

# Is an out-of-role act credible to biased observers and does it affect the credibility of neutral acts?<sup>1</sup>

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As a rule, out-of-role behavior is thought to have greater credibility than in-role behavior in the sense that the former is more informative about real beliefs than the latter. Thus even the simple-hearted, seeking a reliable guide to another's true feelings and being aware of the social obligations under which this person labors, will discount behavior consistent with these obligations and pay special attention to behavior inconsistent with the same.

The theoretical explanation is straightforward (Heider, 1958, Jones & Davis, 1965, Kelley, 1967). In order to evaluate the credibility of an action the observer first must decide whether the action is internally determined ("he said X because he believes X is true") or externally determined ("he said X is true because his position obliges him to say X is true"). When both classes of determinants provide a reasonable explanation for the action (in-role behavior) each is given less weight than when only one offers a reasonable accounting (out-of-role behavior). Thus, if the act is in line with one's role obligations then both external and internal causation are plausible, if, however, the act is out of line, only the latter is plausible. It follows then that out-of-role behavior is more credible than in-role behavior because the former is more likely than the latter to be attributed solely to internal causes. From a different theoretical stance Skinner and others make a similar distinction between tacts or behavior under the control of discriminative

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stimuli (e.g., statements which the person believes are accurate descriptions of the world) and mands or behavior under the control of reinforcing stimuli (e.g., statements which the person believes will have profitable consequences)

The present study explores two aspects of the attribution of credibility. The first has to do with the observer's *prior belief* about the behavior. Does out-of-role behavior seem more credible than in-role behavior regardless of how much more unthinkable or repugnant the former is than the latter? The second involves the generalization of credibility. Does the credibility attributed to out-of-role behavior spread to other acts which are role-neutral, being neither prescribed nor proscribed by the role in question?

Attribution phenomena are often described in the language of inferential statistics (e.g., Kelley, 1967, 1973). This inadvertently suggests scrupulous objectivity on the part of the observer. Few researchers, however, will take the suggestion seriously because there are well known and fairly compelling reasons for expecting observers with different beliefs to draw rather different conclusions from the identical behavior. Research on prestige suggestion (Asch, Block, & Hertzman, 1938, Lewis, 1941) is perhaps the classical demonstration that the credibility of an assertion depends not only on its in-role/out-of-role character but also on the observer's beliefs about the person doing the asserting. The cognitive consistency literature leads one to expect similar kinds of effects. For instance, Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955) contend that if an observer has a strong belief about how a certain actor should behave and this belief is disconfirmed, say, by information that the actor has engaged in out-of-role behavior, the observer will seriously doubt this information.

Attribution theorists with a Bayesian and/or information processing bent probably would agree that prior beliefs are important. For instance, they might conjecture that the amount of information required to make a stable inference about another depends on prior beliefs (see Ajzen, 1971, Kelley, 1973, and Trope, 1974). Thus their prediction could well be that if the actor's behavior disconfirms a strongly held belief, the observer will make only tentative inferences or entirely suspend judgment until he obtains additional information, if, however,

his prior belief about the actor was weak (or, of course, congruent with the behavior), the observer will have no need for nor will he seek much additional information. In fact, Barefoot and Straub (1971) and Girodo (1973) have tested some of these speculations, but only in the context of self-attribution.

The attribution process is in part one of generalization whereby behaviors are perceived as similar because they often share certain critical features, e.g., they occur together in close sequence, they manifest the identical intention, they are emitted by the same person, they are directed to the same person, etc. As a result the observer is able to transform complex and variable information about the contingencies of action into concise, stable representations of the actor's personality. Many would assume such a process is functional and pervasive. If so, the tendency to generalize from one behavior to another may be strong, perhaps automatic. On the other hand, generalization phenomena such as the "halo effect" diminish when the actions being evaluated are clearly expressed and substantially different (e.g., see Rommetveit, 1960), and, of course, when comparing in-role or out-of-role acts with those which are role-neutral, there is another distinguishing feature—the former behaviors are closely tied to the actor's role, the latter are not. All in all then, the spread of credibility to role-neutral acts is an open issue. It is simply unclear under what conditions observers who believe a person has behaved frankly, independently, etc. in one domain will attribute similar characteristics to his behavior in another domain.

