

ROLE MODELS:
THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL BEHAVIORS*

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Much has been written about the sources of personal identity. While some theorists appear to give almost exclusive attention to the biological "givenness" occasioned by birth - whether it be body-type, temperament, intelligence, special aptitudes - most focus their attention upon the interpersonal relationships of childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood for their effect upon the gradual evolution of a sense of selfhood. And perhaps the most prominent concept which is to be found in this regard is that of "identification" which denotes the process by which a young person comes to feel similar to certain others who make up his interpersonal environment, comes to adopt as his own the values and attitudes of certain others, and comes to emulate their behaviors.

Of special importance to vocational counselors is the assessment of the effect of this process upon educational and occupational behavior. Super (1957), drawing on writers as different as Flugel (1929) and Berdie (1944), speaks of identification with a parent or parent-substitute as being related to the development of adequate roles, and of entrance into the occupational field as being related to the identifications made with parental or parental-substitute role models. He goes on to state that the parental relationship is decisive in its

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determination of later role model selections, that the less privileged will be found to have fewer occupational role models, and that in this instance new identifications will often be made with other significant persons in the environment.

Ginzberg (1951) speaks of "key persons" in or outside the family who may act as models which are imitated. Research by Gilliland (1939), Moser (1952), Henderson (1958), and Bowerman and Kerick (1959), relating to the effects of role model selection upon vocational interests and behaviors, tends to confirm these views.

Problem

Those who speak in terms of role model generally fail to make differentiations within that global concept. In analytic psychology attention is given to but one aspect of role modelship, that pertaining to personal identification in which the subject "becomes" the other person with respect to personal values, traits, and behaviors. In vocational psychology attention is given to the process whereby the person "becomes" the other person with respect to occupational values, traits, and behaviors. No acknowledgement appears to be given to the fact that a young person exists in at least three important psychological spheres or environments: educational, occupational, and personal. The present investigation seeks to determine whether or not the key figures who populate a young person's interpersonal environment may serve as role models in only one or another of these spheres and in differing degrees.

The second deficiency of much of the vocational research in this

area stems from the limited perspective afforded by studies which are not longitudinal in design. Attitudes and behaviors change with time, and attention must be given to the wide range of time and circumstance in which vocational behaviors occur if we are to make very much sense of them. The present investigation, based upon interviews conducted at three different time periods, attempts to examine the extent to which the passage of time affects the kinds of role model selections which are made.

Consideration has also been given to the fact that role model relationships may vary. A key figure may be a Similarity Role Model (a person to whom a subject makes specific reference, acknowledging a similarity), an Imitation Role Model (a person a subject would like to be like), or an Assimilation Role Model (a person to whom the subject has made specific reference indicating that he has adopted as his own that person's ideas, standards, or values). The present study is an effort to determine whether or not this further break-down of the global concept is justified and the extent to which the role model relationship is determined by the sphere in which the role model serves.

Finally, each model has been scored for the extent of his or her interaction with the subject in each of the three spheres. Educational interaction includes helping the subject with his homework, encouraging him to finish high school or to go on to higher education, and discussing his educational plans with the subject. Occupational interaction includes taking the subject to the model's place of work, discussing or advising the subject with regard to the subject's occupational plans and preferences, and encouraging the subject to think about

possible vocational choices. Personal interaction includes communicating freely with the subject, spending time with him, and discussing the subject's personal problems with him. The six kinds of interaction in each of the three spheres were chosen, not because they represent necessarily the entire range of interpersonal encounter, but because the nature of the Career Pattern Study's structured interviews made the measurement of these behaviors feasible. A purpose of the present study is to determine the extent to which scores on the interaction variables correlate with scores on the role modelship variables, i.e., whether or not the inclusion of both sets of variables in the final study is justified.

Subjects

The present study made use of typewritten transcripts of taped interviews which were conducted with 265 males as part of the Career Pattern Study. There are three sets of interviews available for each individual: the first took place when the subjects were in the ninth grade, the second when the subjects had reached the twelfth grade and were about 18 years old, and the third when the group had been out of high school for seven years and were about 25 years of age. The interviews, totalling four hours at the ninth grade, and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours at each of the two later time periods, cover a wide range of educational, vocational, and other behavior. They are semi-structured and focus upon the subject's view of his leisure-time, school and family roles, his plans for the future, and his views and attitudes with respect to himself. In the first interview the subjects are asked specifically whom they feel they resemble most, and in the last they are asked to

name that person or persons whom they would most like to be like.

