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Response Styles to Sadness are Related to Sex
and Sex-Role Orientation

Constantina Giannopoulos

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Psychology

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for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

Response Styles to Sadness are Related to Sex
and Sex-Role Orientation

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Concordia University, 1990

Response style theory (Nolen-Hoeksema 1987) states that women ruminate on sadness more than men, and that men distract themselves from sadness more than women. These response styles are assumed to develop through the socialization of sex-appropriate behaviour. The present study extended this argument by examining the relation of sex-role orientation to response styles to sadness. The hypotheses were that greater masculinity is associated with less rumination and more distraction in response to sadness, and that greater femininity is associated with more rumination and less distraction in response to sadness. Male and female undergraduates completed the short form of the BSRI and a coping measure. Consistent with previous research, sex differences emerged. Female subjects relative to male subjects reported more rumination and less distraction in response to sadness. Moreover, subjects' scores on the masculinity and femininity scales were significant predictors of coping responses. Higher masculinity was associated with more distraction, whereas higher femininity was associated with more rumination. The present findings are discussed in terms of current conceptualizations of femininity and masculinity measures.

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This thesis is dedicated to Alexandra- someone who can always make me laugh.

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Introduction

During the last 50 years, findings in epidemiological studies of depression indicate that the incidence and prevalence rates of depression are higher for women than they are for men. It has been shown consistently across North American and European countries that women outnumber men by a ratio of 2 or 3 to 1 in incidence of depression (Weissman & Klerman, 1977). Various explanations have been offered to account for this sex difference in depression. These include artifactual, biological, psychoanalytic, and learned helplessness explanations. Recently, Nolen-Hoeksema (1987) reviewed research in this area and the various explanations offered to account for the sex difference in depression and suggested that the higher incidence rate for women is still poorly understood. She proposed a new, response style, explanation in an attempt to better account for this sex difference.

There are two components to Nolen-Hoeksema's (1987) response style theory. The present paper focuses on the first component of the theory which concerns sex differences in response styles to sadness. Specifically, Nolen-Hoeksema argues that men, when feeling sad, are more likely to engage in activities that distract them from their sadness (e.g., go to a club, do something physical). On the other hand, women when feeling sad are more likely to express and ruminate on their feelings of sadness (e.g., think of reasons why they are depressed, talk to a friend). The second component of

Nolen-Hoeksema's response style theory concerns the effects of these response styles on the severity and chronicity of sadness. It is argued that men's distracting behaviours reduce the intensity and the duration of their sadness, whereas women's expressive, more ruminative responses amplify and prolong their sadness. Moreover, it is proposed that high intensity and long duration of sadness is a precursor to clinical depression.

Nolen-Hoeksema has provided empirical support for the first component of response style theory. In one study, she presented college students with a list of behaviours and thoughts people might engage in when depressed (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1986). Subjects indicated how likely they would be to engage in the behaviours or thoughts when depressed. Results indicated that men compared to women reported engaging more frequently in the following four activities: avoiding thinking of reasons why they were depressed, doing something physical, playing a sport, and taking drugs. Women compared to men reported being more likely to try to talk to others about their feelings and to cry to relieve tension. These findings are consistent with response style theory in that the men's responses seem to reflect distraction from sadness, whereas the women's responses seem to reflect expression of sadness.

Previous research on sex differences in coping with sadness is also consistent with response style theory. In

one study, Funabiki, Bologna, Pepping, and Fitzgerald (1980) asked college students to complete a depression inventory, which consisted of empirically derived items describing cognitions and behaviours people report engaging in when feeling sad. Subjects noted which items reflected their own responses to sadness. Consistent with response style theory, results indicated that women were more likely than men to report that they would write to express their feelings, seek the personal support of a friend, and avoid people in a large social milieu. Furthermore, additional analyses conducted on the depressed subset of the sample revealed that depressed men were more likely than depressed women to engage in distraction-type behaviours such as trying to do something new and getting away to do something they enjoyed.

Another study that provides results consistent with response style theory was conducted by Kleinke, Staneski, and Mason (1982). These researchers devised a Depression Coping Questionnaire (DCQ) to compare male and female college students' strategies for coping with depression. Subjects were asked to report what they did when they were depressed. Results indicated that women were significantly more likely than men to report crying, confronting their feelings (e.g., "I confront my feelings and try to figure out what is bothering me"), and seeking support from others. Men, on the other hand, were significantly more likely than women to report ignoring the problem, relaxing, going for a walk, and

smoking marijuana.

Findings consistent with response style theory were also reported by Chino and Funabiki (1984). In their study, male and female college students were asked to complete the Beck Depression Inventory and the Inventory of Depressive Behaviors (IDB). The IDB consists of 79 empirically derived items that reflect cognitive or behavioural activities people may engage in when depressed. Subjects were asked to indicate the likelihood that they would engage in the described behaviours and cognitions. Consistent with response style theory, results indicated that women were more likely than men to report seeking personal support and writing to express their feelings when sad.

