

## The Effect of Misjudging Another: Over-Compensation or Dissonance Reduction?

ELAINE WALSTER AND PERRY PRESTHOLDT

*University of Minnesota<sup>1</sup>*

When one realizes he has misjudged another (either evaluating the other too harshly or too generously) there are two opposite ways that he can reduce the discomfort he feels: (1) He can compensate the misjudged other. He can accord the other a little extra liking and respect (if the other was initially underrated) or deprive the other of a little liking and respect (if the other was initially overrated). (2) He can attempt to justify his injustice, convincing himself that the other deserved the too harsh or too generous evaluation. The research literature demonstrates both reactions. It was proposed that how publicly committed an individual was to his unjust evaluation would determine whether he subsequently compensated the misjudged other or whether he justified his initial injustice. An experiment clearly supported the preceding hypothesis.

What happens when a person misjudges another, according the other either more or less liking and respect than the other deserves?

In the study immediately preceding this one, it was proposed that people have a desire to accord others exactly as much liking and respect as the others "deserve." Further, it was proposed that if a person discovers he has evaluated or treated another unjustly, he will have a tendency to try to make up for his initial unfairness.

There are two possible ways of making up for an injustice: (1) One can perform an act designed to benefit or harm the other. (2) One can accord the unjustly treated person a little extra liking and respect (if he owes him a favor) or deprive him of a little liking and respect (if he owes him a punishment). The previous study proposed and demonstrated that if a subject discovered he was guilty of being unfairly harsh toward another, he would temporarily react by expressing greater liking for the other than an objective observer would. Similarly, if a subject discovered

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that he had been misled into being unjustly generous toward another, he would temporarily react by expressing greater dislike for the other than an objective observer would. The above process was labeled "over-compensation."

On the other hand, studies derived from the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1958) have predicted and have demonstrated an opposite effect. Dissonance theory would predict that individuals could reduce dissonance caused by treating another better or worse than the other deserved, by bringing their evaluation of the other into line with their unjust treatment of the other. One could reduce dissonance by deciding the other deserved what he got. Thus, according to dissonance theory, people should subsequently increase their liking for those they had unjustly praised and should come to dislike those they had unjustly harmed.

How can we reconcile these opposing predictions and findings? We would like to propose that a crucial variable in determining which of the two reactions individuals demonstrate is how committed they are to their initial misjudgment. If individuals are quite uncommitted to their initial misjudgment, we predict that they will *over-compensate* for initial misjudgments. If they discover they have underrated another, uncommitted individuals should subsequently treat or evaluate him more generously than they normally would; if they discover they have overrated the other, they should subsequently evaluate him more harshly than they normally would.

If individuals are strongly committed to their misjudgment, on the other hand, we predict they will attempt to *reduce the dissonance* produced by the discovery that they treated or evaluated the other person unjustly by attempting to *justify* their initial misjudgment. If they discover they have underrated another, highly committed individuals should subsequently treat or evaluate him more harshly than they normally would; if they discover they have overrated another, they should subsequently evaluate him more generously than they normally would.

To test our hypothesis, the following experiment was designed: Experimental subjects were led to misjudge two individuals; i.e., to evaluate individual A (a girl) too harshly and individual B (her mother) too generously. Control subjects were led to evaluate individuals A and B accurately and fairly. After making their initial evaluations, one-half the control and one-half of the experimental subjects were minimally committed to their initial evaluation. The remainder of the experimental and control subjects were strongly committed to their initial evaluation. Subsequent information then clearly indicated that a harsh evaluation of the daughter and a generous evaluation of the mother was unjust. All sub-

jects were then asked to make a final, anonymous appraisal of the two individuals.

We predict that the uncommitted experimental subjects will try to *over-compensate* for their unjust evaluations. They should like the daughter (initially too harshly evaluated) more and the mother (initially too generously evaluated) less than do control subjects.

