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When Are Persons Willing to Com-
pensate Their Victims?
Effects of Socially or Personally
Legitimate, Intentional or Errone-
ous, and Chanced or Coerced Forms
of Harm-Doing

Summary

In a 2x2x2 experimental design social vs. personal legitimacy of a harm-doing act, its conformity with vs. deviation from personal standard of adequacy, and choice between forms of harm-doing were factorially varied. Dependent measure was subjects' willingness to compensate their victims. Results showed a significant effect of the legitimacy factor and an interaction effect of the personal standard of adequacy factor and choice on compensatory behavior. Results are discussed favouring considerations about multiple normative regulations, against equity theory interpretations.

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Within a general concern of supporting more or less just social relationships or, at least, avoiding escalations of mutual defrauding, injuring, and damaging there is a comprehensible interest in the identification of those conditions which let people get inclined to make amends, to compensate their victims.

Thus, in psychology, research on conditions of compensatory behaviour mainly has been done in the broader context of altruistic or prosocial behaviour. Compensation occurs when a person who has previously harmed someone after that harm-doing shows a kind of prosocial behaviour, either towards the victim, or towards someone else (generalized compensation) without explicit anticipation of external rewards or advantages but only for correction of his/her own anti-social act. So obviously it has been categorized as one subclass of prosocial behaviour (see BAR-TAL, 1976).

Within this research context, harm-doing is seen as transgression, as a certain behaviour "that results in some kind of damage to another's property, product, or person (victim)" (BAR-TAL, 1976, p.133). It can be done intentionally or unintentionally; it includes (as already used for experimental operationalization) quite different forms of behaviour like "delivering an electroshock, telling a lie, upsetting some cards, breaking a machine, taking money from someone, cheating on an exam..." (FREEDMAN, 1970, p.158).

Compensatory behaviour is one of three (WALSTER, BERSCHIED, & WALSTER, 1973, 1976) or four (WALSTER, BERSCHIED, & WALSTER, 1978) main topics within the framework of equity theory. Here it is conceptualized as one alternative for an individual to terminate inequity and to restore equity of a social relationship. An individual who recognizes inequity will at the same time - following equity propositions - experience an inner state of distress. This is an unpleasant feeling and should be eliminated in a most economical manner. So the individual is motivated to do something, to choose out of several alternatives either to restore psychological or actual equity. Compensation is seen as one form of behaviour to restore actual equity.

In the literature (including equity and neighboring conceptualizations like guilt, dissonance, belief in justice) there is found the very fundamental statement that

"harming another violates a normal individual's ethical principles and conflicts with self-expectations" (WALSTER et al., 1976, p.8),

"a harm-doer experiences distress after harm-doing" (BAR-TAL, 1976, p.133), or "some internal feeling common to any situation in which there has been transgression" (FREEDMAN, 1970, p.158),

and as a conclusion from several experimental studies, e.g., BERSCHEID & WALSTER, 1967, BERSCHEID, WALSTER, & BARCLAY, 1969, BROCK & BECKER, 1966, CARLSMITH & GROSS, 1969, FREEDMAN, WALLINGTON, & BLESS, 1967, WALSTER & PRESTHOLDT, 1966, WALSTER, WALSTER, ABRAHAMS, & BROWN, 1966, there is

a "fact that harm-doers often do voluntarily compensate their victims" (WALSTER, WALSTER, & BERSCHEID, 1978, p.25).

As equity theorists postulate, the harm-doer, in consequence of his harm-doing act, feels this unpleasant state of distress because of inequity by being overbenefited as compared with his victim (or because of guilt if interpreted within the FREEDMAN assumptions). So the harm-doer tries to eliminate this unpleasant state, and very often, he chooses compensatory acts to restore actual equity. As an alternative, he can restore psychological equity by justification of his harm-doing act. Within equity theory, compensation and justification are, in sum, the two distinct and incompatible categories of equity restoring behaviour after harm-doing, the harm-doer can decide between (see WALSTER et al., 1978, p.34, conclusion I). Whether the harm-doer will choose compensation or justification depends upon his/her subjective evaluations concerning adequacy and costs of the different equity-restoring techniques which are available (see WALSTER et al., 1978, p.36, proposition IV, corollary 1, and proposition I, corollary 2).

