

A HIGH POWER-LOW POWER ACCOUNT OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SELF-CRITICISM

Catherine A. Latham

ABSTRACT

In this study, gender differences in self-criticism are investigated utilizing the concept of high power-low power from Descriptive Psychology. High power-low power refers to a particular type of complementary relationship. The high power position involves initiating and terminating projects and plans, setting standards and evaluating progress, making decisions and insisting on certain things. The low power position involves selectively encouraging, implementing, elaborating, and interpreting decisions. It was assumed that in mixed-sex relationships, males are typically in the high power position and females are in the low power position. Hypotheses included (1) that being in a low power position leads to more self-criticism in females than in males, (2) that males are more likely than females to reject the low power position,

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Each of the above hypotheses was partially supported by the results. No support was obtained for the additional hypotheses that females are more self-critical, and more criticized by others, when in a high power position. One hundred and twelve subjects completed a questionnaire that presented stories depicting a male and female in a high power-low power relationship completing tasks in the female domain and in the male domain. Subjects rated the likelihood of responses that both persons in the stories may have had. Measures of self-criticism and rejection of the power position were derived from the likelihood ratings. The situational context of the high power-low power relationship must be taken into account in understanding men's and women's tendencies toward self-criticism.

Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and other scholars have recently been struggling to find conceptual systems and theories that accurately describe and increase our understanding of women's as well as men's experience in the real world. Central to the feminist critique of the existing theories is the fact that they have been generated almost exclusively by males, and that these theories are based on a male perspective of the world, and thus, in many cases, are not an accurate reflection of the female experience (Kaplan & Sedney, 1980; Hyde & Rosenberg, 1980; Bernard, 1981; Spender, 1981; Gilligan, 1982).

The conceptual system on which this study is based is Descriptive Psychology, which is a "systematically related set of distinctions designed to provide formal access to all the facts and possible facts about persons and behaviors" (Ossorio, 1985). As a set of distinctions, Descriptive Psychology is free from the androcentric biases inherent in many of the existing psychological theories. This is not to claim that any work, including this study, based on Descriptive Psychology is free from bias. On the contrary, the perspective of the person applying the concepts has a great deal to do with the ways in which concepts are applied, and the specification of which phenomena are of interest. My own perspective is feminist; I am assuming that the "present subordinate status of women is not intrinsic to nature but is a product of culture, and is therefore, changeable" (Cox, 1981, p. 3).

The question to be addressed by the study is, "Is the phenomenon of self-criticism different for women and men?" This question has not been asked, let alone answered, in any of the empirical psychological literature, although it is a question that could well be answered by empirical research. The present study is a beginning effort to explore the phenomenon of self-criticism in a formalized empirical fashion.

In the conceptualization section, the phenomenon of self-criticism is analyzed using the concept of high power-low power from Descriptive Psychology. High power-low power is a concept that describes particular kinds of relationships that have two complementary places or positions,

namely high power and low power. The high power position involves initiating and terminating projects and plans, setting standards and evaluating how things are going in terms of those standards, making decisions, and insisting on certain things. The low power position involves selectively encouraging, implementing, elaborating, and interpreting decisions, and following the standards set by the person in the high power position. Parent-child, teacher-student, supervisor-supervisee are all examples of relationships that can accurately be described as high power-low power relationships. Other relationships that are not as obvious can also be examined to see if this concept is useful in understanding a particular relationship. The high power-low power description might also be useful in understanding the relationship between two different groups of individuals. The groups that are of interest to the present author are women and men.

There is good reason to assume that generally speaking, in our culture, males are often in the high power position and females are in the low power position in their relationships with one another. This is not the same as saying that men have more power than women do in their relationships, because the high power-low power concept does not imply anything about *amounts* of power. Rather, it refers to the notion that the ways in which one is able to influence the relationship or exert power depends upon the power position one is in.

In a study of sex differences in the experiences and expressions of jealousy, Johnston (1982) found that many of the observed male-female differences could be understood as high power-low power differences. The purpose of the present investigation is to determine if the concept of high power-low power is similarly useful in increasing our understanding of the phenomenon of self-criticism as experienced by both females and males.

Self-criticism is a phenomenon with which most people are familiar, yet interestingly enough, it is not listed in the Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms (American Psychological Association, 1982). Self-esteem, self-actualization, and self-mutilation are all descriptors of research carried on in the discipline of psychology, but apparently, self-criticism *per se* is not utilized as a descriptor of the empirical research being done in psychology. A computer search of the PsychInfo data base for any abstract that used the words self-criticism or self-critical, and which also made any mention of sex differences, revealed a total of six articles which potentially address the question of, "Is the phenomenon of self-criticism different for women and men?"