Strongly committed experimental subjects should try to *reduce the dissonance* aroused by their initial injustice by attempting to justify the initial evaluation. They should like the daughter (initially too harshly evaluated) less, and the mother (initially too generously evaluated) more, than do control subjects.

### PROCEDURE

Eighty-nine<sup>2</sup> female subjects were used in this experiment. They were recruited from rhetoric,<sup>3</sup> home economics, and introductory psychology classes. Subjects were run in groups of four.<sup>4</sup> Each subject was randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions.

We wanted to make sure subjects would express their immediate and honest reactions to the stimulus individuals. To encourage them to do this, the following rationale was provided:

The study was described to subjects as an educational research project sponsored by the Social Work Department. The experimenter explained that his advisor, Dr. Gerard, had been attempting to find a good classroom method for teaching social work volunteers to be realistic, uninhibited, and accurate in their evaluation of clients. The experimenter went into great detail explaining why social work volunteers should react honestly to the client. They were told they should not try to mimic the artificial, dispassionate, disinterest of the therapist, but rather should strive to describe clearly how they felt. Unfortunately, the experimenter added, the results of previous research were perplexing. All the methods Dr. Gerard employed, even the "bad" ones, produced the desired results; trained subjects were able to evaluate clients spontaneously and with great accuracy. Dr. Gerard now was trying to discover whether or not individuals could evaluate others just as accurately and honestly with a minimum of training as they could with a great deal of instruction; if they could, obviously much time could be saved by eliminating useless training sessions. The subject was told she was to be part of a minimum training control group. The experimenter mentioned that she would be given the same information that girls in the previous studies had received. She would hear two case histories,

<sup>2</sup>One subject was discarded because she refused to rate the clients as requested.

<sup>3</sup>We would like to thank Becky Mayo and the Rhetoric Department for their help in obtaining subjects for this experiment.

<sup>4</sup>Not all experimental sessions contained four subjects. Fifty-five per cent of the subjects were run in groups of four, 13 per cent of the subjects were run in groups of five or six, 32 per cent of the subjects were run in groups of two or three. Nevertheless, the procedure was always the same. Half of the subjects in any experimental session had their written evaluations collected and read. For simplicity's sake, we will describe the procedure as if there were four subjects present at every session.

in which different social workers discussed two current clients—a daughter and her mother.

At this point, the experimenter turned on a taped recording of the "standard introduction" Dr. Gerard had purportedly used in the previous research on teaching techniques. In this introduction, Dr. Gerard explained the purpose of the study (to find a good teaching technique), and the reasons why he wanted to train social work volunteers to be uninhibited, emotional and honest in reporting their reactions.

Following this introduction, each subject was given a three page booklet and told to read only the first page. Though all booklets appeared to be identical, they were not. Which booklet the subject received determined whether she was an experimental or a control subject.<sup>5</sup> Page one of this booklet contained instructions concerning the procedure of the experiment; none of this information was new to the subjects, it was just a brief summary of the remarks made by Dr. Gerard in his taped introduction. For those subjects assigned to the experimental group, page one ended at this point; experimental subjects received no additional information. However, those subjects assigned to the control group received an additional paragraph. In this paragraph, the control subjects were warned that the first report, which they would soon hear, was not entirely correct. This warning paragraph explained that though at the time the nurse taped her report, she believed that the daughter had abandoned her ill mother, this information was misleading. Actually, the mother had lied to the nurse about the entire incident, and the daughter when confronted with the story had been reluctant to say that her mother was lying. In fact, the warning paragraph stated, the daughter had promptly taken her mother to the hospital.

