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CRIMINAL JUSTICE

IMPLICATIONS OF THE MACHO PERSONALITY CONSTELLATION

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This article outlines a script theory of macho personality and discusses its potential forensic application in the understanding of criminal behavior, the prediction of future dangerousness, and the treatment of male offenders. The macho personality constellation consists of the view of violence as manly, the view of danger as exciting, callous sexuality toward women, and toughness as self-control. Research using the Hypermasculinity Inventory, developed to operationalize the macho personality construct, indicates that macho men are more likely to act violently toward other men, to act violently and callously toward women, and to seek out dangerous situations. Potential areas of criminal justice application include substance abuse, rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, gang violence, "lust" murders, and abuse of women and children in general.

"**M**acho" is a term that elicits sharply contrasting responses in contemporary culture. It is derived from *machismo*, the Spanish word for the essence or spirit of masculinity (Horowitz, 1967). Gilmore (1987) defined machismo as "a masculine display complex involving culturally sanctioned demonstrations of hypermasculinity

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both in the sense of erotic and physical aggressiveness" (p. 130). Today's news is replete with stories about macho men. Men who kill their wives in a jealous rage may get away with murder in certain Latin American countries. A woman is repeatedly raped in a barroom by a group of men who cheer each other on. A woman goes to court to request a restraining order for protection against her threatening spouse. She is admonished and lectured by the male judge for using the legal system to deal with her marital problems and is subsequently murdered by her estranged husband. A gang of adolescent boys goes "wilding" one night in Central Park, brutally raping and beating a woman jogger. After being arrested, one of the alleged offenders brazenly states that they were just out having a good time.

All men are not macho men, constantly emphasizing their dominance over men by intimidation and violence and their dominance over women by intimidation, violence, and callous sexuality. But many men who stop short of violence still share aspects of the ideology of machismo—a world view in which a real man is a fearless, callous, violent warrior. A warrior mentality in a peaceful world, joined with the magnification of warrior affects, places macho men at high risk for crime and for criminal careers.

To some men, being macho is the essence of masculinity. Are wilding, rape, spouse abuse, and barroom violence the acts of macho men whose code of honor—the ideology of machismo—celebrates their violence as manly?

RESEARCH AND THEORY IN FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

According to Brinberg and McGrath (1985), all research can be conceptualized by a validity network schema consisting of three interrelated but analytically distinct domains: the substantive, the methodological, and the conceptual. The substantive domain includes the phenomenon being studied, the methodological subsumes studies of methods of inquiry, and the conceptual domain specifies the explanatory theory. All research is concerned with these domains, but re-

search differs in the priority assigned to them. Most forensic research has begun with a substantive focus and then added methods. For example, in the type of research generated by epidemiological or social concerns, the phenomenon (e.g., child abuse) is identified and current social psychological theory (e.g., cognitive-behavioral or social cognition approaches) is applied. Such phenomena-generated research provides a social psychological explanation for the prevalence of the phenomenon. Methods of inquiry are often post-hoc interviews with victims or use of demographic or other epidemiological data to identify at-risk groups. Often, post-hoc epidemiological studies are atheoretical. Nevertheless, the usefulness of this broad type of research approach has been demonstrated and has aided in our understanding of the dynamics involved, as well as in our attempts at intervention.

Recently, forensic researchers have begun to place more focus on method itself. For example, a number of forensic studies have addressed the issues of evaluation reliability and outcome. The phenomenon studied is, typically, legal and not psychological (e.g., competency) and the goal of such research is to assess the reliability or accuracy of evaluation. These studies are of course valuable. The research in this area has greatly enhanced understanding of the utility as well as the limits of forensic evaluation. As with the post-hoc explanatory studies noted above, however, the conceptual/theoretical domain is not the generating force behind these reliability studies.

In a concept- or theory-oriented approach, theoretical issues are selected first. Then, either the substantive phenomenon or the methods are selected. In the present instance, script theory provides an overall conceptual framework. The study of the personality pattern of macho men is the substantive problem. Either experimental methods (e.g., the use of guided imagery) or methods of measurement (e.g., the Hypermasculinity Inventory, described below) are faithfully translated from, and are logically consistent with, the theoretical constructs. As research tests hypotheses generated by the theory about a phenomenon, when predictions are supported it also provides evidence of the construct validity of the personality measure. Personality theories can

be narrow, attempting to explain a limited number of psychological referents, or inclusive of all aspects of human personality. Recent personality theories have been narrow in range (e.g., McClelland's achievement theory) rather than inclusive. Tomkins's (1962) script theory of personality, however, is an example of a "grand" personality theory. To illustrate the value of theory-based research in forensic applications, we will present some current empirical data generated by one application of script theory, namely, to the macho personality constellation (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984).