Finally, Parker and Brown (1979) also examined sex differences in coping with sadness and reported similar findings. Men and women, while waiting to see their physician, were asked to indicate the degree to which they would engage in 35 behaviours such as listen to music, go for a drive, take alcohol, and spend time with a close friend, in response to two potentially depressing situations. These situations (i.e., the break-up of an important relationship and increasing criticism from someone important to you) had been rated by subjects in a previous study as being most likely to precipitate depression. Results revealed that women were more likely than men to report crying and spending time with a close friend. Men relative to women reported

that they would be more likely to take alcohol, socialize by going to a party or a club, engage in exercise or sports, seek to gain the attention of others and seek a challenge in new activities.

Most of the evidence obtained from studies that have examined sex differences in coping with sadness is consistent with response style theory. It appears that men, when sad, will distract themselves from their sadness, whereas women will express and ruminate on their feelings of sadness. Furthermore, as far as we know, findings that contradict response style theory have not been obtained in previous research.

There are two other sex differences in response styles to sadness that have consistently emerged but are not addressed by response style theory. First, women compared to men tend to report an increase in food intake when sad (Chino & Funabiki, 1984; Funabiki et al. 1980; Kleinke et al., 1982). This sex difference is not addressed by response style theory as eating in response to one's sadness is neither rumination nor distraction. On the one hand, increased food intake is not a form of rumination in that it is a positive, enjoyable behaviour. On the other hand, it is not a form of distraction because, when eating, individuals may remain focussed on the self as well as on their distress.

The second finding not addressed by response style theory is that women report that, when feeling sad, they engage in

more self-deprecatory statements than men (Chino & Funabiki, 1984; Funabiki et al., 1980; Kleinke et al., 1984; Padęsky & Hammen, 1981). Thus women, relative to men, report that when feeling sad they feel inferior to others, feel that others do not want them around, and feel that they are worthless. These feelings are related more to self-esteem and to self-worth than to the expression of sadness.

To summarize, previous research on coping with sadness is consistent with response style theory. Men report engaging in behaviours that distract them from their sadness, whereas women report ruminating more on their feelings of sadness. Some sex differences in coping with sadness are not addressed by the theory, however.

Recently, Zillman, Weaver, Mundorf, and Aust (1986) conducted experimental research addressing a response style theory that is consistent with and parallels that of Nolen-Hoeksema. Zillman and colleagues argue that men and women will exhibit differential response styles in coping with distress. It is argued that men show mastery and affective indifference in the face of distressing or fear-inducing stimuli, whereas women feel free to express their feelings of distress and fear. They argue that these response styles emerge from socialization of gender roles. Young men are taught to exhibit fearlessness and mastery in the face of frightening and distressing situations, whereas young women are taught to express fear in frightening situations. These

researchers have examined people's responses to horror films and provide evidence that these responses are determined by gender-specific rules for the experience and expression of affect. In one study (Zillman et al., 1986), undergraduate subjects of both sexes watched an excerpt from a graphic horror film with an opposite-sex confederate who either expressed distress, indifference, or mastery in response to the film. Results revealed that men enjoyed the movie most in the company of a distressed woman (that is, with a woman who showed behaviour congruent with the female role) and least in the company of a woman expressing mastery (gender-incongruent behaviour). Women enjoyed the movie most in the company of men displaying mastery and least with men showing distress. In addition, mastery enhanced the physical appeal of an otherwise low-appeal male confederate. In other words, low-appeal males who showed mastery were ascribed greater positive traits by female subjects. Overall, this study demonstrates that people's reactions to a film and to others reflect gender roles for emotional expression. Specifically, that men will deal with their distress by exhibiting mastery and affective indifference, whereas women will express their feelings of distress.

In another study, the same researchers further examined sex differences in response to distress (Mundorf, Weaver, & Zillmann, 1989). Subjects participating in same-sex groups were asked to view four segments of horror films and then to

complete several questionnaires. Male subjects reported more enjoyment and less fear in response to the films than female subjects. Male subjects correctly estimated that female subjects would be more fearful than themselves. They also overestimated the fright response of the female subjects compared with the actual reaction reported by the females. On the other hand, female subjects correctly estimated that male subjects would be less fearful than themselves. They did not underestimate the fright response of the male subjects, however.

Sex Roles

The development of theoretical models of sex-role orientation as well as scales measuring masculinity and femininity have generated a great deal of research and controversy (Bem, 1974, 1979, 1981, 1984; Spence, 1984; Spence, Deaux, & Helmreich, 1984; Spence & Helmreich, 1980). Early research was conducted within the framework of the traditional congruence model. In this model, masculinity and femininity are extremes of a single psychological dimension. Hence, the presence of masculine attributes precludes the presence of feminine ones and, conversely, the presence of feminine attributes precludes the presence of masculine ones (Constantinople, 1973). The demonstration that masculinity and femininity are two orthogonal personality variables within each sex (Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975) led to the reformulation of this