### *Case Report I*

Case Report I was described to subjects as a real case report which had been made by a public health nursing student who was caring for the mother. The report was long and rambling. The report mentioned very many good and bad things about both the mother and the daughter. The report was mixed enough in tone that we felt it would be possible to justify almost any feeling one might have about the daughter or the mother. In general, however, the nurse seemed to react more favorably to the mother than to the daughter. The mother was described as a kind, sweet, grandmotherly woman, who had made many sacrifices for her daughter and who was concerned about her daughter's welfare. She was bed-ridden and though she was an unusually stubborn person at times, she was appreciative of the nurse's help. The thirteen-year-old daughter, on the other hand, was said to exhibit little interest in anything except clothes, records, and her boyfriend. According to the mother, she was unaffectionate and unconcerned with her mother's welfare. The mother also complained that the girl had been belligerent and hostile on several occasions. The nurse stressed, however, that she had found the girl to be a quiet, unassuming, typical teenager. On the basis of the above information alone, one would probably be somewhat ambivalent about mother and daughter, liking each fairly much. A crucial incident reported by the nurse was designed to crystallize subjects' opinions, however. The incident concerned the daughter's alleged abandoning of her mother. The nurse mentioned that she received the story about

<sup>5</sup>In order to prevent subjects from noticing the reactions of other subjects or noticing that other subjects had received different instruction booklets, subjects' desks were arranged so they could not see each other.

the incident from the embarrassed mother the day after it had occurred. Supposedly, the mother was very ill and had pleaded with the daughter to stay at home one evening in case she needed help. To this pleading, the daughter replied that should the mother need help "she could always crawl to a window and wave down a passing patrol car." With this, the daughter and her boyfriend left the mother and went to a party somewhere. The nurse reported that soon after the daughter left, the mother slipped into a coma. A neighbor had found her and had gotten her to the hospital in time. The nurse recalled that when she saw the daughter, she gave no excuses for her behavior and didn't try to deny that she had abandoned her mother. Rather, the daughter just shrugged her shoulders. When Case Report I was completed, the tape recorder was shut off.

The experimenter asked subjects to turn to the next page of their booklets and to begin writing. The instructions on this second page asked them to think about the nurse's report and to write an evaluation of either mother or daughter. (Which client the subject rated first was randomly determined.) It was suggested to subjects that they express their own opinions concerning the likeableness, thoughtfulness, and kindness of the client. After about two and a half minutes, they were told to turn to the next page of the booklet. On this page, they were given instructions to write about whichever client they had not yet evaluated. By the time they were done with the second evaluation, each subject had spent about 5-6 minutes reflecting on and writing about the clients.

At the time they were writing their initial evaluation of the clients, experimental subjects still believed that the daughter had abandoned her sick mother. Control subjects had already received the information that this incident was untrue. We assumed, then, that experimental subjects would write an unjustly harsh evaluation of the daughter and overly generous evaluation of the mother. Because control subjects know they should disregard the false information, we assumed that control subjects would write a fair and accurate evaluation of the mother and the daughter. In their initial evaluation they should be much more positive to the daughter and much more negative to the mother than are the experimental subjects.

### *Assigning Subjects to the Uncommitted or Strongly Committed Condition*

After the subjects had closed their booklets, the experimenter explained that their initial written evaluations were not of importance to him. He claimed that he had only had them write evaluations because the previous studies which assessed the effectiveness of various teaching methods had required students to write the same evaluations. Nevertheless, he said he wanted to see *some* of the evaluations the subjects had written just to assure himself that they were thinking seriously about the clients. He also commented that no two evaluations he had read so far came to exactly the same conclusions about the clients, although most of the evaluations seemed to be extremely honest and accurate. The experimenter then pointed at the two subjects that had been randomly assigned to the strong commitment condition. He asked them to write their names on their booklets and then he collected them. While standing right in front of the subject, the experimenter read her evaluation to himself without making any comments or showing approval or disapproval. By design, one of the two strongly committed subjects was always a control subject and one was always an experimental subject. The two subjects whose evaluations had not been collected were assigned to the uncommitted condition. These girls were told they could simply rip up their evaluations and throw them away. In this way, we arranged to publically commit two subjects to their

initial statements about the mother and daughter, while the remaining two subjects were totally uncommitted to their initial evaluations.

