

**A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
PERSON PERCEPTION**

by James T. Laird, Jr.

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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

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INTRODUCTION

A considerable quantity of scientific and phenomenological research has been conducted in the field of perception since the Frankfurt trio, Wertheimer, Koffka, and Kohler, began their experiments in 1912. Their perceptual studies revealed, among other things, a correspondence between the distal stimuli and the mental representation in spite of distortions of the proximal stimuli. Explanations to account for the correspondence are varied but, in the main, have led to assertions that perception is reliable and seeks to adequately represent the environment. These studies have dealt primarily with the perception of inanimate objects.

Studies in social perception by which an individual forms an impression of another have been few. Theoretical and hypothetical assertions about person perception have been much more frequent than controlled experiments which could provide confirmation. Two theoretical orientations provided the perspective for this thesis. It has been claimed that the perception of the natural world is accurate and that social perception likewise seeks to adequately represent the situation. Another orientation is that perception seeks harmony as opposed to accuracy and, consequently, there is a tendency to perceive a person as all good or all

bad, all positive or all negative. In keeping with this is the further assertion that impressions tend to be positive.

This thesis undertakes a phenomenological study of the formation of impressions of another in order to offer evidence in support of one theoretical orientation or the other. By having subjects perceive a contemporary peer who has positive and negative behavioral characteristics, the impression will be either undifferentiated (positive or negative) or differentiated (positive and negative). The ratios of undifferentiated to differentiated impressions, and positive to negative, permit conclusions concerning trends in person perception.

The first portion of this thesis reviews the literature pertaining to experimental and theoretical findings about forming impressions of others. The discussion of the findings leads to two research hypotheses.

The second chapter treats the difficulties encountered in employing precise measurement in the social field. The reasons for a departure from the traditional scientific method provide the basis for choosing phenomenology as the experimental method. From this follows the development of stimuli designed to elicit impressions.

The experimental design presents the sample, procedure and tools of the experiment. The classification of

the responses as Differentiated, Positive Undifferentiated, or Negative Undifferentiated is then described. The method of analyzing the data obtained from the classification of impressions is discussed in terms of four null hypotheses designed to provide tests of the two research hypotheses.

The fourth chapter presents the quantitative results of the experiment in terms of acceptance or rejection of the statistical hypotheses. The chapter that follows links the results to the research hypotheses. A qualitative analysis of the impressions advances explanations to account for the findings.

The final chapter presents the conclusions, and in the appendix are provided some examples of the responses obtained from the subjects.

CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the scientific literature pertaining to specific aspects of the formation of impressions of others. Predominate are two theoretical assertions concerning tendencies in impression formation. The existing experimental evidence in support of these assertions is presented. The inadequacy of the evidence leads to the formulation of two research hypotheses.

1. The Theoretical Assertions

Fritz Heider wrote that assimilation occurs in perception¹. Assimilation, for him, meant homogeneity or unity in one's concept of another. Assimilation in reference to sentiment is to have an over-all like or dislike of a person². He pointed out that when several sentiments directed toward the same stimulus object are distinguished they are of like sign. The explanation offered was that if some sentiments are positive and some are negative the disharmony creates tension. Then forces arise which annul the tension

1 Fritz Heider, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations, New York, Wiley, 1958, p. 132.

2 Ibid, p. 132.

and leads to an assimilation of the negative by the positive, or vice versa, so that a balanced state occurs³.

In regard to perception the situation is similar. Perception is operationally defined for the purposes of this thesis as primarily a cognitive, rather than affective or conative, activity by which facts from the environment enter the life space initiated by excitation of any of the sensory receptors. The impression, which is the organized distal stimuli, one forms of another is usually all positive or all negative according to Heider.

To summarize these remarks, we might say that if several parts, or traits, or aspects, of a person are considered, the tendency exists to see them all as positive, or all as negative⁴.

This tendency to perceive, or "to see", various traits of another as all positive or all negative means that the impression is undifferentiated. It does not mean necessarily that only certain traits from the perception were admitted into consciousness but rather in the organization of the distal stimuli harmony was achieved by excluding certain traits. It follows from this that to form a differentiated impression; i.e., to perceive a person as having good as well as bad points is rare even though the stimuli consisted of both positive and negative traits.

³ Ibid, p. 207.

⁴ Ibid, p. 183.

To conceive of a person as having positive and negative traits requires a more sophisticated point of view; it requires a differentiation of the representation of the person into subparts that are of unlike value⁵.

Heider pointed out that sentiment and perception are interdependent and one can influence the other⁶. However, the major theoretical assertion is the tendency to form impressions which are undifferentiated when the stimulus object manifests positive and negative qualities. That this can be a cognitive tendency is indicated by citation of evidence that homogeneous units form under non-stressful conditions involving impersonal stimuli⁷.

Heider supported his assertion by reference to examples in literature which illustrate the tendency to overestimate the homogeneity of the perceived person⁸. However, the examples concerned the correspondence of external appearance to internal characteristics; e.g., the beautiful person is considered good. The experimental evidence to which Heider did on occasion refer, did not involve an individual forming an impression of another so it was not relevant. The only other evidence uncovered in the literature challenges the claim that there is a tendency, in the

5 Ibid, p. 183.

6 Ibid, p. 201.

7 Ibid, p. 182.

8 Ibid, p. 183.

perception of another, for undifferentiated impressions to form. Solomon E. Asch reported that a differentiating trait contained in a series of otherwise identical traits does not lead to an undiscriminating plus or minus direction⁹. Mench and Wishner repeated Asch's experiment with the same results and conclusions¹⁰.

Heider did not state explicitly whether positive undifferentiated impressions form more frequently than negative ones. However, Nemiah Jordan, a student of Heider's conducted an experiment to test the hypothesis that positive relations are pleasant and negative relations are unpleasant, and that the former are more potent. This experiment involved relations between two people and an impersonal entity rather than the forming of an impression of another. He found that a positive relation of liking is pleasant¹¹.....
..... negative relations are unpleasant¹².

9 Solomon E. Asch, Social Psychology, New York, Prentice Hall, 1952, p. 210.

10 Ivan N. Mench and Julius Wishner, "Asch on 'Forming Impressions of Personality': Further Evidence", Journal of Personality, Vol. 16, No. 2, December 1947, p. 191.

11 Nemiah Jordan, "Behavioral Forces that are a Function of Attitudes and Cognitive Organisation", Human Relations, Vol. 6, No. 3, September 1953, p. 282.

12 Ibid, p. 284.

Cartwright and Harary believed that this finding by Jordan supported their observation that individuals have a tendency to form positive cognitive units in situations involving relations between people.

It is interesting to note that Jordan finds positive relations to be experienced as more pleasant than negative ones. This finding may be interpreted as indicating a tendency toward 'positivity' over and above the tendency toward balance¹³.

The only other experimental evidence pertaining to trends in valence of undifferentiated impressions is reported by Dorothy Dinnerstein. Her experiment was an inquiry into how contradictory material is organized by subjects. Her finding was that negative data were questioned but that positive data were accepted at face value.

This made it clear that negative remarks are per se more likely to be challenged; i.e., less likely to lead to a definite impression, than positive ones¹⁴.

The experimental evidence for the assertion that there is a trend toward positivity is questionable. Jordan's finding is not appropriate evidence for such a statement. The most one can conclude from his study is that

13 Dorwin Cartwright and Frank Harary, "Structural Balance: A Generalization of Heider's Theory", The Psychological Review, Vol. 63, No. 5, September 1956, p. 291-292.

14 Dorothy Dinnerstein, A Study of the Development of Certain Cognitive Structures, unpublished Doctor's thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science of the New York School for Social Research, New York, 1951, p. 206.

positive relations are preferred but not that cognition organizes in a particular direction. He believed that the influence of a pleasant sensation was secondary to the appropriateness of the cognitive unit. He cautioned that "propriety is not synonymous with pleasure"¹⁵ and that the principle governing cognition is appropriateness^{16,17}. In other words, while one may prefer a particular condition, it is not the same as meaning that this preference actually dominates cognition. Nor is Dinnerstein's finding very convincing because her experiment was so designed as to fit Lushin's criticism of artificiality¹⁸.

Hence, from the literature emerge two major theoretical assertions unsupported in fact. One is that there is a tendency to form undifferentiated impressions when the stimulus object manifests positive and negative traits and, secondly, that these undifferentiated impressions have a tendency to be positive.

¹⁵ Nemiah Jordan, "Behavioral Forces that are a Function of Attitudes and Cognitive Organization", p. 282.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 282.

¹⁷ Appropriateness is not used in the sense of a point to point correspondence between the cognitive trace structure and the proximal stimuli but as a general correspondence between the cognitive unit and the distal stimuli.

¹⁸ Abraham S. Lushins, "Forming Impressions of Personality: A Critique", Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 43, No. 3, July 1948, p. 319.

2. Need for Experimental Evidence.

Heider's and Cartwright's assertions raise questions of theory and of fact. The question of theory is the claim that there is a tendency to form undifferentiated impressions which seems to imply that cognition tends toward harmonious units as do sentiments. This would mean that cognitive units seek harmony as opposed to a true grasp of the situation which is quite contrary to Wertheimer's claim that the principle of Pragnanz obtains in the social sphere¹⁹. This means that there is a tendency to get a decisive structuring of the field with true orientation.

A distinction between sentiment and cognition is required in order to view the issue in proper perspective. Cognition is largely ideational and sentiment is largely affective²⁰. Contact with an object may lead to feelings of liking and disliking. This sentiment is not composed of positive and negative units as experienced; i.e., there is no evidence that one can like and dislike the same object at the same time. There may be vacillation between liking and disliking which is ambivalence. That harmony in affect

¹⁹ Max Wertheimer, Productive Thinking, New York, Harper, 1945, p. 191.

²⁰ Martin Scheerer, "Personality Functioning and Cognitive Psychology", Journal of Personality, Vol. 22, No. 1, September 1953, 1- 16 p.

is desirable is attested to by the fact that ambivalence is a condition psychotherapists try to treat.