model. Spence and Helmreich (1980) have proposed that masculinity and femininity are separate and essentially orthogonal dimensions. They also argue that self-report measures containing masculinity and femininity scales such as the BSRI and the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974) are more limited in what they measure. In contrast to the earlier assumption that these measures reflect broad patterns of sex-typed functioning such as sex-roles (Bem, 1981), Spence and colleagues (1980) suggest that what is measured are trait-like "clusters of socially desirable personality attributes that differentiate between the sexes" (p.42). Specifically, they argue that measures which have been taken to reflect masculinity in fact measure instrumentality (refers to a self-assertive orientation) and measures that have been taken to reflect femininity in fact measure expressiveness (refers to an emotional-interpersonal orientation). Thus, according to Spence and colleagues, measures of masculinity and femininity do not reflect sex-roles. They argue that instrumentality and expressiveness are generalized dispositional tendencies that are to be distinguished from sex-roles. The term "sex-roles" refers to the social roles a society defines for men and women (e.g., mother/father, daughter/son, housewife/breadwinner). Social roles (including sex-roles) refer to positions in a social structure, the expectations associated with these positions,

and the behaviours of individuals in these positions (Secord, Backman, & Slavitt, 1976). Men and women occupy many roles (including sex-roles) and these roles are not uniformly consistent in their behavioural requirements. Spence and colleagues argue that instrumentality and expressiveness may indeed affect responses to situationally induced sex-role demands but that they are, nevertheless, conceptually distinct from sex-roles. In sum, these investigators propose that the PAQ and the BSRI are essentially measures of orthogonal dimensions, instrumentality and expressiveness. Nevertheless, they argue that broad orientations such as instrumentality and expressiveness will influence a wide range of behaviours, including behaviours that are considered more or less appropriate as a function of a person's gender.

Despite that fact that masculinity and femininity measures have been shown to be orthogonal, they have been used to develop unidimensional typologies. In terms of Bem's gender-schema theory (1981; 1984), the BSRI masculinity scale assesses a person's adherence to cultural definitions of maleness and the femininity scale assesses a person's adherence to cultural definitions of femaleness. According to Bem, men who strongly identify with the cultural definitions of maleness and who are motivated to keep their behaviour consistent with them (that is, men who identify with the masculine sex-role) are sex-typed. Women who identify with the cultural definitions of femaleness and who

are motivated to keep their behaviour consistent with them (that is, women who identify with the feminine sex-role) are sex-typed. Cross-typed individuals are those who identify with the opposite sex-role. Non-sex-typed individuals are those with little or no sex-role identification. Based on gender schema theory, Bem has developed a model of sex-role identity which posits a continuum with sex-typed individuals at one end, cross-typed individuals at the other end, and non-sex-typed individuals in the middle.

In another theoretical model, Bem has characterized four types of individuals based on their scores on the BSRI masculinity and femininity scales (Bem, 1981). According to this four-way personality classification, people are deemed masculine if they have high scores on the masculinity scale and low scores on the femininity scale. People are deemed feminine if they have high scores on the femininity scale and low scores on the masculinity scale. Androgynous individuals are those with high scores on both the masculinity and femininity scales (in an earlier formulation androgynous individuals were those who had highly similar or equal scores on both scales, regardless of the value of the scores). Undifferentiated individuals are those with low scores on both the masculinity and the femininity scales.

These typologies based on particular combination of scores on masculinity and femininity scales do not seem necessary. A review of previous research (Spence, 1984) examining

masculinity and femininity indicates that interaction effects for masculinity and femininity have generally not emerged. The most parsimonious conceptualization of masculinity and femininity, thus, seems to be that of Spence and Helmreich (1980). They suggest that the BSRI and the PAQ measure two orthogonal dimensions, instrumentality and expressiveness. The masculinity scales of the BSRI and the PAQ provide a measure of instrumentality and the femininity scales provide a measure of expressiveness.

Masculinity, Femininity, and Coping

In contrast to the large number of studies that have examined sex differences in coping with sadness, few have addressed the relation of sex-role orientation (for the sake of convention we are using previous nomenclature to refer to instrumentality and expressiveness) to coping with sadness. To our knowledge, only Nezu and Nezu (1987) have examined this relation. Although they examined coping as a function of masculinity and femininity, they did not specifically address rumination and distraction as responses to sadness. Nezu and Nezu (1987) had male and female subjects complete the BSRI and the Coping Reactions Inventory (CRI; Billings & Moos, 1981). Masculinity but neither sex nor femininity was related to the CRI indices. High-masculine compared to low-masculine individuals scored higher on measures of problem-focused coping and lower on measures of emotion-focused coping. However, the implications for responses of

rumination and distraction are not clear. First, the problem-focused coping index did not reflect affective reactions. Second, the emotion-focused coping index was heterogeneous in that it was based on items related to distraction (e.g., getting busy with other things) as well as items neither related to distraction nor to rumination (e.g., trying to see the positive side, praying).

