Sex differences in moralism and punitiveness

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University students read simulated newspaper stories in which a student was charged with one of two offenses: cheating on an examination or possession of marijuana. Male and female Ss rated male and female offenders on character, probable truthfulness of defense, and appropriate punishment. There were no differences between male and female S groups in character or credibility ratings of offenders of either sex in either situation. Both sexes prescribed similar punishment for males, but males were more lenient than females in prescribing punishment for females.

Studies of impression formation in which the stimulus materials have implications for the character of the person being judged have yielded diverse, though not necessarily incompatible, findings with respect to sex differences. Rosencrantz & Crockett (1965) found differences between male and female Ss in their judgments of a young male other, which were explained by the Es as a function of the females' probable moralistic rejection of a somewhat "bohemian" stimulus person. Cusumano (1968), however, found no sex differences in character evaluations of a male other whose negative behaviors consisted chiefly of selfishness, inconsiderateness, and exploitation of subordinates. Both these studies dealt with male others only. Klinger, Albaum, & Hetherington (1964) varied both sex of perceiver and sex of other in judgments of dishonest behavior. They found no main effects for sex of perceiver or sex of other, but Ss of each sex were more lenient in rating others of their own sex than those of the opposite sex. Older studies in the literature which have dealt with moral judgment per se (focusing on the act itself independent of any specific perpetrator) have generally found no sex differences or have shown females to be more moralistic judges (e.g., Skaggs, 1940; Crissman, 1942).

Some of the apparent inconsistency in the findings of the studies cited may relate to differences in the dimensions of morality being considered. It would seem a reasonable possibility that sex differences may be more pronounced when judgments relate to "Puritanical" moralistic proscriptions (regarding sobriety, sexual behavior, etc.) than when they concern broad ethical values such as fairness and honesty. Women in this

culture are supposedly expected to lead more circumspect private lives than men. Their own moral training may therefore make them more severe judges of personal improprieties in others. They may not, however, be expected to be more honest or trustworthy than men, and their judgments in this area may be no more severe than men's are.

In the present study, both types of misdemeanors were judged. Predictions regarding sex differences varied in some respects with the situation. The hypotheses were that (1) females would make more moralistic judgments than males; (2) females would be condemned more than males for personal improprieties but not for unethical behavior (dishonesty); and (3) both sexes would be more lenient toward their own sex in judgments of unethical behavior.

METHOD

The experimental design was a 2 by 2 by 2 factorial varying sex of P (perceiver), sex of O ("other" or stimulus person), and situation (personal misconduct vs dishonesty). Ss were 120 undergraduate students in introductory psychology courses at St. Louis University.

Most of the studies in this area have used mimeographed materials from an unspecified source. In an effort to make the experimental situation more similar to "real life," the present work utilized simulated campus newspaper stories, printed professionally on newspaper stock and presented to Ss as clippings. The stories were the same for both male and female stimulus persons with only the gender of the pronouns changed in alternate forms. Names of persons and places were obscured.

The stories are presented below:

(Personal misconduct situation)

Student Arrested after Party

_____, Oct. 15. Police were summoned to an apartment building at 1878 _____ Avenue this morning at 1:30 to break up what a neighbor described as a wild party. The neighbor, _____, stated that minors were among guests seen drinking in the hall outside the apartment where the party was in progress. The same neighbor also reported that there was the sound of glass breaking and that one youth was heard to say something about "smoking pot." When the police arrived with a search warrant, they found no one present but the tenant of the apartment,

_____, a 21-year-old student at _____ University. The neighbor said that the guests departed only when the police arrived. Police found empty and partly empty liquor bottles in addition to some marijuana cigarettes. The student claimed that the cigarettes were not his (hers) and that he (she) did not know any of the guests had marijuana. Police arrested the student for having marijuana cigarettes in his (her) apartment. _____'s attorney posted bond for him (her), and he (she) was released from custody. A preliminary hearing has been scheduled for the latter part of the month.

(Dishonesty situation)

Student Threatened with Expulsion

_____, Oct. 15. This week a disciplinary committee at _____ University is considering the expulsion of _____, a 21-year-old student from the University. The basis for this action was that he (she) allegedly cheated on an examination. Dr. _____, instructor of the course, observed the student going through his (her) notebook during the examination. The teacher immediately took _____'s paper and asked him (her) to leave the classroom. The student stated that he (she) was not cheating but simply getting some more paper from his (her) looseleaf notebook. Dr. _____ asked why he (she) had not obtained paper from the desk where a supply was available. The student replied that as a new student he (she) was not aware of local examination procedures. The teacher retained the student's paper and reported the incident to the Disciplinary Committee, a combined student-faculty group which hears such cases and reports its findings to the administration. The Disciplinary Committee will convene tomorrow to hear the testimonies of those who were involved and to decide upon the appropriate action to be taken.