Before accepting such a general statement like "a harm-doer experiences distress after harm-doing" it should be - as far as we think - quite reasonable to ask whether that is really the case so generally. It would be quite useful, moreover, to think about conditons that - on the contrary - do not

let the harm-doer feel so uncomfortable. Besides that, it seems interesting, if such conditions do exist, to think about possible reasons for equity theorists not to take them into account.

In a broader context of research on aggressive interactions, concerned with those conditions which during an interaction-sequence of harm-doing bring an individual

- a) to continue the interaction in an anti-social (aggressive) manner
- b) to terminate it, or
- c) to compensate the harm previously inflicted to the victim

the present study was designed only to focus conditions influencing the possibility last mentioned. In this context of research on aggressive interactions, obviously all forms of harm-doing are the central topic of concern. And although identical operationalizations of harm-doing in experiments on aggressive behaviour and compensatory behaviour has been used (e.g., the identical BUSS-like teacher-learner-paradigm with applications of shocks or subtracting money; see, e.g., MUMMENDEY in press for more details) in the context of aggression research there is rather no idea of any harm-doer feeling distressed or uncomfortable in some way because of having harmed some-one. The references of both research topics, compensatory behaviour after harm-doing, and harm-doing itself (anti-social behaviour) seem to be drawn out of two distinct populations of references. So this very general statement seeing every person in distress after having committed a harm to someone, possibly could be due to a relatively narrow field of view on the spectrum of human anti-social behaviour. In the same direction points BAR-TAL criticizing the lack of concern with the nature of social context and form of harm-doing in experimental work on compensation (1976, p 145 f.).

If compensation is considered as one special course of an anti-social interaction-process, one crucial condition for a harm-doer not to feel uncomfortable after harm-doing can be deduced of (more or less) recent studies on human aggressive behaviour: the perception of social legitimacy

of the critical harm-doing act in sense of normative legitimacy (MUMMENDEY 1980, in press, RULE & NESDALE 1976, TEDESCHI et al. 1974, TEDESCHI & LINDSKOLD 1976, DA GLORIA & DE RIDDER 1977, 1979). If a special harm-doing act is defined (by the actor) as serving certain prosocial values, as situational-normative adequate, neither actors nor observers, perhaps even not the victims themselves (provided they are able to share the actors definition) will develop this sort of feeling seen as supposition for the tendency to compensate after harm-doing. By continuing this consideration it is assumed that there will be a relevant influence on the amount of compensation tendency after harm-doing, dependent upon the actor's evaluation of the critical act as normatively adequate in sense of a situational relevant social norm or not. An individual, however, may be prevented from recognizing the anti-social feature of his/her harm-doing act (at least as far as the aversive consequences for the victim are considered) and by that be prevented from recognizing the violation of - if that really do exist - the very general and vague norm not to hurt or harm other persons; this may happen by different "means":

1. An individual, having harmed someone, may believe to support certain (important) social values by doing this. This person will not feel distress but rather success, at least, no urge to compensate.
2. An individual, having shown a certain harm-doing towards another person - while not at all in confidence of serving "higher social values" - may have been consistent with or deviate of his/her personal standard or norm of adequacy of harming others in a certain situation. An individual, having not evaluated his/her harm-doing as violation of personal norm, will feel less inclined to correct his/her behaviour in sense of compensation (or his/her interpretation of the situation in sense of justification) than an individual evaluating the same-harm doing as negative deviation of personal standard.
3. Additional to the individual's attention to different personal standards in sense of normative adequacy, a further relevant aspect can be seen in the subjective awareness of having the possibility of choice between behavioural alternatives or having none. According to DIENER (1977, 1979) or DUVAL et al. (1979), e.g., besides other aspects, choice can be seen as one major factor of the concept of self-consciousness attached to behaviour or self-focussed behaviour. This, at the same time, agrees with another major critic on experimental research on compensatory behaviour, pointed out by BAR-TAL (1976, p.145)

without any reference to a certain theoretical background, however. Harm-doing out of an individual choice between behavioural alternatives will be expected to attach the harm-doer more to this/her personal standard than harm-doing out of coercion by another person (i.e., the experimenter).