The Present Study

Response style theory (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987) proposes that men distract themselves in response to sadness, whereas women ruminate in response to sadness. In addition, it is argued that response styles to sadness emerge from the socialization of sex appropriate behaviours. Nolen-Hoeksema states that "being emotional and inactive are part of the feminine stereotype," that "being active and ignoring one's moods are part of the masculine stereotype" (p.276), and that boys and girls are reinforced to meet their respective sex stereotypes. This argument suggests that the acquisition of response styles to sadness may be related to the development of the broader range of characteristics assessed by measures of sex-role orientation. It can be argued that individuals, whether men or women, who ruminate on their sadness may be higher in femininity, whereas individuals, whether men or women, who distract themselves from their sadness may be higher in masculinity.

The present research addresses two hypotheses on the

relation between sex-role orientation and response styles to sadness. The first hypothesis is that both male and female individuals high in femininity relative to those who are low will engage in more rumination and less distraction in response to their sadness. The second hypothesis is that male and female individuals who are high in masculinity relative to those who are low will engage in less rumination and more distraction. To address these hypotheses, male and female subjects completed measures of sex-role orientation and of coping with sadness. The sex-role measure was the short form of the BSRI (BSRI-SF; Bem, 1981). The coping measure was a self-report questionnaire developed for the present study and was based on previous research. Sex-role scores and sex were introduced as predictors in regression analyses of the coping responses. Subjects' masculinity and femininity scores were expected to be significant predictors. As in previous research, female subjects relative to male subjects were expected to report more rumination and less distraction in response to their sadness.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were undergraduate students recruited from introductory psychology classes at Concordia University. Three hundred and three participants (170 women, 133 men) between the ages of 18 and 67 ($M=26.0$ years) completed the measures in their classrooms. Participants were eligible to win either a \$100.00 or a \$50.00 lottery prize.

Measures

Bem Sex-Role Inventory Short-Form. The BSRI-SF (Bem, 1981) is a self-report questionnaire which consists of 10 items assessing masculinity (e.g., independent, assertive, aggressive), 10 items assessing femininity (e.g., affectionate, understanding, compassionate) and 10 filler items (see Appendix A).

Participants are asked to indicate on a 7-point scale, with endpoints labelled never or almost never true (1) and always or almost always true (7), the extent to which each trait describes himself or herself. Participants obtain a masculinity score (average of the responses to the masculinity items) and a femininity score (average of the responses to the femininity items).

Coping Questionnaire. The coping questionnaire was constructed for the present study to assess individuals' responses to sadness (see Appendix B). The items were selected by the present investigator from previous research that has identified sex differences in coping with negative

affect (e.g., Chino & Funabiki, 1984; Kleinke, Staneski, & Mason, 1982; and Nolen-Hoeksema, 1986, as reported in Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987). The items included in the coping questionnaire related conceptually to distraction and rumination and they also showed sex differences.

The 12-item questionnaire was devised to measure two types of response styles: rumination and distraction. Rumination items refer to expressing or thinking about one's sadness, whereas distraction items refer to alleviating or avoiding one's sadness. Participants rated each item on a 7-point scale with endpoints labelled never (1) and almost always (7), indicating the degree to which they would engage in the behaviour when feeling "blue" or sad.

Procedure

Eight instructors of introductory psychology courses were asked if some class time could be set aside so that their students could complete a packet of questionnaires. Included in the packet were the measures used in the present study as well as other materials used to recruit participants for other projects conducted by our research group.

First, the experimenter told students that the information collected was being used to develop research measures and to identify individuals who might be eligible to participate in future paid research. The experimenter then distributed the questionnaires and interested students were asked to read and sign the consent form and to proceed with responding to the

items. Participants were informed that their responses were confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The experimenter then waited until all the questionnaires were returned. Across the eight classrooms visited, 89% of the students agreed to complete the questionnaires.

By completing the measures and by writing their name and telephone number on a lottery slip, the participants were eligible to win either a \$100.00 or a \$50.00 prize. The prizes were awarded at the end of the study.

Results

The relation of sex-role scores with sex was initially examined. T-tests were conducted to examine sex differences on masculinity and femininity scores. Results revealed that women ($M=5.68$) obtained significantly higher femininity scores than men ($M=5.13$), $t(303)=6.16$, $p < .0001$. No sex difference was found in masculinity scores, $t < 1$. Bem (1981) also reports no sex difference in BSRI-SF masculinity scores for her normative sample. The correlation between masculinity and femininity scores was not significant, $r = .03$, ns.

The responses to the items of the coping questionnaire were analyzed after having been adjusted for skew (positively skewed items were adjusted using a log 10 transformation and negatively skewed items were reversed and adjusted in a similar manner). A principal factor analysis with oblique rotation was conducted. The solution revealed the following four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1: Avoidance (items 1, 2, 3), Rumination (items 4, 5, 6), Distraction (items 7, 8, 9), and Drug Use (items 10 and 11). The factor loadings of the coping items are shown in Table 1. The item on writing to express feelings (item 12) did not load highly ($>.3$) on any factor. (The internal consistency of each factor was not as high as one would like. See Appendix F for the internal correlation coefficients of the factors).