Examination of the three articles written in English, and the translated abstracts of the remaining three articles, indicated that none of the articles addressed this question directly. Stoner and Kaiser (1978)

administered the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale to high school juniors and found that males scored higher than females on the self-criticism subscale. Steele (1978) found sex differences in depression, with females more depressed than males, but did not find sex differences on the self-criticism subscale of the depression inventory in an investigation of the relationship of race, sex, social class, and social mobility to depression in normal adults. Orlinsky and Howard (1976) investigated the effects of the therapist's gender on the experiences of female clients and found that female clients who had male therapists felt more self-critical than the clients with female therapists.

Although the psychological literature does not offer much information on sex differences in self-criticism *per se*, there is a great deal that is known about sex differences in related areas. Self-esteem, which refers to a person's overall evaluation of his or her general worth, is a global concept that has been measured by a variety of pencil and paper instruments. When people are asked to describe themselves on these inventories, no consistent sex differences emerge (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). More subtle measures of self-esteem such as expectations of success and failure, and the explanations people give for their success and failure, do show some interesting sex differences. Maccoby and Jacklin conclude, "Clearly, college men are more likely than college women to expect to do well, and to judge their own performance favorably once they have finished their work" (1974, p. 154).

A more comprehensive review of the literature on self-confidence (Lenny, 1977) supports Maccoby and Jacklin's conclusion that much of the evidence indicates that females have less self-confidence than males, but qualifies this conclusion by further examination of the few studies that do not show sex differences. Lenny concludes that female self-confidence is more dependent on situational variables than is male self-confidence. She suggests that in studies where subjects were given minimal or no feedback on their performance, females had lower expectancies for success than males, but when feedback was clear and unambiguous, the sex difference in self-confidence disappeared. This finding could be interpreted as supportive evidence for the assumption that females are often in low power positions. Being in a low power position involves having one's actions evaluated by the person in the high power position, and therefore it is to be expected that evaluative feedback would be more salient to one who is used to this low power position. Lenny believed that having that feedback is necessary for women to expect to succeed.

In addition to sex differences in self-evaluations, evaluations made by observers also tend to devalue women. In a study on competitive game situations, observers were found to give more credit to successful male

players than to successful female players (Stephan, Rosenfield, and Stephan, 1976). They also found that the sex of the opponent made a difference in how much credit and blame the female players gave themselves. When women competed against men, they gave the male opponents more credit for success and less blame for failure than they gave themselves. The opposite was true when women competed against women, and when men competed, regardless of sex of opponent. This study also demonstrates that observers are more likely to criticize women than men when they fail. Of particular interest is the finding that women criticize themselves more severely for their own failures when they are competing against men than when they are competing against women. This suggests that although the subjects were peers in the experiment, their relationship may have had high power-low power components which were not experienced in female-female pairings.

Further evidence of negative evaluation of women was provided by the classic Goldberg (1968) study. Female subjects were given articles that supposedly had been published in various sex-related fields. For half the subjects the author was presented as a male and for the other half the same article was attributed to a female author. Even in the fields considered to be female fields (e.g., nutrition and education) subjects judged the article more favorably when it was supposedly written by a male. A recent replication (Paludi and Bauer, 1983) of the study which included males as subjects found that both males and females rated identical articles in both traditionally male and female fields more highly when the author was believed to be male. Some things may have changed since 1968, but apparently the practice of devaluing work done by women continues, and is engaged in by both male and female critics.

Thus far, evidence has been presented that indicates that females are less self-confident than males, do not expect to be successful in achievement-related domains (unless they have clear feedback from an outside source to the contrary), and that their work is evaluated less positively than males' work. While being less positive does not necessarily mean being more critical, it would not be surprising if females are more self-critical, and are criticized more by others than males are. It is important to note that the above findings are based primarily on individual achievements, not on achievements in interpersonal relationships. The review will now focus on differences in the importance placed on interpersonal relationships by women and men.

Many authors have suggested that women derive much of their self-esteem from their interpersonal relationships, whereas men are more likely to derive their sense of self-esteem from their accomplishments. There is a large body of theoretical literature that suggests women and

men differ in the importance placed on affiliative relationships (Bakan, 1966; Bernard, 1981; Gilligan, 1982; Kaplan & Sedney, 1980; Miller, 1982; Stiver, 1983). When asked to describe themselves, women responded in terms of their relationship with other people (e.g., "wife", "mother"), while men rarely described themselves in the corresponding relational terms, and more frequently described themselves in terms of their professions (Rubin, 1979). Women have been said to have a relational sense of self (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1982; Stiver, 1983; Surrey, 1983). Whether this duality is expressed as agency-communion (Bakan, 1966), instrumental-expressive (Parsons & Bales, 1955), or an orientation toward justice and separation versus care and connection (Gilligan, 1982), there is widespread agreement that females are more concerned with affiliative relationships than are males.

In her discussion of the dimension of activity-passivity, Miller (1976) proposes that the reason why women have been seen as passive is that much of their activity has not been in open pursuit of their own goals and interests. She argues that taking care of others, listening and being receptive, are not instances of being passive, but that they are seen as "not doing anything" by a male-defined culture. She, as well as other writers, have suggested that women are much more likely than men to criticize themselves as selfish if they do begin to act on their own interests, rather than act in a way that can be defined as taking care of and giving to others.