The present experiment was designed to test the following hypotheses:

1. After having done harm to someone, a person will show less compensation in the case of social legitimacy of that harm-doing (SL) than in the case of personal legitimacy (PL).
2. After having done harm to someone, a person will show less compensation in the case of conformity with his/her personal standard of adequacy (CPS) than in the case of awareness of negative deviation of that personal standard of adequacy (DPS).
3. The expected differences of compensation will be more pronounced, each in condition of choice (C) compared with conditions of no choice (NC).

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 88 female (18-30 years old) pupils and students from Münster, students not studying psychology, education, or social sciences. This exclusion was made because of rather general negative stereotypes towards experimental psychology as part of that subcultural belief system. Ss were paid with DM 10,00 for their participation in the experiment. They were randomly assigned to one of the eight treatment conditions with 11 subjects for each.

Experimental Design

In a 2x2x2 independent-measure design (a) social legitimacy vs. personal legitimacy (SL vs. PL), (b) conformity with personal standard vs. negative deviation of personal standard (CP vs. DP), and (c) choice of harm-doing alternatives vs. no choice (C vs. NC) were factorially varied.

Procedure

The experiment was introduced as being concerned with the effect of negative or aversive feedback on the modification of individual

behaviour in a typical everyday situation, e.g., in road traffic. Subjects had to play a DEUTSCH & KRAUSS-like trucking game against an (also female) confederate (for details of that procedure see SCHMIDT-MUMMENDEY, 1972; SCHMIDT & SCHMIDT-MUMMENDEY, 1974; SCHMIDT et al. 1976a,b; for a short summary see MUMMENDEY, 1978). By drawing lots the real subject had to begin the series. Her task was to influence the other one to give way so that she could win the game. The means of influencing were either sending electric shocks of more or less intensity and duration, or subtracting amounts of money corresponding to intensity and duration of button pressed, at maximum the whole sum paid for participating in the experiment (10 DM). (For detailed instruction see SCHMIDT et al., 1976b.)

There are general problems to establish socially sanctioned forms of behaviour in the laboratory, e.g., anti-social forms like harm-doing. One very often used procedure is the BUSS-BERKOWITZ paradigm a modification of which was used in the present experiment. There are some important advantages of that paradigm for the experimental analysis of anti-social (e.g., aggressive) behaviour establishing duration and intensity or number of shocks (or other aversive stimuli) as a (dependent) variable (see MUMMENDEY, in press). In the present context of prosocial compensatory behaviour, however, there may be a disadvantage of establishing harm-doing as a variable which then could interfere with the critical dependent variable "compensation". So in most experiments harm-doing as antecedens of compensation is established as a totally fixed prescribed reaction with no individual range for subjects at all. In the present experiment we took the risk of establishing the harm-doing act in a slightly more natural fashion with individually varying intensity and duration of harm-doing. In the case of any systematic influence of that variable on the dependent variable statistical corrections would have to be applied. As shown later, there is no systematic relation between harm-doing and the dependent variable, so consideration of that additional variable could be neglected.

In the choice condition subjects were told before doing harm to the confederate that they could decide between two forms of negative feedback to their partner, (1) subtracting money from the 10 DM she would get for participation like the subject herself by pressing one certain row of buttons, or (2) applying more or less intense and enduring electroshocks by pressing another row of buttons at the desk. Ss were demanded to decide between these possibilities at the beginning and not to change the form chosen in the later course of interaction. In the

no-choice condition Ss got only the normal instruction for subtraction of money (see SCHMIDT et al., 1976b) without having the possibility to choose between different forms of harm-doing.

After having run seven trials (with standardized reactions of the confederate who blocked 1, 0, 2, 2, 4, 4, 4 times before giving way) the subject was told by the experimenter, "The experiment is finished now. But tell me, it is a quite personal interest of mine, how much money did you want to take off, how much had been adequate to take off?" After having got the information by the subject,

- in the "Conformity with personal standard" condition the experimenter said "Yes, that is rather exactly the sum you really took off", and he told her an amount of money differing about half a Mark from that amount mentioned by the subject before

- in the "Negative deviation of personal standard" condition the experimenter said, "Oh dear, you did exceed this sum remarkably. You took off considerably more."