The averages of the responses to the items that loaded

Table 1

Factor loadings of the coping items

Coping items	Factor loadings			
	Avoidance	Rumination	Distraction	Drug Use
1. I ignore the problem and think about other things.	(-.63)	-.01	.01	.03
2. I avoid thinking of reasons why I'm depressed.	(-.63)	.10	-.11	.10
3. I try to determine why I'm depressed.	(.48)	.08	.09	.09
4. I get together with one very close person or friend.	-.13	(.76)	.15	.01
5. I talk to others about my feelings.	.12	(.59)	.04	.01
6. I cry.	.09	(.35)	-.30	-.13
7. I do something physical.	.01	.01	(.49)	.05
8. I get away and do something I enjoy.	.04	.08	(.65)	.05
9. I go out to meet people at a party or club.	-.24	.24	(.39)	.25
10. I take alcoholic beverages (e.g., beer).	-.04	-.07	.06	(.63)
11. I take drugs.	.05	-.01	-.06	(.65)
12. I write to express my feelings.	.29	.22	-.10	.14

Note. The loadings in parentheses indicate the factor to which items were collapsed.

highly on each factor, with scores on item 3 reversed, served as factor scores. Higher scores on the factor labelled Rumination reflect more rumination on sadness. Higher scores on the factors labelled Avoidance, Distraction, and Drug Use reflect more distraction from sadness. Correlations between the factors are shown on Table 2. As noted, the correlations are generally low. (Zero-order correlations among all of the measures for the entire sample are in Appendix C, for males only in Appendix D, and for females only in Appendix E). Principal factor analysis with orthogonal rotation was conducted and as might be expected the same four factors emerged as with oblique rotation.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted for each of the coping factors separately in order to assess the relation of responses to sadness to sex and sex-role. Raw sex-role (masculinity and femininity) scores were used as predictors, as opposed to dichotomous variables based on sex-role median splits (cf. Spence, 1984). Predictor variables were entered in two steps. Sex and sex-role scores were entered simultaneously in the first step. This permitted assessment of the effect of each predictor on the particular coping factor with effects of the other predictor partialled out. All two-way and three-way interactions between predictors (femininity, masculinity, and sex) were entered simultaneously in a second step. At each of the two steps, the increment in variance accounted for by the set of

Table 2

Correlations between factors

Variables	Rumination	Distraction	Drug Use	Avoidance
Rumination				
Distraction	.06			
Drug Use	-.01	.27**		
Avoidance	-.01	.11*	.12*	

Note. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

predictors added at that step was tested for significance.

Sex-role orientation was expected to be related to coping responses to sadness. Specifically, higher femininity was expected to be associated with more endorsement of rumination items and less endorsement of distraction items. Higher masculinity was expected to be associated with less endorsement of rumination items and more endorsement of distraction items.

With the Rumination factor as the criterion, the following results emerged. As expected, higher femininity ($B=.24$, $p<.0001$) was associated with more rumination on sadness. In addition, sex ($B=.32$, $p<.0001$) was a significant predictor. Consistent with previous research, women reported more rumination than men. Sex and sex-role accounted for 21% of the variance, $F(3,299)=26.6$, $p<.0001$. Including the interaction terms as additional predictors in the regression analyses did not significantly increase the proportion of variance explained for the Rumination factor. See Table 3 for the regression statistics.

With the Distraction factor as the criterion, the following results emerged. As expected, higher masculinity ($B=.19$, $p<.0005$) was associated with more distraction from sadness. In addition, sex ($B=-.27$, $p<.0001$) was a significant predictor. Consistent with previous research, men reported engaging in more distraction than women. Sex and sex-role accounted for 11% of the variance,

Table 3

Regression analyses of the four coping factors

Coping measure	Regression statistics				
	Predictor	Beta	t	Prob	Multiple R and regression F
Rumination	Sex	.32	5.85	<.0001	$\underline{R} = .46$ $\underline{R} = .21$ $\underline{F}(3,299) = 26.6, p < .0001$
	Femininity	.24	4.32	<.0001	
	Masculinity	.05	1.04	<u>ns</u>	
Distraction	Sex	-.27	-4.60	<.0001	$\underline{R} = .33$ $\underline{R} = .11$ $\underline{F}(3,299) = 11.9, p < .0001$
	Femininity	.03	.58	<u>ns</u>	
	Masculinity	.19	3.52	< .0005	
Avoidance	Sex	-.08	-1.28	<u>ns</u>	$\underline{R} = .12$ $\underline{R} = .015$ $\underline{F}(3,299) = 1.49, \underline{ns}$
	Femininity	.01	.13	<u>ns</u>	
	Masculinity	-.10	-1.68	< .09	
Drug Use	Sex	-.22	-3.67	< .0003	$\underline{R} = .25$ $\underline{R} = .06$ $\underline{F}(3,299), 6.70, p < .0002$
	Femininity	-.04	0.73	<u>ns</u>	
	Masculinity	.08	1.45	.15	

Note. Sex was coded as follows: 0=men and 1=women.

$F(3,299) = 11.9, p < .0001$. Including the interaction terms as additional predictors in the regression analyses did not significantly increase the proportion of variance explained for the Distraction factor.

