EFFECTS OF THE PERCEIVED CAUSE OF UNFAIR FEEDBACK

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When individuals receive less positive feedback than others for similar work, they feel more negatively about the experience and find the activity less interesting than when receiving more positive feedback. However, these negative effects may differ based on the perceived cause the person gave unfair feedback. College students described situations when they received less positive feedback than another for similar work. They described their feelings, how interesting the activity was, why they thought the person gave them unfair feedback, and likelihood of repeating the activity. Reasons for giving unfair feedback were coded into categories of group membership bias, past relationships with recipients, incomplete information, and enduring personal traits. Neither group membership bias nor incomplete information was related to feelings about the experience or activity. Individuals who felt unfair feedback resulted from an enduring trait of the person giving feedback expressed more interest in the activity, compared to individuals not reporting a trait influencing feedback. Individuals who perceived the unfair feedback resulted from past relationships with recipients reported being unlikely to repeat the activity, compared to individuals not perceiving past relationships as the cause. Feelings about an activity after receiving unfair feedback thus appear to vary based on the perceived cause.