It is another matter to claim that in cognition there is a tendency to have a harmonious unit. Cognition is not bound by the same limitations as affect and it is desirable for a cognitive unit to be in correspondence with the stimulus object in order to have an accurate mental representation. This may at times require the differentiation of the representation into subparts that are of unlike value. If perception tends toward harmony or balance instead of being appropriate to the distal stimuli then it would be difficult to have an accurate impression of others. To go a step further, if the claim is valid that there is a tendency to form positive impressions then interaction with others could be inappropriate.

The question is not whether impressions are appropriate to the stimulus object but rather how often are they appropriate? That selective perception occurs and that strong emotions can dominate cognition are not questioned. What is in question is whether there is a tendency toward selective perception in a whole population. Specifically, the main issue is whether there is a tendency in a population to form undifferentiated impressions when the stimulus object has positive and negative traits and whether there is a tendency toward positive impressions.

The question of fact is raised because evidence concerning the ratio of differentiated to undifferentiated impressions when the stimulus object has positive and negative traits is lacking. The ratio may be specific to certain populations because factors of age, sex, intelligence, and education may play a role. Hence, in order to resolve the question whether there is a trend toward cognitive distortion in a particular direction the contents of naive impressions in a population had to be elicited and classified as Differentiated, or Undifferentiated; Positive or Negative.

3. Summary and Basic Hypotheses

A review of the literature pertaining to forming impressions of others revealed two major assertions: There is a tendency to form an undifferentiated impression of another when he manifests positive and negative traits; and there is a trend toward positivity. These two assertions have gone unchallenged even though they imply that cognition in this area does not yield a true grasp of the situation. No experimental evidence was found in the literature pertaining to the contents of naive impressions formed of another in a population. Only by revealing the contents of impressions can trends be elicited which would indicate whether in forming an impression of another there is a tendency for undifferentiated and positive cognitive units.

In order to resolve the questions raised by the assertions two research hypotheses were formulated: 1. There is a tendency in the population to form undifferentiated impressions when the individual manifests positive and negative traits; 2. There is a tendency in the population to form positive impressions of an individual when he manifests positive and negative traits.

CHAPTER II

TECHNIQUE OF THE INVESTIGATION

In order to investigate the nature of impressions a technique was chosen to compensate for the lack of proven measuring instruments. The first section of this chapter shows how the phenomenological approach is required by the nature of the problem as stated in the research hypotheses. The second section presents experimental evidence which provided the foundation for designing stimulus material for eliciting positive and negative impressions. The third section describes the development of the tools of the investigation.

1. The Phenomenological Technique

This research topic aimed at a study of the content of impressions which formed when one received information about another who has positive and negative behavioral characteristics. For this was required a stimulus object which suggested positive and negative traits, and which would elicit impressions which could then be classified as Undifferentiated or Differentiated, Positive or Negative.

The idiomatic nature of the responses and the lack of proven instruments to elicit and categorize them presented difficulties in treating the material in the traditional

manner. The traditional experimental approach to matters psychological is well described by Wolfgang Kohler.

In American psychology, it is rightly regarded as a virtue if a man feels great respect for method and for caution. But if this virtue becomes too strong it may bring forth a spirit of skepticism and thus prevent new work. Too many young psychologists, it seems to me, either work only against something done by others or merely vary slightly what others have done before; in other words, preoccupation with method may tend to limit the range of our research. We are, of course, after clear evidence, but not in all parts of psychology can evidence immediately be clear. In some, we cannot yet use our most exact methods. Where this happens, we hesitate to proceed. Experimentalists in particular tend to avoid work on new materials resistant to approved methods and to the immediate application of perfectly clear concepts¹.

The traditional scientific method presupposes several conditions among them: a consistent response, a reliable measuring instrument, and an objective scoring method in order to obtain accuracy and precision. One reason the nature of impressions has remained hypothetical is because the above conditions could not be satisfied. Objective quantification in this realm is practically precluded and qualitative assessment is only as reliable as those who assess the responses. However, it was considered that a departure from the traditional method was justified in order to widen the range of research in the area of human experience.

¹ Wolfgang Kohler, "Gestalt Psychology Today", The American Psychologist, Vol. 14, No. 12, December 1959, p. 730.

Human experience in the phenomenological sense cannot yet be treated with our most reliable methods; and, when dealing with it, we may be forced to form new concepts which, at first, will often be a bit vague².

In order to elicit impressions the phenomenological method was chosen. This method was used to obtain from the subjects naive and full descriptions of their immediate experience. The naivete' is important because interpretation by the subject is to be avoided. Whereas introspection depends upon a sophisticated analysis of experience by the subject, phenomenology depends upon a report by the subject of his direct experience. The immediacy of the experience is also important because phenomenology is not reflection but a report of what is happening at the moment.

By the phenomenological method, as applied to psychology, is meant the systematic attempt to observe and describe in all its essential characteristics the world of phenomena as it is presented to us. It involves the adoption of what might be called disciplined naivete. It requires the deliberate suspension of all implicit and explicit assumptions; e.g., as to eliciting stimulus or underlying mechanisms, which might bias our observation. The phenomenological question is simply, "What is there?" without regard to Why, Whence, or Wherefore³.

The method reveals "what is there" at the moment. Whether a repetition of the stimulus would provoke a similar response is determined by the precision of the measuring

² Ibid, p. 731.

³ Robert B. MacLeod, "The Phenomenological Approach to Social Psychology", The Psychological Review, Vol. 54, No. 4, July 1947, p. 193-194.

instrument. It is claimed that phenomenology lacks precision. For example, if a subject claims that five hours passed when according to the clock only five minutes elapsed, the experimentalist points to the distortion of subjective experience as well as that on the following day the subject may claim that only two hours passes. Hence, there is a question of reliability.

The experimentalist misses the point with such a criticism. The phenomenologist is interested in the idiomatic experience of the five hours. He is not "looking for" a consistent response but rather he wants the contents of the response so that it can be analyzed and reveal what occurred in the subject's life-space at that moment. Likewise with impressions. What was wanted was a report of the impression so that it could be categorized on the basis of its contents.

A further objection to phenomenology is that of self-reporting. It is claimed that self-reports may be inaccurate because the individual has defense mechanisms which cause him to misperceive. Hence, he cannot give a true report. One way to cope with this problem was to use the logical technique of agreement. When large numbers of subjects all report a similar impression then this concensus is an actual psychological experience, whether or not there was

rationalization or misperception. The report of the experience comes first and the evaluation later.

The evaluation of the impressions permitted classification into discrete categories. When a subject described the stimulus object in positive or negative terms then it was classified as positive or negative. Impressions are actually continuous variables but they can be treated discretely as when describing a color experience. For example, if a subject reports that a color appears yellow that is sufficient. To record the wave-length would not improve upon the real psychological experience.

As experienced, the colour 'yellow', or the colour 'green', is something ultimate, something incapable of further psychological reduction. By saddling the colour 'yellow' with a definite wave-length I in no way arrive at a better understanding of the colour experience 'yellow'. It is as foolish to attempt to explain colour-experience in terms of wave-length as it is to deny the wave-length theory of colour because the perception of wave-length does not accompany colour-experience⁴.

2. Suggestions for Design

The decision to use the phenomenological method to elicit and categorize impressions led to a study of prior experiments to provide a foundation for the experimental

⁴ Ernst Kretschmer, A Text-Book of Medical Psychology, translated from the tenth German edition by W. B. Strauss, London, The Hogarth Press, 1952, p. 33.

procedure. It was necessary to know: 1. do impressions form by reading about some characteristics of a person? 2. do brief descriptions lead to an impression of an entire person? 3. do contradictory statements about a person form into a unified impression? 4. are the impressions that form "real"?

S. E. Asch showed that when he read aloud several trait names the subjects formed an impression of an entire person.

There is an attempt to form an impression of the entire person. The subject can see the person only as a unit; he cannot form an impression of one-half or of one-quarter of the person. This is the case even when the factual basis is meager; the impression then strives to become complete, reach out toward other compatible qualities. The subject seeks to reach the core of the person through the trait or traits⁵.

Alice Kastenbaum, in a study similar to Asch's, found that when subjects hear contradictory statements about the same person an impression still forms.

The recognition of potentially contradictory themes did not necessarily prevent the formation of integrated impressions. (...) Traits can be experienced as disturbing and inconsistent with one another with consequent searching for a more sensible means of unification⁶.

⁵ S.E. Asch, "Forming Impressions of Personality", Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 14, No. 3, July 1946, p. 284.

⁶ Alice Kastenbaum, An Experimental Study of the Formation of Impressions of Personality, unpublished Master's thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science of the New School for Social Research, New York, 1951, p. 87-88.

Harold H. Kelley showed that written traits presented to subjects form into impressions that are so real that the subjects acted on the basis of their impression. His subjects upon reading about the traits of an expected lecturer formed an impression that influenced their subsequent direct contact with him and the amount of verbal exchange that took place.

In addition, the differences in first impressions produced by the different expectations were shown to influence the observers' behavior toward the stimulus person. Those observers given the favorable expectation (who, consequently, had a favorable impression of the stimulus person) tended to interact more with him than did those given the unfavorable expectation⁷.

3. Tools of the Investigation

With the knowledge that brief written material organizes into a real impression of an entire person, and that contradictory reports about that person still lead to an impression, it was necessary to construct material that would organize into positive or negative impressions. The material when presented in sequence could then form into differentiated or undifferentiated, positive or negative, impressions.

⁷ Harold H. Kelley, "The Warm-Cold Variable in First Impressions of Persons", Journal of Personality Vol. 18, No. 4, June 1950, p. 493.

Written material was designed so that a positive impression would form after reading one paragraph and a negative impression after reading another. By using written stimuli some control is provided over factors that might favor one paragraph over another. When material is presented audibly then tonal inflection, repetition because some subjects did not hear clearly the first time, and the personal magnetism of the speaker himself, all could have a bearing on favoring one paragraph over the other.

