Effects of sex on decision policies used for self and decision policies used for other persons*

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A comparison of the riskiness of decisions made for self and another person were completed. Results of this comparison show that when self and the other person were the same sex: (1) no significant difference was found between bets selected for self and other, but (2) males selected more risky bets than did females. For mixed-sex pairs, both males and females were found to select more risky bets for others than for self.

The results of several recent studies suggest that decisions made for another person differ from those made for one's self. Lonergan & McClintock (1961), Wallach, Kogan, & Bem (1964), and Zaleska & Kogan (1971) report that decisions affecting outcomes for other individuals are more conservative than decisions determining payoffs only to self. A study by Teger & Kogan (1971) indicates that this greater conservatism may be the result of the operation of an implicit decision rule of reciprocity. In the above cited studies, Ss were led to believe that the "other person" would be making decisions which determined S's pay or that S would share in the outcome of decisions he made for the group. Most individuals believe that others are more conservative than themselves (Wallach & Wing, 1968). Hence, under conditions of reciprocal decision making, S empathizes with the client and makes decisions which he believes the client desires.

Following this line of reasoning, decisions made for another person should be influenced by the sex of the client. Beliefs in the conservatism of females and the riskiness of males seem to be an accepted part of the American folklore of child rearing and evidently strongly influence expectations of adult sex-appropriate behavior. While Wallach & Kogan (1959) have argued that there is no evidence indicating that men are in fact more risky than women, we would expect nevertheless, in line with empathy theory, that the belief in sex differences should influence the decisions made for another person. In a direct examination of the effects of client's sex on decisions of the

consultant, Slovic, Weinstein, & Lichtenstein (1967) found no differences in risk levels of bets selected for males and females. However, in this study, a random device was used to select the bets determining payoffs. It is possible that this procedure attenuated S's felt responsibility for the client.

Following a general social comparison model, one might additionally expect that sex of consultant should influence the decisions the client makes for himself. For example, a male client working with a male consultant might be more risky than if working alone or with a female consultant, since he is reminded of sex-appropriate behavior. In the absence of direct evidence, of course, the opposite prediction, that males will be more risky when working with females, could also be argued with equally persuasive rationale.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

A modified version of the duplex bet task developed by Slovic (1967) was used. This task consists of 27 gambles. For each gamble, S is presented with information on the probability of win (Pw), the amount of win (\$w), the probability of loss (Pl), and the amount of loss (\$l). Since the occurrence of win and loss are determined independently and there is essentially a zero-order intercorrelation between each of the four risk dimensions, the task is analogous to real-life situations in which it is possible to win and not lose, lose and not win, both win and lose, or neither win nor lose.

In the present study, task information was displayed by means of two large disks representing, respectively, Pw and Pl. The percentage of area blacked out on each disk represented the probability of outcome (win or loss) for each gamble. Three values for each probability were used: .2, .6, and .8. Outcomes were determined by spinning a pointer

affixed to the center of each disk. Values of amount won or lost for each gamble were determined by the product of the values used in the original form of the task by Slovic (\$1, \$2, and \$4) and the amount of money bet by S. Permissible bets ranged from 10c to \$1 for each gamble in 10c increments. Thus the amount of outcomes for any single gamble ranged from 10c to \$4 won or lost.

Forty male and 30 female volunteers from introductory psychology classes participated in the study. At the time of recruitment, S was told that he would receive a minimum of \$1.50 for participation in the study. Ss were run in groups of four to six persons. Ss did not know each other personally before meeting in the laboratory.

Upon entering the laboratory room, Ss were assigned to work in pairs. Within each pair, one S was arbitrarily designated a "consultant" and the other S a "client." Consultant and client faced each other across a table with the duplex bet display positioned at the end. Both consultant and client were instructed to make bets independently for each of the 27 bets. Ss were told that upon completion of the bets, six gambles would be selected to determine payoffs for the client. Three of these bets were played using the bets made by the client, and three were played using the bets made by the consultant. Each client-S was given a stake of \$1.50 to begin play. All money won was kept by the client. Consultants were paid a standard wage of \$1.50.

RESULTS

Analysis of judgment policies used by S were completed by performing multiple regression analysis of the bets. The high multiple correlations obtained (Mdn $R = .87$) indicate that Ss were responding systematically to the task. The obtained beta weights indicate the relative importance to S of each risk dimension when making his bets. Mean judgment policies are presented in Table 1 so that the reader may extract comparisons of interest. Analysis of variance of these data found a significant main effect for risk dimensions ($F = 5.7, p < .001$) and a significant four-way interaction ($F = 9.08, p < .001$) between client/consultant decisions, sex of client, sex of consultant, and risk dimensions.