The present study contains two very similar experiments. They differ mainly in respect to the actors, the latter being chosen so that what is in-role (or out-of-role) for one is out-of-role (or in-role) for the other (see Jones, Davis, & Gergen, 1961). Prior to observing the actor individuals indicate their belief that he is likely to hold particular attitudes. They then have an opportunity to hear the actor discuss issues which are relevant to these attitudes. Following this, individuals indicate the extent to which they (1) perceive the in-role or out-of-role character of the behavior, (2) take the actor's pronouncements as credible, as reflecting his own beliefs, and (3) revise their prior beliefs about the actor in the light of his actions.

## EXPERIMENT I

*Method*

*Subjects* One hundred twenty male undergraduates at the University of Michigan were recruited for this experiment from a volunteer subject pool and paid at the rate of \$2 00 per hour. The experiment itself lasted about 45 minutes.

*Procedure* Subjects were told they were to be observers—a label which we will use hereafter—in a study of social judgment. They learned they would listen to an interview and then make certain judgments about the person (actor) being interviewed. The latter, with an obviously Jewish name, was said to have recently graduated from the School of Education at a nearby university where he was active in the Hillel organization and in other Jewish student groups. He was now applying for a job at an excellent private Jewish school. The job involved teaching current events and modern Jewish history. The tape the observers would hear was said to be part of a job interview between our applicant and the headmaster of the school.

After the actor and the interview setting were described, observers filled out a short questionnaire. On a seven-point scale they indicated their attitudes toward Israel (extremely pro-Israeli = 1, extremely anti-Israeli = 7), the Common Market (extremely pro-Common Market = 1, extremely anti-Common Market = 7), and strategic arms limitation (extremely pro-arms limitation = 1, extremely anti-arms limitation = 7). Finally they were asked in the light of the information received about the actor to estimate the likelihood that he is in fact really pro-Israeli, pro-Common Market, and pro-arms limitation. Each of the latter estimates were made on 20-point scales (e.g., I am certain he is really pro-Israeli = 1, I am certain he is really not pro-Israeli = 20)<sup>3</sup>

Observers were then played one of two versions of the taped interview in which they heard the actor respond to questions about his views on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Common Market, and strategic arms limitation. In the *in-role* version observers heard the actor consistently make strong positive statements about Israeli policies, in the *out-of-role* version he consistently made strong negative statements about these policies. Identical evaluations of the Common Market and arms limitation were made by the actor in both the *in-role* and *out-of-role* conditions. These consisted of moderately positive to

3 For purposes of analysis and presentation "not really pro-Israeli" is considered "anti" and the scale values were converted to probabilities, e.g., 1 = 10, 2 = 95, etc., for likelihood of the actor being really pro-Israeli, and 20 = 10, 19 = 95, etc., for the likelihood of the actor being really anti-Israeli.

highly positive statements<sup>4</sup> The issues were discussed during the interview in the same order under both conditions the Common Market, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and finally, strategic arms limitation

At the conclusion of the taped interview all observers responded to a second questionnaire The statements made about the three issues were rated separately (e.g., "I think the statements made by Mr Cohen about the Common Market were \_\_\_\_\_") on seven point scales anchored by the following pairs of adjectives Loyal (1)–Disloyal (7), Independent (1)–Conforming (7), Sincere (1)–Insincere (7), and Frank (1)–Deceptive (7) The first two pairs assessed the observer's perception of the in-role/out-of-role character of the three sets of statements, the remaining two pairs measured their perceived credibility Observers always rated the Common Market statements first, statements about the Arab-Israeli conflict second, and the arms limitation statements third Observers then were asked to consider the actor "as a person \_\_\_\_\_ what he is like in general" and to rate him on the same set of traits The next part of the questionnaire was essentially a repetition of the pre-interview likelihood estimate, that is, observers estimated the likelihood of the actor being pro-Israeli or anti-Israeli, pro-Common Market or anti-Common Market, etc., in the light of what he said during the interview

