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Targets' Awareness of Expectations and
Behavioral Confirmation in Ongoing Interactions

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Abstract

Participants engaged in a getting-acquainted interaction over an intercom after one participant (the perceiver) was provided with a positive (extraverted) or relatively negative (introverted) expectation about the other participant (the target). After completing evaluations of each other and the interaction, participants interacted for a second time. Prior to this second interaction, however, targets were made aware of the perceivers' initial expectation, told that it had been confirmed by their own behavior, and given a randomly assigned attribution (either dispositional or situational) about the perceived cause of their confirmatory behavior. Results demonstrated that targets made aware of a dispositionally-attributed and relatively negative expectation were more likely to increase in expectation-disconfirming behaviors as compared to targets made aware of situationally-attributed and relatively negative expectations, who were themselves more likely to continue to confirm the expectations. Implications for the study of behavioral confirmation of expectations and other interpersonal processes are discussed.

Targets' Awareness of Expectations and Behavioral Confirmation in Ongoing Interactions

When individuals meet and interact with other people, they often approach their interactions with preconceived expectations about these others based on such factors as the others' physical or demographic characteristics, their actual behavior, or information provided by third parties. Often early expectations will guide interpretations of later behavior (with individuals more easily "seeing" the behavior that they expect to see). Moreover, an individual who treats others in line with his or her expectations for them may play a role in determining the actual behavior of those being perceived.

A series of experimental investigations has examined dyadic interactions in which one participant (called the "perceiver") is given an expectation about another participant (called the "target") before the two engage in a getting-acquainted conversation (for reviews, see D. [Miller & Turnbull, 1986](#); [Snyder, 1984, 1992](#); [Snyder & Stukas, 1999](#)). To assess the effects of providing perceivers with differing expectations, objective raters (who know nothing of the perceiver's expectation or the actual characteristics of the target) examine audiotaped or videotaped records of the target's behavior to determine if he or she behaved in line with the perceiver's randomly assigned expectation. When the target acts in an expectation-congruent manner, as the evidence provided by such objective raters often reveals, behavioral confirmation is said to have occurred. Considerable research has been conducted to elucidate the processes by which such confirmation is elicited and the various factors that facilitate or inhibit these processes (e.g., D. [Miller & Turnbull, 1986](#); [Snyder, 1984, 1992](#); [Snyder & Stukas, 1999](#)).

To date, the majority of these behavioral confirmation studies have been conducted with strangers. Using strangers in these studies allows researchers to avoid any confounding of the

perceiver's expectation and the target's actual past behavior and also ensures the perceiver's reliance upon the expectation itself as opposed to other information not accessible to the experimenter. The interactions between these strangers in behavioral confirmation studies have typically been limited to only 10-15 minutes--a procedural convenience that has allowed for the collection of manageable chunks of behavioral data.

But that which occurs beyond the very early stages of interactions between initial strangers is not yet known. Interactants do not remain strangers for long and real 10-15 minute interactions may lead to future sustained interactions. Nevertheless, the impact that an early expectation, once confirmed, could have on interactants and their ongoing relationship may be quite powerful with far-ranging (and, in the case of negative expectations, possibly deleterious) effects. To further our understanding of the phenomenon of behavioral confirmation, it seems necessary to examine what happens next, discovering whether the effect of early expectations on target behavior grows or diminishes, whether early expectations dictate the course of relationships, and whether erroneous or undesirable expectations are eventually overturned by target behavior. After all, life is longer than the typical psychology experiment.

Indeed, another standard procedural technique used by researchers in behavioral confirmation experiments may actually inhibit targets from overturning erroneous expectations (at least in those 10-15 minute interactions). In many, if not most, behavioral confirmation studies, targets are not informed that perceivers have been given expectations about them. Without direct knowledge of these expectations, targets may unknowingly act in ways that confirm them ([Hilton & Darley, 1985](#); [Vorauer & Miller, 1997](#)). Behaviors that clearly represent the confirmation of an expectation to perceivers may seem innocuous and unimportant to targets, even if they are "out of character." Targets may continue to respond to perceivers' overtures and never realize that their

actions are being interpreted differently by perceivers, interpreted as diagnostic of long-standing behavioral tendencies, perhaps even interpreted in an undesirable way. Past research (Hilton & Darley, 1985; Snyder & Swann, 1978) has demonstrated that targets do act in ways that confirm even negative or self-inconsistent expectations when they are not told that an expectation exists. When targets are aware of negative expectations, they may behaviorally disconfirm them (Hilton & Darley, 1985)—although there is reason to believe that sometimes they may not.

