During her lifetime, the scientific contributions of Jeanne Humphrey Block ranged widely. She investigated delay of gratification in young children; the parents of schizophrenic children; the factors predisposing to childhood asthma; cross-cultural differences in socialization practices; student activism; various cognitive styles; the effects of family stress; creativity; and the many long-term implications of ego control and ego resiliency for the way behavior is organized and manifested, among other things. She also planned, implemented and for many years nurtured a longitudinal study of personality and cognitive development of unprecedented scope, achievement, and continuing implication that, by itself, justifies her distinguished reputation. Her work on childhood asthma received the American Psychiatric Association Hofheimer Prize (1974) and she was elected to the status of Fellow in four divisions of the American Psychological Association. She also served on various significant editorial and national research review committees.

But perhaps the primary basis for her recognition to date derives from the series of integrative, theoretically oriented, thoughtfully analytic essays she wrote during the 1970's and early 1980's on sex role development (Block, 1973, 1976a, 1979, 1983), culminating in her posthumously published book, Sex Role Identity and Ego Development (1984). In these writings on the course of personality development, she presented her own conception of sex role based upon cross-cultural and longitudinal recognitions, described the ways in which the interweaving of biological and cultural factors have historically influenced sex role development, showed how societal and technological developments have in significant ways made previously understandable sex role shappings no longer valid, documented the differential premises ingrained in little girls and little boys by their differential socialization, and radically but constructively revised previous understandings of the empirical literature on gender differences in behavior. Although an engaged feminist, Jeanne Block was also a scientist and her unique conjoining of these identity-expanding values with sober and incisive scientific analyses struck a responsive chord in many and gave her words wide influence.

Her personal presence also helped her toward having effect: she was womanly, energetic, warmly connecting, funny, artful in the non-pejorative sense, attractive to both women and to men. Her work continues to be frequently cited and she is well-remembered as a role model of the women psychologist.

Family Background and Education
Jeanne Lavonne Humphrey was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma on the 17th of July, 1923. Her father was Charles Joseph Humphrey, a building contractor earlier from Cleveland, Ohio; her mother was Louise Lewis Humphrey, originally from Rolla, Missouri in the Ozark foothills. Her father was a moral, quietly warm person whose consistency and concern were important to his daughter's development. During his life, he became well-known as a meticulous and scrupulous builder of finely crafted homes. Her mother was a firm instiller of traditional values, a believer in self-improvement, and with high intelligence, energy, and social concerns. Active in church and community affairs, when her children reached a sufficient age, she went on to become a tax analyst and a respected lobbyist of principled convictions with the state legislature.

When Jeanne Humphrey was 4-months old, the family wended its way to Portland, Oregon and settled near Reed College. As a child, she played and swam at Reed and came to know several neighboring Reed professors. After the birth of a brother, Richard, in 1931, the family moved to a large house on several acres in Clackamas County, near the small town of Milwaukee and about ten miles outside Portland.
The depression period was a hard one for the Humphrey family because of crushing, undeserved financial blows. But with an affectionate milk cow, a productive garden, and some chickens, the family was in many immediate ways self-providing. Things eased up after several years and, overall, it seems fair to say that Humphrey lived what might be called an All-American, small-town life. Through elementary, junior high, and high school, there was the same set of chums. Humphrey was bright, vivacious, enterprising, and popular, but also she was, in adolescence, turning over in her own mind the various sets of values she was encountering and constructing a sense of who she was and who she wanted to be. She was powerfully upset by the absence of local community reaction when a long term Nisei girlfriend was, overnight, family and all, removed from town and sent to an internment camp a few days after Pearl Harbor; she was realizing that she was smarter than she was supposed to be; a minister, Tom Shannon, was important to her thinking she was smarter than she was supposed to be; a minister, Tom Shannon, was important to her thinking on self.

Upon graduation from high school in 1941, Humphrey went to Oregon State College for a year, majoring in home economics but also taking courses in architecture. She achieved the unusual distinction of majoring in home economics while still making the Dean's List for academic achievement. The time was 1942; America was at war; college seemed insignificant. She quit school and took a job at Meier Frank, the leading department store in Portland, working as a buyer's assistant. In 1943, she accompanied a girlfriend to the recruiting office, and returned having herself enlisted in the SPARS, the women's' unit of the Coast Guard. Jeanne Humphrey was commissioned an ensign in 1944 and served with distinction. In 1945, during her service, she was scalded over much of her body and almost died from the subsequent plasma loss. Coast Guard servicemen responded with blood donations (she was told at the time that she held the record for number of blood transfusions). After many painful skin grafts, Humphrey returned to active service earning commendation for facilitating, at the end of the war, the demobilization of military men seeking rapid return to civilian life.