A final item had observers rate the extent to which they would have liked to have been given more information on what "\_\_\_\_\_ Cohen is like and how he felt about the interview \_\_\_\_\_" before making their judgment This was done on a seven-point scale (I would have liked more information = 1, I would not have liked more information = 7)

### Results

The data in this and the following experiment were treated by means of analysis of variance Unless otherwise specified, the observer's attitude toward Israel and the actor's statements about Israel constitute main effects in the analyses

Observers were divided into three groups according to their self-rated attitudes toward Israel Although there was an overall bias in favor of Israel, observers whose ratings fell in the upper quartile of the distribution of ratings were considered *pro-Israeli*, those in the lower quartile, *anti-Israeli*, and those in the middle half of the distribution, *neutral*.<sup>5</sup>

4 The in-role and out-of-role transcripts are available upon request

5 On seven-point scale (1 = very pro-Israeli, 7 = very anti-Israeli), the pro-Israeli mean was 1.3, the neutral mean was 3.2 and the anti-Israeli mean was 5.1

*Table 1* Extent to which in-role (pro-Israeli) and out-of-role (anti-Israeli) behaviors were perceived as such Mean ratings of independence and loyalty by observers

Observers	Independent (1)- conforming (7)		Disloyal (1)- loyal (7)		Overall means	
	Out-of-role	In-role	Out-of-role	In-role	Out-of-role	In-role
Pro-Israeli	2.1	5.5	2.6	5.5	2.4	5.5
Neutral	1.9	4.8	3.6	4.9	2.8	4.9
Anti-Israeli	1.2	5.2	3.0	5.0	2.1	5.1

There is good evidence that the in-role/out-of-role distinction was clear to subjects. Anti-Israeli (out-of-role) statements were considered to be more independent and disloyal than the pro-Israeli (in-role) statements (see Table 1). The main effects for statements in both instances are quite reliable ( $P_F < .005$ ).

The traits of independence and disloyalty also were generalized to the actor "as a person," that is, he was considered a relatively independent and disloyal person after acting out-of-role and a relatively conforming and loyal person after acting in-role ( $P_F < .01$ ). The observers' evaluations of statements about the Common Market and arms limitation were unaffected by the actor's comments on Israel.

The credibility of in-role and out-of-role acts may be inferred from observers' judgments of their sincerity and frankness. The means for these ratings are given in Table 2. A significant main effect was obtained for observers ( $P_F < .05$ ) indicating that neutrals attributed only a moderate amount of sincerity to the actor's comments about Israel, while both the pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers attributed considerable sincerity to them. A borderline Observer  $\times$  Statements interaction ( $P_F < .10$ ) suggests that the actor seemed more sincere behaving in-

*Table 2* Credibility of in-role (pro-Israeli) and out-of-role (anti-Israeli) behavior Observers' mean ratings

Observers	Sincere (1)- insincere (7)		Frank (1)- deceptive (7)		Overall means	
	Out-of-role	In-role	Out-of-role	In-role	Out-of-role	In-role
Pro-Israeli	2.7	1.3	2.6	2.2	2.6	1.8
Neutral	3.7	3.5	3.1	3.8	3.4	3.7
Anti-Israeli	1.9	1.8	2.5	3.0	2.2	2.4

role than out-of-role for pro-Israeli observers. A similar pattern appeared in ratings of frankness. Observers tended to make little distinction between in-role and out-of-role statements, those who were neutral judging both as moderately frank, while those who were pro-Israeli or anti-Israeli attributing greater frankness to both sets of statements ( $P_F < .05$ ). When these three ratings are combined into an overall index of credibility (see Table 2) neutral observers assign less credibility to either kind of act than pro-Israeli or anti-Israeli observers ( $P_F < .01$ ). The in-role actor "as a person" was seen as more frank than the out-of-role actor by pro-Israeli observers ( $M = 2.0$  vs  $3.7$ , respectively) while the reverse was the case for anti-Israeli observers ( $M = 4.0$  vs  $1.5$ , respectively). Neutrals made little differentiation in general frankness as a function of the actor's statements about Israel ( $M = 3.0$  vs  $2.5$ , respectively). The Observer  $\times$  Statement interaction was quite reliable ( $P_F < .01$ ). A similar pattern, albeit nonsignificant, appeared for ratings of general sincerity. Again neither the observer's attitude toward Israel nor the actor's statements in this regard had any noticeable effects on evaluations of the latter's pronouncements about the Common Market or arms limitation.