After that - in a manner of quasi explaining the aim of the experiment - the experimenter gave the following informations:

In the Social legitimacy (SL) condition he said, "As you know the present experiment was concerned with the following question: What is the most appropriate and effective way to get a person showing a certain form of behaviour. In the course of that experimental task there will arise interpersonal situations which require a certain form of behaviour for the benefit of an optimal solution of the task. Such situations are wellknown also from everyday experiences, e.g., from road traffic situations. Our concern with this experiment is to study with large samples of persons how constructive behaviour in such situations may be promoted by different forms of aversive feedback. A large number of results of large samples of persons enables us to find the form and sequence of feedback which is the most effective one to solve this kind of task. Your sequence of feedbacks you just showed will be included in that large number of data. By the way, if you are interested, first preliminary results show already that this kind of aversive feedback seems to be quite successful."

By avoiding any discussion of normative adequacy of the behaviour in question by referring to a positively evaluated large group behaviour, this version of quasi-explanation aimed at establishing an interpretation of her harm-doing behaviour as normatively adequate in the sense of a larger social consensus concerning that special interpersonal context.

In the Personal legitimacy (PL) condition the quasi-explanation of the experimental aims focussed individual differences in deciding how to cope with the given kind of social conflict-situation: "As you know, the present experiment was concerned with the following question: How do persons make their way to be as much successful as possible in situations of interpersonal conflict as you know them from every day experiences, e.g., from road traffic situations. To succeed in this interaction, you had the possibility to give aversive feedback to your partner if she didn't give way. Our concern with this experiment is to study individuals - that is you in the present case - how they decide to use this aversive feedback in the course of those interpersonal interaction sequences to reach their own individual goals. We are concerned with these individual decisions in such social situations. By the way, if you are interested, first preliminary results show already a very impressive diversity of this behaviour shown by different individuals in the identical situation."

Dependent measure

After these explanations the experimenter announced some final questions concerning the whole experiment; but before going to take the questionnaire from another room he asked the subject to look at a paper he pretended to have got from the (confederate) partner where she asked for subjects needed for a seminar-experiment who could participate without being paid, for at minimum one till maximum twenty trials, a quarter of an hour each. The real subject had to note the number of trials she was willing to participate and to write down her address and telephone number so that the partner (confederate) would be able to appoint a date. Dependant measure was then the number of time-units the subjects were willing to participate at the partner's own experiment.

After that the subjects answered some questions about their own behaviour, the behaviour of the confederate, and their hypotheses concerning the whole experiment.

Results

None of all 88 subjects had any suspicion or hypothesis about the experiment aiming at conditions of compensatory behaviour. Nearly all persons had expectations concerning the procedure of harm-doing, e.g. that assertiveness or social competence in a conflict situation had been in question. Since there had not been designed any control group for no-choice condition coercing the use of electric shock assuming that there would not be so many persons to choose this alternative (the assumption proved to be realistic), three subjects had to be omitted because of having chosen the "wrong" alternative of harm-doing, i.e. electric shock in the choice condition. To get equal frequencies for each condition further seven subjects which had not answered completely the final questionnaire were excluded. So 80 subjects remained for statistical analysis with 10 for each condition.

There were no differences in the amount of harm-doing between the 8 experimental groups ($F_{(7;72)} = 1,28$). The correlation between amount of harm-doing and amount of compensatory behaviour in the total sample was $r = -.10$.

All results of ANOVA testing effects on compensatory behaviour as dependent measures are shown in Table 1.