Demobilized in 1946, Humphrey wanted more and a different education. She went to Reed College, near where she had lived as a young child, and majored in Psychology. Her major influences there were Fred Courts and Monte Griffith, both interesting and supportive individuals as well as good psychologists, and she graduated with honors in 1947. She had applied to several graduate schools in the East and been accepted at Harvard but during a summer visit to the San Francisco Bay Area to see a friend, she used the opportunity to spontaneously visit Stanford University to see what the Psychology Department was like. Ernest Hilgard happened to be available to meet her, liked the verve of the eager, obviously intelligent young woman that he saw, and invited her to become a graduate student that Fall. Humphrey liked Stanford, far enough and yet close enough to Portland, and so her choice was made.

At Stanford, Jeanne Humphrey majored in clinical psychology, then a field seeking to define and transform itself after the war. During these years, clinical psychology at Stanford was represented by Maud Merrill James, who had worked with Terman in revising the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test and by Howard Hunt, neither of whom would be considered to be clinicians given later conceptions of the term. But Maud Merrill James (one never omitted her middle name) was a quietly shrewd, elegant, and gentle person with much experience with young problem children; she became a significant mentor for Humphrey both professionally and personally. Becoming a Veterans Administration Clinical Psychology Intern in 1948, Humphrey encountered the full range of psychopathology among the patients there and, as a personal project, for three years undertook prolonged psychotherapy with a young schizophrenic veteran, a significant learning experience. Concurrently, she served in the Stanford Child Guidance Clinic, first as a psychometrician and then as a therapist with children and with parents.

Also at Stanford, Jeanne Humphrey was taking non-clinical psychology courses: on learning with Ernest Hilgard, on statistics with Quinn McNemar (at a personal level, a significant mentor), on comparative psychology with Calvin Stone, on experimental methods with Donald Taylor, on the history of psychology with Paul Farnsworth, among others. It was the élan of the clinical graduate students at Stanford of that time to be both clinically oriented and also to academically outdo the psychology graduate students focusing on "hardnosed," "experimental" psychology. Jeanne Humphrey was a successful exemplar of this orientation.

An unusually good group of graduate students was at Stanford during this era, the late 1940's, partly because of the return of veterans keen to renew their education: Fred Attneave, Gerry Blum, Charles
Jeanne Humphrey Block completed her own doctoral thesis in 1951, already pregnant with her first child. For the academic year, 1951-52, she was invited by Stanford to be an Instructor in the Psychology Department and, with a brief hiatus for the birth of Susan Dale on February 12, 1952, completed that responsibility and left Stanford with high recommendations. Jack Block had a position at the University of California's Institute of Personality Assessment and Research across San Francisco Bay in Berkeley. Susan was a small baby, more children were anticipated, the era was the 1950's - it was time to leave the academic life for a period of child-rearing, child-rearing, and homemaking. And so she did.

Through the 1950's, Jeanne Block bore three more children, Judith Lynne on December 31, 1953, David Lewis on March 20, 1956, and Carol Ann on April 15, 1959. Immersed as she was in these incessant but rewarding familial responsibilities, she still found the time and energy to continue part-time professional and scientific work, turned to when and where it could be fitted into an often uncontrollable schedule. She was the prime mover of a study in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California Medical School in San Francisco comparing the parents of schizophrenic children with the parents of neurotic children. For the California Medical Association, she interviewed a group of physicians who had been sued for malpractice and wrote a fascinating report on their personalities which could never be publicly released because of its explosive implications for the medical profession. She served as a clinical psychologist and consultant at a mental health clinic, and she began he insightful and subsequently influential work on allergic predisposition and psychopathology in childhood asthma at the Children's Hospital of the East Bay. Her formal publications during this decade were relatively few, articles on ethnocentrism and intolerance of ambiguity (Block & Block, 1951), on reactions to authority (Block & Block, 1952), on the reactions of young children to frustration (Block & Martin, 1955), on psychiatrists' conceptions of schizophrenogenic parents (Jackson, Block, & Patterson, 1958), and on the comparison of the parents of neurotic children with the parents of schizophrenic children (Block, Patterson, Block, & Jackson, 1958). Concurrently, she also created a well-organized and esthetic home, became a gourmet cook, was president of the local parent-teachers association, and underwent a useful personal psychoanalysis.