Analyses were then performed on the observer's estimate of the actor's true beliefs. Judgments made prior to hearing the interview indicated that pro-Israeli observers overestimated the likelihood of pro-Israeli attitudes (and underestimated the likelihood of anti-Israeli attitudes) compared to neutral and anti-Israeli observers ( $P_F < .01$ ).<sup>6</sup> In a separate analysis these prior likelihood estimates were compared with those made after hearing the interview (see Table 3). Following the interview observers believed it increasingly likely that the actor's attitudes corresponded to his statements about Israel ( $P_t < .01$ ). However, they revised their beliefs much more following out-of-role

6 Similar over- or underestimation are also obtained in the second experiment. Their discovery suggested the possibility that the various effects of observers' attitudes on credibility and belief revision might be mediated by such 'biases' in judgment. To determine if this was the case analyses of covariance were performed with the initial likelihood estimate as the covariate. In no instance did the pattern of results (main effects or interactions) differ substantially from that based on the analyses of variance presented in this and in our second experiment. Thus, it can be concluded that the effects attributed to observers' attitudes were not mediated by differential tendencies to over- or underestimate the prior likelihood of pro- or anti-Israel attitudes in the actors.

*Table 3* Estimated likelihood that actor holds pro-Israeli or anti-Israeli attitudes before and after observing his in-role (pro-Israeli) or out-of-role (anti-Israeli) behavior

Observers	Likelihood of pro-Israeli attitude			Likelihood of anti-Israeli attitude		
	Before	After	Difference	Before	After	Difference
	In-role act			Out-of role act		
Pro-Israeli	87	96	09	18	72	54
Neutral	68	79	11	31	76	45
Anti-Israeli	70	85	15	34	89	.55

statements than following in-role statements ( $P_F < .001$ ) and this revision tends to be more extensive among pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers than neutral observers ( $P_F < .05$ ). Small but reliable revisions occurred on likelihood estimates of attitudes toward the Common Market and arms limitation ( $P_F < .01$  and  $P_F < .05$ , respectively). Revisions were always in the direction of the statements about these issues but did not vary with the in-role/out-of-role variables.

Finally an analysis was made of how much the observer desired further information about the situation and the actor. Those who were faced with out-of-role behavior indicated a much stronger desire for additional information than those who dealt with in-role behavior ( $P_F < .01$ ). A near significant interaction ( $P_F < .10$ ) suggests that pro-Israeli observers were especially in need of additional information after confronting an out-of-role actor.

## EXPERIMENT II

### *Method*

*Subjects* As in the first experiment all 120 male undergraduates were recruited from a volunteer pool and paid \$2.00 per hour.

*Procedure* The procedure and materials were identical to that of the first experiment in every respect except that the actor was presented to observers as an Arab who was born and raised in the Near-East and sent to the US for his university training. He recently graduated from the School of Education at a nearby university where he was active in the Arab Student Association as well as in other Arab groups. Before returning to the Near-East he wanted to get some teaching experience and to that end had applied for a job at an excellent private school established by the embassies of several



**Table 4** Extent to which in-role (anti-Israeli) and out-of-role (pro-Israeli) behaviors were perceived as such Mean ratings of independence and loyalty by observers

Observers	Independent (1)– conforming (7)		Disloyal (1)– loyal (7)		Overall means	
	Out-of role	In-role	Out of role	In-role	Out-of role	In-role
Pro-Israeli	3.0	4.7	1.5	4.0	2.2	4.4
Neutral	2.1	3.6	3.3	4.7	2.7	4.1
Anti Israeli	4.3	3.9	1.8	4.9	3.0	4.4

Arab countries to serve their nationals stationed in the US. The job involved teaching current events and modern Arab history. The tape observers were to hear was said to be part of a job interview between the applicant and the headmaster of the school.