Of course, keeping targets in the dark about perceivers' expectations has been empirically useful and may very well replicate the state of affairs at the very beginning of a relationship. That is, using this technique has allowed researchers to examine interactions when targets really don't know what others expect of them—as is the case with many interactions between strangers. What has not been examined to date, however, is what happens next, when an awareness that an expectation is held about them may emerge in targets. At this point, too, they may (or may not) realize that they have been confirming this expectation with their own behavior. Indeed, it seems quite probable that knowledge of another person's expectations will not elude a target for long in an actual relationship—but if such knowledge has eluded them at all, they may have already confirmed the expectation unknowingly.

Awareness of perceivers' expectations may dawn on targets because perceivers themselves say something that makes expectations explicit (for example, revealing that a mutual acquaintance has “said good things about you” reveals positive expectations). In the absence of such a direct revelation by perceivers, targets may still infer the nature of expectations from perceivers' behavior over time (for example, consistent negative treatment from perceivers may suggest underlying negative expectations). Ultimately, awareness of expectations and their characteristics may play an influential role in determining how targets respond to perceivers—and whether

erroneous or undesirable expectations are eventually overturned. In other words, the features of expectations that become apparent to targets may help to determine whether targets choose to actively disconfirm the expectations or to continue to confirm them.

Clearly, a prominent feature of any expectation is whether the target perceives it to be favorable or unfavorable. For example, upon learning about a perceiver's expectation, targets might accept the expectation as a desirable portrayal of their self (or as consistent with their self-beliefs; Swann, 1983, [1987](#)). In this case, it is likely that targets would choose to continue to confirm the expectation. Conversely, targets might consider the expectation to portray them negatively (or as inconsistent with their self-beliefs). Under such circumstances, targets might be more likely to choose to make a perceiver aware that his or her expectation is unwarranted. Indeed, targets' perceptions of the desirability of a perceiver's expectation may have a direct impact on their tendencies to disconfirm or to confirm the expectation.

However, the decision to disconfirm an expectation may not always be so clear-cut. There are several reasons why targets may not want to try to disconfirm an undesirable expectation. For example, targets may feel a need to maintain a smooth and responsive interaction with perceivers that active disconfirmation would interrupt ([Smith, Neuberg, Judice, & Biesanz, 1997](#); [Snyder, 1992](#); [Snyder & Haugen, 1995](#)). Research has shown that targets motivated to maintain smooth relations are more likely to behaviorally confirm expectations than targets not so motivated ([Snyder & Haugen, 1995](#)). Or targets may implicitly understand that disconfirming a powerful perceiver's expectations might lead to negative consequences and therefore they may inhibit disconfirmatory behavior to avoid conflict or to preserve a relationship. (This may be the perilous position in which negatively stereotyped groups often find themselves). Not surprisingly, the power that a perceiver holds over a target's outcomes is one factor that has been demonstrated to

moderate behavioral confirmation effects (e.g., [Copeland, 1994](#)).

To help them decide whether or not to let expectations stand, targets may also find it useful to consider other aspects of perceivers' expectations, in conjunction with desirability. For example, expectations can also be considered to be about behaviors restricted to specific situations ("she gets nervous when meeting new people") or about more global behavioral tendencies stemming from personalities or dispositions ("she is a nervous person") ([Swann, 1984](#)). Research on attribution processes has demonstrated that situational attributions for behavior are seen as less predictive of an actor's future behavior than dispositional attributions ([Heider, 1955](#); [Jones & Davis, 1965](#); [Kelley, 1967](#)). Dispositional attributions of the causes of behavior imply that this pattern of behavior is stable across situations. Following this logic, targets might find it easier to accept that perceivers hold erroneous expectations about them that are thought to be a result of targets' responsiveness to a particular situation rather than thought to represent expressiveness of their enduring personalities. Expectations circumscribed to situations may be less likely to require targets to engage in the difficult work of disconfirmation as it can be inferred that perceivers do not believe such behavior to be predictive.

Naturally, targets may find it easy to judge their own inconsistent behavior as situationally responsive (e.g., [Jones & Nisbett, 1972](#); [Kulik, Sledge, & Mahler, 1986](#); [Sweeney, Anderson, & Bailey, 1986](#))—but information from perceivers may supercede this natural tendency. What if perceivers convey that they have made a dispositional attribution about the causes of targets' previous behavior (as they very likely have; [Jones & Nisbett, 1972](#))? Such an attribution for an undesirable or erroneous expectation should be upsetting to targets and virtually demand disconfirmatory behavior from them, implying as it does that the target might act in an undesirable fashion on many or most occasions. Perceivers who convey that they too have made situational

attributions for undesirable target behaviors should allow targets to avoid having to perform the dirty work of disconfirmation—with the end result being that targets may continue to confirm erroneous expectations with those perceivers.

To test these theoretical assumptions in the current study, we modified the typical behavioral confirmation experiment in three important ways. First, we included a second interaction to add a temporal dimension to the behavioral confirmation scenario. It seems possible that individuals may act differently in a second interaction, after the initial groundwork of the acquaintanceship has been laid. Therefore, we examined changes in targets' behaviors from the first to the second interaction and whether these changes indicated disconfirmation or continued confirmation of perceivers' expectations.