Depression is another area which bears a relationship to the phenomenon of self-criticism. A negative view of the self is one of the components of the primary triad in depression, according to Beck (1967). There is a wide agreement that the incidence of depression is greater in women than in men (Radloff & Cox, 1981; Belle & Goldman, 1980; Brodsky & Hare-Mustin, 1980; Klerman & Weissman, 1980) and it may therefore follow that the incidence of self-criticism in non-depressed populations is higher for females than for males. However, the literature does not answer this question directly.

The one piece of work in the literature that attempts to offer a survey of the major issues, intentions, and reasons a person may have for engaging in self-criticism is Driscoll's (1981) analysis of the phenomenon of self-criticism, which is based on the principles of Descriptive Psychology.

A basic concept in Descriptive Psychology is the concept of Intentional Action. An intentional act is one which is done for some reason, not by accident or mistake. This does not imply that a person is necessarily aware of his or her intentions or reasons (Ossorio, 1973). People often act without being aware of what it is they are doing or trying to do, and it is not necessary to be aware of one's reasons in order to act on them.

In fact, helping a client to see and understand what it is he or she is doing or trying to do is often a major part of a therapist's task.

Driscoll identifies 12 common reasons a person may have for engaging in self-criticism. He makes no claim that this is an exhaustive list of all possible reasons for self-criticism, nor does he imply that a person is acting on only one reason in a given instance of self-criticism. In fact, a maxim from Descriptive Psychology states: "If a person has two reasons for doing X, he has a stronger reason for doing X than if he has only one of those reasons" (Ossorio, 1982). So it is with self-criticism.

The following discussion will be limited to an analysis of the reasons and intentions which might have differential applicability for women and men. One reason Driscoll identifies is that self-criticism may be used as penance to absolve oneself of wrongdoing. Saying "I was being selfish" is a way of showing good faith by indicating that the standard of not being selfish really does count, despite having just violated it. By confessing, one can also hope to ward off accusations from others, and regain moral standing. The suggestion that women may be more influenced by outside standards, which was previously discussed, could lead one to expect that women may be more likely than men to have this reason for engaging in self-criticism.

Women may also have more reason than men to use self-criticism as a way to reduce potential disappointment. The research indicating that women have lower expectations for success (Lenny, 1977; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974) can be interpreted as serving this protective function.

Self-criticism is a way to make a safe self-presentation. A self-presentation is a claim to a particular status. Self-statements are ways of saying, "This is who I am, so treat me accordingly." Self-criticism is putting oneself down, and therefore a claim to a lower status. The safety aspect of it is that if one makes a low status claim, it is unlikely the claim will be undermined. A high status claim on the other hand, makes one vulnerable to being "put in one's place". Many authors have stated that women are accorded lower status than men (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble & Zellman, 1978; Kaplan & Sedney, 1980; Lott, 1981), so it may be particularly dangerous for women to make high status claims.

Self-criticism may also be used to evoke sympathetic involvement from others. Making a self-presentation invites others to try to reassure and support the person who is being self-critical. If it is the case that women are more oriented toward people, it is possible that they would be more likely to have this reason for engaging in self-criticism. One could also speculate that women would meet with more success using this strategy than would men.

Criticizing oneself might also be done to give an appearance of being incapable, to avoid responsibility. One could argue that a woman's self-presentation as being incapable is more likely to be accepted than a man's would be (at least in non-domestic domains), based on the previously discussed research that indicated women's work is judged by others less favorably than is men's work (Goldberg, 1968; Paludi & Bauer, 1983). Bem's (1974) investigation of sex role stereotypes also lends support to this argument. She found that characteristics describing competency were considered to be more socially desirable for males than for females. Therefore, it is likely that people would be more ready to see a female as incapable and treat her accordingly. It can also be argued that women feel less capable than men do (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), and therefore women may present themselves as less capable than men.

Another reason for self-criticism is that it may be a non-obvious means of expressing hostility. Driscoll discusses this type of self-criticism as a channelling of anger into self-derogatory rather than self-affirming actions. He states that clients who engage in this type of self-criticism "feel it is selfish and wrong to look out for themselves, to put their own interests ahead of others" (Driscoll, 1981, p. 344). These words echo Miller's (1976, 1982) description of women, and it would not be at all surprising if women were more likely than men to have this type of reason for engaging in self-criticism. Many other authors have also discussed the difficulty that women have with expressing anger directly, and many therapists suggest that anger is a central issue in therapy with women (Gilbert, 1980; Kaschak, 1981). Social prohibitions against men's expressing anger do not appear as strong; therefore, it would be quite likely that women would be more likely to have this reason for engaging in self-criticism.