The experimenter then put the evaluations of the strongly committed subjects in an envelope and turned on the tape recorder so they could hear the next case report. When the recorder came on, however, Dr. Gerard gave "a little more information" about Case Report I. He noted that most of the girls had undoubtedly noticed some of the inconsistencies of the inexperienced nursing student. He then explained that there had been one definite error in the case report: the daughter had not really abandoned her sick mother. Dr. Gerard said: "The mother had simply lied to the nurse about what had happened. She had made up the whole story to punish her daughter while protecting herself. What had actually happened was this: On the night that the mother got sick, she had been drinking most of the afternoon and when she lapsed into a coma, her daughter became quite frightened and confused. She left her mother, but only to run to a neighbor's. With the neighbor's help, she got her mother to a hospital."

"Now, it's clear from previous use of this report, that this one incident usually doesn't affect the student's over-all evaluation very much. But, I did want to mention this error since the next report might be confusing if you aren't aware that the mother's statement was a lie." (The subjects in the control groups, of course, had received a synopsis of this very same information before they heard the nurse's report. However, this was the first time that experimental subjects had learned that they should not take Interview I at face value.)

After this explanation, the experimenter turned off the tape recorder. He said he couldn't remember if he had told them about the error earlier or not, and said he was sorry if he had forgotten to mention it. He said, however, that since the error was such a small part of the total tape and the total information that he supposed that it didn't really make much difference in one's rating anyway. This statement was designed to prevent the subjects from discounting responsibility for their misjudgment by saying (truthfully) that they would have been more just in their evaluation had they only guessed that that one crucial incident was not true. Pretests showed that subjects would accept this statement, even though it is clear that the warning to disregard the crucial incident does radically change one's attitude toward both the daughter and the mother.

The experimenter then mentioned that he would not be present while the girls heard the second case report. He explained that the therapist who was currently working with the mother and her daughter had expressed an interest in how people in general responded to his clients and that the therapist found such evaluations very helpful. "In fact," he confided, "the therapist is probably a little too influenced by these evaluations." Since he didn't need these evaluations for his study, he said he had agreed to mail a sampling of the evaluations to the therapist for his own use. Expressing a concern about getting these evaluations into the mail before the mail was picked up, the experimenter left to mail the collected evaluations while the subjects listened to the next case report. The experimenter turned on the recorder and left the room with the envelope. Later he returned without the envelope. This last bit of business was designed to commit strong commitment subjects even more strongly to their initial evaluation than before.

### *Case Report II*

Case Report II was by an experienced hospital social worker. This report contained very little new information about the clients. However, the mother was

presented in a slightly less favorable light than in the nurse's report, while the daughter was presented in a slightly more favorable manner. In general, it was a neutral and academic report, designed to have very little effect on the subject's opinions. Details about the clients' housing, appearance and background were presented.

When the social worker had completed her report, the experimenter asked the subjects to indicate their opinion of the clients "now that they had heard all the information." He assured them that this final evaluation was completely anonymous, and assured them that this evaluation was to be seen only by him, and only after all control subjects had been run. This 2-month delay was necessary, he said, so that the subject would feel perfectly free about saying exactly what she thought. At the time he read the evaluation, he said he would not even know from which control group any evaluation had come. Again encouraging girls to give their spontaneous, honest impressions, he passed out a nine-page questionnaire.

Questions one and two were the crucial questions on this questionnaire. These questions asked the subject to indicate how much he liked each of the clients.<sup>6</sup> Possible alternatives ranged from 0 ("I dislike her more than anyone I know") to 9 ("I like her more than anyone else I know").