According to our first hypothesis there is a significant main effect of the factor "Social Legitimacy vs. Personal Legitimacy" of harm-doing: Subjects showed significantly less compensatory behaviour under SL-condition than under PL-condition. The second and third hypotheses were not confirmed, at least not in that simple way. There is no significant main effect of "Conformity With Personal Standard (CPS) vs. Negative Deviation of Personal Standard (DPS)", but there is a significant interaction effect between factors CPS/DPS and C/NC ("Choice vs. No Choice") (see Figure 1). Thus the results are opposite to expectation of

<u>Source</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
<u>Social vs. Personal Legitimacy (A)</u>	127.52	1	127.52	8.81**
<u>Conformity with vs. Deviation from Personal Standard (B)</u>	27.62	1	27.62	1.91
<u>Choice vs. No Choice (C)</u>	1.02	1	1.02	--
A x B	17.10	1	17.10	1.18
A x C	0.60	1	0.60	--
B x C	143.10	1	143.10	9.88**
A x B x C	12.03	1	12.03	--
Error	1042.90	72	14.48	
Total	1371.89	79		

** p < 0.01

Table 1:
Analysis of Variance of Compensatory Behaviour of 80 Female Subjects

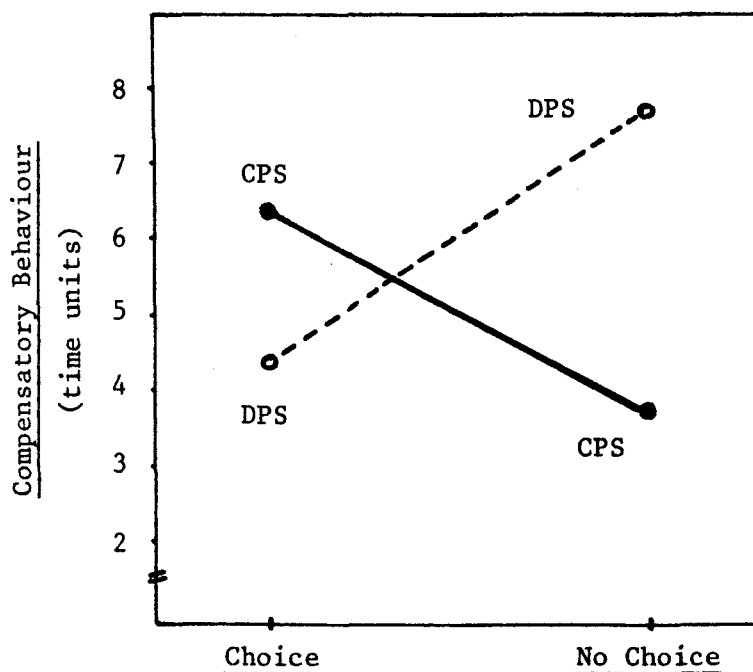


Figure 1:
Interaction Effects of Factors "Conformity with vs. Deviation from Personal Standard" (CPS/DPS) and "Choice vs. No Choice" on Compensatory Behaviour

the third hypothesis. Only in the no-choice condition there is a significant effect of factor CPS/DPS confirming the second hypothesis: If there is no alternative possibility of form of harm-doing, subjects compensate their victims less when the amount of harm-doing conforms with their personal standard than when they are aware that the amount of harm doing exceeded their personal standard of adequacy ($\bar{x}_{\text{CPS/NC}} = 3,85$; $s = 3,01$; $\bar{x}_{\text{DPS/NC}} = 7,70$; $s = 4,30$; $t_{(38)} = 3,20$; $p < 0.01$). In the condition of choice between alternative forms of harm-doing there is no effect of the conformity-with/deviation-of personal standard factor ($\bar{x}_{\text{CPS/C}} = 6,30$; $s = 4,20$; $\bar{x}_{\text{DPS/C}} = 4,80$; $s = 4.00$; $t_{(38)} = 1.15$; n.s.).

Discussion

The postulated "fact" that harm-doers often voluntarily compensate their victims because of feeling distressed after harm-doing can be made more precise by considering the context of legitimacy in which the critical harm-doing act has been shown. When embedded in a context of "social legitimacy", when associated with interpretation hints for a larger social consensus this harm-doing being of positive social value, the identical act of harm-doing - identical at least in sense of the aversive consequences for the victim - is followed by a lower tendency to compensate as compared with the condition when embedded in a context of "personal legitimacy". In this case no global social consensus about positive value and appropriateness of harm-doing is provided (although the general value whether positive or negative is not discussed), moreover the personal individual evaluation of situational-normative adequacy is focussed. There is also an effect of awareness of negative deviation of a personal standard vs. conformity with personal standard with a lower tendency to compensate in the second condition; this, however, is only the case when having no choice between alternatives of harm-doing. In the case of choice there is no difference in the amount of compensation after harm-doing, either consistent or inconsistent with personal standard. This is just opposite to the expectation of the third hypothesis.