For six of the twelve reasons Driscoll offers, a case has been made as to why it may be more likely that women would have those reasons for engaging in self-criticism. Driscoll's work did not address the issue of sex differences nor did it incorporate the concept of high power-low power. The present investigation is an attempt to analyze the phenomenon of self-criticism from a high power-low power perspective and to test empirically the predictions concerning sex differences that are derived from such a conceptualization.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

High power-low power, as described by Ossorio (1976), is a type of complementary relationship. As noted previously, it does not refer to amounts of power, nor does it imply differences in ability to influence the relationship. Rather, it has to do with the ways in which a person is

able to influence how things go in a relationship, depending on the power position one is in. At first glance, it may appear that the high power position implies more control, but this is not the case. The person in the low power position can thwart any decision made by the high power person by passive resistance, by implementing the letter rather than the spirit of the decisions, and by selectively elaborating and interpreting the decisions made.

In our culture, it seems as if the qualities associated with the high power position are valued more than those associated with the low power position, and therefore more status goes with the high power position than with the low power position.

I am assuming that males tend to be in the high power position and females tend to be in the low power position in their relationships with one another in our culture. Support for this assumption is found in the research on sex-role stereotypes indicating that males are seen as being able to make decisions easily, to act as leaders, to be direct, and to be independent (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz & Vogel, 1970). Evidence suggesting that women are more likely to use indirect forms of power (Johnson, 1976) also supports this assumption.

Because being in a low power position involves implementing a plan initiated by another, following guidelines set by another, and having one's actions evaluated by another, there may be more of a need for self-criticism associated with being in a low power position. The reason one would need to be more self-critical in a low power position is that the course of action initiated is not (at least initially) one's own, so what one is doing is not, in general, what comes naturally. Thus, a self-critical stance may well help ensure that one is correctly following the appointed course of action. It is to be expected, therefore, that a person in a low power position will engage in more self-criticism than would a person in a high power position.

Self-criticism of a certain sort would not be called for if the person does not accept the low power position. If one does not accept the standards set by another, one would not have reason to use those standards to judge one's actions. If a person is doing what he or she has initiated, there would generally be less of a need to keep oneself in line. If it is the case that males are typically in the high power position in their relationships with women, and the high power position is more valued in this society, one could expect that there would be an unwillingness on the part of males to accept a low power position, and other things being equal, one would expect males to exhibit a corresponding lack of self-criticism.

Assuming that on the whole, males are in high power positions and females in low power positions in their relations with each other, we can

expect that a female who is in a high power position would be evaluated more negatively by observers (and perhaps by herself) than would a male in a high power position. The negative evaluation can be derived from either or both of two sources. The first is that for the female to be in a high power position is generally a violation of social norms, and so she would be evaluated negatively on this account. The content of this type of criticism is likely to be along the lines of her not knowing her place or being "uppity." The second is that the female will be evaluated by the standards appropriate to the normative female position, i.e., the standards corresponding to low power. Since the low power standard is inappropriate for someone in a high power position, if she does well with the high power position, she will, by that standard, be more or less of a failure. A female would therefore have grounds for rejecting a high power position, whereas males would have grounds for rejecting a low power position.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature reviewed and the above conceptualization, the following hypotheses are offered:

- H1: Females in a low power position will be more self-critical than males will be in a low power position.
- H2: Males will be more likely than females will be to reject a low power position.
- H3: Females in a high power position will be more likely to reject the high power position than will males.
- H4: Females in a high power position will be more self-critical than males will be in a high power position.
- H5: People will be more critical of females in a high power position than they will be of males in a high power position.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study included 107 undergraduates enrolled at the University of Colorado during the spring and summer semesters of 1983, and 5 volunteers from the community. Eighty students participated in the study in order to fulfill a departmental research requirement, 19 students voluntarily participated during class time, and the remaining 8 students and 5 volunteers were solicited by word of mouth. Of the total 112 participants, 56 were male and 56 were female. Participants ages

ranged from 18 to 42 years old, with the mean age being 20.5. Of the subjects 88.4% were single, 2.7% were married, 6.3% were living with a partner, and 2.7% had previously been married.

Instrument

In order to test the above hypotheses, two stories depicting examples of high power-low power relationships were developed. In both the stories, the high power character is described as initiating a project, directing the other character to implement the plan, and then critically evaluating the other character's performance. The story specifies that the low power person does not have much experience with the task but has agreed to help. One of the stories concerns a couple, Joan and Bill, who are building a bookcase together. The second story concerns another couple, Barbara and Craig, who are cooking a meal together for a dinner party. This choice of tasks was made because cooking is traditionally considered to be an activity in the female domain and carpentry is traditionally considered to be an activity in the male domain. The traditional sex role versions of the two stories are presented below. The characters were switched with the female in the high power position in the carpentry story and the male in the high power position in the cooking story for half of the subjects.