With the Avoidance factor as the criterion, there were no significant predictors. This result is not consistent with previous research. Finally, with the Drug Use factor as the criterion, the only significant predictor was sex ($\beta = -.22, p < .0003$), with men reporting more drug use than women, as shown in previous research. This latter finding is consistent with previous research.

Discussion

Sex-role orientation and coping with sadness

The first hypothesis in the present study was that men and women high in femininity, compared to those who are low, engage in more rumination and less distraction in response to their sadness. The second hypothesis was that men and women high in masculinity, compared to those who are low, engage in less rumination and more distraction in response to their sadness. All significant effects that emerged are consistent with the hypotheses. Specifically, higher femininity was associated with more rumination on sadness and higher masculinity was associated with more distraction from sadness. Including interaction terms (e.g., Femininity X Masculinity) as predictors in the regression analyses did not significantly increase the prediction of the coping responses. This finding indicates that femininity and masculinity are related independently to rumination and distraction.

The results also revealed that femininity was not significantly related to distraction and that masculinity was not significantly related to rumination. In addition, both femininity and masculinity were unrelated to coping measures of drug use and avoidance. This last finding may seem inconsistent with that reported by Nezu and Nezu (1987) who demonstrated that high-masculine compared to low-masculine individuals engaged in less avoidance coping. Nevertheless, it is difficult to interpret their findings in lieu of the

differences between the coping measures in the two studies. For example, items reflecting avoidance coping in the Nezu and Nezu (1987) study included, "I tried to reduce the tension by smoking more", "I tried to reduce the tension by eating more", and "I sometimes took it out on other people when I felt angry or depressed." It is not clear whether these items reflect avoidance, distraction, or even expression of sadness. People who eat when sad, for instance, could be self-focused and thus may not be taking their attention away from their affect. In the present study, items referring to avoidance were more specific (e.g., "I avoid thinking of reasons why I'm depressed" and "I ignore the problem and think about other things"). These items refer specifically to avoidance.

The present findings have implications for the conceptualization of rumination and distraction. Nolen-Hoeksema (1987) seemed to suggest that rumination and distraction are opposite ends of a single coping dimension. Consequently, the hypotheses of the present study were based on the assumption that individuals who ruminate on their sadness engage in little distraction, and that individuals who distract themselves engage in little rumination. The results indicate, however, that the degree to which individuals ruminate on their sadness varies somewhat independently of the degree to which they engage in distraction. Rumination and distraction emerged as two

orthogonal factors in the factor analysis. In addition, rumination and distraction were shown to be associated with femininity and masculinity, respectively, and these two measures are conceptually and empirically independent (Bem, 1981; Spence & Helmreich, 1984). Thus, the current findings suggest that rumination and distraction should not be construed as opposite ends of a coping dimension.

The present findings are also consistent with Spence's (1984) analysis of sex-role measures. Spence argued that the masculinity and femininity scales of the BSRI and the PAQ are measures of clusters of traits that differentiate the sexes. According to Spence, individuals who score high on masculinity are instrumental, whereas individuals who score high on femininity are expressive. In terms of Spence's model, the findings that did emerge are the ones that were perhaps most likely. It seems reasonable to argue that people who score high on masculinity would be most likely to engage in instrumental behaviours to deal with their sadness. The current finding that masculinity is related to distraction is consistent with Spence's model. Similarly, one might argue that people who score high on femininity would be most likely to attend to and express their sadness, just as they may generally attend to their own and others' affective experience. The current finding that femininity is related to rumination is also consistent with Spence's model.

In addition, the fact that Femininity X Masculinity

interaction effects did not emerge in the regression analyses of the coping indices has implications for Bem's (1981, 1984) theoretical model which characterizes four types of individuals (e.g., feminine, masculine, androgynous, and undifferentiated) based on the particular combinations of scores they obtain on the BSRI masculinity and femininity scales. A basic assumption of this personality classification is that individuals obtaining one particular score combination differ in their behaviours from individuals obtaining other score combinations. Thus, empirically, one would expect that significant interaction effects would occur regularly. However, results from the present study indicate that no additional information was gained when scores on the masculinity and femininity scales were considered jointly. In addition, reviews of previous research (Spence, 1984) suggest that often, "joint effects of masculinity and femininity yield relationships that could be reconstructed from the information found in the separate masculinity and femininity correlations" (Spence, 1984 p. 55).

The present findings, obtained using self-report measures, are consistent with experimental research that has examined the relation of masculinity and femininity to sadness. Conway, DiFazio, and Bonneville (in press) demonstrated that high masculine subjects who were experiencing negative affect seemed to engage in distraction by recalling positive events, whereas low masculine subjects who were experiencing negative

affect expressed their sadness by recalling negative events. Conway and colleagues led male and female undergraduates high and low in masculinity and femininity to experience negative affect by reading sad stories and by listening to sad music. Subjects were also given false feedback: they were informed that their reactions to the stories and music were more negative than other participants' reactions. To examine how they would react to the feedback and negative affect, subjects were asked to recall events from their past. The results indicated that individuals who scored high on masculinity in the negative affect/false feedback condition tended to recall more positive events relative to a neutral affect control condition. In contrast, subjects who scored low on masculinity in the negative affect/false feedback condition recalled more negative events relative to a neutral affect control condition.

