REACTIONS TO CONFIRMATIONS AND DISCONFIRMATIONS OF EXPECTANCIES OF EQUITY AND INEQUITY [1]

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This study investigated subjects' cognitive, affective, and physiological reactions to equity and inequity. Results confirmed two hypotheses derived from equity theory: (a) Subjects were more content (and less distressed) when they were equitably rewarded than when they were either underrewarded or overrewarded (Hypothesis 1). Further, overrewarded subjects were more content than were underrewarded subjects (Hypothesis 2). Hypothesis 3 predicted that when persons are led to expect inequity, they will be less distressed when an injustice is actually encountered than they would be had they been unprepared for the inequity. This hypothesis was also supported. This last finding was explained in terms of the notion of cognitive set, as developed by Austin.

A fundamental assumption in the various equity theories (see Adams, 1965; Homans, 1961; Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973) is that individuals feel most comfortable when they are receiving a fair return for their social investments. For example, Walster et al. have claimed that when individuals receive more or less than they deserve, they experience distress. (When individuals are overcompensated, they may describe their distress as guilt or fear of retaliation. When they are undercompensated, they usually describe their distress as resentment or anger.) Although these equity theorists have insisted that both undercompensation *and* overcompensation generate distress, the theory acknowledges that an overbenefited participant should become less distressed by an inequity than should his deprived partner.

Unfortunately, little compelling evidence exists to support the Walster et al. (1973) propositions. This void is extremely serious, since if individuals who find themselves enmeshed in inequitable relations do not experience distress, equity theory would no longer be capable of explaining why individuals try

so relentlessly to reestablish equity. The present study was designed to test these critical equity theory propositions. It was designed to ascertain whether Walster et al.'s equity theory accurately predicts the affective reactions of deprived, equitably treated, and overbenefited individuals.

Effect of Expectancy on Distress

The present study also explored a second, entirely different, question.

Austin (1972) articulated a general expectancy model. In accord with Aronson and Carlsmith's (1963) earlier theorizing, Austin proposed that a person's expectation should dramatically affect how he reacts to the inequities he encounters. He argued that when a person expects an event (such as "being treated inequitably") he cognitively rehearses for the stressful event and thus becomes cognitively and physiologically set for the event. Thus, Austin proposed that expected injustices generate less distress than do unexpected ones.

According to Austin's (1972) argument, expectancy ameliorates distress, *even when a person clearly realizes that the expected event is inequitable.* This prediction is an intriguing one. If this argument is true, it implies that whether or not an exploiter or a victim is led to *expect* a forthcoming injustice should profoundly affect his reaction to injustice. A warning should damp his affective and physi-

ological responses, thus damping his motivation to combat the injustice.

Are Austin's predictions derivable from equity theory? No. Equity theory does not formally state how a person's expectancies affect his perception of, and reactions to, inequity. We can offer some speculations, however. A person's expectations may well influence his definition of equity. For example, envision a student who knows that he deserves $2 per hour. His prospective employer agrees but sadly informs him that he is caught in a financial squeeze; he can only pay him $1 per hour. It seems reasonable that the student who expects to be paid $1 might well update his definition of equity. He may well decide that in fact he *deserves* less than $2 per hour ($1.75, $1.69?). As a second example, suppose the employer grudgingly informs the student that although they both know the student deserves $2 per hour, the employer's government contract requires him to pay the student $3 per hour. When he contemplates this fact, the student may well update his definition of equity and decide that he really deserves more than $2 ($2.25, $2.31?).

If expectations do generate changes in individuals' definitions of equity, these changed definitions will, of course, influence how inequitable a given deprivation ($1 per hour) or a given overbenefit (say $3 per hour) is perceived to be, and thus how distressing it is. Thus, even equity theorists might expect expectancies to influence individuals' reactions to inequity.

However, Austin (1972) and equity theory would obviously differ on whether or not expectancies *always* ameliorate distress. Austin argued that even when individuals clearly perceive that an event is blatantly inequitable, expectancy ameliorates distress. Equity theorists would predict that only when expectancies cause individuals to alter their definitions of equity will expectancies ameliorate distress.