Story 1: Bill and Joan are building a bookcase together for their new apartment. Bill really enjoys carpentry and has made several other pieces of furniture. Joan has had a woodworking class in high school but does not have very much experience in this area. She has agreed to help Bill with this project. Bill tells Joan to get the screws and mark the centers for the screws for the shelves. When Bill sees what Joan has done he says, "Those are the wrong size screws and these two marks look like they are out of line."

Story 2: Barbara and Craig are having a dinner party at their home. Barbara is a gourmet cook and has planned an elaborate menu. Craig has agreed to help prepare the food although he does not have much experience in the kitchen. An hour before the guests are to arrive, Barbara tells Craig to cut the onions and carrots. As Craig is cutting the second onion, Barbara looks over his shoulder and says, "The onions have to be smaller than that and all the carrots have to be the same size."

Possible reactions that each of the characters might have had are listed following each story. Some of these reactions were examples of self-criticism, some reactions were examples of rejecting the high power-low power relationship, and some were criticisms of the other person. Participants were asked to rate how likely they thought each of the listed reactions would be on a seven-point Likert scale. All subjects rated both characters in both stories. Following the rating of the likelihood of the low power person's possible reactions, participants were asked to

indicate which of the listed reactions would be most characteristics of themselves if they were in the low power person's position.

Table 1
Self-Criticism Indices

Low Power Position (LO-SC)	High Power Position (HI-SC)
1. Think to her(him)self, "I really am stupid when it comes to carpentry (cooking)."	1. I should have told her(him) exactly what I wanted her(him) to do.
2. Say, "I should have been more careful."	2. I should have watched what she(he) was doing more carefully.
3. Say, "I should have asked how you wanted it done."	

The indices of self-criticism for the persons in high power and low power positions, hereafter referred to as HI-SC and LO-SC, respectively consist of the mean of the ratings on the items found in Table 1. The indices of rejection of the high power position (REJECT-HI) and rejection of the low power position (REJECT-LO) are the mean of the ratings of the items found in Table 2. Criticisms of the other person were assessed by subjects rating both the high power and low power person on the dimensions of "likeable", "easy to push around", and "self-critical".

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: Females in a low power position will be more self-critical than males in a low power position.

P1 .1: Scores on LO-SC will be higher for female characters than for the male characters.

P1 .2: Female subjects will select a statement from LO-SC as their own response more often than male subjects.

P1.1 was confirmed for the cooking story, but not for the carpentry story. The means for Barbara and Craig in the cooking story were 3.34 and 2.97 respectively, $t(110) = 2.00$, $p = .05$. For Joan and Bill the means were 3.70 and 3.55 which are in the predicted direction, but fail to approach significance, $t(109) = .84$, $p = .40$.

Table 2
Rejection of Position Indices

Low Power Position (REJECT-LO)	High Power Position (REJECT-HI)
1. Think to (him)herself, "If he(she) doesn't like the way I did it, she(he) can do it her(him)self."	1. This business of running a project is for the birds.
2. Say, "if you don't like the way I did it, you can do it yourself."	2. I should have done it myself.
3. Think to (him)herself, "I should never have agreed to help build this bookcase (make dinner)."	3. It's not like me to be telling someone what to do.
4. Say, "I never should have agreed to help build this bookcase (make dinner)."	
5. Say, "I bet this size screw would work just as well (the onions are fine the way they are)."	

P1.2 was not confirmed for either story. In both the cooking and the carpentry story, more females than males chose an item from the LO-SC index as their own response, however, the Chi Square test did not approach significance.

Responses to each item in LO-SC were analyzed separately using a 2 x 2 ANOVA. Results of analysis of the first two items for the carpentry story failed to reveal any main or interaction effects that were significant at the .05 level. Analysis of the third item, "I should have asked how you wanted it done", revealed a weak interaction $F(1,110) = 3.31, p = .07$. Inspection of the means indicates that male subjects tended to expect Bill to have this reaction and female subjects tended to expect Joan to have this reaction; however, the differences between the four means are not significantly different at the .05 level.

Analysis of the three items on the LO-SC index for the cooking story revealed a different pattern of effects. Analysis of the first item, "I really am stupid when it comes to cooking", revealed a significant main effect for sex in that female subjects were more likely than male subjects to endorse this item $F(1,108) = 5.76, p = .02$. There was a significant sex of low power character effect for the third item, "I should have asked how you wanted it done", $F(1,107) = 4.93 = .03$, with all subjects finding it more likely that Barbara rather than Craig would have this reaction.

Thus, the first hypothesis received partial support for the female domain of cooking, but not for the male domain of carpentry.

Hypothesis 2: Males will be more likely than females will be to reject a low power position.

P2.1: Scores on REJECT-LO will be higher for male characters than for female characters.

P2.2: Male subjects will be more likely than female subjects to select a statement from REJECT-LO index as their own reaction.

