive and women who are stoic) would load negatively on factors for sympathy and appropriateness. However, no factor for gender-stereotypicality was found. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not confirmed. In other words, subjects did not give ratings of sympathy and appropriateness based on the gender-stereotypicality of the griever's response described in the vignettes.

Hypothesis 2 was that female participants would give higher ratings of sympathy than male participants to all of the widowed individuals described in the vignettes of the ATGGS. Means and standard deviations for the Sympathy factor scores were calculated. The mean total sympathy factor score for male participants was –.28 (n = 42, SD = 1.07), while the mean for females was .18 (n = 64, SD = .92). A t-test for independent sample means, comparing the mean scores for males and females on the Sympathy factor, was found to be significant (t = –2.34, df = 104, $p < .01$). The hypothesis that females give more sympathy than males to grieving people was confirmed.

Hypothesis 3 was that female target figures described in the vignettes of the ATGGS would receive more sympathy than male target figures from all participants. Hypothesis 4 was that female target figures would receive their highest sympathy ratings from female participants, and male target figures would receive their lowest sympathy ratings from male participants.

Means and standard deviations for total sympathy scores of ATGGS vignettes having male target figures and vignettes having female target figures, by sex of participant, are presented in Table 2. A review of these means shows that the sympathy scores for male and female target figures were almost identical (40.72 for male targets and 40.36 for female targets). Table 3 also shows that, although female participants gave higher sympathy ratings than male participants in general, neither sex gave differential ratings of sympathy as a function of the sex of the target figures in the vignettes.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for the Total of All Sympathy Scores by Sex of Participant and Sex of Target Figure

Target figure	Participant	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Male	Male	38.71	7.25	42
	Female	41.98	6.40	64
	Total	40.72	6.90	106
Female	Male	38.27	7.10	42
	Female	41.68	6.38	64
	Total	40.36	6.84	106

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for the Sympathy Factor Scores by Participants in the Four Bem Sex-Role Categories

	Sympathy		
Sex role	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Masculine	24	–.50	.99
Feminine	26	.35	.99
Androgynous	27	.30	.89
Undifferentiated	29	–.17	.95

These data were analyzed using a multivariate procedure for within groups (sex of target figure) and between groups (sex of participant). The results showed no significant main effect for sympathy ratings by sex of target figure and no significant interaction between sex of target figure and sex of participant. The findings, however, did show a significant main effect for sex of participant ($F = 3767.741$, $df = 1$, $p < .0005$), reflecting the fact that females gave more sympathy than males to all target figures (as demonstrated earlier using factor scores for Sympathy). These findings failed to confirm either Hypothesis 3, that female target figures will receive more sympathy than male target figures, or Hypothesis 4, that female target figures will receive their highest sympathy ratings from female participants and male target figures will receive their lowest sympathy ratings from male participants, In other words, the sex of the target figure was not related to ratings of sympathy for either male or female participants.

Hypothesis 5 was that participants showing a feminine sex type and those showing an androgynous sex type would give more sympathy to all target figures than would participants identifying with a masculine sex type. All participants completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory in order to determine sex type. The Bem scores for each participant were classified as Masculine Sex-Typed (greater than the normed median of 4.9 on the average of self-ratings of the masculine items and below 4.9 on feminine items), Feminine Sex-Typed (greater than the median of 4.9 on the average of self-ratings of the feminine items and below 4.9 on masculine items), Androgynous (above 4.9 on both masculine and feminine items), or Undifferentiated (below 4.9 for both masculine and feminine items).

The number of participants falling into each of the Bem sex-type categories and the means and standard deviations for the Sympathy factor scores for each sex type are presented in Table 3. As shown in this table, the 106 participants in the study divided rather evenly across the four sex-type categories. A review of the mean scores for the Sympathy factor across sex-type categories shows that Feminine sex-typed participants and Androgynous participants gave higher sympathy ratings than Masculine sex-typed and Undifferentiated participants.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the mean Sympathy factor scores across the four Bem Sex-Type categories showed significant differences ($F = 4.54$, $df = 3$, $p < .005$). Also, the Tukey HSD test was used to compare the individual means for the Sympathy factor. Results showed significant differences for sympathy between masculine sex-typed participants and feminine sex-typed participants ($p < .012$), and between masculine sex-typed participants and androgynous participants ($p < .018$), but no significant differences on the Sympathy factor for any other mean comparisons. Therefore, Hypothesis 5, that participants who identify themselves with a feminine or androgenous sex role would give more sympathy than those who identify with a masculine sex role, was confirmed. In other words, individuals whose sex type is feminine and those who are androgynous give more sympathy to grieving people than do masculine sex-typed individuals.

DISCUSSION

The Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale was found to have acceptable internal consistency reliability, both overall and for the eight subscales. Also, factor analysis of the scale found three strong factors, which were designated Sympathy, Appropriateness/Instrumental, and Appropriateness/Intuitive based on the loadings of the subscales comprising them. Therefore, the ATGGS can be considered an internally reliable instrument with evidence for construct validity for assessing the sympathy accorded to grief behaviors and the extent to which those behaviors are considered appropriate.