In terms of equity theory the effect of social vs. personal legitimacy of harm-doing on compensation may be interpreted as a kind of justification effect, although in the framework of that theory justification as well as compensation are individual strategies to restore equity after the act of harm-doing has been done. Justification and compensation are not processes influencing the context and characteristics of the harm-doing act itself. In a broader sense of justification, however, the present effect of social legitimacy could be interpreted as an effect of additional justifying informations provided from outside for the individual looking for some justifying arguments. Formulations of equity theory are so wide and rather unspecific that they can easily be used for post-hoc evidences of a wide range of vaguely related phenomena as MIKULA pointed out recently (1980).

There are much more difficulties for equity theory to describe and interpret the further results of the present study. WALSTER, BERSCHIED, & WALSTER (1976, p.8) predict that "when the normal individual violates his own standards, he experiences self-concept distress" (my emphasis). They see "compelling evidence ... to support the contention that individuals do feel intense distress after injuring another." So there is (at least implicitly) the assumption that injuring another person (or doing harm to him/her) will be - at least in the case of the "normal individual" - a violation of the individual standard. This actually is consistent with results from the No-Choice condition: DPS subjects compensate more than CPS subjects. But provided that under conditions of choice of alternative forms of behaviour (as compared to having no choice) the individual's awareness of personal standard either being violated or not violated will be much more pronounced (following, e.g., DIENER, 1977, 1979, or DUVAL et al., 1979), there had to be expected a compensation-augmenting effect in the Choice/Deviation of Standard condition compared with the Choice/Conformity with Standard condition. This did not occur, there was no difference of compensation at all.

Interpretations within a framework proposed by UTNE & KIDD (1980) modifying and extending equity-postulates by some fundamental assumptions of attribution theory do not fit the data

either: Supposed that the attribution of (personal) responsibility (of the harm-doing act) will be crucial for the development of distress and compensation tendencies the relevant suppositions, i.e. "intentionality" and "control" are established in the CPS condition (as compared to the DPS condition) with all subjects having done their harm exactly to that extent they intended to do. Moreover, "intentionality" and "control" should have been intensified in the Choice condition. So the lack of any difference between these conditions can hardly be interpreted in that framework. Under conditions of no choice, the direction of effect of the CPS vs. DPS treatment is even opposite to the assumptions proposed by UTNE & KIDD.

Instead of attempting to interpret compensatory behaviour in terms of equity theory or related concepts, an interpretation of the present results concerning conditions of compensatory behavior within a concept of social-normative adequacy of interpersonal behaviour is proposed as follows:

Compensatory behaviour is one possible kind of continuing a course of antisocial interaction (besides antisocial continuation, escalation, and termination). Whether that kind of continuation will be chosen depends upon (a) a person's individual interpretation and evaluation of his/her previous harm-doing, either as situational-normative adequate, or not, (b) the amount of subjective certainty of that interpretation and evaluation; the interpretation provides the direction, the certainty provides the intensity of expected effects on further behavior.

It is assumed that, if an act (of harm-doing) is evaluated as situational-normative adequate, the more certain and unequivocal that evaluation, the less compensatory behaviour will be shown. The situational relevant cues for subjective evaluation of situational-normative adequacy or inadequacy determinate the direction of decision, i.e., whether compensation or another form of continuation occurs; the more certain and unequivocal they are, the more pronounced this behaviour will be shown.