SCRIPT THEORY AND MACHO PERSONALITY

In script theory, the basic units of analysis are the scene and the script. The scene is "an event in a life as lived, marked by a beginning and an end, organized by at least one affect and its object" (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988, p. 61). A script "connects and organizes the information in a family of related scenes through a set of rules for interpreting, responding, defending, and creating similar scenes" (p. 61). Hypermasculine behavior is a function of the bonding of certain ideological rules (about how a male should behave) with certain discrete affects. Mosher and Tomkins (1988) defined the macho personality as a script that develops during the "punitive socialization" of affects, a script that is further supported by the ideology of machismo. Machismo is "a hypermasculine form of a socially inherited gender-ideological script" (Mosher, 1991, p. 213), and the ideology of machismo is a system of ideas forming a world view that chauvinistically exalts male dominance by assuming an ideal essence of "real men," including masculinity, virility, and physicality.

According to Tomkins (1965), ideology is a biosocial construction that humans use to understand and celebrate how they live in the world. He argued that ideology is basically rooted in the biology of food and hunger, that is, the perceived scarcity of resources. Furthermore, stratification arises from "a reliance upon violence to reduce such

scarcity by allocating the scarce resources disproportionately to the victors of adversarial contests" (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988, p. 63). Tomkins (1987) asserted that domination of matriarchal agricultural societies by patriarchal warriors produced a stratification of affects. As noted by Mosher (1991), "excitement was the positive affect of the warrior; . . . the victors in adversarial contests . . . differentially magnified the importance of the warrior affects: surprise, excitement, anger, disgust, and contempt. Only the vanquished, the oppressed . . . were to tremble in fear, weep in distress, and hang their head in shame because they were weak, basking in their dubious and seductive relaxed enjoyment" (p. 208).

This stratification of affects was then extended to women. The innate affects were divided into the so-called "superior, masculine"—excitement, surprise, anger, disgust, and contempt—and the so-called "inferior, feminine"—enjoyment, fear, distress, and shame.

Ideological scripts are socially inherited simply by virtue of being a member of a civilization, an epoch, or a gender. Just as a personality script reflects the differential magnification of affects in the individual (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988; Tomkins, 1965), the ideology of a culture reflects the "differential magnification of affects in the society" (Mosher & Tomkins, p. 63). The ideological script and the personality script mutually amplify one another through resonance. Although the ideological script of macho is inherited within a macho culture by virtue of being a male, the macho male is socialized by his family in specific ways that can be summarized as transformations of feminine affects to masculine ones. Distress is transformed into anger, fear is transformed into excitement, and shame is transformed into manly pride. The macho ideology expresses contempt for the inferior, feminine affects. Thus

macho scripts exaggerate masculine gender role behavior to serve hostile-dominant interpersonal goals motivated by the affects of excitement, anger, disgust and contempt. Not just male, and not just masculine, the macho must be hypermasculine in ideology and action. . . . That's just how "real men" are. (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988, p. 64)

Therefore, social stratification is transformed into sexual differentiation based upon differential magnification of invidiously stratified affects. Mosher and Tomkins concluded:

The cultural descendent of the nomadic warrior is the macho man. The ideology of *machismo* is a warrior's ideology. The macho warrior holds dominion over all he has conquered—he is master and patriarch. Slaves, wives and children are his property, owing him respect and fealty. To maintain that dominion, the macho man must be prepared to risk all by acts of great daring, to compel enemy men to submit through violence, and to dominate female adversaries through callous sex. (1988, p. 64).

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE MACHO PERSONALITY

Mosher and Sirkin (1984) constructed the Hypermasculinity Inventory (HMI) to measure the macho personality constellation: (a) the view of violence as manly, (b) the view of danger as exciting, and (c) calloused sex attitudes toward women. "Violence as manly" identifies the macho man's attitude that aggression—verbal or physical—is an acceptable expression of dominance over other men. "Danger as exciting" reflects the attitude that survival in dangerous situations is a display of man's dominance over the environment. "Calloused sex attitudes" reflects the macho male's belief that sexual intercourse can be equated with sexual dominance over women, establishing both his masculine power and the submission of women. Thus the sex act becomes an aggressive and depersonalized act for the macho man, rather than an intimate and personal one.