Once it was decided that written material was preferable, various positive and negative paragraphs were constructed and administered to subjects. In each case the paragraphs consisted of two informants discussing an individual. These minor experiments indicated that in order to get the subjects to focus their attention upon the individual, rather than upon the informants, certain precautions were necessary. When the informants blantly mentioned traits the individual possessed, the reaction of the subjects was to judge the informants as "gossips" or as being "petty" rather than to form an impression of the individual.

It was happened upon that if the informants avoided mentioning personality traits and instead mentioned behavioral activities which implied traits, then the subjects quickly drew conclusions from this about the individual. The subjects apparently would accept a statement as evidence

if it was attributed to a naive perception of the informant but would reject statements if they suspected that the informant was passing judgment or drawing his own conclusions. Consequently, by constructing paragraphs that referred to behavioral activities of an individual the subjects accepted both the positive and the negative material as evidence.

The paragraphs eventually chosen to present to the subjects to elicit positive and negative impressions were:

The Positive Paragraph

Bill: "Hi, Jack. How's everything?"

Jack: "O.K. I was just talking to the new student. He loaned me a book. Last night he spoke at the Fellowship Society. He was asked some tough questions but he answered them without getting rattled."

The Negative Paragraph

Jack: "Hi, Bill. How's everything? Have you seen the new student?"

Bill: "I've seen him around but he seldom speaks. He got mad at the coach because he wouldn't let him play center, so he quit the team."

An important consideration in the construction of the positive and negative paragraphs was that both be approximately equal in valence. That is, one paragraph should not be strongly positive and the other weakly negative.

In order to evaluate the valence of each paragraph the judgment of two male professional psychologists and two male psychiatric social workers was used. They were required to read each of the paragraphs and state the degree of favorableness - unfavorableness each implied. To accomplish this the Summated Rating Scale as devised by Likert was used. This scale is reliable and is widely used in rating attitudes⁸. While it was believed sufficient that the impression of the psychological object be rated as simply favorable or unfavorable⁹, it was hoped that a somewhat finer discrimination would be made by adding the class "Very". The scale as presented to the judges was:

Very	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Very
Favorable				Unfavorable

The criterion was that if three of the four judges were in agreement then the P and N paragraphs would be considered comparable in valence. Three of the four judges found the P and the N paragraphs to be Favorable and Unfavorable, respectively. The other judge rated the P paragraph as Very Favorable and the N paragraph as Very Unfavorable.

⁸ Allen L. Edwards, Technique of Attitude Scale Construction, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957, p. 162.

⁹ Ibid, p. 167.

The P and N paragraphs were then administered to two groups of subjects in order to determine whether they also would rate the paragraphs as similar in valence. One hundred male subjects were randomly selected from a junior college in Virginia and were divided into two equal groups. Group A received the P paragraph and Group B received the N paragraph. The instructions were: "Read the following paragraph and write your impression of the new student. Then rate your impression on the scale provided."

The responses to the Summated Rating Scale are illustrated in Table I.- The Ratings by Fifty Subjects of Group A to the P Paragraph and by Fifty Subjects of Group B to the N Paragraph. The ratings indicate that for intensity the two paragraphs are similar. A qualitative analysis of the written reports showed that in every instance when the subjects read the positive or negative description of the new student the impression they wrote and rated was positive or negative, respectively. The Neutral scores came from those who did not form an impression or else said they were reserving judgment.

The Summated Rating Scale could not be used in the major experiment. When reading the single undifferentiated paragraph about the new student the only decision required of the subjects was the degree of favorableness or unfavorableness of their impression. There was no question as to

Table I.-

The Ratings by Fifty Subjects of Group A to the P Paragraph and by Fifty Subjects of Group B to the N Paragraph.

Scale	Group A	Group B
Very Favorable	13	0
Favorable	28	0
Neutral	9	9
Unfavorable	0	27
Very Unfavorable	0	14
	<u>50</u>	<u>50</u>

whether it was one or the other. However, after a subject reads the P and N paragraphs in sequence the decision is no longer so simple. A study of the responses and ratings by twenty-eight subjects revealed other factors influencing the rating.

Foremost is the matter of self-concept. For a subject to reflect on a complex impression, which is a part of his psyche, may encourage him to rate his impression on the basis of how he wishes to perceive himself. Some people like to think they are fair and objective even while reporting a bias. Such subjects rated their impression as neutral even though their written reports were decidedly negative or positive. Others apparently wished to perceive themselves as having a favorable impression even though they wrote a strongly negative report. Hence, the Rating Scale too often gave a rating of something other than the actual impression when used by subjects who had read both paragraphs. Therefore, it was necessary for judges to evaluate the written reports rather than to use a self-scoring device.

An equally important consideration in the construction of the P and N paragraphs was that each should suggest obliquely definite personality traits and approximately the same number. For one paragraph to suggest ten favorable traits and the other to suggest five unfavorable traits

would favor one over the other. Further, the traits suggested by the P paragraph should all be positive and the traits suggested by the N paragraph should all be negative.

Trait elements were selected from the list compiled by Raymond B. Cattell¹⁰ in order to determine whether each paragraph suggested about the same number of definite personality traits. His assumption is that the "surface" of personality is represented by existing symbols and that the English vocabulary supplies the basis for a full description of personality¹¹. From his list of 171 traits and their opposites were selected sixty-seven traits. These traits were chosen because they at least remotely, and some closely, could have been suggested by the paragraphs.

The four judges were given the list of sixty-seven traits¹² and requested to indicate those traits characteristic of the new student. It was decided that when three of the four judges were in agreement then this trait was definitely suggested by the paragraph.

10 Raymond B. Cattell, "The Description of Personality: Basic Traits Resolved into Clusters", Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 38, No. 4, July 1943, p. 493-496.

11 Ibid, p. 486.

12 Appendix 1.

The number of traits chosen by the judges for the P paragraph in which three of the four judges were in agreement was five. The number of traits chosen for the N paragraph in which three of the four judges were in agreement was four. The agreements were close to an all or none proposition. All of the judges selected the following traits for the P paragraph: calm, friendly, interests social, self-confident, and three of the four selected responsive.

For the N paragraph all of the judges selected: short-tempered, hostile, irritable, and three of the four selected impulsive. Inasmuch as these judges did not have opportunity to discuss their choices with one another, the agreements were arrived at independently.

From this the P paragraph suggests a self-confident individual, who is calm, friendly, and responsive to others and one who has social interests. The N paragraph suggests an impulsive individual who is hostile, short-tempered, and irritable.

A trait list could not be presented to the subjects because it would require them to analyze their impressions. As mentioned previously, a naive report is sought and reflection is to be avoided.

A third paragraph was developed for insertion between the P and N paragraphs when the subjects received

the material sequentially. The judges agreed that the paragraph neither adds to nor subtracts from the behavioral characteristics as suggested by the P and N paragraphs.

Neutral (x) Paragraph

Bill: "I know him, too."

Jack: "That's right, we met him at the same time."

Bill: "He rooms at Hadley Hall, doesn't he?"

Jack: "I believe so."

This third paragraph was designed so that no further information would be given about the new student. However, it does point out indirectly that one informant does not know the new student better than the other. Hence, while the x paragraph acts as a buffer between the P and N, or N and P, paragraphs, it does not provide the subjects with an excuse to reject one paragraph for the other on the basis that one informant is better acquainted with the new student.

In summation, in order to elicit and categorize impressions formed by perceiving an individual who has positive and negative traits a departure from the traditional method was required. Phenomenology was the method of choice to elicit naive impressions in order to find out "what is there". Shortcomings of the method were justified on the basis that it is a starting point for widening the range of research in human experience.

Three prior experiments provided precedent and justification for using written paragraphs which would elicit a positive and a negative impression. By presenting a positive and negative paragraph in sequence the subjects would form either a differentiated impression or, a positive or negative undifferentiated impression.

The paragraphs eventually selected consisted of two informants describing a new student who had positive and negative behavioral characteristics. Judges and subjects indicated that the paragraphs were approximately equal in valence and suggest about the same number of definite personality traits. A third paragraph was developed to serve as a buffer between the P and N paragraphs.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

This chapter presents the design of the experiment so that impressions could be elicited and categorized. The first section presents the characteristics of the population and the sample. This is followed by a discussion of the experimental procedure and tools. The methods used in classifying the data are discussed. The final section shows how the data was treated in the light of four statistical hypotheses which would serve as tests of the two research hypotheses.

1. The Sample

The population selected was white, male, college students of West Virginia. This population was chosen so that future experiments could then be conducted on other select populations in which factors of sex, age, and education could be varied.

West Virginia is mountainous, rural, and has few large cities. Higher education in the state is inexpensive because of state sponsored colleges which attracts those of average socio-economic backgrounds. Those above average generally seek education in private universities outside of the state.

The level of intelligence, as above average, was inferred by the knowledge that it is correlated with education¹. The educational factor indicates that the subjects have had training in the comprehension of written material as well as in expressing their thoughts in English and in writing. Education is partially a process of training individuals to delay tendencies to jump to conclusions and to first examine evidence in order to develop true cognitive centering. This factor should be present in the population and, presumably, it is what Heider meant by "sophisticated"².

The age level may mean that the population has had relatively little independence and responsibility compared to the adult wage earner supporting a family. In this sense they are immature, yet their emotions, attitudes and needs may lack the intensity and systematization found in the adult who lives in a socially and economically competitive press. Nor would one expect to find the cynicism and disillusionment sometimes encountered in older populations. This younger population with educational opportunity should be more optimistic and idealistic than an older population.

¹ David Wechsler, The Measurement and Appraisal of Adult Intelligence, Baltimore, Williams and Wilkins, 1958, p. 136.

² Fritz Heider, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations, New York, Wiley, 1958, p. 183.