During the 1960's, as the children became more self-sufficient, Jeanne Block was able to become more involved with psychology. She continued and extended her important work on factors predisposing toward asthma in childhood (Block, Jennings, Harvey, & Simpson, 1964; Block, Harvey, Jennings, & Simpson, 1966; Block, 1968) albeit still on an opportunistic, non-scheduled, part-time basis. In 1963, she received a Special Research Fellowship from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the entire family spent her husband's sabbatical year in Oslo, Norway. During this time, Jeanne Block held an appointment at the Norwegian Institute for Social Research and again became a full-time psychologist. She carried out several studies comparing the socialization practices of the four Scandinavian countries, America, and England and, in the process evolved her widely used assessment instrument, the Child Rearing Practices Report (1966). Shortly after her return to Berkeley in 1964, the student Free Speech Movement erupted and for the next several years the campus was preoccupied by its moral fallout. She was a passionate but still scientific observer of the ever-changing scene and received a 1965 Rosenberg Grant through the Institute of Human Development at Berkeley to conduct studies of the personalities, the moral orientations, and the parenting of different types of student activists. Her papers (Haan, Block, & Smith, 1968; Block, Haan, & Smith, 1969; Smith, Haan, & Block, 1970; Block, 1972) on these matters were widely read and remain highly influential.

Although she was becoming known as a bright, productive, thoughtful psychologist, at Berkeley Block was still without a stable or fulfilling position and so she took, concomitantly, apart-time job as a "specialist" involved in the graduate training of teachers who had returned to the University. This was the time of the Vietnam war; Jeanne Block
marched in protest of that effort, walked the precincts to muster support for Eugene McCarthy, and helped start the Committee for Social Responsibility (which later was transformed into Physicians for Social Responsibility).

In 1968, two significant career events occurred which permitted a fundamental career transition. Jeanne Block received a National Institute of Mental Health Research Scientist Development Award, sited within the Institute of Human Development and, together with her husband, started an ambitious longitudinal study of personality development. The career development award for the first time provided secure support for a long enough period so that she could explore her own thinking and pursue her own interests. The initiation of the Block & Block longitudinal study was a deliberate career investment intended to permit the developmental study of ego control and ego resiliency, the study of sex role development and of gender differences, the study of self percepts over time, the study of parenting styles and their consequences, among other concerns. The powerful logic of the longitudinal method had impressed her as incontestable, the psychological issues that could be studied were intellectually exciting and personally meaningful, previous longitudinal projects were unable to respond to these contemporary concerns, and the idea of a jointly-nurtured, complementarily-managed research enterprise with her husband and dance partner was reinforcing. And so the effort was begun.

In central ways, the longitudinal study once embarked upon shaped (indeed, controlled) Jeanne Block’s subsequent life as a psychologist. She wholeheartedly contributed her intelligence, energy, and diverse talents to the enterprise, which would have founded otherwise along the way. In return, the longitudinal study of 130 children at ages 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, and 14 (later assessed at ages 18 and 23 as well) provided empirical recognitions that greatly influenced her theoretical perspective. Many research articles by Jeanne Block or decisively influenced by her flowed from the study: on sex role and socialization patterns (J. Block, von der Lippe, & J. H. Block, 1973), on sex-role typing and instrumental behavior (J.H. Block, 1976b), on the many implications of ego control and ego resiliency for the way behavior is organized and manifested (J.H. Block & J. Block, 1980), on intolerance of ambiguity in young children (Harrington, J.H.Block, & J.Block, 1978), on sex differences in cognitive functioning (J. H.Block, 1981), on activity level (Buss, J.H.Block, & J.Block, 1980), on the implications of parental disagreement regarding child-rearing (J.H. Block, J. Block, & Morrison, 1981), on various cognitive styles (J.Block, J.H. Block, & Harrington, 1974; J. Block, Buss, J.H.Block, & Gjerde, 1981), on delay of gratification (Funder, J.H.Block, & J.Block, 1983), on the effects of family stress (J. Block, J.H. Block, & Gjerde, 1988), on creativity (Harrington, J. Block, & J.H.Block, 1983), on the continuity and changes in parents’ child rearing practices (Roberts, J.H.Block, & J.Block, 1984), on the personality of children prior to divorce (J.H.Block, J.Block, & Gjerde, 1986), on the early antecedents of low self esteem in adolescence, among others. An influential public television program, “The Pinks and the Blues,” by NOVA (1980) focusing on sex role development featured Block, her thoughts, and the longitudinal study. It became widely used in college classes in the Psychology of Women.