Method

In order to assure reliability, the judge was instructed to read the interview and to note the role model statements which the subject made. He then identified the subject's role models and recorded the number of references the subject made to each role model within the context of these statements. He then determined the importance to the subject of the basis upon which the statements were made, and scored each role model accordingly. A role model's score or scores are a function of the number of different role model relationships he has with the subject, their importance to the subject, and the number of references the subject has made to him.

It was found that in this way the variables could be quantified with relative ease and that reliability coefficients (based upon inter-judge agreement of rankings) were in the high .80's and low .90's. The scores received by a role model are compared to those of other role models, a comparison which results in the assignment of each role model to a quintile that serves to designate the extent to which the subject perceives each of his role models as a positive role model and "inter-actor" (5 - Most Positive.....1 - Least Positive) in a particular sphere and at a given time period.

Results

Although this investigation is not yet completed, enough work has been done to indicate that the analysis of the above-mentioned variables is possible and that the rationale for the study is therefore supported.

1. Among the ninth grade subjects of the Career Pattern Study scored for their responses at the ninth grade, the role model variables are not at all related. The correlations range from $-.01$ to $.17$, all non-significant, indicating, for example, that a person who is a highly positive and significant occupational role model for a given subject may well not be the same kind of personal role model for that person.

Only eleven years later, when the subjects had left school and were coping with the developmental tasks of the establishment period, is there a higher correspondence between the role model variables. For instance, an r of $.53$ ($p = .001$) between occupational role modelship and personal role modelship at that time period suggests that the occupational and personal spheres have begun to be somewhat integrated (see Table 1).

2. Whereas parents, siblings, and adult relations are the most frequent role models in the ninth grade, peers, teachers, and employers emerge as increasingly significant role model figures for 25 year-olds. With increasing age nonparental role models figure more and more strongly as positive role models in the educational and occupational spheres, and by age 25, 76 of the 110 persons who can be considered positive personal role models were not parents (see Table 2).

3. There is a moderate relationship ($r = .40$, $p = .01$) between perceived personal similarity with a key figure and assimilation of that person's occupational thinking in the ninth grade. There is no relationship ($r = .14$, $p = .3$) between feeling much the same way about things in the occupational sphere and imitating that key figure

occupationally. However, if one imitates a person occupationally there is a good chance that one will also want to emulate him as a person ($r = .48$, $p = .02$). Generally, low but positive correlations between role model relationships indicate that this further differentiation is justified (see Table 3).

4. Perhaps as a function of the questions asked in the semi-structured interviews, educational role models appear to be chiefly persons whose educational values subjects have assimilated, and not imitation role models. This would also appear to be true of occupational role models at the ninth grade level, although at the later time periods occupational role models seem to be persons whose occupational behaviors subjects would like to emulate. At the first two time periods, at ages 15 and 18, personal role models are chiefly persons to whom subjects feel similar, while at the last time period, age 25, they are persons to whom subjects do not necessarily feel similar but whom they would like to imitate (see Table 4).

5. In the ninth grade positive educational role models tend to be of only one type. For example, 75 percent of those who earn scores for similarity role modelship in this sphere do not earn scores as assimilation or imitation role models. In the occupational sphere this is less likely to be the case, while in the personal sphere a positive imitation role model is likely to be an assimilation role model as well (see Table 5).

6. Scores on the interaction variables tend to be much more highly related than scores on the role model variables. Occupational interaction scores and educational interaction scores seem to be the least

related at all time periods. Occupational and personal interaction scores seem to be the most highly related (see Table 6).

7. Scores on interaction variables in a given sphere are often not as highly related to the role model scores in that sphere as they are to role model scores in other spheres. For example, occupational interaction and role modelship scores correlate .02 ($p = .8$), while occupational interaction and personal role modelship scores correlate .32 ($p = .002$). Again, the moderate relationships between a key figure's role model and interaction scores indicate that they measure different variables (see Table 7).

A few other findings may be of some interest. Of 100 ninth grade subjects interviewed in the ninth grade, 27% could think of no one in their interpersonal environment whom they resembled the most; 39% named only their father; 14% named only their mother; 6% named a non-parent only. Nine percent of the subjects named both parents. Approximately 25% of the subjects thought in terms of imitating their fathers occupationally. About 64% stated that they did not wish to imitate their fathers in this sphere.