Questions in the remainder of the questionnaire were primarily filler questions. They asked subjects to assess various aspects of the daughter's and the mother's personalities, and to what extent the subject thought others would agree with her opinions. In addition, several clinical type questions, asking the subject whether the family should be separated and how serious they thought the case was, etc., were also included.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We predicted that commitment would be a crucial variable in determining whether a person who had unfairly evaluated another would attempt to make up for his unjust treatment of another (demonstrating over-compensation) or would attempt to justify his unjust treatment and continue to treat the other unjustly (demonstrating dissonance reduction).

### *Manipulation Check*

In order to test the above hypothesis, it was first necessary to lead experimental subjects to judge one stimulus person too generously and the other too harshly. Control subjects, on the other hand, had to be led into making fair and accurate initial judgments of these same stimulus persons.

We can determine whether experimental subjects did rate the daughter too harshly and the mother too generously after reading Case Report I, as we have assumed they would. All we have to do is to compare the

<sup>6</sup> If, following the nurse's report, the subject wrote about the mother first, she also answered questions about the mother first on this final questionnaire. If she had written about the daughter first, the subject answered questions about the daughter first.

initial descriptions of the daughter and the mother written by high commitment *experimental* subjects with those written by high commitment *control* subjects.<sup>7</sup> The written evaluations were scored by a student<sup>8</sup> who was not informed of our hypothesis and who was not aware of whether the subject was in an experimental or a control condition. She rated each description on how much the subject appeared to like the person she was rating, and how good or bad the subject appeared to feel the person was. When we look at these evaluations, we see that experimental subjects do express much more dislike and disapproval for the daughter than do control subjects. Experimental subjects also express much more liking and approval of the mother than do control subjects. These differences are significant (Interaction  $F = 29.97$ ,  $p < .001$  with 1 and 42 *df*). It is evident that experimental subjects did judge both the daughter and the mother unfairly as a consequence of taking the case report at face value. We can now turn to the test of our hypothesis.

TABLE 1  
SUMMARY OF PREDICTIONS

	Subjects Uncommitted to Initial Misjudgment	Subjects Strongly Committed to Initial Misjudgment
Experimental subjects (who themselves misjudge others)	Over-compensation: Daughter liked <i>much more</i> than mother.	Dissonance Reduction: Daughter liked only <i>slightly</i> <i>more</i> (or perhaps even less) than mother.
Control subjects (who do <i>not</i> themselves misjudge others)	Daughter liked somewhat more than mother.	Daughter liked somewhat more than mother.

Table 1 provides a summary of our predictions. All predictions were incorporated into a single statistical test in the following way. In *reality*, the daughter was described as a better and more likable person than was the mother. Thus, in both the low commitment and high commitment conditions, control subjects should like the daughter somewhat

<sup>7</sup>It should be recalled that written reports were collected only from high commitment subjects. Low commitment subjects were told they could destroy their initial reports. Since, at the time the evaluations were written, subjects did not know that anyone would hand in their written evaluation, the evaluations of high commitment subjects should not differ in any systematic way from those of the low commitment subjects.

<sup>8</sup>Rebecca Olson, a senior at the University of Minnesota, scored these descriptions.

more than the mother. How much we expect experimental subjects to like the daughter and the mother depends on whether subjects are uncommitted or highly committed to their initial evaluation. In the *uncommitted conditions* we expect experimental subjects to try to over-compensate for their initial misjudgments. This means they should exaggerate their liking for the daughter and minimize their liking for the mother. The daughter should thus be liked a *great deal more* than the mother.

In the *high commitment conditions*, we expect experimental subjects to try to reduce dissonance and to justify their initial evaluation. This means that they should minimize their liking for the daughter and exaggerate their liking for the mother. The daughter should thus be liked only slightly more, or perhaps even less, than the mother.

In summary then, in the uncommitted condition, compared to the mother, the daughter should be liked much better by experimental than by control subjects. In the high commitment condition, compared to the mother, the daughter should be liked much less by experimental than by control subjects.