Second, we attempted to recreate the emerging awareness of targets that they have unknowingly confirmed an expectation during the course of interaction, in order to examine targets' reactions to this knowledge. Thus, in the first interaction, targets were naïve to their perceivers' expectation. Prior to the second interaction, targets “discovered” that perceivers had interpreted their behavior in the first interaction a certain way--targets were told that perceivers had seen them engage in behavior that, unbeknownst to targets, matched the actual expectations to which they had earlier been assigned.

Third, we also supplied targets with a perceived attribution for the cause of their expectation-confirming behavior in order to discover if causal attributions moderate targets' tendencies to disconfirm expectations. Targets were told that the behaviors in question were interpreted by perceivers as either expressiveness of underlying personality or as responsiveness to situational constraints and mandates.

We predicted that targets would subsequently disconfirm negative expectations that were

attributed to expression of their personalities but continue to confirm negative expectations that were attributed to situational responsiveness. We also expected that targets who learned that they had confirmed positive expectations would continue to confirm these expectations regardless of the type of attributional feedback they received. Thus, specifically, we predicted greater changes away from expectation-confirming behavior for targets who received feedback about dispositionally-attributed negative expectations compared to targets who received feedback about situationally-attributed negative expectations or feedback about positive expectations.

Method

Participants

Eighty-one female and 81 male undergraduates at the University of Minnesota served as participants. They were recruited for a study investigating acquaintanceship processes and informed that they would meet someone new from their psychology class during the session and have a short conversation with him or her. Each participant received two points of extra credit toward their introductory psychology course grade. Participants were scheduled in dyads composed of a male perceiver and a female target. This sex composition, used frequently in past research (e.g., [Snyder and Haugen, 1995](#)), was chosen based on Christensen and Rosenthal's (1982) findings that men in the perceiver role were more influenced by erroneous beliefs and therefore more likely to initiate behavioral confirmation than women, and that women more readily showed the effects of behavioral confirmation as targets than did men.

First Interaction

At each session, one male and one female participant arrived at different locations and were escorted to separate experimental rooms to prevent expectations related to physical appearance from possibly confounding our manipulations. The male participant (designated as the

‘perceiver’) was asked to wait momentarily while the experimenter spoke with the female participant (designated as the ‘target’). The experimenter briefly interviewed the target to obtain basic demographic information (e.g., age, hometown, and major) that would subsequently be given to the perceiver. Targets were told that they would have a ten-minute conversation with another participant over an intercom system (which consisted of a set of headphones and a microphone in each room wired through a tape recorder). Participants were told (falsely) that the researchers were interested in the differences between face-to-face conversations and conversations over the telephone and that their dyad had been assigned to the telephone condition.

The experimenter then returned to the perceiver’s room, told him the cover story, and instructed him that his goal was to get acquainted with the target during the ten minute conversation, emphasizing that this involved both ‘getting to know’ the target and ‘getting along’ with the target. These motivational instructions have been used in earlier behavioral confirmation studies (e.g., Miene, Gresham, & Snyder, 1991). The perceiver also was presented with a form containing the demographic information obtained from the target. In addition, this form presented the randomly assigned expectation about the target’s personality, supposedly gleaned from the interview--targets were described in a short paragraph as either extraverted or introverted.

Past behavioral confirmation research (see [Snyder, 1992](#)) has frequently used expectations of introversion and extraversion. These expectations, based as they are on sociability, are easily perceived in conversation by both participants and objective raters. The current study designated the expectation of introversion as a negative label and extraversion as a positive label for targets; therefore, the trait descriptions given to both perceivers and targets were written to provide a negative or positive cast. The decision to portray introversion as negative and extraversion as positive is supported by Anderson’s (1968) ratings of the likableness of trait adjectives: synonyms

for extraversion (“outgoing”) are rated as much more likable than synonyms for introversion (“shy”). To reinforce the expectation, the paragraph provided to perceivers was also read aloud by the experimenter. The specific descriptions given were as follows:

a) Introvert: “This person tends to be highly introverted. That is, this person tends to be withdrawn, quiet, and noncommunicative. She usually does quite well in familiar situations, but is uncomfortable meeting new people;”

b) Extravert: “This person tends to be highly extraverted. That is, this person tends to be outgoing, friendly, and talkative. She enjoys meeting new people and seeking out new situations.”

At this point, the experimenter turned on the intercom system and left the room while the participants engaged in the ten-minute interaction.

Initial Self-Report Measures

After the conversation, both participants reported their impressions of their own behavior and their partner’s behavior during the conversation. These self-reports provided an explanation for our knowledge of the perceiver’s expectation and its attribution (subsequently provided to targets). After completing the questionnaires, both participants were informed that they would be having another ten-minute conversation. Neither targets nor perceivers had been told in advance that they would talk again.