A random sample of the population was limited by practical considerations. It would have been desirable to sample every college in the state. However, the resources available did not make such a project feasible. Therefore, two colleges were selected which can be considered representative of the population because they are state sponsored, geographically located in the north-central and southern part of the state insuring state wide participation, and, finally, practically all the students were native West Virginians. Both of the colleges were liberal arts, coeducational, and about the same size. Both had the same admission policies and academic requirements.

A random sample was selected from each college by choosing every fifth male registry card at one college and every seventh at the other college. Each group was randomly divided in half. Group C consisted of ninety-two subjects, fifty from one college and forty-two from the other. Group D consisted of ninety-five subjects, fifty from one college and forty-five from the other. Hence, there were a total of 187 subjects randomly selected from two colleges and divided into two groups.

Group C, which was composed of ninety-two subjects, had a mean age of 18.2 with a range from seventeen to twenty-six. Their mean education was 2.4 semesters of college. All were natives of West Virginia with one exception.

Group D, which was composed of ninety-five subjects, had a mean age of 18.5 with a range from seventeen to twenty-three. Their mean education was 2.6 semesters of college. All were from West Virginia with two exceptions.

2. Experimental Procedure

The experiment was designed to elicit and categorize impressions so that it could be determined whether there was a tendency in the population to form undifferentiated impressions when the individual manifested positive and negative traits, and whether there was a tendency to form positive impressions.

The method employed was to present to one group of subjects a positive paragraph in which one informant is talking in favorable terms about a new student. The subjects could then form positive impressions. Then a neutral paragraph was presented to reveal that both informants were equally acquainted with the new student and, also, to serve as a buffer between paragraphs. A negative paragraph was then presented in which the second informant replies in such a way as to show that the new student has unfavorable characteristics. This was the positive- neutral- negative (PN_N) sequence presented to Group C. A second group of subjects received the reverse sequence, negative- neutral- positive (N_NP) which was Group D.

Group C, PKN sequence, was presented the stimulus materials in a class-room in the evening. Three different sessions were required to accommodate all the subjects. The subjects at each session were given identical instructions and materials. When the subjects had gathered in the class-room they were told: "Material will be handed out to you. Please follow the written instructions. Do not leave until you are dismissed." The following P paragraph was then distributed.

P Paragraph

Suppose you overheard the following conversation between two students:

Bill: "Hi, Jack. How's everything?"

Jack: "O.K. I was just talking to the new student. He loaned me a book. Last night he spoke at the Fellowship Society. He was asked some tough questions but he answered them without getting rattled."

Write in the space below your impression of the new student.

When the subjects had completed writing their impression of the new student, the neutral paragraph was handed out to them.

X Paragraph

Here is still further conversation. Do you still have the same impression? If it is the same, say so. If it is not, write your new impression.

Bill: "I know him, too."

Jack: "That's right, we met him at the same time."

Bill: "He rooms at Hadley Hall, doesn't he?"

Jack: "I believe so."

When the subjects had completed writing their impression, or indicating whether their impression had changed, the Negative paragraph was handed out.

N Paragraph

Here is still further conversation.

Bill: "I've seen him around but he seldom speaks. He got mad at the coach because he wouldn't let him play center, so he quit the team."

Now write your complete impression of the new student.

Group D was presented the stimulus materials in reverse sequence. There were four sessions conducted in class rooms in the evening. The verbal instructions were identical to those given Group C. The written instructions and materials for Group D were:

N Paragraph

Suppose you overheard the following conversation between two students:

Jack: "Hi, Bill. How's everything? Have you seen the new student?"

Bill: "I've seen him around but he seldom speaks. He got mad at the coach because he wouldn't let him play center, so he quit the team."

Write on the space below your impression of the new student.

When the subjects had completed writing their impression of the new student, the neutral paragraph was handed out to them.

X Paragraph

Here is still further conversation. Do you still have the same impression? If it is the same, say so. If not write your new impression.

Jack: "I know him, too."
Bill: "That's right. We met him at the same time."
Jack: "He rooms at Hadley Hall, doesn't he?"
Bill: "I believe so."

When the subjects had completed writing their impression, or indicating whether their impression had changed, the Negative paragraph was handed out.

N Paragraph

Here is still further conversation.

Jack: "I was just talking to him. He loaned me a book. Last night he spoke at the Fellowship Society. He was asked a lot of tough questions, but he answered them without getting rattled.

Now write your complete impression of the new student.

3. Classification of the Data

The responses to the P paragraph of the PxN sequence by the ninety-two subjects of Group C and the responses to the N paragraph of the NxP sequence by the ninety-five subjects of Group D were screened to eliminate those which were not considered indicative of an impression. The criteria by which it was presumed that an impression had not formed were: any response of less than a complete sentence, qualification by the subject that he was reserving judgment, or complete rejection by the subject. An impression was presumed to have formed if the response consisted of at least a complete sentence describing the new student.

From Group C ten responses were eliminated and 82 were accepted as valid impressions. From Group D ten responses were eliminated and 85 were accepted as valid impressions. Hence, there were a total of 167 valid impressions.

It was not expected that all the subjects would form impressions any more than one would expect one hundred percent cooperation in any large scale social study. That eighty-nine percent of the subjects responded with coherent, unified impressions is similar to Kastenbaum's finding³. That eleven percent did not form impressions does not imply a category but rather it reduces the size of the sample. Only coherent responses were categorized and tabulated as is done in public opinion polling or in interviewing.

In every instance, subjects who formed initial impressions also formed final impressions. A subject after forming a positive first impression to the P paragraph of the PxN sequence had three alternatives for his final impression. 1. He could form a differentiated impression by synthesizing the positive and negative information. 2. He could form a positive undifferentiated impression by retaining his first impression and rejecting the negative

³ Alice Kastenbaum, An Experimental Study of the Formation of Impressions of Personality, unpublished Master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research, New York, 1951, p. 87.

information. 3. He could form a negative undifferentiated impression by accepting the negative information and rejecting his first positive impression.

A subject after forming a negative first impression to the N paragraph of the NxP sequence had three alternatives for his final impression. 1. He could form a differentiated impression by synthesizing the positive and negative information. 2. He could form a negative undifferentiated impression by retaining his first impression and rejecting the positive information. 3. He could form a positive undifferentiated impression by accepting the positive information and rejecting his first negative impression.

Consequently, for both Groups C and D, final impressions can be categorized as Differentiated, Undifferentiated Negative or Undifferentiated Positive.

A clinical psychologist and a psychiatric social worker were selected to act as judges because of their training and experience in evaluating material clinically. They were given the 167 protocols with instructions to classify the responses to the first and last paragraphs of each sequence as: Undifferentiated Positive, Undifferentiated Negative or Differentiated. They studied the data together with the following instructions to guide them.

Here are a series of impressions. The impressions are written reports about a new student. Your task is to read each and determine whether or not an

impression formed. If an impression is expressed then you are to classify it as Undifferentiated Positive, Undifferentiated Negative or Differentiated.

For an impression to be undifferentiated positive it must be such as to describe the student in all positive terms.

For an impression to be undifferentiated negative it must be such as to describe the student in all negative terms.

For an impression to be differentiated it should contain a mixture of positive and negative terms in describing the student. The ratio of positive to negative is not important so long as there is at least one negative to one or more positive terms, or vice versa.

The judges were in agreement with one another in classifying the responses to the first paragraph of each sequence. In classifying the final responses there were a total of eight disagreements which were worked out in conference with the author.

4. Analysis of the Data.

a) First hypothesis. - The data obtained from Group C, which received the PXM sequence, was treated in accordance with the following assumptions in regard to determining whether there was a tendency to form undifferentiated impressions.

There were three categories of final impressions: Positive Undifferentiated, Negative Undifferentiated, and Differentiated. The Positive and Negative categories were

combined into one category "Undifferentiated" by ignoring the sign of each category. The justification for this is that the question to be answered was concerned with the ratio of undifferentiated to differentiated impressions without regard to sign. Hence, there were two categories: Undifferentiated and Differentiated.

If there is a tendency to form undifferentiated impressions when the stimulus object has positive and negative characteristics then the expectation would be for the population to have more undifferentiated than differentiated impressions. The null hypothesis applied was: There is no difference between the categories Undifferentiated and Differentiated final impressions when the first impression was positive. Rejection of this hypothesis would indicate that one category had significantly more impressions than the other.

The following assumptions were made to test this hypothesis. The ratio in the population between undifferentiated and differentiated impressions is 50:50. The observed frequency in the sample was compared to the expected frequency by means of chi square. A chi square value significant at the .05 level would indicate that the difference between the observed frequency in the sample and those expected could occur by chance five per cent of the time or less. Therefore, the presumption would be that the sample

was not drawn from a population with a parameter equal to the theoretical ratio and the hypothesis would be rejected that there is no difference between categories. Hence, this would mean that the frequencies in one category occurred significantly more often than the frequencies in the other.

b) Second hypothesis. - The data obtained from Group D, NXP sequence, was treated according to the above mentioned assumptions. The null hypothesis applied was: There is no difference between the categories undifferentiated and Differentiated when a first impression was negative. Application of chi square was made on the assumption that if there is no difference in the population then the ratio is expected to be 50:50. A departure of the observed from the expected frequencies significant at the .05 level is sufficient to reject the hypothesis.

Rejection of both of the above hypotheses would imply that the samples were not drawn from populations in which undifferentiated and differentiated impressions are evenly divided and one or the other occurs more frequently when the first impression was positive or negative.

c) Third hypothesis. - Group C was compared to Group D to determine whether there was a difference between them for proportions of undifferentiated and differentiated impressions. The two groups were independent samples which

had received the same stimulus materials but in differing sequences. If the temporal sequence had an effect then there should be a difference between the two groups so that one or the other would have more undifferentiated impressions. If no difference is found then it is presumed that the temporal sequence did not affect the proportions between the two groups. The null hypothesis is: There is no difference between the population proportions of Groups C and D for the categories of Undifferentiated and Differentiated final impressions.