Our next step was to compute an index of how much the daughter was liked, compared to the mother. We did this simply by subtracting the liking subjects expressed for the mother from the liking they expressed for the daughter. Thus, the more positive an index is, the more the daughter is liked than the mother.

If our hypothesis is true, there should be a significant interaction between degree of commitment and whether subjects are in an experimental or a control conditions, in determining how much the daughter is liked, compared to the mother.

When we turn to Table 2, we see that our hypothesis appears to be entirely supported.

Compared to the mother, the daughter is liked *most* by those experimental subjects who are uncommitted to their initial misjudgments. On a nine-point scale, experimental subjects like the daughter 3.27 units more than they like the mother. Uncommitted control subjects like the daughter only 2.41 units more than they like the mother. Uncommitted experimental subjects, then, as predicted, appear to be over-compensating for their initially unjust evaluations.

Compared to the mother, the daughter is liked *least* when experimental subjects are strongly committed to their initial misjudgments. On the nine-point scale, experimental subjects like the daughter only 2.00 units more than they like the mother. High commitment control subjects like the daughter 2.82 units more than they like the mother. Subjects highly committed to their initial misjudgment, then, as predicted, appear to be

reducing the dissonance caused by the initial misjudgment of the others, by attempting to justify their initial misjudgment.

Commitment, then, is a crucial variable in determining whether subjects will over-compensate for an initial misjudgment, or will compound their initial error by subsequently justifying their injustice. The Interaction between commitment and condition is significant ( $F = 6.63$ ,  $p < .05$  with 1 and 84 *df*).

TABLE 2  
SUBJECTS' LIKING FOR THE DAUGHTER AND THE MOTHER

	Ss uncommitted		Ss strongly committed	
	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control
Liking for daughter (Rated too harshly initially) <sup>a</sup>	6.18	5.91	5.68	5.82
Liking for mother (Rated too generously initially) <sup>a</sup>	2.91	3.50	3.68	3.00
How much more is daughter liked than mother? <sup>b</sup>	3.27	2.41	2.00	2.82
<i>N</i>	(22)	(22)	(22)	(22)

<sup>a</sup> The higher the number, the more the individual is liked.

<sup>b</sup> The higher the number, the more the daughter is liked compared to the mother.

We, of course, wanted next to look at subjects' ratings of the daughter and the mother separately.

1. Initially, the daughter was judged too harshly. Thus, we predict that uncommitted experimental subjects will over-compensate for this initial error by liking her more than do uncommitted control subjects. We expect highly committed experimental subjects to justify their initial misjudgment by liking her less than do highly committed control subjects.

When we examine ratings of the daughter alone, we see that all means are in the predicted direction. However, the differences are not large enough to produce a significant interaction. (Interaction  $F = 1.03$ , with 1 and 84 *df*).

2. Initially the mother was judged too generously. Thus, we expect uncommitted experimental subjects to over-compensate for their initial error by liking her less than do uncommitted control subjects. We expect highly committed experimental subjects to justify their initial misjudgment by liking her more than do highly committed control subjects.

When we examine ratings of the mother alone, we see that all means

are in the predicted direction. In addition, the predicted differences are significant ( $F = 7.48$ ,  $p < .01$ , with 1 and 84 *df*).

It appears then that both the over-compensation and dissonance effects were much stronger for the mother (who was initially overrated) than for the daughter (who was initially underrated).

### *Behavioral Measures of Liking*

We were naturally interested in whether or not the variations in liking predicted by over-compensation and dissonance formulations would have any behavioral correlates.