P2.1 was confirmed for the cooking story, but not for the carpentry story. In the cooking story, the mean score for Craig in the low power position was 3.61, the mean for Barbara was 3.12. The difference between the means is statistically significant, $t(110) = 2.02, p = .05$. While the means for Bill and Joan, 3.71 and 3.36 respectively, are in the predicted direction, they fail to reach significance, $t(109) = 1.43, p = .16$. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

A two-way ANOVA, with sex of subject and sex of low power character as the independent variables, and REJECT-LO as the dependent variable, revealed a significant interaction for the carpentry story, $F(1,1) = 4.06, p = .05$. Female subjects rate Bill as being much more likely than Joan to reject the low power position. The least significant differences test revealed that the mean for female subjects rating Bill is significantly different ($p = .05$) from the means in the three other conditions. A two-way ANOVA with sex of subject and sex of low power character as the independent variables and REJECT-LO score as the dependent variable was performed for the responses to the cooking story. As expected from the results of the t -test, there was a significant main effect for sex of low power character, $F(1,108) = 4.03, p = .05$. No significant main effect for sex of subject or interaction effect was found.

For each story, each of the items on REJECT-LO were analyzed using a two-way ANOVA with sex of subject and sex of low power character as the independent variables. For the carpentry story, significant interactions were found for items #1 ($p = .03$), #3 ($p = .04$), and #5 ($p = .02$) (See Table 2). On these three items, female subjects expected male characters to reject the low power position, and male subjects expected the female characters to reject the low power position. A significant main effect for sex of subject ($p = .005$) on item #2 was found. Female subjects expected the low power person to reject the low power position on this item. A main effect for sex of low power character was found for item #6 ($p = .01$). Both male and female subjects found it more likely that Bill, rather than Joan, would think, "Who is she to tell me what to do?"

For the cooking story, two-way ANOVA's on each of the 6 items revealed significant main effects for sex of low power character on items #2 ($p = .03$), #3 ($p = .02$), and #5 ($p = .02$). In all cases, the differences were in the predicted directions, that is, Craig was seen as more likely than Barbara to reject the low power position.

P2.2 stated that male subjects would be more likely than female subjects to select an item from the REJECT-LO index as their own response. Although the differences are in the predicted direction, neither chi square test approached significance, thus P2.2 was not confirmed.

Hypothesis 2 received partial support for the cooking story and mixed support for the carpentry story.

Hypothesis 3: Females in a high power position will be more likely to reject the high power position than will males.

P3: Scores on REJECT-HI will be higher for female characters than for male characters.

This hypothesis was not confirmed for the carpentry story, $t(108) = .39$, $p = .70$, or the cooking story, $t(110) = .81$, $p = .42$. A two-way ANOVA with sex of subject and sex of high power character as the independent variables was performed on each of the three items that made up the REJECT-HI index for each story. For the carpentry story, the analysis of the first item revealed a significant main effect for sex of subject, $F(1,108) = 6.13$, $p = .01$. Female subjects found it significantly more likely that high power characters would think, "This business of running a project is for the birds," than male subjects did, regardless of the sex of the high power character.

Analysis of the responses to the second item for the carpentry story revealed an interaction effect that approached significance, $F(1,105) = 3.08$, $p = .08$. Inspection of the means indicate that female subjects found it more likely that the female character, rather than the male character, would have the reaction "I should have done it myself." However, the least significant differences test failed to reach significance level of .05.

No main effects or interaction effects for the third item on the carpentry story reached or approached significance.

Analysis of the three items indicating a rejection of the high power position for the cooking story revealed a different pattern of results. There were no significant main effects or interactions for the first two REJECT-HI items. The two-way ANOVA on the third item revealed an interaction effect that approached significance, $F(1,108) = 3.16$, $p = .08$. Male subjects found it more likely that the male character, rather than the female character would have the reaction that, "It's not like me to be telling someone what to do." The least significant difference test

revealed that the mean for males judging the male character was significantly different from the other three means.

The different pattern of results for the two stories tentatively suggests that females are likely to reject the high power position in the masculine domain of carpentry, and males are likely to reject the high power position in the female domain. These findings provide partial support for Hypothesis 3, but only for the male domain of carpentry.

Hypothesis 4: Females in a high power position will be more self-critical than males will be in a high power position.

P4: Scores on HI-SC will be higher for female than for male characters.

This prediction was not confirmed for either the comparison of ratings of Joan and Bill in the carpentry story, $t(198) = .80$, $p = .42$ or the comparison between Barbara and Craig in the cooking story $t(110) = 38$, $p = .71$.