However, her primary contribution - and the basis for her rapid and widespread influence - is to be seen in the series of integrative, theoretically oriented, thoughtfully analytic essays she wrote during the 1970’s and early 1980’s on sex role development (Block, 1973, 1976, 1979, 1982), culminating in her posthumously published book, Sex Role Identity and Ego Development (1984). In these writings, she presented her own conception of sex role based upon cross-cultural and longitudinal recognitions, described the ways in which the interweaving of biological and cultural factors have historically influenced sex role development, showed how societal and technological developments have in significant ways made previously understandable sex role shapings no longer valid, documented the differential premises ingrained in little girls and little boys by their differential socialization, and radically but constructively revised previous understandings of the empirical literature on gender differences in behavior. Although an engaged feminist, Jeanne Block was also a scientist and her unique conjoining of these identity-expanding values with sober and incisive scientific analyses struck a responsive chord in many and gave her words wide influence. Her personal presence also helped her toward having effect: she was womanly, energetic, warmly connecting, funny, artful in the non-pejorative sense, attractive to both women and to men.

Jeanne Block in 1972 was diagnosed as having ulcerative colitis. The illness was an oppressive one, at first manageable but later often out of control and requiring a number of serious hospitalizations.
There was surgery, the necessity of daily, difficult-to-live-with cortisone, the many ways in which chronic illness permeates and attenuates daily life. Through this all, Block remained remarkably spirited and productive. Recognizing that she no longer needed "development," NIMH gave her a Research Scientist Award in 1973, renewed in 1978. She served on numerous professional committees of the American Psychological Association (APA), was a Fellow of APA Divisions 7 (Developmental Psychology), 8 (Personality and Social Psychology), 9 (Psychological Study of Social Issues), and 35 (Psychology of Women), and was elected President of the Division of Developmental Psychology in 1980. She was a member of the National Institute of Mental Health Personality and Cognition Research Review Committee (1972-1975) and the National Institute of Child Health and Development Maternal and Child Health Research Review Committee (1977-1981), chairing this latter committee her last two years. She received the American Psychiatric Association Hofheimer Prize for Research in 1974 because of her work on childhood asthma. She served on many editorial boards and was frequently called upon as an editorial consultant. She gave many special invitational lectures including an APA Master Lecture in 1979 on socialization influences on personality development of males and females, was widely sought as research consultant, and was a Scholar-in-Residence at the Rockefeller Foundation Study Center, Bellagio, Italy in 1979. In belated recognition of her intensive work with many graduate students and her significant educational influence, she was appointed Adjunct Professor of Psychology at Berkeley in 1979. And her national visibility caused her to be elected in 1980 a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Block had realized her self, was where she wanted to be, with ideas and energy and possibilities stretching ahead when, in May 1981, the doom of pancreatic cancer was discovered.

Jeanne Block was graceful during her last months, fought bravely, continued to be a model to family, friends, and to strangers who knew her only from her writings but now wrote to her, looked at the moon on clear, cold, sleepless nights, mustered her inner resources for a glorious but understood to be final Thanksgiving dinner surrounded by family and a few friends, and died on December 4, 1981.

The joint longitudinal study has been continued by her husband. Sadly, although Block was so centrally involved in the seeding and nurturing of this prolonged effort, she did not live to see the abundant harvest of implicative relations the study consequently was enabled to discern. Daughter Susan is now a psychiatrist, daughter Judith is a registered nurse, son David is a computer engineer, and daughter Carol is a university administrator. Four grandsons never had the opportunity of meeting their grandmother. Radcliffe College has initiated the Jeanne Humphrey Block Fellowship which, each year, supports two graduate students studying gender-related issues.

Jack Block
University of California, Berkeley

References