The observed difference between Groups C and D for proportions of Undifferentiated and Differentiated impressions divided by the standard error of the difference for independent proportions to obtain a critical ratio was the statistic used. An obtained difference significant at the .05 level is necessary to reject the hypothesis. The formula used was:

$$GR = \frac{D}{\sum p_i \sqrt{p_0 q_0 \left(\frac{1}{N_1} + \frac{1}{N_2} \right)}} = \frac{p_1 - p_2}{\sum p_i \sqrt{p_0 q_0 \left(\frac{1}{N_1} + \frac{1}{N_2} \right)}}$$

d) Fourth hypothesis. - The data from Group C were compared to that of Group D to determine whether there was a trend toward forming positive impressions.

Group C received the P&N sequence and the final impressions were positive undifferentiated, negative

undifferentiated, and differentiated. The first impressions to the P paragraph were always positive and after the introduction of the N paragraph those final impressions that remained positive represented no change. Hence, the categories of final impressions for Group C were: No change, Negative Undifferentiated, and Differentiated.

Group D received the NXF sequence and the final impressions were positive undifferentiated, negative undifferentiated, and differentiated. The first impressions to the N paragraph were always negative and after the introduction of the P paragraph those final impressions that remained negative represented no change. Hence, the categories of final impressions for Group C were: No Change, Positive Undifferentiated, and Differentiated.

The null hypothesis applied was: There is no significant difference between Groups C and D for categories of final impressions. The difference between the groups for each category was measured by the critical ratio of the difference between proportions divided by the standard error of the difference for independent proportions. A difference significant at the .05 level was considered to indicate a true difference.

If the hypothesis is rejected and the difference is located between the categories No Change then in order for there to be a trend toward positivity Group C would have to

have the greater proportion of impressions. This would indicate that for Group C fewer positive first impressions changed to negative or differentiated than did negative first impressions change to positive or differentiated in Group D.

If there is no trend toward positivity then Group D would have as many, or more, impressions as Group C in the category No Change. This would indicate that as many subjects in Group D retained negative impressions as the subjects in Group C retained positive impressions.

The category No Change represented those final impressions that were the same as in the first impression. The other categories of final impressions represented impressions that had changed. For Group C this would be from Positive Undifferentiated to Negative Undifferentiated and Differentiated. For Group D this would be from Negative Undifferentiated to Positive Undifferentiated and Differentiated. By comparing the Negative Undifferentiated of Group C to the Positive Undifferentiated of Group D there would be an indication of trends in impressions that had changed. If there is no significant difference between the categories then there would be no indication of a trend toward positive or negative impressions.

If no significant difference is found between the categories Differentiated then there would be no basis for

asserting that when a first impression is positive or negative that it leads to more differentiated impressions.

This chapter discussed the design of the experiment beginning with a description of the population and the college sample. Then the experimental procedure and tools were described so that three categories of impressions could be elicited: Positive Undifferentiated, Negative Undifferentiated, and Differentiated. Four null hypotheses were formulated in order to determine whether undifferentiated impressions are more frequent than differentiated, and whether there is a trend toward positivity. The method of analysis discussed the application of chi square and the standard error of the difference for independent proportions to the data.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS

This chapter presents the quantitative results of the experiment in terms of the four null hypotheses. The initial and final impressions were categorized as Positive Undifferentiated, Negative Undifferentiated, and Differentiated. The statistical computations of these categories then tested the hypotheses for the ratios of Undifferentiated to Differentiated within groups, and the differences between groups. Further computations were made to determine whether positive or negative impressions have a greater tendency to change.

a) Categorization of impressions. - The judges categorized the first impressions formed by Group C in response to the PxN sequence as eighty-two Positive Undifferentiated first impressions. Then the final impressions, which formed after the N paragraph was introduced to those who had initial positive impressions, were categorized as: 8 Positive Undifferentiated, 44 Negative Undifferentiated, and 30 Differentiated.

For Group D, which received the NxF sequence, the initial responses to the N paragraph were eighty-five Negative Undifferentiated impressions. The final impressions, which formed after the P paragraph was introduced to those

who had formed initial negative impressions, were categorised as: 27 Negative Undifferentiated, 36 Positive Undifferentiated, and 22 Differentiated.

The distribution of the impressions formed by Groups C and D are illustrated in Table II.- First and Final Impressions in Response to the PxN and NxP Paragraphs. For Group C the Positive Undifferentiated category was the first impression. For Group D the Negative Undifferentiated category was the first impression.

For both Groups C and D whenever a first impression formed it was followed by a final impression. In no case did a final impression fail to form because of the introduction of the paragraph that contained contrary material. Also, the initial responses to the P paragraph were always positive and the initial responses to the N paragraph were always negative.

b) First hypothesis. - The Positive and Negative Undifferentiated categories of Group C, PxN sequence, were combined and they summed to a total of 52 Undifferentiated final impressions compared to 30 Differentiated. A comparison of the frequencies of Undifferentiated to Differentiated is illustrated in Table III.- Calculation by Chi Square that Undifferentiated and Differentiated Final Impressions are Evenly Divided for the PxN Sequence. The Chi Square is 5.9 and P is greater than .02. The probability that the

Table II. -

First and Final Impressions in Response to the
PxN and NxP Paragraphs.

Categories	Impressions			
	First P Par.	Group C	Group D	
		Final PxN Seq.	First N Par.	Final NxP Seq.
Positive Undifferentiated	82	8		36
Negative Undifferentiated		44	85	27
Differentiated		30		22
Totals		82		85

Table III. -

Calculation by Chi Square that Undifferentiated and Differentiated Final Impressions are Evenly Divided for the FXN Sequence.

Frequencies	Final Impressions	
	Differentiated	Undifferentiated
Observed	30	52
Expected	41	41
$o - e$	-11	11
$o - e^2$	121	121
$\frac{o - e^2}{e}$	2.951	2.951

$$\chi^2 = 5.902$$

$$P < .02$$

observed frequencies would depart from the expected to such an extent if the population were evenly divided is less than two percent. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected that there is no difference between the categories Undifferentiated and Differentiated final impressions when the first impression was positive. The category Undifferentiated contains significantly more final impressions than the category Differentiated.

c) Second hypothesis. - The Positive and Negative Undifferentiated categories of Group D, NXP sequence, were combined and they summed to a total of 63 Undifferentiated final impressions compared to 22 Differentiated. A comparison of the frequencies Undifferentiated to Differentiated is illustrated in Table IV. - Calculation by Chi Square that Undifferentiated and Differentiated Final Impressions are Evenly Divided for the NXP Sequence. The chi square is 19.77 and P is greater than .001. The probability is less than one chance in a thousand that the population is evenly divided. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected that there is no difference between the categories Undifferentiated and Differentiated final impressions when the first impression was negative. The category Undifferentiated contains significantly more final impressions than the category Differentiated.

Table IV. -

Calculation by Chi Square that Undifferentiated and Differentiated Final Impressions are Evenly Divided For NXP Sequence.

Frequencies	Final Impressions	
	Differentiated	Undifferentiated
Observed	22	63
Expected	42.5	42.5
$o - e$	20.5	20.5
$o - e^2$	420.25	420.25
$\frac{o - e^2}{e}$	9.888	9.888
<hr/>		
$\chi^2 =$	19.776	
$P <$.001	

d) Third hypothesis. - Group C, which received the PkN sequence, was compared to Group D, which received the PkP sequence, for categories Differentiated and Undifferentiated final impressions. For Group C, thirty-seven percent of the responses were categorized as Differentiated and 63 percent were Undifferentiated. For Group D, twenty-six percent were categorized as Differentiated and 74 percent were Undifferentiated. Table V.- The Difference Between Groups C and D for Proportions of Undifferentiated and Differentiated Final Impressions indicates that the critical ratio is 1.49 and the probability is that such a difference between the two groups could occur by chance thirteen percent, or more, of the time. Hence, no significant difference between the groups was found in spite of the differing sequences. There was not sufficient basis for rejecting the hypothesis that there is no difference between the groups for Undifferentiated and Differentiated final impressions.

e) Fourth hypothesis. - The tabulation of final impressions formed by Group C, PkN sequence, indicated that there were eighty-two initial positive impressions of which 74 changed to differentiated or negative undifferentiated upon introduction of the N paragraph. Hence, eight of the positive first impressions, or 10 percent, did not change. The final classifications were: 8 No Change, 44 Negative Undifferentiated, and 30 Differentiated.

Table V. -

The Difference Between Groups C and D for Proportions of
Undifferentiated and Differentiated
Final Impressions.

	Final Impressions		C R	P
	Differentiated	Undifferentiated		
Group C	.366	.634		
Group D	.259	.741	1.49	> .13

For Group D, NxP sequence, there were eighty-five initial negative impressions of which 58 changed to differentiated or positive undifferentiated upon introduction of the P paragraph. Hence, twenty-seven of the negative first impressions, or 32 percent, did not change. The final classifications were: 27 No Change, 36 Positive Undifferentiated, and 22 Differentiated.

A comparison of the groups is illustrated in Table VI.- The Difference Between Groups C and D for Categories of Final Impressions. For the category No Change the critical ratio is 3.49 which indicates that such a difference could occur less than one percent of the time by chance. This means that Group C had more positive impressions change and that Group D had less negative impressions change. Hence, significantly more of the positive impressions changed to negative or differentiated than did the negative impressions become positive or differentiated.

A comparison between the two groups for undifferentiated impressions indicates that the critical ratio is 1.46 and does not reach the prescribed .05 level of significance. Hence, no significant difference was found between Group C and D for Undifferentiated categories. This means that for impressions that had changed Group C did not have significantly more Negative Undifferentiated than Positive Undifferentiated in Group D.

Table VI.-
The Difference Between Groups C and D
For Categories of Final Impressions.

Final Impressions	Group C	Group D	C R	P
No Change	8	27	3.49	< .01
Undifferentiated	44	36	1.46	> .14
Differentiated	30	22	1.49	> .13
	<u>82</u>	<u>85</u>		

A comparison of the categories Differentiated between groups indicates that the critical ratio did not reach the required level of significance necessary to indicate that there was a true difference. Hence, one group did not have more Differentiated impressions than the other.