Revealing the Expectation

At this point, the target also was told that the experimenter had examined the perceiver’s ratings of her and that she had been perceived as either an extravert or an introvert. This information matched the actual expectation that the perceiver had been given (but not necessarily the perceiver’s actual impressions--that is, it was still a result of random assignment). In addition, each target was randomly assigned to hear this information framed in one of two ways-- either that

the perceiver believed that her behavior was dispositionally-caused, a conscious expression of her enduring personality (Personality Expressive condition), or that he believed that her behavior was situationally-caused, designed to be responsive to the interaction situation at hand (Situationally Responsive condition). The experimenter again both read the information and gave the target a written copy. The text of the four feedback conditions follows:

a) Introvert/Personality Expressive: “It seems that your partner liked you. He put down that he liked you especially because you seemed to be really true to your self--you openly displayed your real personality in front of a stranger. As you can see, he gave you high ratings on the adjectives below: thoughtful, soft-spoken, reserved, relaxed, calm, passive, shy, withdrawn, sincere, and discreet. In other words, he feels that it was pretty obvious that you have an introverted personality. He said he acted differently because he perceived that you were shy;”

b) Introvert/Situationally Responsive: “It seems that your partner liked you. He put down that he liked you especially because you seemed to be really responsive to his ideas and comments--you were a good partner and he liked that. As you can see, he gave you high ratings on the adjectives below: thoughtful, soft-spoken, reserved, relaxed, calm, passive, shy, withdrawn, sincere, and discreet. He mentioned specifically that he thought your introverted behavior was really good for this strange situation and that it put him at ease because he felt you were easy to talk to;”

c) Extravert/Personality Expressive: “It seems that your partner liked you. He put down that he liked you especially because you seemed to be really true to your self--you openly displayed your real personality in front of a stranger. As you can see, he gave you high ratings on the adjectives below: outgoing, adventurous, active, lively, bold, engaging, outspoken, polite, dynamic, and friendly. In other words, he feels that it was pretty obvious that you have an

extraverted personality. He said he acted differently because he perceived that you were outgoing;”

d) Extravert/Situationally Responsive: “It seems that your partner liked you. He put down that he liked you especially because you seemed to be really responsive to his ideas and comments--you were a good partner and he liked that. As you can see, he gave you high ratings on the adjectives below: outgoing, adventurous, active, lively, bold, engaging, outspoken, polite, dynamic, and friendly. He mentioned specifically that he thought your extraverted behavior was really good for this strange situation and that it put him at ease because he felt you were easy to talk to.”

In addition, the experimenter pointed to a seven-point Likert item which read “Your partner thought your behavior was mostly caused by:” and was anchored by “your personality” and “this situation.” For the Personality Expressive conditions, a ‘1’ was circled indicating that the perceiver interpreted the target’s behavior as being caused by personality; for the Situationally Responsive conditions, a ‘7’ was circled indicating that the opposite was true. This procedure was designed to reinforce the attributional nature of the feedback being provided.

Second Interaction and Final Self-Report Measures

Each pair then interacted a second time for an additional ten minutes. After this conversation, participants filled out the same series of questionnaires as before. When they finished, participants were fully debriefed and dismissed at separate times.

Objective Ratings of Target Behavior

Targets’ behavior was coded by two raters, blind to experimental condition, who listened only to the targets’ side of each conversation, in randomly determined order. Raters did not listen to the first and second conversations by any one dyad sequentially. Due to our desire to focus

explicitly on target activities in this study, we decided not to examine perceiver behaviors. Given that perceivers were not provided with any new information between the two interactions and because of the well-documented tendency for beliefs to persevere despite clear disconfirmation (e.g., Ross, Lepper, & Hubbard, 1976), we did not predict changes in perceiver behavior.

To examine target behaviors, then, our raters completed semantic differential scales identical to those used by the participants in addition to several other Likert scale items. Specifically, the objective raters responded to 24 seven-point semantic differential items related to extraversion, with both its positive and negative characteristics, along with ten Likert scale items that assessed expressive and responsive motivations and behaviors during the interaction. We included both potentially positive (e.g., “engaging”) and potentially negative (e.g., “loud”) aspects of extraversion because we thought both might be represented in the process of expectation-disconfirmation, particularly disconfirmation of an unpleasant expectation and particularly if targets become too extraverted in their attempts at disconfirmation (e.g., were so talkative that they became overbearing). Factor analyses suggested that our 34 items could in fact be separated into two scales that, after removing items that did not correlate highly with either factor, represented the positive and negative aspects of extraversion.

