



What you expect is not always what you get: The roles of extremity, optimism, and pessimism in the behavioral confirmation process[☆]

Darcy A. Reich

Department of Psychology, Texas Tech University, Box 42051, Lubbock, TX 79409-2051, USA

Received 25 September 2002; revised 24 June 2003

Abstract

Do pessimists and optimists elicit the very behavior they expect from others? What if their expectations are fairly extreme? Using a simulated job interview paradigm, evidence was found for behavioral confirmation of generalized future-event expectancies (optimism/pessimism) and for the moderating role of extremity. Interviewers with nonextreme expectancies gathered information in an expectancy-biased fashion and elicited expectancy-confirming behavior from applicants. However, as interviewer expectancies became more extreme, these effects were attenuated. Further evidence suggested that extremity is associated with effortful correction processes and awareness of bias. Interestingly, pessimistic applicants were more strongly influenced by interviewers' expectancies than were optimistic applicants. The current study extends research on the social-cognitive consequences of generalized future-event expectancies and extremity to the behavioral domain.

© 2003 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Introduction

As social perceivers, we are often aware of our expectations about the behaviors, traits, and abilities of other people. These interpersonal expectancies may be based on previous encounters with those individuals, hearsay, or our own stereotypes and biased ways of interpreting our social world. What we may be less aware of is that these expectancies can have a profound influence on our own and others' behavior, ultimately affecting the course of social interactions. Specifically, expectations can create self-fulfilling prophecies (Mer-

ton, 1948), whereby people elicit behavior from others that is consistent with their expectations (behavioral confirmation; for reviews, see Jussim, 1986; Miller & Turnbull, 1986; Neberg, 1996b). For example, studies have demonstrated behavioral confirmation of teachers' expectancies about students (e.g., Jussim & Eccles, 1992; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), interviewers' expectancies about job applicants (e.g., Neberg, 1989; Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974), and counselors' expectancies about clients (e.g., Copeland & Snyder, 1995).

How can one person's expectations affect another person's behavior? Analyses of the behavioral confirmation process (e.g., Darley & Fazio, 1980; Miller & Turnbull, 1986; Snyder, 1992) suggest that a perceiver first adopts expectations about a target person, then treats the target according to these expectations (e.g., via biased information-gathering). The target then responds in accord with the perceiver's expectations (behavioral confirmation). For example, a perceiver with a negative expectancy might ask negatively biased questions that constrain the target's responses, thus eliciting unfavorable behavior from the target. If the perceiver then

[☆] This research was completed as part of a doctoral dissertation at the Ohio State University. I thank my advisor, Gifford Weary, and the other members of my dissertation committee, Richard E. Petty and Robert M. Arkin, for their valuable feedback. I also thank Richard McGlynn, Clyde Hendrick, James Beggan, and Sheila Garos for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript, and Grant Wright and Ben Naulty for their hard work in coding the interviews. Partial reports of these data were presented at the 2001 conference of the Midwestern Psychological Association and the 2002 meeting of Social Psychologists in Texas.

E-mail address: darcy.reich@ttu.edu.

interprets the target's behavior in an expectancy-consistent fashion, above and beyond the evidence provided by the target's actual behavior, perceptual confirmation has also occurred.

Under what circumstances do one person's expectations affect another person's behavior? In keeping with the current emphasis in social psychology on the role of motives and goals in directing cognition and behavior (see Gollwitzer & Bargh, 1996), recent research has examined perceiver and target goals as moderators of behavioral confirmation (for reviews, see Neuberg, 1996a; Snyder, 1992). For example, accuracy goals tend to motivate perceivers to gather a broad range of target information and to interpret that information in an unbiased fashion, thus reducing expectancy confirmation (e.g., Darley, Fleming, Hilton, & Swann, 1988; Neuberg, 1989). For targets, behavioral confirmation is enhanced when they desire to get along with the perceiver (Snyder & Haugen, 1995) or are encouraged to be deferential (Smith, Neuberg, Judice, & Biesanz, 1997). However, behavioral confirmation is reduced when targets focus on promoting their own agendas (Smith et al., 1997) or are highly certain of their own personality characteristics (Swann & Ely, 1984).

Generalized outcome expectancies

In most studies of behavioral confirmation, the expectancies of interest have been relatively explicit, have been experimentally manipulated, and have pertained to the states, traits, abilities, and actions of another individual. Although some studies have examined behavioral confirmation of expectancies associated with category knowledge, stereotypes, and implicit personality theories (for reviews, see Claire & Fiske, 1998; Hamilton, Sherman, & Ruvolo, 1990), previous studies have not examined behavioral confirmation of trait-driven expectancies—that is, expectations that stem from relatively stable individual difference factors (e.g., personal knowledge structures, cognitive styles). One such expectancy is the generalized future-event expectancy (optimism/pessimism; Andersen, 1990; Andersen, Spielman, & Bargh, 1992). Andersen and her colleagues argued that people vary in their tendencies to think about the future; some expect primarily positive things to happen to them and others expect more negative events to occur. Furthermore, these generalized outcome expectancies tend to be applied to both the self and others. Because such chronic expectancies are broadly applicable and are not limited to specific categories of people or to specific traits, they may have a pervasive influence on social judgments and social interactions.

Indeed, recent studies have provided evidence that perceivers' generalized future-event expectancies can influence their inferences regarding another person's performance in an assimilative fashion (Reich & Weary,

1998; Weary & Reich, 2001; Weary, Reich, & Tobin, 2001). More specifically, these studies have shown that when perceivers are cognitively busy, pessimistic perceivers make less favorable inferences about the ability and performance level of a target than do optimistic perceivers. However, when perceivers have sufficient motivation and cognitive resources, they search and correct for other factors that could have contributed to a target's outcome (e.g., task difficulty). Correction for these factors reduces the net impact of perceivers' generalized expectancies on their inferences about the target.

In addition to influencing social judgments, might generalized future-event expectancies also lead perceivers involved in social interactions to exhibit expectancy-consistent behaviors? If so, might perceivers' behaviors, in turn, elicit expectancy-confirming behavior from others?

Current research

The current research sought to go beyond previous findings regarding the perceptual consequences of generalized future-event expectancies to examine the conditions under which generalized future-event expectancies might be either confirmed or disconfirmed in social interactions. Using a procedure developed by Neuberg (1989), college student participants engaged in a simulated job interview. This paradigm is representative of many consequential social interactions and allows for the examination of relatively interactive and spontaneous behaviors. In the current study, interviewers varying in the valence of their future-event expectancies each conducted a phone interview with a job applicant. Interviewers then provided post-interview assessments of their targets. The interviews were recorded so that objective judges could assess applicants' performance and interviewers' information-gathering behaviors.

Based on previous research (Reich & Weary, 1998; Weary et al., 2001; Weary, Tobin, & Reich, 2001), it was expected that interviewers' generalized future-event expectancies would be relevant to forming expectations about the upcoming performance of the applicant. Thus, interviewers with pessimistic expectancies should expect their applicants to perform less adequately and to be less qualified for the job than should interviewers with optimistic expectancies. These interviewers were therefore expected to exhibit more negatively biased information-gathering behaviors (i.e., ask negatively tinged questions, spend less time listening, etc.), than those with optimistic expectancies. As a result of interviewers' biased behavior, applicants should be constrained to perform in an expectancy-consistent manner. Specifically, applicants of pessimistic interviewers should be

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات