EXPERIENCING UNFAIR FEEDBACK

Jaimee E. Kidder, Sara J. Doty, William B. Elder, Jennifer M. Warden
Shawn E. Bassett (Dr. Carol Sansone),
Department of Psychology, University of Utah

When people receive less positive feedback than others for what they see as similar work, they may feel more negatively about the experience and find the activity less interesting. However, these hypothesized negative effects may differ when individuals see themselves as at least partly responsible for getting the unfair feedback. College students filled out questionnaires describing situations when they received less positive feedback than another for similar work, and for comparison, when they received more positive feedback than another for similar work. For each, they described how they felt, how interesting the activity was, and why they thought this unfair feedback happened. Responses were coded for whether it was at least partly due to the person who received less positive feedback. As hypothesized, recipients of less positive feedback for similar work viewed the experience more negatively and found the activity less interesting than when they were the one who benefited from the unfair feedback. Seeing themselves as at least partly responsible for receiving less positive feedback did not change the negativity of the experience nor make the activity more interesting. However, it frequently safeguarded against seeing themselves as being less competent at performing the task.