

Attraction and reactions to noncontingent promises

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In a 2 by 2 factorial design, high or low attraction for a simulated player (SP) was induced in 40 female college Ss. During a mixed-motive interaction, the SP sent intermittent promises of cooperation to Ss; the promises were either 10% or 90% credible. Results indicated a main effect of promise credibility on S cooperativeness on message-relevant trials. Liking for and evaluation of the SP were inversely related to perceived potency. Changes in attraction from pre- to postmeasures supported an expectancy theory of attraction.

Schlenker et al (1971) found no effect of interpersonal attraction for a simulated source of contingent promises upon S compliance. Tedeschi (1973) has suggested that attraction elicits rewarding or cooperative behavior only when the source of benefits is perceived as acting in an altruistic and nonobligatory fashion. Contingent promises may be perceived as contractual agreements, a type of economic exchange (Blau, 1964) which renders liking irrelevant. A noncontingent promise, which offers unilateral benefits, should promote the effects of attraction on the influence process. The first hypothesis of the present study was, therefore, that Ss would comply with noncontingent promises more often under conditions of high attraction than low attraction (H1).

It should be expected that the proportion of times a promisor does what he says he will do (i.e., credibility) will affect a target's reactions. A replication of the Gahagan & Tedeschi (1968) finding that target Ss were more cooperative in a Prisoner's Dilemma Game (PDG) when the source of noncontingent promises was most credible was predicted (H2).

There is evidence that liking for a person arouses the expectancy that the other will provide benefits, while disliking arouses the opposite expectancy (Kaufmann, 1967). It is plausible that under high attraction Ss set higher comparison levels (i.e., expected gains from the interaction) than Ss under low attraction. These differences in expectancies would serve as a basis for disappointment or pleasant surprise and subsequent revision of liking for the other person (cf. Jones & Gerard, 1967; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). If attraction and

comparison level are highly correlated, then the same level of reward might disappoint persons who like each other but pleasantly surprise those who dislike each other. Stapleton, Nacci, & Tedeschi (in press) have found support for the latter relationships. Furthermore, Ss who like a promisor should expect credibility to be high, since the congruence of verbal statement and behavior imply both the reliability of stated intentions and the beneficent cooperation of the promisor to achieve a joint gain. Conversely, low attraction should be associated with the expectancy that the promisor would not keep her word to be unilaterally benevolent and might in fact use false statements of intention to lure the S into an exploitative interchange. High attraction should lead to disappointment when the source's credibility is low, and low attraction should lead to pleasant surprise when the source's credibility is high. It is, therefore, predicted (H3) that in the high-attraction condition, high credibility will not change measured values of liking but low credibility will cause a decrement in liking, while in the low-attraction condition, low credibility will not increase or decrease liking but high credibility will cause an upward revision in liking.

The design was a 2 by 2 factorial in which Ss were induced to like or dislike an alleged peer and subsequently received noncontingent promises of 90% or 10% credibility from the simulated player (SP) in the context of a PDG.

METHOD

Forty female students partially fulfilled an introductory psychology course requirement by their participation. Following Byrne's (1961) procedure for inducing positive and negative attraction, Ss completed a survey of attitudes and an interpersonal judgment scale (IJS) on the "other girl." Two critical items on the IJS provided a measure of liking, with a score of 2 indicating low attraction and a score of 14 indicating high attraction. Pretest IJS scores indicated a successful manipulation ($F = 59.49$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .001$), with Ss liking the similar SP more ($\bar{X} = 12.2$) than the dissimilar SP ($\bar{X} = 6.5$). Each S was informed that she and the SP would participate together in a joint decision task and was then taken to a cubicle containing the PDG apparatus. The fully automated apparatus contained a 2 by 2 matrix, each cell of which illuminated separately to indicate the cell entered after each trial; two switches, one for Choice 1 (cooperative) and one for Choice 2 (competitive) strategy selections; two add-subtract counters which kept running totals of both players' scores; a series of slots for printed messages, each with a light for incoming and a button for outgoing communications; and a series of lights serving as prompters and guides for the correct sequence of events. A more complete description is provided by Tedeschi, Bonoma, & Brown (1971). The matrix values used were: $R = 4$, $T = 5$, $S = -5$, and $P = -4$.¹