After reading whichever story he had been given, the S was asked to answer the following questions, using 7-point ordinal scales: (1) How probable do you think it is that the student's statements are truthful? (2) What is your opinion of the character of a student who would engage in this behavior if it were proven that he (she) did? (3) How severe should the punishment be if the charge of possession of marijuana (cheating) were proven?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Responses to each of the questions were analyzed by separate analyses of variance, with mean differences further evaluated by

Duncan's Multiple Range Test. The results are given by question as follows:

(1) ("How probable do you think it is that the student's statements are truthful?") The analysis indicated no main or interaction effect of either sex of perceiver or sex of other. Neither sex was seen as more truthful than the other and neither sex was more credulous. There was, however, a significant main effect of situation ($F = 21.46$; $df = 1$; $p < .01$). The statement given by the student accused of cheating was more plausible than that of the student accused of possession of marijuana.

(2) ("... your opinion of the character of a student who would engage in this behavior. . . .") There were no significant main or interaction effects in this analysis. Both sexes judged both sexes in both situations as equally reprehensible. All means are between 5.2 and 5.9. A rating of 5 on this scale indicates an impression of O that is "a little below average" (as compared to other college students) while 6 is "a poor impression." The finding of no sex differences is in opposition to the hypotheses, which predicted main effects for sex of P, interaction of Sex of O by Situation, and second-order interaction of Sex of P by Sex of O by Situation.

(3) ("How severe should the punishment be if the charge . . . were proven?") Analysis of responses to this question indicated a significant main effect for sex of P ($F = 6.79$; $df = 1$; $p < .05$) as well as a significant interaction of Sex of P by Sex of O ($F = 4.86$; $df = 1$; $p < .05$). Males were more lenient judges than females, advocating less severe punishment for misdemeanors they had rated equally as reprehensible as females rated them. The Duncan showed, however, that Ss of both sexes prescribed similar punishments for male offenders, and that females did not discriminate between the sexes in recommending punishment. The significant interaction was due to the lenience of male Ps toward female Os. On the punishment scale for cheating, the means indicated that the average male thought that males should be given an F in the course, but females should only be obliged to withdraw from it without credit. For possessing marijuana, males thought males should receive a \$50.00 fine, but females should only be put on probation. No main or interaction effects of situation were found on the punishment question. This finding does not mean that recommended punishments were equally severe for both offenses, since different specific penalties were provided by the punishment scales for the respective offenses.

The hypothesis that females are more moralistic than males was thus negated by one of the relevant dependent variables and partially supported by the other. Females

did not make harsher judgments of character than males, but they recommended more severe punishment for the same offenses. Since, however, males were equally as severe as females in judging males, it would be more correct to speak of selective male lenience than of greater female punitiveness. This finding, it may be noted, was obtained where young male Ps were judging their contemporaries. Whether they would be equally partial to much older or younger females (i.e., those to whom they would be less likely to be attracted) is a question not answered by the study. Klinger et al (1964) found that when young adult Ps judged older Os, greater lenience in judgments of reprehensibility was shown to same-sex Os. (Punishment was not studied.) It may be, therefore, that the finding of male lenience to female Os is dependent upon the relative ages of P and O.

The fact that the predicted Sex of O by Situation interaction was not found may be a function of the sophistication of these Ss. Less well educated judges might have been selectively more censorious toward females in the personal misconduct situation. Here,

too, the age of these Ss, who are part of the generation supposedly most involved in a moral revolution, may be a factor. On the other hand, however, the failure to obtain the predicted sex differences may be due to the fact that the "personal misconduct" described was milder than it might have been. More extreme behavior (e.g., promiscuous sexual behavior, use of more powerful narcotics) might have been judged more reprehensible in a female.

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Discrimination between nutriment by the human neonate¹

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Sucking in new-born infants was compared when no liquid was delivered, and when milk or a 5% dextrose solution was delivered. No order effects were found. The milk elicited longer sucking bursts and increased the total time spent sucking. It appears that infants aged 48-90 h can discriminate milk from dextrose and that taste is the most likely basis for the discrimination.

The aim of this study was to determine whether the newborn infant can discriminate the difference between dextrose solution and milk.

Eckstein (1927) reported differentiation of taste sensation in premature babies using the sucking response as a criterion. In particular, bitter solutions resulted in an inhibition of sucking. Jensen (1932) compared sucking reactions to a variety of fluids, with milk at 40 deg C as a control condition. He found positive reactions (reduced frequency and amplitude of sucking) to salt solutions as early as the

second day of life, but no differential reactions to glucose 6%, sterile water, or acid milk. Kron, Stein, Goddard, & Phoenix (1967) compared sucking behavior in two groups of full-term babies fed milk and corn syrup, respectively. They reported a greater number of sucks per minute for milk and concluded that "milk has a higher stimulus value for the newborn than 5% corn syrup."

In a recent study (Dubignon & Campbell, 1968), differences were found between sucking during a milk feed and sucking for small amounts of dextrose. During a feed the babies sucked more slowly but spent more of the available time sucking and consequently gave a greater number of sucks than when a small amount (0.5 cc) of dextrose 5% was delivered for every 10th suck. It was not clear from these results whether differences in the amount or the quality of the fluids delivered were responsible for the differences in sucking behavior.

SUBJECTS

Twenty bottle-fed infants were seen on the third or fourth day of life (mean age 68.2 h, range 48-90 h). All were normal, full-term babies born of multiparous mothers.