This interpretation fits the main effect found as well as as the interaction effect. Besides that, it is consistent with a lot of hints from aggression research stressing the criterion of normative deviation/adequacy as a crucial one for evaluation of and reaction to antisocial acts (see, e.g., DA GLORIA & DE RIDDER, 1977, 1979). First there is a very clear, unquestioned positively valued form of harm-doing in the Social-Legitimacy condition (positive evaluation, high certainty), as compared with the Personal-Legitimacy condition, where the evaluation of harm-doing is up to the subject (neutral evaluation, low certainty). So the greater amount of compensation in the PL condition is consistent with this assumption. The condition CPS vs. DPS may be seen as representing cues for adequacy vs. inadequacy evaluation of harm-doing; the condition Choice vs. No-Choice may affect the subjective certainty of this interpretation and evaluation: In the case of choice, the evaluation of one's behaviour may be less certain because of possible considerations whether having chosen the optimal or relatively better or right alternative, or not. In the case of no choice there does not rise any question about the kind of behaviour just because comparisons between several alternatives were not available. So the NC condition will intensify, the C condition will attenuate the effect of adequacy vs. inadequacy of harm-doing on compensation. Thus the following expectations may be (post hoc) derived from these considerations:

Experimental groups will differ in compensatory behaviour as follows:

DPS/NC > CPS/NC

DPS/NC > DPS/C

CPS/C > CPS/NC

DPS/C = CPS/C.

As shown in Table 2, the results support these expectations.

To sum up the discussion of the present results the following should be concluded:

<u>Experimental condition</u>	<u>Evaluation of harm-doing</u>	<u>Certainty of evaluation</u>	<u>Effect on compensatory behaviour</u>	<u>Experimental Results:</u>	
				\bar{x}	SD
DPS / NC	inadequate	high	++	7.7	4.3
CPS / NC	adequate	high	--	3.9	3.0
					DPS/NC > CPS/NC t=3.20 p < 0.01
DPS / NC	inadequate	high	++	7.7	4.3
DPS / C	inadequate	low	+--	4.8	4.0
					DPS/NC > DPS/C t=2.16 p < 0.05
CPS / C	adequate	low	-+	6.3	4.2
CPS / NC	adequate	high	--	3.9	3.0
					CPS/C > CPS/NC t=2.07 p < 0.05
DPS / C	inadequate	low	+--	4.8	4.0
CPS / C	adequate	low	-+	6.3	4.2
					DPS/C = CPS/C t=1.15 n.s.

Table 2:
Results of group comparisons due to combinations of harm-doing evaluation and evaluation certainty (for abbreviations, see text)

Provided that each of our subjects can be considered as that "normal individual" WALSTER et al. (1976, 1978) are referring to, at least these persons did not feel that assumed "intense distress after injuring another" (p.8), or better, they were not inclined so homogenously to compensate their victims. There were, moreover, remarkable differences between quite normal individuals, dependent upon the kind of context of social and personal legitimacy of their (formal identical) harm-doing. Equity-theoretical formulations only deal with varying inner-individual activities after the harm-doing act is performed, apparently taking for granted the influence of a general ubiquitous norm of "not to injure other persons", thus reflecting individual or interpersonal behaviour as being regulated "inside an unstructured and homogenous social environment" (TAJFEL, 1979, p.189). It is a pitfall of equity-theorists (though they are not original with that) to reduce variations (and uniformities) of behaviour (here the reaction to harm-doing) to inner-personal psychic activities. The equity-theoretical concept of "distortion of reality" as inner-psychic equity-restoring activity (see WALSTER et al., 1978, p.36 ff.) apparently presupposes an objective, uniform, ubiquitous reality which can be taken by the individual either correctly or "distorted".

But, as we think, an individual does not need to compensate after harm-doing and not to "distort reality" either. Just that social reality provides itself a large variety of "justifications" (which can be taken as accurate, and not at all as a result of individual reality distortion). The quoted (social) reality provides social valid conditions for considering an identical act of injuring another person as either social desirable and adequate or illegitimate, as either completely consistent with or severely violating a personal standard or normatively adequate social behavior.

Theoretical conceptualizations which include the divergencies of judged adequacy or deviation of social and personal standards (at least if concerned with kinds of behaviour which is defined by its relation to such standards, i.e. anti-social or prosocial behaviour) and the conditions for those divergencies provided by

the functioning of a certain social (i.e. historical and cultural) environment may be of more descriptive and predictive value than conceptualizations which focus on postulated modes of innerpsychic regulations within a rather axiomatical general social context.

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