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When you don't act as I expect

A comparative literature review of two perspectives on expectancy violations and disconfirmations

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ABSTRACT

The attitudes and opinions of most people have been shown to be rather unstable and people seem to express different views on different occasions. Some researchers even go as far as claiming that many people let chance decide what they answer on opinion polls and surveys. Still, there has long been a preference for strong opinions in our society. However, very strong and fixed attitudes may not be ideal in a modern world facing complex dilemmas. Instead, the ability to take in different arguments and change our attitudes should be valued. Therefore, the aim of this study has been to investigate what happens when people change their attitudes and do not act as expected. A literature review has been conducted with the purpose of looking closer at the role of expectancy violations and disconfirmations in the interpretation and evaluation of people's attitudes. The articles included in this review either takes the perspective of the *Expectancy Violations Theory* or the *Attributions Theory*. The findings show that expectancies do influence how we interpret and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of other people but they are not decisive in this process and it is possible to overcome them. Furthermore, the findings indicate that expectancy violations can lead to both increased and decreased persuasiveness depending on the strength of the arguments and how well regarded the person is. Moreover, expectancy violations can result in increased or decreased sincerity depending on if the expectancies that are violated are based on general or specific information.

Key words: Expectancy violations theory, Attributions theory, Attitudes, Attitude change, Persuasion, Sincerity

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1. INTRODUCTION

To have strong opinions have long been highly valued by Western culture. Throughout history people with strong convictions have been admired while contempt has been shown for people who lack convictions (Hirschmann, 1989). Still, we often hear of examples when people act in ways that strongly contradict their stated beliefs; the tax official who accepts black money, the policeman who commits a crime, or the respiratory doctor who smokes. The expectation among researchers has long been that a person's attitudes are evaluative predispositions that will affect how the person behaves. However, several studies have been conducted that fail to show a strong relation between attitudes and behaviors, and some researchers thus mean that attitudes are just one of many different variables that influence behavior (Gross & Niman, 1975).

Also the nature of most people's attitudes and opinions has been shown to be rather fleeting. Hall, Johansson, and Strandberg (2012) conducted a study of which the result made them question the utility of opinion polls, surveys, and similar common methods to elicit attitudes. Using a manipulated questionnaire they made a big number of the participants argue convincingly for the opposite view of the one they first had filled out, this without realizing that they had changed their viewpoint. They explained the participants' readiness to endorse the opposite view of a moral attitude by hypothesizing that maybe the dilemmas of today are so complex that it might not even be ideal to have very strong and fixed attitudes. "While principles are supposed to be the very core of our moral beings, it might be something that only a rigid and legalistic mind actually *can* adhere to" (Hall, Johansson & Strandberg, 2012, p. 7). Similarly, Chong and Duckman (2007) have by reviewing studies conducted within the field of public opinion concluded that stable opinions are rare and that it often seems like the respondents let chance decide their answers.

As we can see there are many credible sources pointing to the fact that most opinions are not very stable and that people in general express different views on different occasions. However, the underlying explanations for these outer manifestations of opinion change differ. Some scholars focus more on internal explanations and psychological processes while others focus more on external factors. One popular theory

that focus on external forces and aim at explaining why people change their attitudes is the theory of *framing*. For example, in one study 45 percent of the participants answered that they were pro letting hate groups organize political meetings but when the same question started with “given the importance of free speech” the number of participants who were in favor almost doubled. This is a clear example of how the expressed attitudes can change depending on how the same issue is phrased, that is, how the issue is framed (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). Another well-known theory that instead puts the focus on internal processes as a means of explaining opinion change is the theory of *cognitive dissonance*. The theory states that dissonance is a negative psychological state that arises when a person holds two inconsistent ideas, beliefs, or opinions at the same time. For example, a person who smokes but still thinks that smoking is bad for the health can, in order to reduce the dissonance, either stop smoking or try to justify the smoking by adjusting one's attitudes towards smoking (Festinger, 1957).

According to the economist and researcher Hirschmann (1989) having strong opinions can fulfill a purpose for the individual since it contributes to the sense of identity and connectedness. Nonetheless, it may not be all that positive on a societal level, he argues. For a democracy to be successful it is important with openness, a flexible mind, and the readiness to modify opinions and embrace new arguments. “Our traditional bias in favor of “strong” opinions ought to be modified, in part because it might be dangerous to the health of our democracy” Hirschmann (1989, p. 78) writes. He thus believes that we should find a way to both have opinions and keep an open mind. Also within the field of inter-cultural communication the importance of keeping an open mind is often highlighted as a crucial factor of competent communication. Other components often mentioned include flexibility, adaptation, and the ability to understand and take on different views and perspectives (e.g. Chen, 1989).

