

AN EXTENSION OF THE RISK-SHIFT PHENOMENON TO ACHIEVEMENT AND AFFILIATION CONCERNS

RALPH H. KILMANN

*Graduate School of Business
University of Pittsburgh*

Summary.—The experiment investigated whether achievement and affiliation concerns would induce the phenomenon encountered in the risk-shift and related group studies. Using three decision-problems involving such concerns, Ss first responded to the three problems individually, then in randomly assigned groups, and then separately again. In comparison to Ss in a control condition, results indicate that the risk-shift phenomenon generalizes to achievement and affiliation shifts, both in the group decision and in Ss' post-group responses.

A considerable amount of research has been conducted to investigate the risk-shift phenomenon first described by Stoner (8). In his study, Stoner found that groups accepted higher risk responses on hypothetical risk problems than the individuals who made up the groups. Initially, replications and extensions of the risk-shift involved only risk considerations (3). Subsequent research, however, began to suggest that the phenomenon was more general than had been thought. Madaras and Bem (4) found that a *moral* shift could be induced; Moscovici and Zavalloni (5) found attitude shifts toward nationalities; Doise (2) observed shifts toward an educational institution; and Myers and Bishop (6) recorded shifts on prejudiced attitudes.

The present study further explored the emerging theory of the shift phenomenon suggesting that individuals prefer the expression of *value* related arguments (concerns) to other types of arguments during group discussions (7). In particular, this study proposed two specific concerns that appear to be valued in the American society, achievement and affiliation. "Achievement" is defined as a desire for competing with a high standard of excellence; "affiliation" is defined as a desire for maintaining and promoting good interpersonal relationships (1). It was expected that achievement and affiliation concerns would induce the shift phenomenon. Hypothesis 1 was that, as a result of group discussions, group consensual decisions on achievement and affiliation concerns will emphasize either of these two concerns more strongly than pre-group individual decisions, i.e., achievement or affiliation shifts. Hypothesis 2 was that, if shifts occur via the group consensual decisions (Hypothesis 1), individuals will maintain these shifts outside their group.

Of 62 male college students from introductory psychology classes, 42 were randomly assigned to the experimental condition and 20 to the control condition.

This research design is identical to that used in the original study by Stoner (8). All Ss first responded to three decision-problems given individually and in random order to each S. Two weeks later, the 42 experimental Ss were randomly assigned to be in three-man groups and were asked to reach consensual group decisions on the same three decision-problems. Then Ss were separated from the groups and given the problems again individually. The 20 control Ss responded to the decision-problems 2 wk. after their initial responses, without any interventions.

Each decision-problem was constructed by stating a brief problem-situation followed by four explicit *concerns* a decision-maker may have in mind while considering a solution to the proposed problem.¹ While the situational context of the three decision-problems

¹Requests for copies of the three decision-problems used in this study should be sent to Ralph H. Kilmann, Graduate School of Business, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260.

varied, two concerns to each problem were written to reflect achievement concerns and two for affiliation. The respondent was asked to allocate an arbitrary 100 points among the four concerns on each decision-problem to reflect his feeling of their relative importance. By summing the points assigned to the achievement concerns on each problem, one can derive a measure of the *relative* weight achievement concerns are given in relation to the affiliation concerns, and vice versa (achievement + affiliation points = 100 on each problem).

A *group* measure was defined as the consensual group responses on each of the three decision-problems (scored from the achievement concerns). A *pre-group* measure was the average of the initial responses of the three individuals who made up the group (scored from the achievement concerns). Regarding Hypothesis 1, all the mean absolute differences between group and pre-group measures on the three decision-problems (separately and combined) were higher than the mean absolute differences between the control Ss' first and second achievement-scored responses ($N = 14$ "groups" for the experimental Ss, $N = 20$ for control Ss; 1-tailed t s, $p < .01$). It should be noted that these calculations (absolute differences) do not indicate whether groups consistently shift toward the same kind of concerns, e.g., achievement, but only that there is some shift in emphasis toward *either* the achievement or affiliation concerns.

A *post-group* measure was defined as the average of the final individual responses of the three group members (scored via the achievement concerns). Regarding Hypothesis 2, all the mean absolute differences between group and post-group measures on the three decision-problems (separately and combined) were not different from the mean absolute differences between the control Ss' first and second achievement-scored responses ($N = 14$ "groups" for the experimental Ss, $N = 20$ for control Ss; 2-tailed t s not significant).

These results suggest that the risk-shift phenomenon generalizes to achievement and affiliation shifts, both in the group decision and in Ss' post-group responses. However, when an analysis took into account the *direction* of the shifts and not just the absolute differences (the latter ignores whether an achievement or affiliation shift occurs), no significant differences were found between groups of Ss. Undoubtedly, achievement shifts were cancelled out by affiliation shifts, and vice versa. Consequently, directions for further research would be to investigate what determines which of two or more valued concerns are likely to be emphasized in small group discussions. Such research endeavors become essential as social scientists attempt to explain group behavior in real-life situations that involve many such valued concerns.

REFERENCES

1. ATKINSON, J. W. (Ed.) *Motives in fantasy, action, and society*. Princeton, N. J.: Van Nostrand, 1958.
2. DOISE, W. Intergroup relations and polarization of individual and collective judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1969, 12, 136-143.
3. KOGAN, N., & WALLACH, M. A. Risk taking as a function of the situation, the person, and the group. In T. M. Newcomb (Ed.), *New directions in psychology III*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967. Pp. 111-278.
4. MADARAS, G. R., & BEM, D. J. Risk and conservatism in group decision making. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 1968, 4, 350-365.
5. MOSCOVICI, S., & ZAVALLONI, M. The group as a polarizer of attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1969, 12, 125-135.
6. MYERS, D. G., & BISHOP, G. D. Discussion effects on racial attitudes. *Science*, 1970, 169, 778-779.
7. PRUITT, D. G. Conclusions: toward an understanding of choice shifts in group discussion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1971, 20, 495-510.
8. STONER, J. A. F. A comparison of individual and group decisions involving risk. Unpublished Master's thesis, School of Industrial Management, M.I.T., 1961.

Accepted September 4, 1974.