Predictions

The following experiment was designed to test the following three hypotheses.

1. Persons who are given an equitable reward will be less distressed than persons who receive an inequitable reward (i.e., persons who are equitably rewarded will be less distressed than persons who are *either* underrewarded or overrewarded).

2. Persons who are overrewarded will be less distressed than persons who are underrewarded.

3. When persons are treated inequitably, they will experience less distress if they *expected* overreward or underreward than if they did not (i.e., expected reward will interact with received reward in determining subjects' distress level).

METHOD

To test the preceding predictions, a 3 × 3 factorial design was constructed. The manipulated variables were reward expected ($1, $2, or $3) and reward received ($1, $2, or $3).

Subjects

Subjects were 78 female and 39 male University of Wisconsin undergraduates, who were randomly selected from a list of students who expressed an interest in participating in social psychological experiments.

Establishing Subjects' Initial Expectations

On the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, college students are routinely paid $2 for participating in psychological experiments. We expected that subjects would enter the experimental setting expecting $2 and perceiving that $2 was an equitable payment. The following experimental procedures were designed to reinforce that conviction.

Procedure

When each of the subjects arrived at the laboratory, two fellow students (actually experimental confederates) were seated in the waiting room. The experimenter introduced the trio of subjects and ushered them into separate experimental rooms.

The experimenter entered the real subject's room. He explained that he was interested in how persons make decisions, especially business decisions. He pointed out that studying decision making in the laboratory, under controlled conditions, seemed the best way to understand this process.

He then handed the subject a copy of the Mood Adjective Check List and asked him to fill it out. He would explain the significance of the Mood Adjective Check List later. The Mood Adjective Check List consists of 30 adjectives representing six dimensions or "moods." The dimensions can be roughly labeled Elation, Activation, Social Affection, Aggression, Anxiety, and Depression. The Mood Adjective Check List served as our index of affect (i.e., contentment or distress). Subjects' Mood Adjective Check List index scores were calculated in

the following way: Subjects' responses on the three positive moods were positively weighted, and their responses on the three negative moods were negatively weighted. Thus, the more positive the index, the more contented the subject is. The more negative the score, the more distressed he is. This index constituted our measure of affect.

The experimenter then described the experimental procedure. He explained that the three subjects were being asked to participate in a decision-making study. He observed that in business, managers must often evaluate their employees' performance and decide how much to pay the employees for their work. He had designed this experiment in an effort to simulate a business decision-making situation. One of the subjects would be assigned to be a supervisor (i.e., the decision maker). Two of them would be assigned to be employees, assigned to proofread some simple material. Each of the subjects then drew a slip to determine whether he would serve as the decision maker or as a worker. (Actually, all of the subjects were assigned to be proofreaders.)

The experimenter then outlined the proofreader's job. His primary task was to read through two pages of simple material. If he came across any spelling errors, he was to circle them. Both proofreaders would proofread the same copy.

As soon as the proofreaders completed their task, the experimenter would collect their work and turn it over to the decision maker. The experimenter claimed that he was really interested in how the decision maker went about making a series of decisions. First, the decision maker would be asked to quickly score the proofreaders' papers and to calculate what percentage of the existing errors each of them had detected. Then the decision maker would make his all-important decision. The experimenter would give him $4 to distribute between the subject and the other proofreader. After calculating how well they both did, the decision maker would have to decide how much money to give each of them for participating in the experiment.

Finally, the experimenter said he would ask the decision maker to recount the reasons underlying his decision. He would also ask the proofreaders to evaluate his decision. Hopefully, this procedure would help the experimenter learn something about the decision-making process.

Cover Story for the Mood Adjective Check List and Galvanic Skin Response Measures

The experimenter then took a few minutes to explain a second study. He explained that the Medical School had recently become interested in determining how tight a relationship there was between mood and physiological response (specifically, the galvanic skin response). The Medical School had been trying to get experimenters to cooperate on the project for a long time. Finally, the experimenter had acquiesced and had agreed that they could collect continuous readings in this task situation.