Fifteen items were averaged together to form the Positive Extraversion scale: semantic differential items (extraverted-introverted, active-passive, bold-shy, engaging-withdrawing, lively-calm, flexible-rigid, dynamic-staid, adventurous-unadventurous, personal-impersonal, indiscreet-discreet, independent-dependent, and outgoing-reserved) and Likert-type items (covering the following behaviors: presenting a clear picture of who she is, talking a lot about herself, and feeling comfortable in the conversation). The overall scale had good internal consistency at both time points (Time One Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.90$, Time Two $\alpha = .91$); scale scores

ranged from 1 to 7 (with higher scores indicating greater extraversion). Inter-rater reliability, collapsed across time one and time two, was Spearman-Brown $\underline{r} = 0.67$.

Fourteen items were averaged together to form the Negative Extraversion scale: semantic differential items (loud-quiet, not composed-composed, outspoken-soft-spoken, impatient-patient, not thoughtful-thoughtful, disrespectful-respectful, inattentive-attentive, rude-polite, insensitive-sensitive, unfriendly-friendly) and Likert-type items (covering the following behaviors: not avoiding being too nosy or inquisitive about their partner, talking about what she wanted to talk about, not talking about what her partner wanted to talk about, exerting control over the conversation (asking questions, changing topics)). The overall scale had good internal consistency at both time points (Time One $\alpha = 0.74$, Time Two $\alpha = .81$); scale scores ranged from 1 to 7 (with higher scores indicating greater disagreeableness). Inter-rater reliability, collapsed across time one and time two, was Spearman-Brown $\underline{r} = 0.69$.

Three Likert-type items (concerning the level of interest in the target's tone of voice, her perceived motivation to make a favorable impression, and her tendency to initiate instead of respond) and two semantic differential items (relaxed-not relaxed, public-private) were dropped from analyses due to low item-total correlations with the two scales.

As changes in targets' behaviors from the first conversation to the second were of primary interest, we calculated difference scores for both scales by subtracting time one scale scores from time two scale scores. These difference scores were entered into our analyses as our two primary dependent variables. Although our two scales were correlated at Time 1 ($\underline{r} = .26$, $p = .02$) and Time 2 ($\underline{r} = .36$, $p = .001$), indicating that they do represent two aspects of extraversion (as originally conceived), the difference scores were uncorrelated ($\underline{r} = .05$, ns).

Results

As with all behavioral confirmation studies, the chief dependent measures of interest for us were the outside observers' ratings of target behavior and the standard question was whether such behavior confirmed or disconfirmed perceivers' initial expectations. In the current study, however, we were principally concerned with whether targets' behavior changed over time and thus, we used difference scores to examine whether our feedback intervention led targets to change their behavior in the second interaction. We predicted that awareness of dispositionally-attributed negative expectations would lead targets to greater change in an expectation-incongruent fashion than awareness of situationally-attributed negative expectations (or of positive expectations no matter how attributed).

Manipulation Checks

To examine first whether targets believed our feedback (and by inference the perceivers' judgment of them), we analyzed difference scores calculated from targets' self-reports of their own interaction behavior. Targets filled out semantic differential scales (identical to those completed by the objective raters) after each interaction. We created two scales that were similar (but not identical, lacking the Likert-type items) to the scales developed for the objective raters. One scale contained the corresponding 12 semantic differential items from the Positive Extraversion scale (Time One $\alpha = 0.76$, Time Two $\alpha = 0.85$), the other scale contained the corresponding 10 semantic differential items from the Negative Extraversion Scale (Time One $\alpha = .66$, Time Two $\alpha = .72$). These two scales were not significantly correlated at either time point or in their changes over time (all r 's between +/- .05). Difference scores were calculated for each scale by subtracting Time One scores from Time Two scores.

Two 2 X 2 (Expectation by Attribution) ANOVAs examining these difference scores revealed main effects for expectation: on the Positive Extraversion scale, $F(1, 77) = 26.18$, $p <$

.001, $\eta^2 = .25$ [such that introvert feedback targets reported decreases ($M = -0.09$, $SD = .58$) whereas extravert feedback targets reported increases ($M = +0.55$, $SD = .55$)] and the Negative Extraversion scale, $F(1, 77) = 7.43$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .09$ [such that introvert feedback targets reported decreases ($M = -0.25$, $SD = .48$) whereas extravert feedback targets reported no change on average ($M = +0.02$, $SD = .43$)]. Thus, after learning what perceivers thought, targets were more likely to believe that their own behavior was in line with perceivers' expectations (i.e., those given introvert feedback subsequently perceived themselves as decreasing in extraversion, both positive and negative).

Difference scores calculated from a single Likert-type item that asked targets to indicate whether their behavior was caused by "personality" (1) or "situation" (7) were also entered into a similar ANOVA. Results showed a strong main effect for the attributional feedback, $F(1, 77) = 12.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$, such that expressiveness feedback targets were more likely to change toward believing that their behavior was caused by their personality ($M = -0.80$, $SD = 1.40$) whereas responsiveness feedback targets were more likely to change toward believing that their behavior was caused by the situation ($M = +0.39$, $SD = 1.64$). Again, targets accepted our feedback as a true reflection of their behavior.