Sex differences and coping with sadness

The present findings are consistent with previous research on sex differences in response styles to sadness. Women, compared to men, reported more rumination and less distraction. Men, relative to women, reported more drug use. These findings are consistent with the first component of Nolen-Hoeksema's (1987) theory concerning sex differences in response styles to sadness.

Masculinity, Femininity, and Depression

The present findings indicate that masculinity is

associated with distraction and that femininity is associated with rumination. In the second component of her theory, Nolen-Hoeksema (1987) proposes that distraction reduces the likelihood and duration of depression, whereas rumination increases the likelihood and duration of depression. The present findings coupled with the second component of Nolen-Hoeksema's theory lead to the expectation that masculinity will be associated with lower levels of depression, whereas femininity will be associated with higher levels of depression. Whitley (1984) conducted a meta-analysis to investigate the relation of masculinity and femininity to depression. The results revealed that masculinity was associated with less depression, but that there was no systematic relationship between femininity and depression. Whitley's (1984) meta-analysis revealed no relationship between femininity and depression because previous studies have shown both positive and negative relationships between femininity and depression. Methodological inconsistencies may explain why the relation of femininity to depression is unclear. For example, different investigators have used different instruments to measure femininity.

Results from a recent study conducted by Nezu and Nezu (1987) parallel the results of Whitley's meta-analysis. College students were asked to complete the BSRI and the BDI. The results revealed that masculinity was associated with lower depression and that there was no relationship between

femininity and depression. Based on this previous research as well as the current findings, one might argue in line with Nolen-Hoeksema (1987) that masculinity is associated with less depression in part because more masculine individuals engage in more distraction in response to sadness. In contrast, at present, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the relation of expression of sadness to the experience of depression.

Validity of Self-Report Methodology

The present findings were obtained using self-report measures. The use of such methodology in the present study raises two issues: the validity of self-report masculinity and femininity scales as measures of instrumentality and expressiveness and the validity of self-report coping measures to assess response styles to sadness.

The validity of the BSRI masculinity and femininity scales as measures of instrumentality and expressiveness has been supported by a number of studies which demonstrate that people who obtain particular scores on the scales actually differ in the extent to which they engage in instrumental and expressive behaviours (for a review see Bem, 1984; Spence 1984). For example, in a series of studies examining instrumental and expressive behaviour using the BSRI, Bem (1975) demonstrated that men who scored high on the masculinity scale and low on the femininity scale, relative to those who scored in the opposite manner, when left alone

and given the opportunity to interact with a kitten, displayed little emotional expression or nurturance. In another study, men who scored low on the masculinity scale and high on the femininity scale, relative to those who scored in an opposite manner, were less able to remain independent from social pressure to conform.

The coping questionnaire developed for the present research appears to be a valid measure of response styles to sadness. First, the fact that sex differences in response styles to sadness emerged in the present study, using the coping indices, suggests that the coping questionnaire is a valid measure. This finding is consistent with previous research on sex differences in response styles to sadness as well as Nolen-Hoeksema's theory which proposes that men and women respond differently to their sadness. Second, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest that self-report methodologies are appropriate in the study of coping.

Limitations of the Present Research

There are several limitations of the current study. First, the findings were based on the responses of college students. It is therefore not clear whether these findings can be generalized to other segments of the population. Second, the present results were based on self-report data. It would be important to replicate and to extend the present findings by conducting experimental as well as prospective studies. Finally, a measure of depression was not included

in the present study. The inclusion of such a measure may have revealed interesting information about the response styles of depressed versus nondepressed males and females.

Future Research

The present study empirically supported Nolen-Hoeksema's response style theory. It also extended it by demonstrating that masculinity was associated with distraction, whereas femininity was associated with rumination.

Future studies might further pursue the implications of Nolen-Hoeksema's theory. One may examine the relation of response styles to depression in a prospective study in order to assess the long-term effects of distraction and rumination on the experience of depression (cf., Rholes, Michas, & Shroff, 1989). In such a study, subjects would be selected on the basis of their scores on a response style to sadness questionnaire. At the beginning of the study (Time 1) and several months after (Time 2), depressive symptoms would be measured. A life events questionnaire would also be administered at Time 2 to identify the number, duration, and intensity of stressors experienced between Time 1 and Time 2. Based on Nolen-Hoeksema's (1987) theory it would be hypothesized that individuals who distract themselves from their sadness would show decreased symptoms of depression, whereas individuals who ruminate on their sadness would show increased symptoms of depression. It would also be important to examine the effect of stressors on level of depression.

One would like to show that response styles to sadness predict depression over and above that predicted by life events. In addition, future experimental research could directly examine the relation of distraction and rumination to the experience of sadness. In such a study, subjects would be selected on the basis of their scores on a response style to sadness questionnaire. They could then be led to experience negative affect. The duration and intensity of experimentally induced sadness could be assessed.