The same tapes were used as previously, in this experiment, however, the one containing pro-Israeli statements is the out-of-role tape and the one containing anti-Israeli statements, the in-role tape.

### Results

Observers were divided into pro-Israeli, neutral, and anti-Israeli groups according to criteria previously discussed. Again a bias in favor of Israel was evident, similar in degree to that found in our earlier sample. In-role behavior (anti-Israeli statements), was generally considered more loyal and conforming ( $P_F < .01$ ) than out-of-role behavior (pro-Israeli statements), as is shown in Table 4. Similar results were obtained in ratings of the actor "as a person."

The Common Market and arms limitation statements were also rated for loyalty and conformity. None of the effects approached an acceptable level of significance.

Neutral observers perceived out-of-role behavior as more sincere and frank than in-role behavior while pro-Israeli as well as anti-Israeli observers perceived the former as less sincere and frank than the latter (see Table 5). The interaction effect on both ratings is reliable ( $P_F < .05$ ). In this case, then, neutral observers judge out-of-role behavior as more credible than in-role behavior while pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers do just the reverse. A somewhat similar pattern appears in ratings of the actor "as a person." In evaluating how sincere a person he is, pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers attributed greater sincerity to the actor under in-role conditions ( $M = 1.7$  and  $2.6$ ,

Table 5 Credibility of in-role (anti-Israeli) and out-of-role (pro-Israeli) behavior Observers' mean ratings

Observers	Sincere (1)– insincere (7)		Frank (1)– deceptive (7)		Overall means	
	Out-of role	In-role	Out-of-role	In-role	Out-of-role	In-role
Pro-Israeli	5.3	2.1	5.1	3.3	5.2	2.7
Neutral	2.2	3.3	2.6	4.0	2.4	3.6
Anti-Israeli	4.9	1.8	5.4	1.9	5.1	1.9

respectively) than under out-of-role conditions ( $M = 5.2$  and  $5.0$ , respectively). Neutral observers made little differentiation between the sincerity of the in-role ( $M = 3.1$ ) and that of the out-of-role ( $M = 2.8$ ) actor "as a person." Furthermore, in judging general frankness, both pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers considered an in-role actor to be more frank "as a person" ( $M = 2.8$  and  $2.3$ , respectively) than an out-of-role actor ( $M = 4.9$  and  $4.7$ , respectively) while neutral observers judged the reverse to be true, an in-role actor being seen as less frank a person than an out-of-role actor ( $M = 3.3$  and  $2.6$  respectively). These effects involving ratings of the actor "as a person" were significant at the .05 level or better. Analyses of the ratings of the sincerity and frankness of the actors' statements regarding the Common Market and arms limitation demonstrate no reliable main effects or interactions as a function of our independent variables.

Analyses were then performed on the observer's estimate of the actor's true beliefs prior to hearing the interview. Compared to anti-Israeli and neutral observers, pro-Israeli observers underestimated ( $P_F < .05$ ) the likelihood of pro-Israeli attitudes (or overestimated the likelihood of anti-Israeli attitudes). In a separate analysis these prior likelihood estimates were compared with those made following the interview presentation. The comparison reveals a highly significant overall revision ( $P_F < .001$ ). The two interaction effects indicated by the pattern of results in Table 6 were also reliable by traditional standards, or nearly so. That is to say, observers revised their beliefs more after out-of-role than after in-role behavior ( $P_F < .01$ ) and this effect was particularly strong among neutral observers ( $P_F < .10$ ).