Ss were provided with instructions which explained the relationship between mutual strategy selections and payoff outcomes, provided the goal of gaining as many points as

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possible during the interaction (an individualistic set), and explained the use of communications. Ss were told that the SP could send the single posted incoming message at any time during the interaction by illuminating a yellow communication light on the S's board. The message available to the SP read: "I will make Choice 1 on the next trial." Each time S received a message from the SP, she was required to transmit one of three available outgoing reply messages: (M1) "I will make Choice 1 on the next trial," (M2) "I will make Choice 2 on the next trial," and (M3) "I do not wish to disclose my intentions." Ss were told that they could not initiate communications. No mention of such words as "game," "promise," "opponent," "cooperation," etc., was made at any time.

The SP sent two promises within each block of 10 PDG trials over the 50 trials of the game (i.e., a total of 10 promises). According to a prearranged schedule, the SP either kept her promises 90% or 10% of the time. In the 90% credibility condition, the SP cooperated on all trials following the transmission of messages except for the fifth, while in the 10% credibility condition, the SP cooperated only on the fifth message occasion. On the 40 nonmessage trials, the SP was programmed to be 50% cooperative on a random basis; the schedule was the same for all Ss. Following the interaction, Ss were asked to give their impressions of the "other girl" on a shortened form of the semantic differential (SD, Osgood et al, 1957) and on a second IJS.

RESULTS

All dependent variables were subjected to a 2 by 2 analysis of variance. S's cooperation on message trials was affected only by promisor credibility ($F = 5.82$, $df = 1/36$, $p = .02$), with 90% credibility producing more message cooperation ($\bar{X} = 7.55$) than 10% credibility ($\bar{X} = 5.90$). Neither attraction nor the interaction produced significant effects ($p > .10$). SP's credibility also influenced the frequency of S's choice of M1 ($F = 11.23$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .002$) and M2 ($F = 7.43$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .01$). Ss were more willing to reciprocate the SP's promises with M1 ($\bar{X} = 6.55$) and less apt to announce competitive intentions by using M2 ($\bar{X} = 1.35$) when the SP's promises were highly credible, while Ss used M1 less frequently ($\bar{X} = 4.00$) and M2 more often ($\bar{X} = 2.8$) when the SP's promises were of low credibility.

That the attraction inducement was maintained over the interaction is shown by a liking main effect on the posttest IJS scores ($F = 15.65$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .001$) and the evaluation dimension of the SD ($F = 7.13$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .01$). Also, induced liking produced effects on the activity ($F = 4.49$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .05$) and potency ($F = 9.66$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .005$) dimensions of the semantic differential. On an additional item added to the SD (accommodative-exploitative), induced liking produced a main effect ($F = 6.23$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .02$). Ss in the high-attraction condition still liked the SP after the interaction ($\bar{X} = 10.55$), and the SP was evaluated as strongly positive ($\bar{X} = 3.95$), quite active ($\bar{X} = 2.65$), mildly accommodative ($\bar{X} = .800$), and as rather impotent ($\bar{X} = -1.6$). Ss in the low-attraction condition were mildly positive in liking for the SP ($\bar{X} = 8.05$) after the interaction and rated her as mildly positive on the evaluative scale ($\bar{X} = .800$), mildly active ($\bar{X} = .600$),

mildly exploitative ($\bar{X} = -.400$), and rather potent ($\bar{X} = 1.75$).

Credibility produced main effects on posttest liking ($F = 5.63$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .03$), evaluation ($F = 5.05$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .03$), and potency ($F = 4.76$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .04$). When the SP's promises were highly credible, she was strongly liked ($\bar{X} = 10.05$), evaluated as strongly positive ($\bar{X} = 3.7$), and perceived as impotent ($\bar{X} = -1.1$). When the SP's promises were of low credibility, she was mildly liked ($\bar{X} = 8.55$), rated as mildly positive ($\bar{X} = 1.05$), and potent ($\bar{X} = 1.25$).