He pointed out that the Medical School had sent over some equipment and a medical technologist to operate it. If the subject "wouldn't mind," the technologist would simply hook two wires to his hand. He was reassured that the wires were part of a perfectly harmless monitoring device and that there was nothing to worry about. As soon as the subject agreed to cooperate, the medical technologist attached the electrodes to the subject's hand.

The experimenter then left the room "to talk with the other subjects." Actually, he waited in an adjoining room for five minutes, and then he collected a three-minute galvanic skin response base measure.[4]

The galvanic skin response has long served as a direct measure of physiological arousal and an indirect indicant of anxiety (see Geer, 1966; Forrest & Dimond, 1967; Sternback, 1966). However, we elected to use the Mood Adjective Check List as our primary measure of affect (contentment versus distress) and the galvanic skin response as a supplementary measure because psychophysiological measures are generally unreliable and because our attempts to use them have repeatedly been unsuccessful.

Manipulation of Independent Variables

When each of the subjects had completed the proofreading task, the experimenter picked up the proofing and took it to the decision maker. The subject waited. (Presumably, the decision maker was evaluating the pair's proofreading and deciding how the $4 should be divided between them.) After an appropriate time, the experimenter checked to see if the subject had been assigned to the $1, $2, or $3 expectancy condition. Then he entered the subject's room and said:

> [Decision maker's name] corrected the papers. Both you and the other proofreader discovered 94% of the errors. He said he *plans* to give you $___ ($1, $2, or $3) and [other proofreader's name] $___ (the remaining $3, $2, or $1).

Then the experimenter left the room, presumably to inform the second proofreader of his score and the decision. In fact, he unobtrusively took the second galvanic skin response measure from the adjoining room in order to tap the impact of the expectancy manipulation on the subject.

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[4] The galvanic skin response apparatus consisted of a model 5818 galvanic skin response meter, manufactured by the Lafayette Instrument Company. In order to quantify the physiological data, a digital counter was wired to the galvanic skin response meter. The counter recorded the cumulative number of all deflections of the galvanic skin response meter past a certain point on the meter. It was determined from pretesting that deflections past −1 on the meter yielded substantial variance among subjects within maximal range of galvanic skin response sensitivity.

The experimenter allowed the expectancy manipulation to cement for five minutes. Then he checked to see what payment condition the subject had been assigned to. He stepped into the experimental room, told the subject the decision maker's final decision, and paid the subject his money. He said, "All right, here is the final decision." (The experimenter then handed the subject a card that said the decision marker had decided to give him $1, 2, or $3.) Then he added, "And, before I forget, here is the money." (The experimenter handed him the same amount.)

And that was the end of the psychology experiment. The only thing left for the subject to do was to take the Mood Adjective Check List one last time for the Medical School and to complete a few forms for the experimenter. This second Mood Adjective Check List constituted our postmeasure of distress. The questionnaire was designed to: (a) check the efficacy of our manipulations of expectancy and reward received and (b) assess subjects' perceptions of fairness and satisfaction.

While the subject was completing these forms, the experimenter went to the adjoining room and took a three-minute postmeasure of galvanic skin response. Each of the subjects was then debriefed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our first purpose was to test two of Walster et al.'s (1973) equity propositions: (a) *Hypothesis 1*, that persons who are given an equitable reward will be more content (less distressed) than persons who are either exploited or overbenefited, and (b) *Hypothesis 2*, that persons who are underrewarded will be more distressed than persons who are overrewarded.

We can test Hypotheses 1 and 2 by comparing the reactions of subjects who expected to receive and did receive $2—an equitable payment—with the reactions of subjects who expected $2 but received $1 or $3.

Manipulation Check

Our first step was to ascertain that subjects in the basic expect-$2 conditions did perceive $2 to be an equitable payment. There is compelling evidence that they did. Our final questionnaire asked, "If you were given control over distribution of the $4 between the proofreaders, how would you have decided?" All of the subjects insisted that they would have given each participant an "equitable" $2 had they been the decision maker.