The hypothesis was rejected that there is no difference between the two groups for categories of final impressions. The significant difference between the two groups was in the category No Change. The differences between the other categories can be attributed to chance variation.

In summation, the quantitative results of the experiment indicated that the first two null hypotheses were rejected that there is no difference between the categories Differentiated and Undifferentiated when a first impression was positive or negative. Undifferentiated final impressions occurred significantly more often than Differentiated for both groups.

The third hypothesis that there is no significant difference between groups for Differentiated and Undifferentiated final impressions could not be rejected. One group did not have significantly more impressions in its categories than the other even though the temporal sequence of the two groups differed.

The fourth hypothesis was rejected that there is no difference between groups for categories of final impressions. The difference between the groups was in the category No Change indicating that more of the positive impressions changed than the negative. No significant difference was found between the groups when comparing Positive to Negative Undifferentiated impressions that had changed, and no difference was found for categories Differentiated.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This chapter interprets the results of the experiment in relation to the two research hypotheses. The first section relates the rejection of the first two null hypotheses to the alternate hypothesis that there is a tendency to form undifferentiated impressions. Then the conditions under which the experiment was conducted and the significance of the sample lead to a generalization of the results. The second section relates the rejection of the fourth null hypothesis to the second research hypothesis concerning tendencies to form positive impressions. The last section is a qualitative analysis of some of the impressions pointing out new factors that may contribute to the forming of undifferentiated and differentiated impressions. Examples are provided to illustrate those factors it is believed contribute to impression formation.

1. First Research Hypothesis

This phenomenological study of impressions involved an experiment of one of the many situations in which impressions may form. The situation involved reading positive and negative paragraphs about a person as could occur in reading

about another through reports or the mass media of publications. The subjects lacked prior knowledge about the person and the informants so that there was no expectation or set. The reader was presented information that was not threatening, or emotionally charged, and no crucial issues were involved. Hence, the conditions and stimulus materials involved an intellectual exercise.

The distal stimuli contained positive and negative attributes of a contemporary peer and the subjects began as impartial perceivers. An objective, or true, impression should be a synthesis of both the positive and negative attributes to correspond to the distal stimuli. The correspondence does not have to be one to one but some of the positive and negative attributes should be contained in the impression. That is what would be expected on the basis of Wertheimer's and Allport's theories that there is a tendency not to be structurally blind¹ and for cognition to get at the truth of a situation². However, one would expect the impressions to correspond to one paragraph or the other according to Heider's theory. For him mental representations

¹ Max Wertheimer, Productive Thinking, New York, Harper's, 1945, p. 199.

² Gordon W. Allport, Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality, New Haven, Yale, 1955, p. 46.

seek balance and harmony as opposed to having sub-parts of unlike value³.

The rejection of the first null hypothesis that there is no difference between the categories Undifferentiated and Differentiated final impressions when a first impression was positive indicated that undifferentiated impressions are significantly more frequent. When an initial impression formed to the P paragraph it was always positive. However, upon introduction of the N paragraph only thirty-seven percent of the subjects formed final impressions that took cognizance of the new student's positive and negative attributes.

The results of the NxP sequence were similar and the second null hypothesis was rejected that there is no difference between the categories Undifferentiated and Differentiated final impressions when a first impression was negative. Only twenty-six percent formed differentiated impressions.

Hence, upon reading a positive or a negative report and then material of opposite sign the final impressions were undifferentiated significantly more often than differentiated. Therefore, the first research hypothesis is accepted that there is a tendency in the population to form

³ Fritz Heider, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations, New York, Wiley, 1958, p. 183.

undifferentiated impressions when the individual manifests positive and negative traits.

The failure to reject the third null hypothesis that there is no difference between the two groups for frequencies of undifferentiated and differentiated impressions implies that temporal sequence is not an important factor. That is, regardless of whether the first impression was positive or negative there was a trend toward undifferentiated impressions. It should be noted, however, that this ignored the valence of the category Undifferentiated which contained both positive and negative impressions. As will be shown later, temporal sequence has significance for changing a first impression.

Consideration of conditions under which the experiment was performed and the sample have significance for generalizing to other situations and populations. If there is a tendency for undifferentiated impressions to form under conditions in which there is minimum stress and emotional involvement, then it could be expected that the tendency would be more pronounced in stressful situations or when emotions are strongly involved. In reading about issues in political campaigns and the individuals associated with them, international debates about personalities, or issues in the community involving personalities, one could expect a

tendency for extremes in which the individual is perceived favorably or unfavorably, good or bad.

Secondly, the sample was above average in education and intelligence, and their training involved discriminating perception. Yet, in forming an impression the tendency was to ignore much of the evidence. In other populations with less education and intelligence one might expect a greater tendency for gross impressions. Common experience with rumors and gossip illustrate this tendency.

Hence, Heider's claim is supported by the finding that undifferentiated impressions are more frequent than differentiated impressions among a college population. The fact that about one-third of the impressions were differentiated indicates that impressions can be divided into subparts of unlike value and that a portion of the population tends toward true orientation. However, on the basis of the findings it cannot be claimed that such a condition is as frequent as the tendency to be structurally blind when forming an impression of another who manifests both positive and negative traits. Consequently, Wertheimer's principle of Pragnanz, supported by findings in the physical realm, cannot be transposed to the social realm as he believed⁴.

⁴ Max Wertheimer, Productive Thinking, p. 199.

2. Second Research Hypothesis

There have been assertions that there is a trend toward positivity when perceiving another^{5,6}. In the experiment just described there were more undifferentiated than differentiated impressions. However, the category Undifferentiated included both positive and negative impressions. By comparing Group C to Group D for final impressions classified as positive, negative, and differentiated it was determined that the two groups differed significantly for the category No Change in which Group C had fewer positive impressions and Group D had more negative impressions. This meant that for Group C more positive impressions became negative and differentiated, and that Group D had less negative impressions change to positive or differentiated. A trend toward positivity would have been indicated by just the opposite. Consequently, the finding that significantly more subjects retained a negative than a positive impression

⁵ Dorwin Cartwright and Frank Harary, "Structural Balance: A Generalization of Heider's Theory", The Psychological Review, Vol. 63, No. 5, September 1956, p. 291 - 292.

⁶ Dorothy Dinnerstein, A Study of the Development of Certain Cognitive Structures, unpublished Doctor's thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science of the New School for Social Research, New York, 1951, p. 206.

does not permit acceptance of the second research hypothesis that there is a tendency to form positive impressions of an individual when he manifests positive and negative traits.

The conditions under which the experiment was conducted did not put more pressure on the subjects to take a negative than a positive stand. The positive and negative paragraphs they read were equivalent in valence. The age and education of the subjects were such as to expect them to be more optimistic than pessimistic. Consequently, if there is no trend toward positivity in this group then one would not expect it in any other population under less favorable conditions.

This raises the question whether there was a trend toward negativity. A comparison of the impressions that had changed, which for Group C were the negative impressions and for Group D were the positive impressions, indicated that there was no significant difference between them. If there had been a trend toward negativity then there would have been more negative final impression that had changed than positive. Such was not the case. Nor were there significantly more differentiated impressions for either group.

The results, strictly interpreted, indicate that positive impressions are more prone to change than negative ones. The temporal sequence did not affect impressions that changed; i.e., as many impressions became positive and

differentiated as negative and differentiated. However, a first impression that is negative builds into a more rigid cognitive structure than one that is positive.

The finding that there is no trend toward positivity fails to support those assertions by Cartwright and Dinnerstein. The indication is that negative impressions are more difficult to change than positive ones, and that positive impressions are less potent contrary to Jordan's finding⁷, degrees of pleasantness notwithstanding.

3. Factors Which Contributed to Impression Formation.

Phenomenology attempts to reveal "what is there" and the findings lend support to Heider's assertion that there is a tendency to form undifferentiated impressions. However, a quantitative analysis cannot indicate the factors responsible for the occurrence of the phenomena. Heider claimed that undifferentiated impressions formed because cognition seeks balance through a process of assimilation⁸, but this is not definitive and only begs the question. Asch was more explicit when he stated that a general

⁷ Nemiah Jordan, "Behavioral Forces that are a Function of Attitudes and Cognitive Organization", Human Relations, Vol. 6, No. 3, September 1953, p. 275.

⁸ Fritz Heider, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations, p. 207.

impression is derived by selecting a particular trait, or traits, as representative of the entire individual and then incorporating other compatible traits into the initial impression⁹.

This raises the question whether there is a singular explanation adequate to explain the formation of impressions. Certainly, Asch's explanation does not indicate why certain traits are perceived as central nor why some subjects formed differentiated impressions. Nor does Heider's explanation of balance explain why negative balanced impressions are more difficult to change than positive ones.

The impressions were qualitatively analyzed in an attempt to broaden the scope of explanations. Certain features of the responses suggested that the subjects had varying reasons for retaining an impression, changing an impression, and for forming differentiated impressions. Some factors that appeared responsible were identified as:

a) Identification. - One subject identified with the new student on the grounds that they both shared a common interest in religion. He rejected the negative evidence by being critical of the circumstances of the N paragraph and, also, by raising a question as to the negative informant's character.

⁹ S.E. Asch, "Forming Impressions of Personality", Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 41, No. 3, July 1946, p. 284.

Response to the P Paragraph.

The new student sounds interesting to me. He seems intelligent, self-composed and sure of himself. He is evidently religious but there is no real indication that he is an extreme religious zealot. If he was a zealot my attitude toward him would be shaded by this creating a negative attitude. Since, he sounds intelligent his views on religion would interest me greatly.

Final Response to the FXN Sequence.

This student interests me even more now. From the first conversation he is intelligent and self-composed. Here he is intelligent enough not to spout off all the time. The quality of the team and the circumstances surrounding the conflict between the student and the coach might definitely color my attitude.

Of course, it might be considered that this statement comes from Bill, and Bill's character would probably have to be taken into consideration.