Because asking targets themselves whether they perceived the feedback they received to be positive or negative (or an accurate or inaccurate representation of their behavior) might have introduced demand characteristics that could have affected our results, we randomly assigned another sample of University of Minnesota undergraduates ($N = 29$; 17 female, 12 male) to examine either the introvert feedback or the extravert feedback (without the expressiveness or responsiveness framing device) and rate them on several 7-point Likert-type scales. As expected, they perceived the extravert feedback ($M = 6.40$, $SD = 0.91$) to be more positive than the introvert

feedback ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.08$), $F(1, 27) = 22.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .45$. Conversely, they also perceived the introvert feedback ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.17$) to be relatively more negative than the extravert feedback ($M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.72$), $F(1, 27) = 25.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .49$. We also found that these undergraduates believed that the extravert feedback ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.41$) would be relatively more accurate for them in this situation than the introvert feedback ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.89$), $F(1, 27) = 9.72$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .26$. Thus, we feel confident that our targets were very likely to have perceived the introvert feedback as relatively undesirable, as compared to the extravert feedback.

Objective Ratings of Target Behavior

Differences at Time One. Despite the presence of both an expectation and instructions highlighting motivations that promote behavioral confirmation (see [Snyder, 1992](#)), no expectation-based differences in target behaviors during the first interaction were found. Nevertheless, targets seemed to have internalized the feedback given before the second conversation (showing decreases in self-reported extraversion in the introvert label cells) and continued to perceive themselves this way despite acting to counter that impression in the introvert/personality cell. Thus, phenomenologically, the feedback seemed to have impact whether or not it was tied to target's actual behaviors in the first interaction--targets apparently believed it and acted accordingly.

Changes over Time. To examine targets' actual behavior in light of the revelation of the expectation and the perceivers' supposed attributions, we looked at changes in observers' ratings of targets' behavior from the first interaction, before targets had knowledge of the expectation, and the second, after they had gained this knowledge.

Given that our two scales were designed to measure the positive and negative aspects of

extraverted behavior, our central prediction was that targets labeled introverts and given a personality expressive attribution for this label would increase in both aspects of extraversion (perhaps because they might overcompensate). Nevertheless, we also expected that targets who had been labeled extraverted (regardless of attribution) might increase in Positive Extraversion after having been labeled extraverted (but not in its negative aspect). Thus, according to our predictions, only those targets who were told that they were introverted but that it was taken to be responsive to the situation at hand should not increase in extraversion at all (either positive or negative). To examine these predictions, we created two planned contrasts (see [Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996](#)). For the Positive Extraversion scale, we contrasted the Introvert/Situationally Responsive group (which should not increase in positive extraversion at all) with the other three groups. For the Negative Extraversion scale, we contrasted the Introvert/Personality Expressive group (which alone should increase in negative aspects of extraversion) with the other three groups.

To begin, we submitted our Positive Extraversion scale to a 2 (Expectation) X 2 (Attribution) ANOVA. Neither the main effects nor the interaction were statistically significant. More importantly, the contrast that compared the Introvert/ Situationally Responsive group to the other three groups demonstrated that this group was significantly different from the others, $t(77) = 2.09$, $p = .04$, $r_{\text{contrast}} = .23$ --targets hearing Introvert/Responsive feedback significantly decreased their extraversion across interactions compared to other targets, who increased in positive extraversion as expected. Please see Table 1 for condition means and Figure 1 for a graphical representation of these data.

Next, we submitted our Negative Extraversion scale to a 2 (Expectation) X 2 (Attribution) ANOVA followed by a planned contrast that compared the Introvert/Personality Expressive group

to the other three groups. Analysis of the Negative Extraversion scale difference scores revealed a significant main effect for attribution, $F(1, 77) = 4.57$, $p = .036$, $\eta^2 = .06$, such that targets who received the Personality Expressive attribution ($M = +0.20$, $SD = .39$) were more likely to be rated as increasing in negative extraversion than were targets who received the Situationally Responsive attribution ($M = -0.003$, $SD = .43$)—this effect seemed largely driven by increases in one condition: the Introvert/Personality Expressive condition (which was the only group to change much in negative extraversion). Thus, the contrast comparing Introvert/Expressive targets to the other three groups also demonstrated that this group was significantly different from the others, $t(77) = 2.64$, $p = .01$, $r_{\text{contrast}} = 0.29$ —targets hearing Introvert/Personality Expressive feedback significantly increased their negative extraversion across interactions compared to other targets. Please see Table 1 for condition means and Figure 2 for a graphical representation of these data.