TABLE 1

MEAN CHANGE IN AFFECT AS MEASURED BY THE MOOD ADJECTIVE CHECK LIST

Reward condition	Expectancy condition			M
	$1	$2	$3	
$1	−1.23[a]	−18.31	−25.08	−14.87
$2	2.46	7.31	2.69	4.15
$3	1.92	−4.60	3.54	.28

[a] The higher the number, the more "content" (and the less distressed) subjects are; $n = 13$ per cell.

Mood Adjective Check List Data [5]

Hypothesis 1 can be tested with a simple contrast. An explanation of these statistical procedures can be found in Hays (1963). The contrast

$$\Gamma_1 = 2\mu_{(\text{Expect } \$2 : \text{Receive } \$2)}$$
$$- \big[\mu_{(\text{Expect } \$2 : \text{Receive } \$3)}$$
$$+ \mu_{(\text{Expect } \$2 : \text{Receive } \$1)}\big]$$

tests the hypothesis that when subjects expect an equitable payment ($2), they will be more satisfied when they receive equity ($2) than when they are overrewarded (receive $3) or underrewarded (receive $1). When we examine the Mood Adjective Check List data, to determine how contented or distressed subjects in the various conditions were, we see that Hypothesis 1 was firmly supported ($F = 17.71$, $df = 2/36$, $p < .001$). Equitably treated subjects were more content than were either overrewarded or underrewarded subjects.

In Hypothesis 2, the contrast

$$\Gamma_2 = \mu_{(\text{Expect } \$2 : \text{Receive } \$3)} - \mu_{(\text{Expect } \$2 : \text{Receive } \$1)}$$

tests the hypothesis that when subjects expect equity ($2) but are treated inequitably, they will be less distressed when they are overrewarded ($3) than when they are underrewarded ($1). The data strongly supported Hypothesis 2 ($F = 7.07$, $df = 2/36$, $p < .005$).

The present study, then, provides compelling evidence that individuals experience

[5] We performed analyses of variance and Scheffé comparisons on the posttest scores only and secured identical results to the change scores analyses on the Mood Adjective Check List.

Hypotheses 1 and 2: Additional Analyses

The reader may ask whether more conventional analyses of variance would yield the same supportive results. They do. A 3×3 analysis of variance provided strong support for our hypotheses. On the average, the three groups of subjects who received an equitable $2 reward were more content than the subjects who were overrewarded or underrewarded. The reward received main effect was significant ($F = 72.52$, $df = 2/108$, $p < .001$).

The effect of reward received was analyzed further by the analysis of covariance within a regression framework (see Cohen, 1968). Using the Mood Adjective Check List premeasure as the covariate, tests for the significance of the increment in R^2 were performed. In this way the amount of additional explained variance due to reward received was examined. The value of R^2 for the premeasure covariate was .37. The R^2 value when reward received was entered into the regression equation was .61. The additional amount of explained variance was significant ($F = 16.4$, $df = 4/111$, $p < .001$).

In brief, regardless of whether we analyze the data via contrast, analyses of variance, or analyses of covariance techniques, we secure impressive support for the prediction that subjects who are equitably rewarded will be significantly more satisfied than subjects who are either overrewarded or underrewarded.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that when a person is led to expect inequitable treatment, he will be less distressed when he encounters injustice than a less prepared person would be (i.e., we predicted that expected reward would interact with reward received in determining subjects' distress level).

Manipulation Check: Efficacy of the Expectancy Manipulation

Our first step was to ascertain whether or not our expectancy manipulation had been effective. On the posttest questionnaire, subjects were asked, "After you first were informed of the decision made by the decision maker, how much money did you expect to be paid for participating in this experiment?" All but 2 of the 117 subjects acknowledged that they expected to receive the $1, $2, or $3 reward the decision maker had told them to expect. On questioning the two subjects, it became clear that they had misunderstood the question.