Discussion

It is believed that inter-subject differences with regard to the scores their key figures receive on those variables outlined above will permit the comparison of individuals with respect to patterns of role model selection. This can be done over a ten-year period. These patterns can be related to the various occupational and educational criteria of the Career Pattern Study, in work which is still in progress. Knowledge

of the patterns of an individual's role model selection as well as the kinds of role models he has chosen may be helpful in the prediction of educational and occupational behaviors.

After the role model variables and their relationships have been fully explored and the ninth grade subjects have been differentiated with respect to their role model patterns, these variables will be related to the other relevant Career Pattern Study variables, including such as vocational maturity, educational attainment, and career success. After these relationships have been explored, hypotheses based upon findings with the ninth grade subjects will be tested with the eighth grade subjects who were interviewed similarly in 8th, 12th, and 19th grades and whose role models have been scored in the same way.

As a result of this study, we shall know more precisely what difference, if any, it makes when a boy says, "My father and I are very much alike" or when he says, as did one of the ninth grade subjects, "I can't think of anyone I'm like. All they tell me is that I'm not like them." Perhaps as vocational psychologists and guidance counselors we shall be in a better position to know what kinds of role models are appropriate and possible at a given stage of educational and occupational development, and to use this information not simply to predict future behaviors but to help to foster the kinds of interpersonal relationships which promise most in this regard.

Summary

This study presents some findings regarding the differentiation

of the concept of role modelship according to sphere, time, and relationship. The differentiation of role model-subject interaction according to sphere and time has also been examined. The results appear to justify the use of these differentiations in describing role model selection. Attempts will be made to assess the effect of this process upon educational and occupational behavior.

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Table 1
INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF ROLE MODEL VARIABLES IN GRADES 9, 12, AND 19

Role Model	9th Grade		12th Grade		19th Grade	
	ORM	PRM	ORM	PRM	ORM	PRM
Educational	.17	.09	-.84	.00	.30	.36
Occupational		-.01		.26		.53**
Personal						

**
p ≤ .01

Table 2
NUMBER OF FATHERS, MOTHERS, AND NON-PARENTS
RECEIVING SCORES ON THE ROLE MODEL VARIABLES IN GRADES 9, 12, AND 19

Role Model	9th Grade				12th Grade				19th Grade			
	Father	Mother	Non-Parent	Total	Father	Mother	Non-Parent	Total	Father	Mother	Non-Parent	Total
Pos. Ed.	20	21	11	52	9	1	14	24	5	5	14	24
Neg. Ed.	9	3	12	24	6	1	4	11	6	1	9	16
Pos. Occ.	81	26	43	150	30	8	31	69	49	10	110	169
Neg. Occ.	80	27	9	116	18	4	0	22	42	2	17	61
Pos. Per.	89	47	34	170	14	4	10	28	23	11	76	110
Neg. Per.	23	19	24	66	9	5	6	20	10	4	15	29

Table 3

INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF ROLE MODEL RELATIONSHIP VARIABLES
IN GRADES 9, 12, AND 19

9th Grade	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Educational Similarity	.00	.59	.63*	.26	.35	.29	.19	-.62
2. Educational Imitation		1.00	.00	.34	-.92	.20	.20	.00
3. Educational Assimilation			.55*	-.04	.37	-.11	-.51	.05
4. Occupational Similarity				.14	.44*	-.03	.09	-.38
5. Occupational Imitation					-.21	.17	.48*	.01
6. Occupational Assimilation						.40*	.02	-.01
7. Personal Similarity							.57***	.07
8. Personal Imitation								.54
9. Personal Assimilation								

12th Grade	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Educational Similarity	.00	.00	.00	-.89	.00	.19	.00	.00
2. Educational Imitation			.00	1.00	.00	.87	.00	.00
3. Educational Assimilation			1.00	-.99	.58	.59	.00	-.37
4. Occupational Similarity				-.98	.00	1.00	.00	.00
5. Occupational Imitation					-.49	-.99	.00	1.00
6. Occupational Assimilation						.88	.00	-1.00
7. Personal Similarity							.00	.00
8. Personal Imitation								.00
9. Personal Assimilation								