Finally, out-of-role behavior led observers to want further

*Table 6* Estimated likelihood that actor holds anti-Israeli or pro-Israeli attitudes before and after observing his in-role (anti-Israeli) or out-of-role (pro-Israeli) behavior

Observers	Likelihood of anti-Israeli attitude			Likelihood of pro-Israeli attitude		
	Before	After	Difference	Before	After	Difference
	In-role act			Out-of-role act		
Pro-Israeli	83	91	08	16	60	44
Neutral	71	78	07	33	85	.52
Anti-Israeli	77	89	12	21	61	40

information to a greater extent than in-role behavior ( $P_F < .05$ ) Moreover, under out-of-role conditions, both pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers expressed a stronger desire than neutral observers ( $P_F < .05$ )

#### DISCUSSION

Out-of-role political statements not only were recognized as disloyal and nonconforming activities but they also drastically affected the observer's belief about an actor's true attitude Revisions in the estimated likelihood of a Jew being anti-Israeli and an Arab being pro-Israeli were substantial following out-of-role pronouncements Moreover, the magnitude of revision varied with the observer's own attitude Unfortunately the latter effect differed markedly across experiments In the first experiment both pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers revised their beliefs about a Jew who made anti-Israeli comments more than neutral observers, in the second experiment neutral observers revised their beliefs about an Arab who made pro-Israeli comments more than pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers Moreover, this pattern of differences in the magnitude of revision corresponds exactly to the pattern of differences in credibility attributed to out-of-role behavior Both pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers judge anti-Israeli statements by a Jew to be more frank and sincere than do neutral observers, while the latter judge the pro-Israeli statements by an Arab to be more frank and sincere than do pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers Thus there is evidence that the impact of out-of-role behavior is mediated by its perceived credibility But nothing in the present study permits us to say why credibility varies in this fashion

with observers' attitudes. Thus no really straightforward interpretation can be made regarding the relationship between prior belief and the attribution process. We do offer, however, the following conjecture: since our observers are heavily pro-Israeli, anti-Israeli statements are likely to be seen as socially undesirable acts. Such behaviors are generally assumed to be more credible than those which are socially desirable (see Jones & Davis, 1965). Suppose in our study that (1) judgments of credibility were based not only on whether the behavior was in- or out-of-role, but also whether it was socially desirable or undesirable, and (2) biased observers compared to neutral observers gave much greater weight to social desirability. If this were the case, then the findings on credibility and revision of opinion display a consistent pattern: biased observers compared to neutral observers tend to see the socially undesirable anti-Israeli statements as much more credible, and thus are more likely to revise beliefs in the light of such behavior, regardless of whether the latter are in-role or out-of-role.

A second rather strong effect of prior beliefs is readily explicable, being perfectly consistent with findings from other likelihood estimation studies. In both experiments pro-Israeli observers underestimated the likelihood of out-of-role beliefs in the actor—of a Jew being anti-Israeli and an Arab being pro-Israeli—compared to neutral and anti-Israeli observers. The various theories of cognitive consistency, especially as they bear on person perception, imply that something like overestimation should occur, to wit: in the absence of other information an observer will expect a person possesses consistent attributes to the extent that the observer believes these attributes are important and closely related. Studies in which individuals estimate the likelihood of an individual having a specific characteristic given that he has one or more related characteristics provide good support for this assertion (Burnstein, 1967, DeSoto & Kuethe, 1959, McNeel & Messick, 1970). Recall that our pro-Israeli observers were in both experiments much more extreme than either neutral or anti-Israeli observers. Hence it is fairly reasonable to assume that a person's attitude toward Israel is a more important issue, and perhaps more closely related to ethnicity for him, than for these other observers. If either supposition is correct then it follows that pro-Israeli observers are

more likely than others to believe that a Jew is pro-Israeli, not anti-Israeli, and an Arab is anti-Israeli, not pro-Israeli