For this reason, immediately after the subject had completed the questionnaire, and before debriefing, the experimenter mentioned that social work volunteers were now needed to assist the clients described earlier, because the clients were no longer eligible for welfare and a private agency had undertaken their assistance. If anyone was interested in helping the clients, the experimenter said they should pick up a form from him before leaving. The form he handed out was ostensibly from the District 3 Section 11 combined Metropolitan Public Welfare Agency. It said:

"Volunteer workers are needed to help in collecting financial support for a local woman and her young daughter. The funds and the work for each of the clients will be handled separately. Therefore, should you volunteer to help, you cannot work for both the mother's account and the daughter's account simultaneously. The work itself will be rudimentary and unrewarding, but the agency, as well as the clients, will appreciate your help. You understand, of course, that you will not meet the daughter, mother, or anyone directly involved with them. Nevertheless, you very definitely will be helping them."

Subjects who accepted the form were asked to indicate:

(1) If they had a preference, whose account would they prefer to help with?

(2) During the next few weeks, how much time would they be willing to spend on the daughter's account or the mother's account?

(3) Would they be willing to pledge money for the daughter's or mother's account?

They were then asked to indicate their name, address and phone number.

We thought that it would be interesting to see if the liking produced by dissonance reduction and over-compensation processes would affect ones willingness to assist others in a practical sense. Unfortunately, though some commitment sheets were collected, a sufficient number to make data analysis possible were not obtained. Out of the first 10

subjects, a great many were willing to consider devoting time to the family. After that, as final examinations and summer vacation approached *no one* accepted the volunteer sheets. From those few sheets collected, early in the experiment, commitment went like this:

1. *Experimental condition — low commitment.* (We predicted the daughter would be liked most compared to the mother). Two subjects in this condition volunteered to help the daughter. No one volunteered to help the mother.

2. *Experimental condition — high commitment.* (We predicted the daughter would be liked least compared to the mother). One subject volunteered to help the mother and daughter. A second subject volunteered to help the mother.

3. *Control conditions.* In the Low commitment control condition, two subjects volunteered to help the daughter, one subject volunteered to help the mother and one subject volunteered to help either one. In the High commitment control condition, one subject volunteered to help the daughter.

These data are presented only for the reader's interest. Obviously the data are too scanty for a meaningful analysis. There is some suggestion, however, that with proper timing in the quarter, such a behavioral measure could have been used as a substitute for a written expression of liking.

### *Filler Questions*

In addition to the questions measuring liking, several questions designed to measure the way subjects' perceived various aspects of the clients' personality, were included as filler questions. (Many of these personality traits were discussed in the taped case reports.)

We were interested in seeing whether or not subjects would distort their perception of the clients' personalities, in line with their liking of the clients. Subjects evaluated clients on six traits. The more thoughtfulness, sensitivity, intelligence, kindness the subject felt the client possessed, the more the client liked the other, and the more concerned she was for the other, the higher the score a client received. A high score on these six traits was said to indicate a desirable personality. This index of goodness of personality was computed for both mother and daughter by summing up the subjects' ratings of each client. Then a single index was computed by subtracting the mother's index from the daughter's index. The resulting index tells us how many more desirable personality traits were attributed to the daughter than to the mother.

When we look at the reaction of subjects in various conditions, we see that there is some tendency for attribution of good personality traits to

be positively related to the subject's liking for a client. For example, low-commitment experimental subjects (who liked the daughter most compared to the mother) also ascribe more good traits to the daughter, compared to the mother, than do low-commitment control subjects. High commitment experimental subjects (who liked the daughter least compared to the mother) also ascribe fewer good traits to the daughter, compared to the mother, than do high commitment control subjects.

These differences are clearly *not* significant, however. (Interaction  $F = 1.14$ , with 1 and 84 *df*).

Probably the most accurate conclusion we can come to on the basis of the above data is that subjects perceived and accepted the taped descriptions of the clients' personalities fairly similarly, regardless of their experimental condition. Though subject's emotional reaction depended on whether or not he had treated the other unjustly or not and whether or not he was committed to this injustice or not, perception of the other's personality was not significantly influenced by these variables. The reader should bear in mind, however, that there is a *possibility* that perception of the other's personality might be influenced by the subject's feeling of liking or dislike for the other.

#### REFERENCE

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