Discussion

The results of this investigation allow us to place the body of prior work on the behavioral confirmation of expectations in social interaction into a broader context. First, we examined changes in behaviors across interactions to add a new temporal context to the study of behavioral confirmation. Second, we modeled the emergence of targets' awareness of perceivers' expectations by providing them with an early interaction in which perceivers presumably formed their expectations, then allowing targets access to perceivers' presumed expectations. Finally, we examined the effects of the communication of perceivers' causal attributions on targets' behavior. Each of these modifications of the typical behavioral confirmation paradigm both extends previous research and brings it closer to the experience of actual social interaction outside the laboratory.

Our results demonstrated that, when told that perceivers held a relatively more negative

(introverted) expectation about them and that this expectation was thought to be consistent with their enduring personality, targets became more likely to act in an expectation-incongruent (extraverted) fashion, exhibiting behavioral disconfirmation of the expectation, as compared to targets told about a relatively more negative expectation that was thought to be a reflection of situationally responsive behavior. A dispositional attribution for relatively negative behavior may have led participants to try too hard at exhibiting expectation-incongruent behavior, in this case exhibiting a pushy type of extraversion that was perceived as loud and rude, behaviors that were not exhibited by targets receiving other types of feedback. Not surprisingly, participants labeled extravert did increase in positive extraversion too—but in this case it was simply more expectation-congruent behavior, continued confirmation of the initial expectation. Learning that relatively more negative behavior (introversion) was attributed to situational responsiveness also led to expectation-congruent behavior (increases in introversion), continued behavioral confirmation rather than disconfirmation, making this the only group to persist in acting introverted.

Throughout the paper we have referred to introversion as a relatively negative expectation and we counted on our targets to find it relatively undesirable in this context. Indeed, we found that targets subjected to dispositional judgments of introversion were more likely to engage in behavioural disconfirmation activities. It should be noted, however, as Swann (1983, 1987) has demonstrated, that targets sometimes do not disconfirm expectations that they feel to be negative but perceive to be representative of them. Although we did find introversion to be perceived as relatively more negative than extraversion, we did not test whether targets perceived it to be self-consistent or self-inconsistent¹. Whether the findings demonstrated here would also hold for clearly self-inconsistent expectations (either positive or negative), as might be predicted, remains

an open question.

In examining target awareness of perceiver expectations and its effects on subsequent behavior, the current study follows a recent trend in the literature--the target is viewed as an active participant in the behavioral confirmation process (e.g., [Hilton & Darley, 1985](#); [Smith et al., 1997](#); [Snyder & Haugen, 1995](#); [Snyder & Stukas, 1999](#)). In earlier research, however, the confirmation scenario was often characterized as a flow of influence from perceivers' expectations to targets' behavior--a scenario in which the perceiver, having adopted beliefs about the target, acts in ways that cause the behavior of the target to confirm these beliefs. Such a characterization clearly imputes a more active role to the perceiver than to the target. It has become increasingly apparent that targets may actually take an active role in shaping the dynamics and outcomes of their interactions with perceivers (e.g., [Swann, 1987](#)). The current study reinforces this view by showing that targets may be attentive to the implications of expectations (that is, whether they suggest enduring dispositionally-induced behaviors or less enduring situationally-induced behaviors) rather than just to the positivity or negativity of expectations.

Moreover, it now seems increasingly apparent that targets can and do take actions that serve to counter erroneous or undesirable expectations. Targets made aware of perceivers' negative expectations about them may actively alter their behavior in ways that are incongruent with these expectations. Targets of well-known social stigmas can and do overcome negative expectations through their own actions; for example, obese targets act in ways that overcome perceivers' negative expectations, but only when they believe that they are visible to these perceivers (C. [Miller & Myers, 1998](#); C. Miller, Rothblum, Felicio, & Brand, 1995).

Disconfirmatory outcomes of this form can be interpreted as serving an identity-defensive function of protecting targets from accepting potentially unpleasant, unflattering, threatening, or

otherwise unwelcome beliefs about the self ([Snyder, 1992](#)).

Of course, it stands to reason that targets may not always have the ability to actively disconfirm negative expectations, even when they feel threatened by them. Certainly, when faced with a perceiver of higher status or personal power (as many targets of negative expectations may find themselves), targets may feel that it would be too risky or inappropriate to seek to actively disconfirm a perceiver's label for them. Under these circumstances, especially perhaps when they are unaware of perceivers' attributions for their behavior, one way that targets may escape having to accept a threatening vision of themselves may be to attribute their self-inconsistent behavior to situational responsiveness rather than to expressiveness of their own enduring dispositions. Of course, this prediction about targets' own attributions when interacting with powerful perceivers awaits empirical test. Nevertheless, if targets do use situational attributions to protect their identities, their continuing confirmatory behavior may lead to the perpetuation of the expectation in the mind of the perceiver and to further expectation-contingent treatment by him or her.