Summary

Nolen-Hoeksema's theory of response styles to sadness argues that women ruminate more than men and that men distract more than women in response to sadness. The present study was aimed at extending Nolen-Hoeksema's argument by not only linking sex but sex-role orientation to response styles. The sex-role differences obtained were consistent with the hypotheses. Individuals high in femininity compared to those low in femininity reported more rumination on their sadness. Individuals high in masculinity compared to those who are low reported more distraction from their sadness.

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Appendix A
Bem Sex-Role Inventory Short-Form

APPENDIX ABEM SEX-ROLE INVENTORY SHORT-FORM

BSRI-SF

The following questions concern your personality. Each personality characteristic is followed by a scale. Please indicate how each characteristic relates to you by circling the appropriate number on the scale.

Please answer all items. Your responses will remain confidential.

Defend my own beliefs

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Affectionate

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Conscientious

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Independent

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Sympathetic

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Moody

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Assertive

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Sensitive to needs of others

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Reliable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Strong Personality

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Understanding

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Jealous

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Forceful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Compassionate

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Truthful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Have leadership abilities

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Eager to soothe hurt feelings

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Secretive

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Willing to take risks

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Warm

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Adaptable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Dominant

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Tender

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Conceited

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Willing to take a stand

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Love children

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Tactful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Aggressive

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Gentle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Conventional

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never or almost never true	usually not true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	usually true	always or almost always true

Appendix B
Coping Questionnaire

APPENDIX B
COPING QUESTIONNAIRE

ID # _____

SRDC QUESTIONNAIRE

The statements in this questionnaire describe various things that people may do when they feel blue or sad. Please read each statement and circle the number on the scale which indicates how the statement applies to you when you feel sad.

I get together with one very close person or friend.
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 never sometimes quite a bit almost always

I do something physical
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 never sometimes quite a bit almost always

I get away and do something I enjoy.
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 never sometimes quite a bit almost always

I go out to meet people at a party or club.
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 never sometimes quite a bit almost always

I cry.
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 never sometimes quite a bit almost always

I try to determine why I'm depressed.
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 never sometimes quite a bit almost always

I ignore the problem and think about other things.
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 never sometimes quite a bit almost always

I take alcoholic beverages (e.g., beer).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never		sometimes		quite a bit		almost always

I take drugs.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never		sometimes		quite a bit		almost always

I avoid thinking of reasons why I'm depressed.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never		sometimes		quite a bit		almost always

I write to express my feelings.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never		sometimes		quite a bit		almost always

I talk to others about my feelings.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never		sometimes		quite a bit		almost always

Appendix C

Correlations among all variables for entire sample

Appendix C

Table 4

Correlations among all variables for entire sample

	<u>Masculinity</u>	<u>Femininity</u>	<u>Rumination</u>	<u>Distraction</u>	<u>Drug Use</u>	<u>Avoidance</u>	<u>Gender</u>
<u>Masculinity</u>	1.00						
<u>Femininity</u>	.04	1.00					
<u>Rumination</u>	.05	.34**	1.00				
<u>Distraction</u>	.20**	-.05	.06	1.00			
<u>Drug Use</u>	.09	-.11*	-.01	.27**	1.00		
<u>Avoidance</u>	-.09	-.02	-.01	.11*	.12*	1.00	
<u>Gender</u>	-.03	.33**	.40**	-.26**	-.23**	-.07	1.00

* $p < .05$
 ** $p < .01$

Appendix D

Correlations among all variables for males

Appendix D

Table 5

Correlations among all variables for males

	<u>Masculinity</u>	<u>Femininity</u>	<u>Rumination</u>	<u>Distraction</u>	<u>Drug Use</u>	<u>Avoidance</u>
<u>Masculinity</u>	1.00					
<u>Femininity</u>	.22*	1.00				
<u>Rumination</u>	.07	.22*	1.00			
<u>Distraction</u>	.21*	.20*	.27**	1.00		
<u>Drug Use</u>	.11	-.02	.08	.25**	1.00	
<u>Avoidance</u>	-.14	-.02	.08	.13	.13	1.00

* p < .05

** p < .01

Appendix E

Correlations among all variables for females

Appendix E

Table 6

Correlations among all variables for females

	<u>Masculinity</u>	<u>Femininity</u>	<u>Rumination</u>	<u>Distraction</u>	<u>Drug Use</u>	<u>Avoidance</u>
Masculinity	1.00					
Femininity	-.10	1.00				
Rumination	.07	.27**	1.00			
Distraction	.19*	-.09*	.12	1.00		
Drug Use	.05	-.05	.11	.20**	1.00	
Avoidance	-.05	.01	.09	.07	.10	1.00

* p < .05
 ** p < .01

Appendix F
Alpha coefficients of coping factors

Appendix F

Table 7Coefficients of coping factors

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Alpha coefficient</u>
Rumination	.53
Distraction	.53
Drug Use	.57
Avoidance	.14