The HI-SC index was developed by averaging ratings on two items for each story. A two-way ANOVA with sex of subject and sex of high power character as the independent variables was performed on each of the two HI-SC items for each story. No significant main effects or interactions were found for the first item, "I should have told her(him) exactly what I wanted her(him) to do." A significant main effect for sex of subject was found for the second item, "I should have watched what (s)he was doing more carefully," for the carpentry story, $F(1,108) = 4.18$, $p = .04$. Regardless of whether it was Joan or Bill in the high power position, male subjects rated this item significantly higher than female subjects. The main effect for sex of subject from the two-way ANOVA on this item for the cooking story did not reach significance, $F(1,108) = 3.35$, $p = .07$; however, the direction of the differences between the means was the same as for the carpentry story, with male subjects having higher scores on this item than female subjects. These findings are contrary to Hypothesis 4. Male subjects, rather than female subjects, were more likely to endorse one of the two high power self-critical items. Hypothesis 4 was not supported by this analysis.

Hypothesis 5: People will be more critical of females in a high power position than they will be of males in a high power position.

PS: Ratings on the dimension of "likeable" will be lower and ratings on "pushy" and "critical" from each story will be higher for the female high power characters than they will be for the male high power characters.

Responses to each of the stories were analyzed separately using two-tailed t -tests. None of the predictions for either of the stories were

supported by the data. No differences were significant at the .05 level, although three of the differences approached significance at $p = .10$, in the opposite direction from the predictions. In the carpentry story, Joan was seen as more likeable than Bill, $t(106) = 1.70, p = .09$, and Bill was seen as more critical than Joan, $t(107) = 1.86, p = .07$. In the cooking story, Craig was seen as more pushy than Barbara, $t(109) = 1.90, p = .06$.

Additional analyses were performed by using a two-way ANOVA on each of the above dependent variables, with sex of high power character and sex of subject as the independent variables. None of the main effects or interactions were significant at the .05 level. Hypothesis 5 was not supported by the data.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the phenomenon of self-criticism is different for females and males, and that these differences are very much dependent on the nature of the task at hand. The findings suggest that the context of the situation in large part determines both how self-critical a person is likely to be, as well as how willing a person is to be in one of the two positions in a high power-low power relationship.

The first hypothesis stated that females in a low power position will be more self-critical than males will be in a low power position. This hypothesis received support, but only for females in a female domain. It appears that when females are in a situation in which they are expected to have some expertise, yet are in a low power position, they are more likely than males to engage in self-criticism. The parallel situation, of males in a male domain but in a low power position does not lead males to being more self-critical than females. The finding that males are more likely than females to criticize themselves in a high power position in a male domain may shed some light on why males are not more self-critical than females when they are in a low power position.

One way of interpreting the results is by thinking in terms of place. Females who are in a female domain and in low power positions are *in place in two ways*, as are males who are in high power positions and in male domains. It appears that being in place in this sense leads to an increase in self-criticism. Being out of place in two ways leads to a rejection of the position one is in. Thus it appears that males identify with the high power positions and females identify with the low power positions, but that neither sex identifies with the opposite sex domain. In order to criticize oneself for failing to monitor another's actions, one would need to identify with the high power position, otherwise there would be no grounds for self-criticism. Similarly, in order to criticize

oneself for not properly implementing a task initiated by another, one would need to identify with the low power position. If a person did not identify with the position he or she was in, then it would be much more likely that he or she would reject that position rather than criticize oneself for failing to carry out the responsibilities associated with that position.

One of the most interesting findings in this study was the different pattern of results found between the story in the female domain and the story in the male domain. The second hypothesis stated that males will be more likely than females to reject a low power position. Support for this hypothesis was found only for males in a female domain. The third hypothesis stated that females will be more likely than males to reject the high power position. Support for this hypothesis was found only for the females in a male domain.

To return to the notion of place, if most people consider that the males' place in relationships with women is in the high power position, and they expect him to be in a male domain, and that a female's place in relationships with men is in a low power position, and they expect her to be in a female domain, then each of the above results concerns a person who is out of place in two ways. The female who rejects the high power position is out of place not only by being in the high power position but also by being in a male domain. The male who rejects the low power position, is out of place by being in the low power position and by being in the female domain. Rejection of a particular position, then, would seem to depend on not fitting in that position in more than one way.

The significant interaction effects that occurred in the carpentry story in connection with rejection of the low power position are quite interesting. Females expected the male character to reject the low power position, while males tended to expect females to reject the low power position. The finding that females expect the males to reject the low power position is not particularly surprising. Female experience in actually being in the high power position is most likely to occur in female domains. These data demonstrate that when females are in high power in a female domain, males *do* reject the low power position. Based on this experience, it would be reasonable for women to continue to expect men to reject the low power position even in a male domain. It could be argued that if women cannot expect men to accept a low power position in a female domain, it would be even more unlikely that men would accept a low power position in a male domain. Yet, the male subjects did not expect the male character to reject the low power position in a male domain, as much as female subjects did, and on some of the items, males expected the female character, more than the male

character, to reject the low power position. One conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that people do not expect much cooperation from the opposite sex when involved in activities in the male domain, and that women ought not expect much cooperation from males when women are directing activities in a female domain.