To summarize our conclusions, then, it seems that the effects of expectations on target behavior over time, after targets become aware of these expectations, may depend both on whether the expectations are relatively positive or negative and on how targets believe expectation congruent behavior has been attributed. If the expectation is positive, it appears that confirmation will continue. However, if the expectation is relatively more negative, confirmation may depend on whether targets can be comfortably assured that perceivers (and, perhaps, they themselves) can attribute expectation-confirming behavior to the situation. If this is not possible, then targets may be moved to engage in disconfirming activities.

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Footnotes

¹It is possible that some targets, who perceive themselves to be introverted (negative trait or not), may have accepted our introvert feedback as true of them and, thus, unnecessary to disconfirm. There could also have been introverts in our extraverted feedback conditions, who may have felt the need to disconfirm that self-inconsistent feedback. Given that we did not measure targets' actual introversion-extraversion scores or their acceptance or lack of acceptance of the feedback given to them, we can only argue that we have conducted a rather conservative test and might expect bigger effects with a more focused test.

Table 1. Mean change from Time 1 to Time 2 in ratings of targets' Positive and Negative Extraversion by Expectation and Attribution.

Expectation		Extravert				Introvert			
Attribution		Personality Expressive		Situationally Responsive		Personality Expressive		Situationally Responsive	
Scale	Interaction	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Positive Extraversion	time one	5.07	0.65	5.05	0.59	4.96	0.57	5.00	0.64
	time two	5.27	0.55	5.18	0.67	5.18	0.52	4.87	0.82
	difference	+0.20	0.48	+0.13	0.63	+0.22	0.62	-0.13	0.58
Negative Extraversion	time one	2.84	0.36	2.86	0.36	2.83	0.36	2.82	0.32
	time two	2.92	0.45	2.83	0.38	3.13	0.39	2.84	0.35
	difference	+0.08	0.33	-0.03	0.47	+0.30	0.43	+0.02	0.41

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Changes in mean ratings of targets' positive extraversion from the first interaction to the second interaction as a function of expectation and attributional feedback.

Figure 2. Changes in mean ratings of targets' negative extraversion from the first interaction to the second interaction as a function of expectation and attributional feedback.

Figure 1.

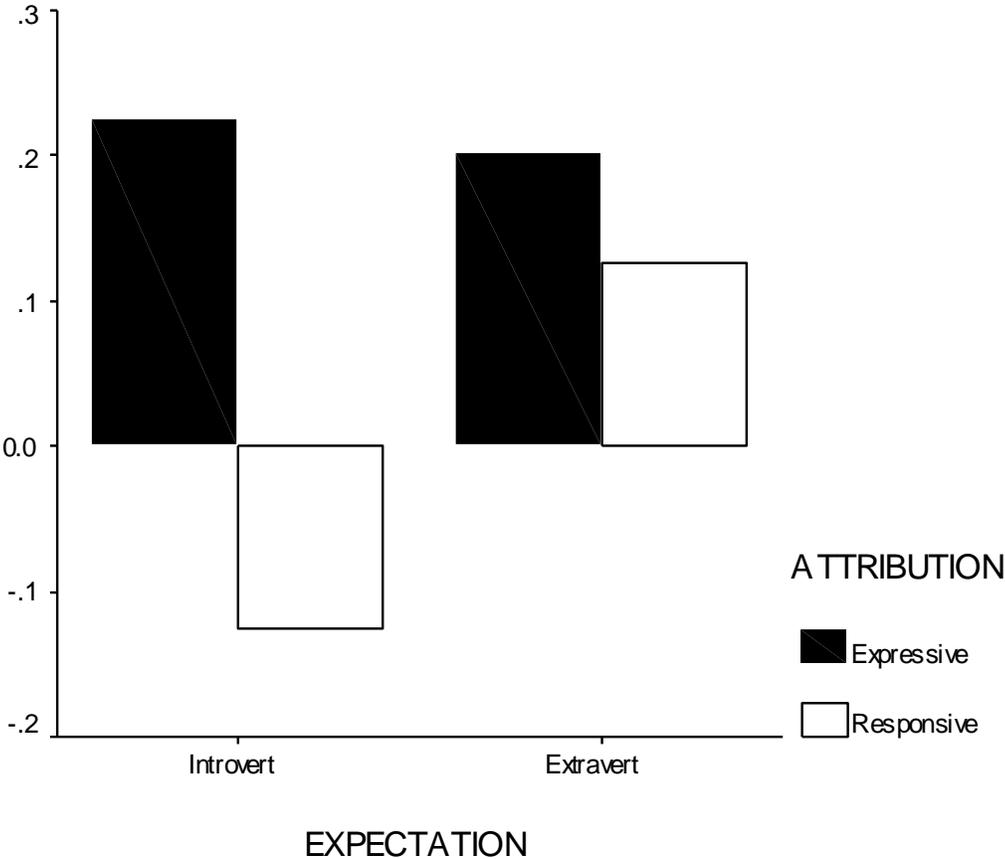


Figure 2.