However, in a lengthy postexperimental interview, several subjects admitted that their expectancy was weak. Their initial expectation that they should be and would be equitably paid was apparently "held in the wings." Thus when subjects expected to receive $1 or $3 but were actually given $2, they were "not too surprised." They volunteered that they simply could not see how anyone could apportion the money unequally under the circumstances. When subjects expected inequity ($3 or $1) but received the opposite form of inequity, a few of them admitted to being confused. The decision maker's "flip flop" was difficult or impossible for them to interpret. In any case, it appears that the expectancy manipulation effectively altered subjects' expectancy of reward.

Did Expectancy Manipulation Alter Subjects' Definitions of Equity?

Next we attempted to determine whether or not the expectancy manipulation shaped subjects' definitions of equity. As we noted earlier, one item on the questionnaire asked subjects how they would have divided the money had *they* been the decision maker. We attempted to determine whether expect-$1 subjects came to believe that they deserved somewhat less than $2, while expect-$3 subjects came to believe that they deserved somewhat more than $2. There is no evidence that they did. All of the subjects indicated that they would have distributed the money equally had they been the decision maker.

Under these circumstances, Austin (1972) can still predict that expectancy and reward received should interact in determining subjects' level of distress. Equity theorists are unable to make a similar prediction. Equity theorists would argue that if (and only if) subjects' expectations shape their definitions of equity, then these altered definitions

should effect how subjects respond when they encounter an unusually large or an unusually small reward. We found no evidence that the expectancy manipulation caused subjects to redefine equity. Perhaps subjects' expectations really did not influence their definitions of equity; perhaps our measure was a poor one. We do not know. In any case, equity theory must abstain from making a prediction.

So let us proceed to test Austin's (1972) prediction that expected reward will significantly interact with received reward in determining subjects' reactions (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

The data indicate that expectancy and reward strongly interacted in determining subjects' distress levels. An analysis of variance of the Mood Adjective Check List gain scores produced a significant interaction effect ($F = 15.55$, $df = 4/108$, $p < .001$). An analysis of covariance of the Mood Adjective Check List data was consistent with this finding. When the interaction terms were entered in a regression equation after the Mood Adjective Check List premeasure and the independent variables, they accounted for an additional 11% of the variance in the Mood Adjective Check List postmeasure ($F = 5.1$, $df = 4/107$, $p < .001$). When the interaction terms were entered into the equation after the premeasure alone, R^2 increased from .37 to .52. An additional 15% of variance was accounted for when the variable reward received was not included ($F = 7.2$, $df = 4/111$, $p < .001$).

Examination of Table 1 and Figure 1 reveals that the form of the interaction is almost entirely as predicted.

As predicted, subjects in each reward condition were most content when their expectancies were confirmed. When subjects expected to be exploited (expect-$1 condition), they were decidedly less distressed by subsequent exploitation than were other subjects. Subjects who expected only $1 and received it experienced only slight distress. Subjects who expected an equitable $2 but received only $1 were more distressed. Subjects who expected $3 but received only $1 were the most upset. These results are entirely in line with our predictions.
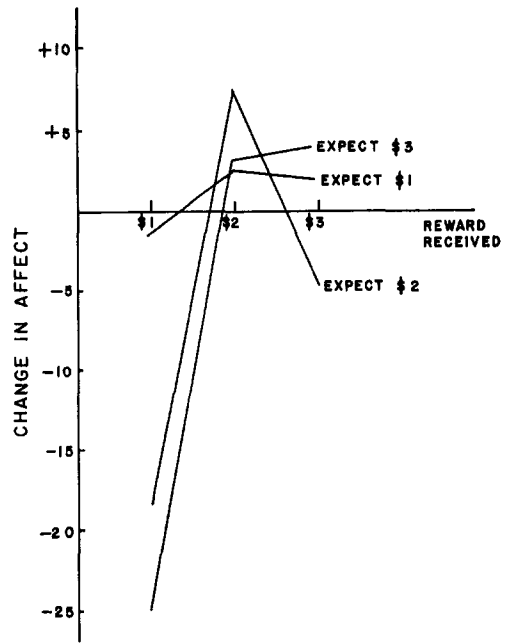

FIGURE 1. Relationship between expectancy and reward measured by change scores on the Mood Adjective Check List.