Mosher and Sirkin (1984) asserted that, beginning in early childhood, parental use of contempt and humiliation to socialize the emotions of fear and distress in a male child fosters a hypermasculine style. Subsequently, the boy, when he fails to achieve the masculine ideals of courage and stoicism (through inhibition of his fear and his cries of distress), experiences shame and self-contempt. During adolescence, enculturation continues with the magnification of the masculine virtue

of heroism in such male activities as sports or in less culturally acceptable and more dangerous delinquent behaviors. This heroic script includes the view of woman as sexual object, a reward for the conquering warrior.

The HMI is composed of three subscales, corresponding to the three theorized components of the macho personality constellation. This 30-item forced-choice measure has been validated in a number of studies using different populations and has also been employed in an amended format—the Attraction to Macho Men Scale—for administration to women subjects (Mahoney, Shively, & Traw, 1986; Zaitchik, 1988). Hall (1992) has recently expanded and refined the HMI, adding a fourth subscale that measures the toughness of the macho man. “Toughness as self-control” reflects the macho male’s belief that true masculinity can only be achieved through the mastery of his own emotions, through self-inhibition of the “inferior, feminine” affects of fear, distress, and shame.

Mahoney et al. (1986) investigated the personality correlates of males who engaged in a wide range of sexually coercive and assaultive acts, and of females who experienced them. The HMI was administered to male subjects and the Attraction to Macho Men Scale to female subjects. Mahoney et al. reported that, among coitally experienced college men, macho personality was the best predictor (among several variables examined) of sexual coercion/assault. (The second best predictor of sexual coercion was lifetime number of coital partners.) There was also a significant positive correlation ($r = .27, p < .001$) between macho personality and the number of different types of sexually assaultive behaviors subjects had committed. For coitally experienced women, the best predictor of being a victim of sexual coercion or assault was frequency of coital partners per year; the next best predictor was Attraction to Macho Men. Other studies (Lenderking, 1988; Mosher & Anderson, 1986) also demonstrated that subjects who scored higher on the HMI reported more acts of sexual aggression toward women. Relatedly, Zaitchik (1988) found that women who were more attracted to macho men were more likely to have been the victims of sexual aggression.

A number of studies have shown that men who identify more strongly with macho ideals are significantly more likely to engage in certain dangerous and antisocial behaviors. For example, Mosher and Sirkin (1984) reported that undergraduate college subjects who scored higher on the HMI reported more drug use, drinking of alcohol, and delinquent behaviors. Furthermore, a positive relationship between HMI scores and other personality variables, including impulsivity, exhibition, play, and aggression, was demonstrated. Similarly, Zaitchik and Mosher (1991) found that more macho rock musicians reported more drug and alcohol use, more aggressive behavior toward women, more antisocial and illegal activities, and more antisocial behaviors after the use of drugs and alcohol than their less macho counterparts. Other recent studies have found that more macho men were less likely to use condoms (Exner, 1985), less likely to experience disgust and distress in response to guided imagery presentations of realistic rape (Mosher & Anderson, 1986), and less likely to be interpersonally involved with sex partners (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1991).

One recent study tested the hypothesis that the punitive socialization of macho males leads them to respond to an infant's cry of distress with punitive behaviors—an analogue to child abuse (Epstein, 1991). Epstein studied the reactions of male college students to a situation in which they role-played a father taking care of his crying infant (life-like doll) in a nursery. Subjects who scored higher on the HMI were angrier and less interested during interactions with the crying infant; they perceived the infant as bad and had less empathy for him or her. As expected, the HMI was correlated with punitive socialization of the affect of distress, with more macho subjects being less likely to comfort the baby by holding it against the body.

Another study concluded that macho men are unlikely to view a sexual assault as rape if the victim is a spouse. Sullivan and Mosher (1990) used a guided imagery method to investigate the relationship of macho personality to marital rape. They found that macho men reported a history of more aggressive sexual behavior, accepted more rape myths as true, and reported a higher likelihood of committing rape. Macho men were more likely to believe that an act of forced sex

within a marriage was not rape and to justify rape within marriage as a male prerogative. In summary, these results suggest that the socialization of macho men encourages violent and callous sexual behavior, often manifested as physical and sexual abuse of spouses and children.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The pattern of results yielded by these theory-generated studies has implications for the criminal justice system in the areas of prediction and treatment. For example, a script theory of the macho personality constellation would predict that males celebrating the macho ideology would seek out dangerous environments and situations, resolve conflict with other men physically and violently, and enter into dominating, sexually and interpersonally callous relationships with women. Additionally, they should be more likely to abuse alcohol and other drugs (particularly stimulants) and to act out violently while under the influence of these substances. Interestingly, many of the demographic groups identified by Monahan (1981) as being at higher risk for committing violent acts are also groups that might be expected to identify more strongly with the macho ideology. Specifically, street violence has been demonstrated to be more prevalent among lower socioeconomic groups and individuals having a history of alcohol or opiate use, a lower IQ, or less educational attainment (Monahan, 1981). Mosher and Tomkins (1988) hypothesized that "members of the underclasses should be overrepresented in macho scripts of physicality" (p. 83), but as yet no data are available.¹