In the above case the retention of the positive impression appears to be based on the fact that the subject had empathy for one who shared his interest in religion. However, he drew an unwarranted conclusion. The new student was not identified as being interested in religion any more than was the Fellowship Society or topic of the talk described as involving religion. While there is identification, it occurred because the subject in reading the first paragraph seized hastily upon one implied trait with which he identified, over-generalized to other personality traits, arrived at a conclusion and refused to admit contrary evidence. Hence, one way an undifferentiated impression can form and be retained is on the basis of a strong interest

in something and by identifying others in terms of this interest.

b) Spread of effect. - Another factor responsible for forming an impression is when a subject interprets a situation on the basis of its surface aspects which in turn mobilize his defenses. It may be that this subject finds "quitting" a deplorable trait and, consequently, it colored his whole attitude. His failure to examine the circumstances, his rejection of the positive information, and generalization from a negative trait, imply a "spread of effect" after being selectively attentive to one trait.

Response to the P Paragraph.

The new student is sociable, free-hearted, and true to his fellow man. He also seems pretty intelligent.

Final Response to the P₂ Sequence.

My impression of the student entirely changes. He is repulsive, conceited, self-centered, independent and snobbish.

In the above case, the subject focused on one act which he considered was sufficient to portray the student as repulsive. His emotional reaction to this one "repulsive" act spread so that cognitively his impression became entirely negative.

c) Concretism. - The following subject attributes the inconsistency of the reports as involving deception by

the new student. He then builds a negative impression on the basis that he had been deceived.

Response to the P Paragraph.

He seems to be a "nice guy" and one who can handle himself in a situation which requires ability and poise.

Final Response to the PxN Sequence.

This new student seems to be vain, egotistical, and inconsistent and one who takes the idea of a first impression seriously and plans to use this deception to better himself. When this fails, his true self emerges.

The subject is arbitrary in claiming that the N Paragraph reveals the "true self" of the new student. It appears that this subject was reacting to his own uncritical acceptance of the first paragraph and is being just as uncritical in accepting the final paragraph. His failure to abstract the essential traits from each paragraph make him practically stimulus-bound in that when evidence changes he focuses on the fact it changed and attributes it to ulterior motives on the part of the student. This in turn relieves him of the burden of accounting for inconsistencies at a more abstract and impersonal level.

d) Over-generalization. - Some of the subjects formed a final negative conclusion because they focused on a particular trait which they believed was the core of the individual; e.g., egotism, selfishness, self-assertion, self-centeredness, and insincerity. Others formed positive

conclusions because they believed that the central trait was a good quality. The following is an example of the latter.

Response to the P Paragraph

He is considerate of other people and knows how to handle some difficult situations which may occur.

Final Response to the PxN Sequence

This part of the conversation does not substantiate my first impression of the student, however, his quitting the team may have resulted from other reasons. We cannot conclude that the reason given is true. As far as his not speaking perhaps here too there are underlying causes which are not known. Impression- fairly considerate of other people and could be rather popular. My impression is favorable since I am trying to understand the reasons for his acting the way he does.

The forming of undifferentiated impressions seem to involve more than one factor. As was shown, some of these factors are: identification, spread of effect, concretism, and over-generalization. This latter approach, in which one trait is selected as central and other compatible peripheral traits are organized around it, occurred more often than the other factors.

About one-third of the subjects did not form impressions in the above manner. Instead, other forces seemed to be at work. In the following example, the subject selected central traits after reading the first paragraph. Then after reading the contrary evidence he does not reject the positive or the negative traits and build an undifferentiated

impression. Instead he accepts both the positive and negative central traits as being representative of the new student, and considers him as having good and bad points.

Response to the P Paragraph

The new student must be generous, possess leadership ability, and has self confidence. I think he also knows where he is going and knows how to adjust to people and situations in order to reach his goal.

Final Response to the PII Sequence

The first impression still applies, only now I may add that he is also a show off and is used to getting his own way. He thinks it is an honor and asset to the team for him to play.

Summing up, I think he is cocky, intelligent, has leadership ability, is somewhat of a snob, has self-confidence, and not very friendly unless it pays for him to be so.

Somewhat different is the resolution of the contrary paragraphs by the following subject. In this case he finds the new student moody and reserves judgment as to which traits are dominant.

Response to the P Paragraph

From the preceding paragraph I received the following impression: he is friendly, he is sociable, he possesses leadership qualities, he has good qualities of social grace.

Final Response to the PII Sequence

Basic impressions offered in this conversation are quite opposite from those received in the first conversation. He does not appear to be friendly, and social development is lacking. My complete impression of the new student is that he appears to be moody because of qualities he possesses at one time are absent at others. Which

of these social traits is dominant cannot be ascertained from the information provided.

In both of the above examples the subjects display a sense of detachment and a recognition of the new student's varying qualities. This raises the question why do some subjects seize upon one central trait, organize compatible peripheral traits around it, and generalize to an impression that is positive or negative whereas others organized incompatible central traits into an impression that was differentiated?

It may be that the formation of a differentiated impression requires a detachment, or impersonal appraisal, so that a final judgment can be postponed until something is reasoned about the context in which the trait appeared, or until an explanation is arrived at that would permit contrary traits to reside in the same individual. This would require the subject to: tolerate uncertainty about the nature of the stimulus object, possess the ability to tolerate unpleasant traits in another, and have the intelligence to resolve apparent inconsistencies. These suggest that the perceiver should have traits of detachment, reflection, tolerance, inquisitiveness, and intelligence.

Those who formed undifferentiated impressions reacted strongly to particular traits which colored their entire impression. This aspect of selective attention to a particular behavioral characteristic and subsequent strong

reaction suggest that past experience has sensitized them to particular acts which were interpreted as being beneficial or detrimental to their own welfare. This was exemplified by the subject, who after reading the N paragraph, described the new student in negative terms and attributed his behavior as being due to the fact he had been spoiled by his parents. Then upon reading the P paragraph he refused to change his mind. In other words, undifferentiated impressions may stem from a subject's needs, his personality structure, and his intelligence. To put it another way, undifferentiated impressions are a product of conation, affect, learning, and intelligence.

The selection of certain traits as central because of past personal experiences may indicate that unpleasant experiences lead to stronger impressions than pleasant experiences. Negative impressions were more resistant to restructuring than positive ones. It may be that when reading about a benign individual there is an intellectual appreciation whereas reading about an unpleasant person is interpreted as a threat to one's welfare. This recognition may cause one to be more cautious about changing a negative impression. Hence, unpleasant experiences may "stamp in" more effectively than pleasant ones.

All the impressions reported by the subjects varied and no two were homologous. Hence, independent observations

lead to individualistic interpretations. This uniqueness of each impression follows from the explanation that the evaluation of others proceeds on the basis of one's needs, fears, interests, and personality.

When the subjects read only one paragraph the impressions were in correspondence with that paragraph in terms of valence but each impression was unique. The introduction of the contrary paragraph did not seem to motivate the subjects to search for an objective resolution of the problem so much as to the belief that their undifferentiated impression represented the "true" individual. This lack of criticalness in observation implies that objectivity in personal appraisals is infrequent. Further, the lack of agreement as to which traits were central implies that there is a relativity of values when forming an impression of another. That is not to say that there is little agreement which traits are central but rather when one becomes involved then his personal reactions to his own past experience take precedence in determining which traits are central.

The finding that some impressions were differentiated indicates that there are individuals who search for the facts and attempt to be objective. However, this tendency was not as frequent as a personal resolution of the issues.

Practical application of the results suggest that if there is a tendency to perceive a person as favorable or unfavorable because of personal reaction then one should be self-critical of undifferentiated impressions. Also, the knowledge that selecting one trait as representative of an individual may lead to erroneous impressions should impel one to search for more information about the individual and the context before arriving at a conclusion.

Further, if positive impressions are prone to change then a positive first impression may require reinforcement. If negative impressions are difficult to change then one should be self-critical of negative impressions as well as exercising caution so that one will not be created.

In summation, the rejection of the null hypotheses that the population is evenly divided between differentiated and undifferentiated impressions indicated that undifferentiated impressions are more frequent. The first research hypothesis was accepted.

The finding that negative impressions are more resistant to change than positive ones indicated that there is no trend toward positivity and, consequently, the second research hypothesis was not accepted.

A transposition of Wertheimer's principle of Pragnanz to person perception was not supported by this

experiment. Heider's assertion was confirmed but possibly not for the reasons he advanced.

A singular explanation as to the reason why undifferentiated impressions form was not adequate to account for the variety of the responses. Forming undifferentiated impressions appeared to be a function of intelligence and personal reactions based on one's experiences and needs. Differentiated impressions may stem, in part, from a more impersonal appraisal of an individual by an observer who has tolerance for negative traits.

The finding that negative impressions are more resistant to restructuring may stem from unpleasant experiences which had made a strong impression on the subject and he is cautious about changing a negative impression.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A survey of the scientific literature concerning person perception focused on two theoretical assertions which were converted into the research hypotheses: 1. There is a tendency in the population to form undifferentiated impressions when the individual manifests positive and negative traits; 2. There is a tendency to form positive impressions of an individual when he manifests positive and negative traits.

It was determined that the population was not evenly divided for undifferentiated and differentiated impressions after reading about a new student who had positive and negative behavioral characteristics. Undifferentiated impressions occurred significantly more often than differentiated, and the first research hypothesis was accepted.

The results of comparing categories of final impressions indicated that significantly more subjects changed their positive impression to negative or differentiated than from negative to positive or differentiated. This tendency to retain a negative impression led to a rejection of the second research hypothesis. Hence, there was no trend toward forming positive impressions.

It was not considered that the findings indicated a trend toward negativity. The results indicated that negative impressions are more difficult to restructure than

positive ones. The argument was advanced that because negative traits can threaten one's welfare the subjects were more cautious about changing a negative impression.

