

PSYCHOLOGY

Women Cooperate Less

The results of an experiment similar to a mythical game of strategy indicate that females cooperate less with each other than do males—By Patricia McBroom

► THERE MAY BE SOMETHING to the commonly held male idea that women cooperate less with each other than men do.

In an experiment with games stretching over three years and using more than 1,000 University of Michigan students, a mathematician and a psychologist found a substantial difference between the cooperation levels of college men and women, with women on the short end.

The findings of Anatol Rapoport, professor of mathematical biology and Albert Chammah, psychologist at the University's Mental Health Research Institute, have been published in "Prisoner's Dilemma," University of Michigan Press, (\$7.50).

The book's title is taken from a mythical game of strategy in which two prisoners are charged with the same crime. If both confess, both lose. If one confesses, he goes free with a reward and his partner who kept faith goes to jail.

But if both keep quiet, they are set free together. It is in the interest of each to confess, yet it is in their collective interest to hold out.

To adapt the game, the two authors used money added or subtracted from paychecks of their student volunteers. The game went as follows: If both students cooperated and pointed to the left, they earned a tenth of a cent each. But if one student pointed to the right in self interest while the other continued left, the first earned 10 cents and

the other lost 10 cents. If both pointed to the right, both lost a tenth of a cent.

If they cooperated, any two individuals could make a maximum of 30 cents. However, one competitive student might add three or four dollars to his pay.

A partition separated the volunteers. Each faced a board showing the relative advantages of pointing left or right. Both were kept informed of the running score.

In overall performance a significant difference emerged between men and women in their degree of cooperation.

"When men locked on cooperation usually after 10 moves, they very rarely shifted out," Mr. Chammah told SCIENCE SERVICE. Women, however, might cooperate for a while, then switch and start pointing right.

An interesting sidelight of the experiment was that women could forgive a transgression more easily than their male counterparts. They would reestablish cooperation more often after a period of competition.

Each group of two students made at least 300 moves; some made 700. Reward and punishment were varied to make seven games in all.

When the game was played by sexually mixed teams, always using different individuals, scores fell midway between those established by sex, said Mr. Chammah.

He expressed interest in doing the experiment with students of another culture.

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Avert Imminent Suicide

► AROUND-THE-CLOCK emergency mental help for individuals on the verge of suicide is winning the attention of local governments throughout the country.

Most cities will pattern their first aid after pilot projects already operating in Los Angeles and the District of Columbia. Both offer 24-hour telephone service, and psychological help. They indicate new government interest in the problem of suicide, which now ranks among the 10 major causes of death in the United States.

A small number of cities already have emergency suicide aid, but none, besides Los Angeles and the District of Columbia, with government support.

Seattle has a citizens' group called Crisis Center. Orlando, Fla., has the volunteer We Care and the Mormons in Salt Lake City, Utah, are in the process of establishing a facility. New York has the 50-year-old Save-a-Life League. But probably the most effective of all the private services is Father Murphy's Rescue, Inc., in Boston. Besides

these, Denver, San Francisco and Philadelphia are contemplating setting up emergency centers.

So far, the picture has been fairly bleak. Desperate individuals have had little help outside non-professional groups in the "suicides anonymous" class.

However, Dr. E. S. Shneidman, who is largely responsible for the two-year-old Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center and the resulting national movement on suicide, said he expects a breakthrough in two or three years. Representatives of 20 states met in Los Angeles to study the center there and consider plans for their own services.

The first of its kind in the country, the Los Angeles facility is still the best known and, with its own team of psychologists, the most adequately staffed. It was established partially through a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, but operates independently of local government, in contrast to the service in Washington, D.C., which is part of the District Health Department.

A function of the D.C. General Hospital, it goes under the name of Emergency Mental Health Services. Most of the emergency techniques were borrowed from Los Angeles, said Dr. John R. Schultz, assistant director for mental health in the District of Columbia Health Department.

A staff of five specially trained nursing assistants man the telephones. All have spent six months in psychodrama, acting out the situations they expect to encounter with actual suicidal individuals.

When a call comes through, the assistant evaluates the degree of immediate danger while attempting to direct the caller's thoughts into safe channels.

About 90% of the time, suicide is not imminent enough to warrant an immediate visit, but if it is, the caller is told to jump in a cab free of charge and come to the center, said Dr. Schultz. There he will talk to a social worker and eventually a psychiatrist.

Dr. Schultz said the District facility plans soon to have a stand-by team of psychiatric nurses who can make house calls at a moment's notice.

Because of the small permanent staff and free use of all community health services, the cost of emergency aid is relatively low, noted Dr. Schultz. He said public health departments in other cities should have no trouble providing such services.

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Old People's Home Often Benefits Senior Citizens

► IF YOU ARE guilt-ridden at the thought of putting an elderly relative in an "old people's home," you may be doing your dependent wrong, as well as yourself.

Some senior citizens may actually benefit psychologically from an environment away from their accustomed place of living.

A study by Valencia N. Prock, a nurse who is about to receive her Ph.D. degree at the University of Chicago, has revealed that the oldsters showed less concern about their health, and were less excitable, tense and anxious when they were away from their usual homes.

Feelings of helplessness and dependency disappeared or were lessened in the old people's home, and there was less tendency to withdraw from those around them.

It is possible that the transition period while waiting to be admitted to an institution can be bad psychologically, but Miss Prock said that afterwards, the institution appears to have a stabilizing effect on the elderly person's "disequilibrium."

The study, conducted under the direction of Dr. Morton A. Lieberman, University of Chicago assistant professor in the department of psychiatry, and the committee on human development, compared a group of elderly persons about to enter old people's homes with a matched group that had been in such homes for some time.

The Ph.D. candidate reported the study at the 18th annual meeting of the Gerontological Society in Los Angeles.

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