Finally, a main effect of induced liking was found on the amount and direction of change from pre- to posttest measures in liking for SP by Ss ($F = 37.812$, $df = 1/36$, $p < .001$). Duncan range tests were applied to examine group differences. Appreciable changes in liking were found for Ss in the high-attraction 10% credibility condition who decreased their attraction for the SP ($\bar{X} = -1.6$); this negative change score was significantly different ($p < .05$) from the low-attraction group at the same (10%) level of credibility ($\bar{X} = 0.9$). Under high credibility, low-attraction Ss revised their liking upward ($\bar{X} = 2.2$), while high-attraction Ss showed a slight decrease ($\bar{X} = -.8$). Change means for these latter two groups were significantly different from each other ($p < .05$). Though all the means are in the predicted directions, the findings within attraction conditions only weakly support the expectancy hypothesis. High-attraction Ss did not decrease their liking for SP differentially as a function of promise credibility ($p > .10$). On the other hand, low-attraction Ss increased their liking for SP more when the SP's promises were of high rather than low credibility ($p > .10$).

DISCUSSION

Contrary to H1, attraction had no effect on the behavior of Ss in the PDG situation. In retrospect, it might be argued that the situation was not one in which the SP's behavior could be perceived as altruistic and that, therefore, attraction would be an irrelevant consideration in determining Ss' responses. Although SP's promises were noncontingent, her use of them implied an expectation that Ss would also be cooperative; otherwise, the SP's behavior would be self-defeating and costly. When the SP unilaterally announced cooperative intentions, and particularly when she followed through by actually cooperating, Ss had an opportunity to take exploitative advantage of the SP. Yet, Ss were predominantly cooperative on message trials even when the SP's promises were not credible. Such responses hint that normative pressure may have caused Ss to respond to the promises in an accommodative manner. In support of the interpretation that normative pressures were operating, it was found that Ss were more likely to reply to the SP's promises with promises of their own when the SP was highly credible and that Ss used promises often even when the SP's promises were not credible.

As expected, the Gahagan & Tedeschi (1968) finding that credibility was directly related to cooperative responses of targets to promises (H2) was confirmed, with more cooperation occurring under high credibility.

Consistent with a reinforcement theory of attraction, Ss liked an SP more when she kept her promises than when she did not. Changes in attraction levels from pre- to posttest measures suggest that Ss did formulate expectancies regarding the

probability that the SP would make rewarding responses and then revised their evaluations of the SP according to whether expectancies were confirmed or disconfirmed. According to Tedeschi's (1973) theory, when Ss were induced to strongly like the SP, they should have expected the SP to keep her promises (a form of trust), while under low levels of attraction, they would not have had such expectations. Changes in attraction should occur only when expectancies are disconfirmed. In support of H3, high-attraction Ss who received highly credible promises and low-attraction Ss who received low credibility promises did not significantly revise their liking for the SP from pre- to posttest. However, high-attraction Ss decreased their liking for the SP when the latter's promises were not credible, and low-attraction Ss increased their liking for the SP when her promises were credible. Hence, it was the confirmation or disconfirmation of expectancies which produced changes in attraction and not the behavior of the SP per se. These results are consistent with those obtained by Stapleton et al (in press) in a different paradigm.

Attributions of potency and evaluation are apparently a function of both the preinteraction liking for SP and the SP's behavior in the conflict interaction. Preinteraction liking for the SP caused Ss to rate the SP as evaluatively good and as rather impotent; low attraction led to perceptions of an evaluatively neutral and rather potent opponent. High credibility not only was associated with liking but also led to a perception of the SP as evaluatively positive and as impotent. Similar findings have been obtained by Schlenker et al (in press) and Bonoma et al (1972). Apparently, Ss associate positive attributes with weakness and negative attributes with strength.

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NOTE

1. This notation is adopted from Rapoport & Chammah (1965).

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