The hypothesis that females in a high power position will be more self-critical than males in a high power position was not supported by the data. There was a significant difference on one of the items indicating that males were significantly more self-critical than females when they were in a high power position in the male domain of carpentry. The content of the item, "I should have watched what she was doing more carefully", implies an acceptance of the responsibility of evaluating and monitoring progress that goes along with the high power position. If the assumption that males are more often in a high power position and females in a low power position is correct, then it follows that males would be more likely to criticize themselves for failing to carry out high power functions.

The finding that females were more likely than males to reject the high power position also supports the assumptions that males are typically in a high power position and females in a low power position. If a person does not accept the status of belonging in a high power position, she or he is less likely to criticize themselves for failing to carry out the duties of that position. Rather it appears that such persons would merely reaffirm that they did not belong in that position to begin with.

No support was obtained for the hypothesis that people will be more critical of females in a high power position than they will be of males in a high power position. In fact, there was a trend in the opposite direction in that people perceived the female high power character in the carpentry story as being more likeable and the male in the high power position in the carpentry story as being more critical. People also tended to perceive the male high power character in the cooking story as being more pushy. However, none of these findings were significant at the .05 level, so interpretation must be done with caution.

A possible explanation for these results is that traditionally males have been the recognized experts in virtually all fields. The subjects may have regarded the male high power characters as possessing more authority than the female characters, and have reacted negatively to his use of authority. The subjects may not have regarded the female high power characters as experts; therefore, the female character's criticism of the male low power character might not have been perceived as carrying as much weight.

It is also possible that the choice of the obviously sex typed activities of cooking and carpentry may have been particularly problematic in terms of social desirability. It may be that participants were counter-stereotyping as Sapin (1979) found. Sapin also used University of Colorado undergraduates in her study and found that when sex role variables were obvious, subjects tended to counter-stereotype, yet when the sex role variables were not obvious, subjects stereotyped in the traditional manner. Her findings suggest that students do operate on the basis of traditional assumptions about male and female differences, yet bend over backwards to avoid appearing this way. The finding in the present study that the female high power carpenter was more likeable than the male high power carpenter could be interpreted as a similar attempt to appear liberal concerning sex roles. A third possibility is that there are no gender differences when people evaluate high power characters, at least not on the dimensions assessed in this study.

Future research which addresses the implications of these findings to the issue of women and work could prove to be quite illuminating. Much of the advice given to women on how to achieve, particularly in the business world, appears to be directed toward how to become more high power. If, however, the underlying issue is that women view the world of work as a male domain and therefore reject the high power position, addressing this issue directly would be more beneficial than merely exhorting women to adopt a high power style. Traditionally, the domain of work outside of the home has been a domain dominated by men. A great deal of the present discomfort that otherwise successful women feel (which accounts for the current popularity of workshops addressing "the imposter scenario" and "feeling like a fraud") could be understood as stemming from this historical context.

It may be useful for the reader to reflect for a moment on his or her own observations of males and females in the real world. Based on the author's observations, it appears that women are more self-critical than men. This is not to say that men do not criticize themselves at all; rather, it appears women do it more often. Thus, I believe the frequency of this phenomenon appears to be greater in females than in males. Undoubtedly, the content of the self-criticism is in some cases different for females and males. In our culture it is quite easy to think of a number of women who criticize themselves on the basis of physical appearance, including how they are dressed. This often gets described as vanity, and stereotypes, as well as psychological theories, suggest that women are more vain (or narcissistic) than men. Treating a woman who constantly criticizes how she looks as someone who is engaging in excessive self-criticism has very different implications for treatment than does labeling her as narcissistic.

Future research is also needed to address the issue of constructive versus destructive types of self-criticism. Constructive self-criticism would appear to consist of the following steps: Making a mistake, judging it to be a mistake, diagnosing the problem, and following through with a realistic prescription for correcting or improving the problem. A destructive kind of self-criticism would arise if the diagnosis made was one for which there was no realistic prescription. Diagnosing the problem as "I'm so stupid" does not carry with it any realistic prescription for change. The only prescription would be "I should be smart" and this amounts to saying, "I should be a different person." Criticizing oneself for not being the right kind of person would not lead to change and would be very likely to lead to low self-esteem. A person who is in a low power position and accepts that position would appear to be more likely to make this kind of error in diagnosing the problem, because the standards used are the high power person's standards.

The present study did not directly address the issue of sex differences in the destructive type of self-criticism, yet the above line of reasoning would suggest that females, by virtue of their identification with the low power position, would be more likely than males to engage in destructive self-criticism. The well documented finding that the incidence of depression is greater in women than in men also lends support to the notion that women may be more likely than men to engage in the destructive form of self-criticism. Further research is needed to empirically test this hypothesis.

In conclusion, the concept of high power-low power has proven to be useful in understanding some of the observed differences in male and female self-critical behavior. The study indicates the importance of taking into account the situational context in which behaviors occur. It is to be hoped that future research will utilize the concept of high power-low power to increase our understanding of the observed differences between females and males in other aspects of human behavior.

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