What about subjects who received an equitable $2? When subjects expected to be treated equitably, and were, they were more content than when they had erroneously been led to expect $1 or $3. Again, these results were as expected.

What about subjects who were overbenefited? As expected, when subjects expected to be overbenefited, they showed less distress when they had received $3 than when they had expected an equitable $2 or $1. However, results are not completely in accord with our predictions. Subjects who expected $2 and were given $3 received $1 more than they expected. Subjects who expected $1 and were given $3 received $2 more than they expected. Thus, if anything, we would have expected the former group to be less upset than the latter group. They were not. We have been able to come up with no satisfactory explanation for these results. Perhaps the reader will fare better.

In summary, we have fair support for the notion that expectancy increased the contentment of subjects who expected and received equity and lessened the negative affect

TABLE 2

MEAN SCORES FOR FAIRNESS–SATISFACTION SCALE

Reward condition	Expectancy condition			M
	$1	$2	$3	
$1	8.69[a]	7.46	6.08	7.41
$2	12.46	13.77	13.62	13.28
$3	9.77	10.00	9.70	9.82

[a] The higher the number, the more satisfied subjects are.

(distress) of subjects who received inequitable rewards.

Ratings of Fairness and Satisfaction

Four items on the postexperimental questionnaire assessed the subjects' perceptions that they had been treated fairly. Subjects were asked: (a) how satisfied they were with the decision maker's decision, (b) how fair they thought the decision maker's final decision was, (c) whether or not they would hire the decision maker, and (d) how well suited they thought the decision maker was for decision making. An index of fairness/satisfaction was constructed by summing the scores of the four items. (The range of the scale was from 4 to 16.)

Let us test Hypotheses 1 and 2 against these data. As before, we first examine data from those subjects who entered the experiment expecting to receive $2 and were assured throughout the experiment that they would receive $2 (expect-$2 condition). The contrast

$$\Gamma_3 = 2\mu_{(\text{Expect }\$2:\text{Receive }\$2)}$$
$$- [\mu_{(\text{Expect }\$2:\text{Receive }\$3)}$$
$$+ \mu_{(\text{Expect }\$2:\text{Receive }\$1)}]$$

tests the hypotheses that equitably rewarded subjects were more satisfied and thought the procedure was fairer than did inequitably rewarded subjects ($F = 35.89$, $df = 2/36$, $p < .001$). The contrast

$$\Gamma_4 = \mu_{(\text{Expect }\$2:\text{Receive }\$3)} - \mu_{(\text{Expect }\$2:\text{Receive }\$1)}$$

tests the hypothesis that overrewarded subjects were significantly less distressed than were underrewarded subjects. This contrast was also significant ($F = 5.19$, $df = 2/36$, $p < .01$).

Once again, readers may be interested in more traditional analyses. For their interest, we conducted a 3 × 3 analysis of variance. As one might expect, when we examine these data, we find that equitably treated subjects were more satisfied ($\bar{M} = 13.28$) than were either overrewarded ($\bar{M} = 9.82$) or underrewarded ($\bar{M} = 7.41$) subjects. The main effect for reward received was significant ($F = 69.41$, $df = 2/108$, $p < .001$). Each of the four items comprising the index also showed a significant main effect.

In summary, our analyses of the fairness/satisfaction data indicate that the equitableness of a reward has a strong effect on the subjects' cognitive responses as well as on their affective responses.

Pritchard (1969) pointed out that equity researchers have never convincingly demonstrated that overrewarded individuals act differently from equitably rewarded ones. Since Pritchard's time, several researchers have collected data relevant to this question (see, e.g., Leventhal, Allen, & Kemelgor, 1969; Pritchard, Dunnette, & Jorgenson, 1972; or Wicker & Bushweiler, 1970). The present research convincingly demonstrates that equity theory can delineate both the cognitive and the affective responses of equitably and inequitably treated persons. It remains to be shown whether these cognitive and affective responses are accompanied by behavioral responses.