The emergence of the same three components for data from both male and female participants showed that men and women make ratings of sympathy and appropriateness in the same manner. Both appear to offer sympathy to bereaved people regardless of how appropriately they believe the griever behaves. At the same time, they seem to have different standards for instrumental and intuitive grief as evidenced by separate appropriateness factors for each. They interpret instrumental and intuitive grief as two different things, rating the appropriateness of each differently.

Hypothesis 1, that a factor analysis of the Attitudes Toward Gender and Grief Scale would show that vignettes describing gender-stereotypical grief behavior (i.e., men who are stoic and women who are expressive) would load positively on factors for sympathy and for appropriateness, and that vignettes describing gender-atypical grief behavior (i.e., men who are expressive and women who are stoic) would load negatively on factors for sympathy and appropriateness, was not confirmed. Thus, men and women do not appear to give or withhold sympathy or to make judgments concerning appropriateness based on the gender-stereotypicality of the grief behavior.

An individual feels sympathetic toward grievers no matter what the griever's sex or how they express their grief; sympathy for a griever's pain is not colored by his or her sex or behavior. The same individual, however, makes judgments about how appropriately a griever behaves depending on how "well" he or she is grieving in either a masculine or a feminine manner according to standards for that particular type of grief.

These findings indicate that people do not make distinctions about grief based on gender-stereotypicality when giving sympathy or when judging the appropriateness of the griever's behavior. This interpretation, however, is not consistent with previous research on attitudes toward suicidal target figures and toward college-age grievers. Both of these studies (Kubitz et al., 1989; White and Stillion, 1988) found that men who "acted like men" (in a stereotypical, instrumental manner) and women who "acted like women" (in a stereotypical, intuitive manner) were given more sympathy and rated as more attractive than those who did not. It should be noted, however, that neither of these comparison studies dealt with conjugal grief as the ATGGS vignettes do.

The present study, in failing to confirm these findings, raises several possibilities: 1) differences in attitudes toward gender-stereotypical and gender-atypical grief may be smaller than supposed; 2) suicide may garner a stronger response than death due to natural causes; 3) age and generational differences between participants in these studies may have influenced the results (participants in both comparison studies were college age, while participants in the present study were beyond traditional college age); or 4) the studies mentioned may be addressing constructs (sympathy and attractiveness) that are not equivalent. Such questions are appropriate for further study.

Hypothesis 2, that women would give more sympathy than men to grieving people, was confirmed. This finding, in line with previous research showing women to be more sympathetic than men toward suicidal or troubled figures, may suggest that females have a higher base level of sympathy than males. Several possibilities for this finding are suggested by various fields of psychology (Cochran & Rabinowitz, 1996; Douglas, 1990; Golden, 1996). Both evolutionary and developmental psychology postulate a greater requirement for women to engage in nurturing and sharing activities. Such activities might foster a closer sense of relatedness or identification with others' emotions. Developmental theory also suggests that males in Western society undergo such painful differentiation from their mothers that they protect themselves from further intimacy, which might play a role in the lesser sympathy accorded by males relative to women. It may also be the case that traditional cultural influences, demanding that men behave in stereotypically masculine ways, may cause men to see sympathy itself as inherently feminine and thus something to be tempered.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 stated that female target figures described in the ATGGS vignettes would receive more sympathy than male target figures from all participants. Male target figures would receive their lowest sympathy ratings from male participants, and female target figures would receive their highest sympathy ratings from female participants. These hypotheses were based on two findings from a study on attitudes toward attempted suicide (White & Stillion, 1988). First, female suicidal target figures received more sympathy than male suicidal target figures; and second, male suicidal target figures received the lowest sympathy ratings from male participants, while female suicidal target figures received the highest sympathy ratings from female participants. However, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were not confirmed. Both male and female target figures received roughly the same level of sympathy from both men and women. A possible explanation is that people view suicide differently from grief: attempted suicide may be considered less masculine than grief, causing men, in particular, to judge suicidal men more harshly than grieving men.

Hypothesis 5, that both feminine and androgynous sex-typed participants would give more sympathy to all target figures than masculine sex-typed participants, was confirmed. These findings suggest that individuals, regardless of sex, who identify strongly with traits traditionally associated with feminine sex roles (feminine sex-typed), and who in so doing reject stereotypical masculine traits, give more sympathy to grievers than participants who identify strongly with stereotypical masculine traits (masculine sex-typed). Evolutionary and developmental psychology postulates regarding the traditional nurturing and sharing roles for females, discussed earlier in this section, may apply here also. The findings indicate also that people who identify strongly with both stereotypical masculine and feminine traits (androgynous sex-typed) also give more sympathy to grievers than people who are masculine sex-typed. These findings are consistent

with the interpretation that androgynous people feel free to express characteristic masculine or feminine behavior as seems appropriate for the situation.

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