19th Grade	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Educational Similarity	.00	1.00	-.94	1.00	-1.00	-.21	.00	1.00
2. Educational Imitation			.00	.99	.00	.00	.73	.00
3. Educational Assimilation			.00	.17	.94	-.01	-1.00	.00
4. Occupational Similarity				.07	.33	-.18	.27	.00
5. Occupational Imitation					.31	.39	.36	.00
6. Occupational Assimilation						.68	.73	.00
7. Personal Similarity							-.07	.00
8. Personal Imitation								1.00
9. Personal Assimilation								

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$

Table 4

NUMBER OF ROLE MODELS RECEIVING SCORES
IN EACH OF THE ROLE MODEL RELATIONSHIP CATEGORIES AT GRADES 9, 12, AND 19

Role Models	9th Grade			12th Grade			19th Grade		
	Father	Mother	Non-Parent	Father	Mother	Non-Parent	Father	Mother	Non-Parent
<u>Pos. Ed.</u>									
1. Similarity	4	7	1	2	0	2	1	0	0
2. Imitation	2	1	2	2	0	5	2	0	6
3. Assimilation	14	13	8	5	1	7	2	5	8
<u>Neg. Ed.</u>									
1. Similarity	3	0	7	2	0	1	2	0	6
2. Imitation	1	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	1
3. Assimilation	5	3	1	4	1	1	4	1	2
<u>Pos. Occ.</u>									
1. Similarity	28	16	7	3	3	7	15	7	32
2. Imitation	25	3	25	15	2	19	16	1	56
3. Assimilation	28	7	11	12	3	5	18	2	22
<u>Neg. Occ.</u>									
1. Similarity	12	3	3	1	0	0	3	0	10
2. Imitation	62	16	5	13	2	0	30	1	5
3. Assimilation	6	8	1	4	2	0	9	1	2
<u>Pos. Per.</u>									
1. Similarity	56	32	26	12	4	8	12	10	23
2. Imitation	20	4	4	0	0	2	11	0	50
3. Assimilation	13	11	4	2	0	0	0	1	3
<u>Neg. Per.</u>									
1. Similarity	15	10	20	3	3	6	3	1	12
2. Imitation	6	1	1	3	0	0	6	0	1
3. Assimilation	2	8	3	3	2	0	1	3	2

Table 5
 PERCENTAGES OF THOSE WHO SCORE
 IN ONE ROLE MODEL RELATIONSHIP CATEGORY
 BUT NOT IN THE OTHERS

Role Modelship	9th Grade %	12th Grade %	19th Grade %
<u>Positive Educational</u>			
1. Similarity	75	100	100
2. Imitation	60	86	100
3. Assimilation	86	100	93
<u>Negative Educational</u>			
1. Similarity	90	33	75
2. Imitation	80	100	100
3. Assimilation	89	83	86
<u>Positive Occupational</u>			
1. Similarity	27	61	59
2. Imitation	50	80	74
3. Assimilation	19	65	60
<u>Negative Occupational</u>			
1. Similarity	27	0	46
2. Imitation	48	73	61
3. Assimilation	46	100	50
<u>Positive Personal</u>			
1. Similarity	75	96	84
2. Imitation	25	100	82
3. Assimilation	25	50	100
<u>Negative Personal</u>			
1. Similarity	69	100	63
2. Imitation	38	67	71
3. Assimilation	54	100	83

Table 6

INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF INTERACTION VARIABLES
IN GRADES 9, 12, AND 19

<u>Interaction</u>	9th Grade		12th Grade		19th Grade	
	Occ.	Pers.	Occ.	Pers.	Occ.	Pers.
Educational	.30**	.27**	.32*	.23	.27**	.19
Occupational		.50**		.53**		.40**
Personal						

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$

Table 7

INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF INTERACTION AND ROLE MODEL VARIABLES
IN GRADES 9, 12, AND 19

<u>Interaction</u>	9th Grade Role Model			12th Grade Role Model			19th Grade Role Model		
	Ed.	Occ.	Pers.	Ed.	Occ.	Pers.	Ed.	Occ.	Pers.
Educational	.29*	.07	.17*	.08	.20	.13	.53**	.38**	.39*
Occupational	.48**	.02	.32**	-.32	.16	.13	.53*	.36**	.41**
Personal	.35**	.00	.38**	.10	.00	.25	.59*	.37**	.39**

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$