An explanation was sought to account for the formation of undifferentiated and differentiated impressions. A qualitative analysis revealed that no single factor adequately explained the formation of undifferentiated impressions. Some of the reasons advanced for perceiving a person as all positive or all negative were: identification with another on the basis of a similar interest, spread of effect due to an emotional reaction to a single trait, concreteness or lack of impersonal abstract reasoning, and the most frequent reason which was over-generalization from a particular trait chosen as representative of the individual. It was believed that certain traits were selected as central due to personal experiences which had sensitized the perceiver.

Subjects who formed differentiated impressions seemed to display a sense of detachment when perceiving another, the ability to tolerate doubt, tolerance for negative traits, inquisitiveness, and the intelligence to organize contrary traits into a consistent whole.

The results indicated that the principle of *Pragnanz* cannot be transposed from the physical sphere to the social because impressions are so frequently relative to an

individual's value system and personal experiences. The finding that negative impressions are difficult to change suggest that unpleasant experiences made a stronger impression than positive experiences.

Certain practical suggestions were made in view of the findings that there is a tendency to cognize another as all positive or all negative, and that negative impressions are resistant to restructuring. One should be self-critical of undifferentiated impressions and positive impressions may need reinforcement.

Further research should attempt to determine the role of education and intelligence in person perception. Also, should be evaluated the relative strengths of unpleasant and pleasant learning experiences in impression formation.

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APPENDIX 1

PERSONALITY TRAITS PRESENTED TO THE JUDGES¹

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Ambitious | 21. Gentle tempered |
| 2. Unambitious | 22. Coldhearted |
| 3. Humble | 23. Deliberate |
| 4. Arrogant | 24. Headstrong |
| 5. Cautious | 25. Impulsive |
| 6. Reckless | 26. Interests wide |
| 7. Cooperative | 27. Interests narrow |
| 8. Obstructive | 28. Interests social |
| 9. Easy going | 29. Interests physical |
| 10. Short tempered | 30. Good tempered |
| 11. Energetic | 31. Irritable |
| 12. Inactive | 32. Loyal |
| 13. Enterprising | 33. Fickle |
| 14. Shiftless | 34. Reasonable |
| 15. Calm | 35. Mulish |
| 16. Excitable | 36. Tolerant |
| 17. Fairminded | 37. Opinionated |
| 18. Partial | 38. Patient |
| 19. Genial | 39. Quitting |
| 20. Hostile | 40. Persevering |

¹ Raymond B. Cattell, "The Description of Personality: Basic Traits Resolved Into Clusters", Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 38, No. 4, July 1943, p.493-496.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 41. Practical | 56. Tactful |
| 42. Unrealistic | 57. Tactless |
| 43. Peaceable | 58. Talkative |
| 44. Pugnacious | 59. Taciturn |
| 45. Responsive | 60. Temperate |
| 46. Aloof | 61. Extreme |
| 47. Self-confident | 62. Unresentful |
| 48. Self-distrusting | 63. Vindictive |
| 49. Self-denying | 64. Wise |
| 50. Selfish | 65. Feclish |
| 51. Sensitive | 66. Placid |
| 52. Tough | 67. Worrying |
| 53. Shy | |
| 54. Sociable | |
| 55. Changeable | |

APPENDIX 2

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE UNDIFFERENTIATED AND DIFFERENTIATED IMPRESSIONS.

1. Initial Positive Impressions That Did Not Change.

Initial Response to the P Paragraph

The new student seems to have social ease while in a group and an unselfish attitude toward his fellow students. He seems to adjust easily to his new peer group.

Final Response to the PxN Sequence

The impression I get of the new student is about the same as before but that he is also reserved and quiet. This quiet manner results from the need to be recognized as a member of the group. The new student is longing to get into the group but just doesn't know the proper method to use.

Initial Response to the P Paragraph

The student is a capable fellow and he is well educated. He is confident of his ability.

Final Response to the PxN Sequence

I still think he is capable, confident and intelligent but he may be a bit over-confident.

2. Initial Positive Impressions that Changed to Negative.

Initial Response to the P Paragraph

He seems to be friendly, quick thinking young man. The new student seems to want to be liked

and friendly. He seems to be well educated. He wants to get along with the other students.

Final Response to the PxN Sequence

He has a completely different personality than what I pictured he would have. He thinks things should go the way he wants them to or not at all. He is a social introvert and has an over-bearing attitude.

Initial Response to the P Paragraph

The new student gives me the impression of being friendly, intelligent, and sociable.

Final Response to the PxN Sequence

The new student leaves me with the impression that he is self-centered, conceited and was only considering himself - one might say he thinks he is "it".

3. Initial Positive Impressions that Changed to Differentiated.

Initial Response to the P Paragraph

The new student appears to be fairly intelligent and has the desire to become one of the group. He wants to make friends in his new surroundings. He is a pleasant guy.

Final Response to the PxN Sequence

The new student is mainly after recognition since he moved to this new location. He would find gaining friends much easier if he had an important position such as playing center on the ball team. However, since he doesn't speak very often he either feels superior or inferior. He is still friendly and seeking friends but when he doesn't get what he wants he gets mad and quits.

Initial Response to the P Paragraph

The new student is a friendly person willing to take part in social activities and seems to have a great deal of confidence.

Final Response to the PMN Sequence

The new student would like to make friends which he showed by loaning the book but is unwilling to follow up with ever day considerations that are necessary. Although he is willing to participate in school activities, he wants things to go his way.

4. Initial Negative Impressions that Did Not Change.**Initial Response to the N Paragraph**

I think the new student is childish. He is concerned with only himself. He is high tempered and acts without thinking about a situation. I feel he has a feeling of superiority.

Final Response to the NXF Sequence

My impression is the same, but I think his feeling of superiority gives him too much self-confidence.

Initial Response to the N Paragraph

The student is a self-centered individual, socially unadjusted, and unable to accept advice or criticism.

Final Response to the NXP Sequence

I still believe him to be a self centered individual. He is still the type of person that requires attention from other people. He is perhaps intelligent in mind but ignorant in accepting other people.

5. Initial Negative Impressions that Changed to Positive.**Initial Response to the N Paragraph**

I think the boy shows a selfish attitude because of his quitting the team. If he didn't have this attitude, he would have played some other position. He's unfriendly and a snob.

Final Response to the NXP Sequence

At the first impression, I thought he was selfish but now I've changed my thoughts about him. I think he is friendly, he would want to cooperate with the other boys if they would be friendly towards him. He shows that he would be calm by the way he answered the questions without getting upset.

Initial Response to the N Paragraph

He seems to be emotionally immature. His behavior seems to be somewhat irrational and he is unfriendly.

Final Response to the NXP Sequence

Upon learning more about this new student he seems to have desirable behavior patterns which changed the first impression received. He seems to be concerned about others and to be trying to win friends. His "stature" seems to have increased when his behavior at the Fellowship Society is taken into consideration.

6. Initial Negative Impressions that Changed to Differentiated.**Initial Response to the N Paragraph**

The new student has a very weak character. Obviously he also does very little socializing. He has no determination to better himself. He will not be very popular and will probably end up quitting school.

Final Response to the NxF Sequence

The new student seems to be friendly in some aspects and not so friendly in others. He seems to be capable of answering questions on some things he knows about but if he is not good at something he tends to quit.

Initial Response to the N Paragraph

He seems to carry a chip on his shoulder. If he can't play the position he wants to, he won't play any other because he thinks he is too good.

Final Response to the NxF Sequence

He sounds as though he is an "alright guy", but I feel that at times he carries a chip on his shoulder considering his attitude towards sports.

APPENDIX 3

ABSTRACT OF

A Phenomenological Study of Person Perception¹

There have been two specific assertions concerning the forming of impressions of another both of which lacked experimental evidence. One was that in the perception of an individual who has positive and negative behavioral characteristics there is a tendency to form impressions that are all positive or all negative (undifferentiated) as opposed to having an impression that contains sub-parts of unlike value (differentiated). The second was that there is a tendency to perceive others positively.

The sample consisted of 187 male, college students in West Virginia who were randomly divided into Groups C and D. The stimuli consisted of a written positive and negative paragraph about a new student. Group C read the positive-neutral-negative (PxN) sequence and Group D read the negative-neutral-positive (NxP) sequence. The subjects wrote their impression of the new student after reading the sequence. These impressions were then categorized as Differentiated, Positive Undifferentiated, or Negative Undifferentiated.

¹ James T. Laird, Jr., doctoral thesis presented to the School of Psychology and Education of the University of Ottawa, 1960, viii-94 p.

The results indicated that the population was not evenly divided between undifferentiated and differentiated final impressions when reading about another who had positive and negative behavioral characteristics. Undifferentiated impressions occurred significantly more often than differentiated.

The difference between Groups C and D was that more positive impressions changed to negative or differentiated than did negative impressions change to positive or differentiated. Hence, negative impressions were more resistant to restructuring.

The findings led to the conclusions that there is a tendency in the population to form undifferentiated impressions when the individual manifests positive and negative traits, but there is no trend toward forming positive impressions.

A qualitative analysis of the impressions indicated that no single factor can adequately explain the reasons why impressions become undifferentiated. Some of the factors that appeared to contribute to such impressions were: identification with one who has similar interests, spread of effect from a single trait, concretism or lack of abstracting ability, over-generalization from a trait believed to be representative of the individual. Differentiated impressions seemed to indicate on the part of the perceiver a detachment,

inquisitiveness, the ability to tolerate unpleasant traits in another, and intelligence to reconcile conflicting attributes.

It was ascertained that impressions are frequently relative to the perceiver's value system. The individualistic quality of the impressions were accounted for, in part, on the basis of the influence on cognition of the perceiver's needs, past experiences, personality, and intelligence. Hence, the infrequent objectivity of person perception indicates that the principle of Pragnans cannot be transposed from the physical sphere to the social.

Negative impressions were more resistant to restructuring and this appeared to be the result of the subjects reacting more strongly to negative stimuli than to positive. Hence, negative material may be more potent for impression formation than positive. Consequently, positive first impressions require more reinforcement.

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