Next we attempted to test Hypothesis 3 to discover whether expected reward and received reward interact in determining subjects' satisfaction with the experimental setting. It appears that they do. When subjects received only $1, subjects who had expected to be deprived were more content than were subjects who had expected $2 or $3. When subjects received an equitable payment ($2), those who had expected equitable treatment were more satisfied than were subjects who had expected to be deprived or overbenefited. However, the data for subjects who received $3 are perplexing. Subjects who expected overpayment were not any more satisfied than were other subjects. Once again, we are at a loss to explain these findings.

Physiologcial Reactions

The Mood Adjective Check List was, of course, our measure of contentment/distress. The galvanic skin response was selected as a potentially promising supplementary measure. Since humidity and room temperature could not be controlled during the experiment, and since physiological indexes are notoriously unreliable even under the best of conditions, we were not too hopeful that we would secure clear galvanic skin response data. But we hoped these data might prove valuable. Our dismal expectations were largely supported. While the cell means were in the predicted direction, our within-group variance was enormous. Let us now examine the extent to which subjects' physiological arousal levels changed from the pretest to posttest assessments. On the average, subjects who were equitably rewarded showed a slight decrease in physiological arousal (-1.25 deflections). As predicted, overrewarded subjects were somewhat more aroused (2.98 deflections), and underrewarded subjects were considerably more aroused (4.12 deflections). While these means were in the predicted direction, a contrast between the $2 versus the $3 and $1 conditions and a contrast between the $3 versus the $1 conditions resulted in F ratios of less than 1. An analysis of variance of the galvanic skin response data also failed to yield significant results for either reward received ($F = 2.10$, $df = 2/108$, $p < .10$) or for the Expectancy $\times$ Reward Received interaction ($F < 1$, $df = 4/108$). These discouraging results were corroborated by an analysis of covariance and tests for significance of increments in R^2. This analysis revealed that while reward received explained an additional 4.6% of the variance in the galvanic skin response data, it was nonsignificant ($F = 1.86$, $df = 4/111$, $p < .12$).

In summary, there is no evidence that our experimental manipulations affected subjects' galvanic skin response levels. There was a consistent tendency for reward received to affect subjects' physiological response, but this trend was not statistically significant. There was no hint that reward expected and reward received interacted in determining subjects' galvanic skin response level.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the present study provide firm support for Walster et al.'s (1973) equity theory propositions. Subjects who were treated equitably were more content and satisfied than were subjects who were either over- or underrewarded. These findings add significantly to equity theory, particularly since many critics have been skeptical that inequity would be disturbing to overrewarded as well as to underrewarded persons.

Austin (1972) predicted that expectancy would interact with reward in determining how individuals react to equity or inequity. He argued that the formation of expectancies motivates persons to get set cognitively and physiologically for forthcoming events. Thus he argued that expectation of an unpleasant event (such as inequity) ameliorates the distress a person experiences when the threatened event eventually occurs. Research on coping with stress offers some empirical support for Austin's contention (see Craig & Weiss, 1971; Janis, 1958; or Pervin, 1963). It is clear that in this experiment, subjects' expectancies did mollify their reactions to inequity. Subjects who expected to be deprived were less distressed when they encountered exploitation than were other subjects.

If we are willing to shamelessly generalize from Austin's data, we are led to some intriguing—and unsettling—speculations.

Austin's (1972) data demonstrated that individuals are more distressed when they encounter an unexpected injustice than when they encounter a long-expected one. We might expect, then, that upsetting unexpected inequity will provoke more vigorous demands for restitution than will long-expected, well-accepted, and rationalized injustice.

If the preceding rationale is correct, it suggests a compelling explanation for the frequent observation that young college women, blacks, Mexican-Americans, etc., tend to react more violently to discrimination than do their elderly counterparts. We would point out that throughout their lifetime, older people have come to expect discrimination; younger people have not. Thus, we should not be surprised that older people become less

aroused and less angry when they encounter inequitable treatment than do younger people who are psychologically unprepared for such unjust experiences.

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