Being a macho male is itself a risk factor for a wide range of dangerous and violent behaviors. Furthermore, being a young macho male is associated with being at even greater risk for these behaviors. The macho script is differentially enacted as a function of times, conditions, and reference groups (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988). Times "can refer to either the stages in the life cycle or to the specific opportunities for macho scenes to unfold. The *time* to be macho is any

time when 'masculinity' is challenged. . . . The rule: escalate anger, daring, callousness until dominance is established" (p. 79). Because of the macho emphasis on physicality, it is primarily a young man's script. The *conditions* that lead to a greater degree of magnification of macho affects and behaviors are challenges. These can be challenges presented by nature, by male adversaries, or by female adversaries. Challenges are opportunities for macho action. The *reference group* of macho men is composed of other macho men; "the bonded-male-group permits the contagious celebration of the macho ideology. The contagion is both affective and social" (p. 80). Young macho men, therefore, are more likely to behave in extreme macho ways (e.g., sexually calloused, aggressive, risk taking) when in the presence of other macho men. The contagion effects of the reference group of a young male gang may account for wilding incidents against women.

As presented above, the macho personality constellation, as measured by the HMI, has been validated in a number of studies and with an expanding number of subject populations. However, these validation studies have primarily utilized college males as subjects. There is research under way employing prison populations, and studies employing younger subjects, as well as a wider range of adult subjects, also are needed. Not only does script theory illuminate the personality of macho men, but it also promises a theoretical account of the larger realm of antisocial, violent, and delinquent criminal phenomena. Understanding the role of affects and scripts in the personality of men engaged in criminal behavior opens possibilities for prediction, prevention, and rehabilitation.

The ideology of machismo is supported by the culture as well as within the macho subculture. The macho personality script is developed via differential socialization of the masculine affects and amplification of macho scenes. How then does one intervene in this apparently mutually resonating and supportive system? Primary prevention should occur in schools and families and target child populations. A redefinition of masculinity—what it means to be a real man—is necessary at a cultural level. This is, admittedly, a grand goal requiring considerable resources. For men who already celebrate the macho

ideology (e.g., violent offenders), the task of change is no less difficult. Change in attitude and behavior requires development of empathic understanding of others and an acceptance of one's own "inferior, feminine" affects. To accomplish this, a macho man must question his very identity. Therefore, intervention should proceed incrementally as the macho man is able to acknowledge and accept gradual doses of his so-called feminine affects. Mosher and Tomkins (1988) described a reparative script that requires the macho man to embrace the culturally proscribed feminine gender script. "To renounce death, the macho must embrace life, love, communion, and his 'feminine' affects in order to become a more total and complete human being," observed Mosher and Tomkins (p. 82). They concluded that "psychotherapy may provide the best context for a narrative review in consciousness to consider the rules for how to be a man—a *mensh*—without being a macho man" (p. 82).²

CONCLUSION

Criminal justice research has historically underutilized a conceptual, theory-generated approach. As an example of the potentially rich contributions of such an approach, we have described a script theory of macho personality and presented some of the validation research generated by it. Research in this area has potential applications in the understanding of certain criminal behaviors and their motivations, the prediction of future dangerousness, and the treatment of male offenders.

NOTES

1. Mosher and Tomkins (1988) commented that "other variations on the macho script may deemphasize physicality and violence in favor of adversarial competition for scarce resources within culturally accepted organizational networks. Such scripts may be characteristic of middle-class socialization" (p. 83). Although middle-class males may deemphasize violence in their displays of dominance, their acceptance of the ideology of machismo permits sexual

dominance through scoring sexual conquests. Mosher and Tomkins (1988) described a number of variations of the broader class of macho scripts, such as a *ladies' man*, a *man's man*, a *con man*, and a *macho presidential style*.

2. In Yiddish, *mensch* literally means "a person." Its connotation, however, is a good or decent person, one who does the right thing.

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