The methodological importance of such biases in estimation of beliefs is perhaps self-evident, that is, the differential impact of in-role and out-of-role behavior cannot be assessed adequately unless prior beliefs are taken into consideration. In our first experiment, for example, merely assessing post-behavior estimates of the actor's true attitude would suggest that out-of-role behavior has less impact as observers become increasingly pro-Israeli (see Table 3, column labelled "After"), when, in fact, the relationship is curvilinear—both pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observer revise prior beliefs more than neutrals. Perhaps earlier studies of in-role/out-of-role variables gave relatively weak results because the belief-revision aspect of attribution processes was not stressed and thus not deemed necessary to assess prior beliefs (e.g., Jones & Harris, 1967)

When asked to make comparable judgments about the actor "as a person" observers generalized from their evaluations of his statements about the Arab-Israeli conflict. The effect was pervasive and strong. After noting he had behaved, say, in an independent fashion when responding to the interviewer's questions about Israeli policies, observers judged the actor to be *in general* a quite independent person. Nevertheless, this did not influence their judgments of his comments on the Common Market and arms limitation.

On the face of it the generalization effects are a puzzle. In-role behavior was perceived as markedly different from out-of-role behavior, and the characteristics attributed to these distinctive acts were generalized to the actor as personal traits, yet there was no tendency to generalize further to role-neutral behavior. It is as if observers were willing to make inferences about a relatively important matter (the actor's personality), but were loathe to make comparable inferences about relatively unimportant matters (his statements regarding the Common Market and arms limitation). Our speculation is that these effects resulted from differences in the amount of information contained in the entities to be judged. Observers were told virtually nothing about the actor "as a person." The statements he made about Israel, however, had a good deal of substance in addition to saying something about demeanor under social

pressure. It is not surprising, therefore, that these detailed assertions were useful in forming an opinion about his personality. Indeed, observers were probably obliged to generalize from the former when pressed for an opinion regarding the latter. This was not the case for role-neutral opinions. They, like their role-relevant counterpart, were packed with much information, and thus observers had a good basis for evaluating them in respect to their loyalty, frankness, etc., independent of what had been said about Israel. In other words, because the role-neutral statements were relatively distinct and well elaborated, they could be (and apparently were) judged in their own right. It is worth noting that under such conditions Rommetveit (1960) also observed "halo effects" to be inhibited.

That attributions made following out-of-role behavior are tentative is strongly suggested by the finding that following such behavior observers have a marked preference for additional information about the actor and the situation. Furthermore, recall that pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers in the second experiment were sure, compared to a neutral observer, that the actor they were about to hear would be anti-Israeli. Under out-of-role conditions, after listening to the interview they came to the conclusions that the actor was probably pro-Israeli but with much less certainty than a neutral observer. It turned out that, following the out-of-role performance, pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli observers also indicated a stronger desire for additional information than neutral observers. In the first experiment pro-Israeli observers were least certain of the actor's real beliefs following out-of-role behavior and they were the ones who also tended to express the strongest need for more information. It would seem then that the observer's desire for additional information depends directly on the extent to which his observations lead him to abandon a relatively certain opinion of the actor for a relatively uncertain and contrary one.

#### SUMMARY

Out-of-role behavior markedly changed the observer's belief about the actor's true attitude. Revisions in the estimated likelihood of a Jew being anti-Israeli and an Arab being pro-Israeli were substantial following out-of-role statements. Moreover, the observer's own attitude affected the extent to which he felt

the actor's behavior was credible and the extent to which he revised his belief about the actor in the light of his behavior. These effects differed in our two experiments, however, and no good explanation could be offered for the difference.

One consistent and strong result involving prior beliefs was obtained: extremely pro-Israeli observers overestimated the likelihood of in-role attitudes (a Jew being pro-Israeli or an Arab being anti-Israeli) and underestimated the likelihood of out-of-role attitudes (a Jew being anti-Israeli or an Arab being pro-Israeli).

Observers consistently generalized from their evaluations of the actor's role-relevant behavior to evaluations of the actor "as a person." However, there was no tendency to generalize from role-relevant to role-neutral acts. Finally, observers under out-of-role conditions expressed a greater desire for additional information about the actor than those under in-role conditions. This desire seemed particularly marked if, after noting what the actor said, the observer was relatively uncertain about what attitude to attribute to him.

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