To simplify the complex results of judgment policy, a risk index score was computed by comparing the average amount of bet for gambles having the same probability of loss and win. Across the 27 gambles, each level of each risk dimension occurs three times with each level of the other three dimensions. It is assumed that

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Table 1
Mean Judgment Policies

			Risk Dimensions							
Sex		Number of Pairs	Pw		\$w		Pl		\$l	
Client	Consultant		A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Male	Male	12	.60	.51	.23	.28	-.38	-.36	-.25	-.31
Female	Female	7	.66	.65	.13	.20	-.36	-.19	-.04	-.18
Male	Female	9	.61	.54	.27	.29	-.30	-.37	-.10	-.30
Female	Male	7	.61	.55	.09	.19	-.28	-.30	-.14	-.25

Note—A = mean beta weight for clients; B = mean beta weight for consultants.

the greater the mean amount bet on gambles at one probability of loss relative to amount bet on gambles at the same probability of win, the more risky the bets. Since bets ranged from 10c to \$1, the range of the index score is from +.90 (high conservatism) to -.90 (high risk).

Mean differences on bets for Pw and Pl gambles across the 27 bets are presented in Table 2. As seen in the two top rows of the table, mean bets of same-sex pairs are moderately conservative, but females are more conservative than males. Additionally, consultants make bets which are not significantly different in riskiness on the average from the bets their respective clients made for themselves ($F < 1$).

As seen in the bottom rows of Table 2, in mixed-sex pairs, clients of both sexes make decisions which are as conservative as those made by females in the same-sex condition. Consultants, on the other hand, make decisions which are as risky as those made by males working with other males. Thus, male consultants are more risky than their female clients, as might be expected from the same-sex results, but female consultants are also more risky than their male clients. A 2 (client/consultant bets) by 2 (sex of client) by 2 (sex of consultant) ANOVA of these data yielded a significant three-way interaction ($F = 100.0$, $p < .001$), as well as significant main effect for decisions made by client/consultant ($F = 20.0$, $p < .01$) and sex of client ($F = 6.67$, $p < .05$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present results show that, under nonreciprocal conditions involving interaction between strangers of the

same sex, consultants make decisions for the client which are similar to those that the client makes for himself. While these results are easily interpreted in terms of consultant's empathy for client's desires, mixed-sex pair results bring this conclusion into question as a general explanation of decision-making for self and others. Neither empathy theory nor other proposed conceptualizations such as social responsibility (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1964) seemingly explain why both male and female clients are more conservative than opposite sex consultants. Past conceptualizations, being geared to explaining helping behavior, have overlooked the possibility that the behavior of the person receiving help may be influenced by the presence of the helper. It is also noteworthy that recent studies supporting an empathy interpretation (i.e., Teger & Kogan; Zaleska & Kogan) have used same-sex pairs, and only females at that.

Taken together, same- and mixed-sex results may suggest that when a consultant believes that he is similar to the client, he simply makes decisions which he would make for himself. The extent to which personal similarities represent valid judgment policy similarities may determine the actual agreement between client's and consultant's decisions. In a slightly different context, Cronbach (1958) has suggested that high accuracy in person perception may be at least partially accounted for by a similar decision strategy, and he cautions against interpreting such a "projective bias" as social sensitivity or empathy.

When client and consultant believe they are different from one another, decisions may be influenced by expectations of behavior appropriate to the respective roles of recipient and giver of help. This interpretation would seem to be valid to the extent that: (1) consultants did not have their own money at stake when making decisions and therefore could "afford" to be risky, and (2) giving help may be more strongly associated with masculinity (and therefore more risky), whereas receiving help may be

perceived as more feminine (and conservative). These conclusions are, of course, tentative and necessitate determining the reliability of present results. Further work should investigate whether dimensions of personal similarity/dissimilarity other than sex are associated with differences in risk taking (e.g., occupational differences).

One final comment regarding present results is in order. As noted earlier, Wallach and Kogan have argued against the "myth of feminine conservatism vs masculine daring." Present same-sex results and Slovic et al, however, find that males are more risky than females. As Slovic et al suggest, this discrepancy may be due either to relatively high payoffs which serve to increase S's interest in his task or because Ss were required to make decisions in the presence of others and know beforehand that at least some of the decisions will be made public. Either or both of these conditions may have increased S's awareness of culturally approved role behavior and thus produced sex difference in risk taking.

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Table 2
Mean Risk Index Scores

Client		Consultant	
Sex	Mean	Sex	Mean
M	.04	M	.03
F	.09	F	.10
M	.08	F	.05
F	.11	M	.03