Maybe, then, the optimal is not to have very strong or rigid convictions but to be able to take in different arguments, views, and angles of the issues and moral dilemmas that surround us. To admit of being wrong, being able to adjust one's opinions when met with contrary facts, or change attitudes as our experience grow should at least be valued as high as holding the same convictions and opinions throughout a lifetime. Even when stepping aside from the discussion regarding what can be said to be the ideal, the fact remains that most people are not very consistent when it comes to their opinions, and as we have seen, the explanations for this differ depending on if we focus on external or internal factors.

How easy is it then to break free from people's expectations of how to behave, think, or communicate and be taken seriously when changing our attitudes, views or ideals. According to Burgoon (1993) expectancies guide all human behavior and it is thus a universal phenomenon. There are both general expectancies of how people within a certain culture behave, and specific expectancies related to how an individual behaves or communicates. Even though expectancies often are based on relatively limited data they influence both the subsequent information processing and perception of the social interaction and the characteristics of the person. The aim of this paper will be to look closer on what happens when a person does not act according to the expectancies, that is, when someone *violates* the expectancies. A literature review will be conducted with the purpose of looking closer at the role of expectancy violations/disconfirmations in the interpretation and evaluation of a person's communicative behavior. The special focus will be on the expression of attitudes. Studies related to the *attribution theory* and *expectancy violation theory* which originate from two different fields of study, social psychology and communication, will be compared and contrasted in order to see how the knowledge about the role of expectancies from the two fields can be integrated. In order to achieve this aim the following research questions will be used:

- In which way do expectancy violations/disconfirmations influence the interpretation and evaluation of a person's attitudes?
- Are expectancies decisive when it comes to how we interpret the communicative behavior of others, or is it possible to overcome these preconceptions through the actual communicative exchange?

Throughout the review the findings from the different studies will be compared and contrasted in order to see how they complement, contradict, and/or overlap each other. The hope is to get a clearer picture of the role of attitude based expectancy violations/disconfirmations by looking at two different theories that each has a different perspective and sheds light on different aspects of the phenomenon.

1.1 Central Concepts

In this section the central concepts and theories used and referred to in this literature review will be defined and explained.

1.1.1 EXPECTANCY AND EXPECTATION

The terms *expectancy* and *expectation* have a very similar meaning when defined in different dictionaries. As we can see the two words can both refer to the state a person is in when expecting something to happen, the act of expecting, as well as the object or thing that is being expected:

Merriam.webster.com:

Expectancy: “a feeling that something is going to happen” or “the act, action, or state of expecting”

Expectation: “the belief that something will happen or is likely to happen” or “the act or state of expecting”.

Dictionary.com:

Expectancy: “the quality or state of expecting” or “an object of expectation; something expected”

Expectation: “the act or the state of expecting” or “something expected; a thing looked forward to”.

Also among the articles included in this review the terms are used with a similar meaning.

Within some of the articles both terms are used within the same sentence:

“A person [...] who violates *expectancies* associated with a specific role is seen as more sincere than a person who conforms to *expectations*” (Mc Peek & Edwards, 1975, p.194). “When a person has a strong *expectancy* based on [...] followed by observation of an actor’s behavior that violates that *expectation* [...]” (Bell et al, 1976, p. 326).

In this literature review the term *expectancy* will be used. The reason for this is that a majority of the articles use that term more often than *expectation* when referring to some

kind of anticipated behavior or attitude. An exception will be made for direct quotes including the word expectation.

1.1.2 VIOLATION AND DISCONFIRMATION

In the context of this review, the violation or disconfirmation of an expectancy refer to when the attitudes or behavior of another person is not the same as expected. The difference is that the term violation is used more often in the field of communication while disconfirmation is a common term used in psychology. In this paper both terms will be used interchangeably.

1.1.3 RECEIVER, SENDER, PARTICIPANT AND TARGET

In the articles included in this review a wide variety of different words are used in order to explain the different actors involved in an interaction or experiment. Perceiver, subject, and observer are all names referring to a person who holds an expectancy or interprets the behavior of another. Target, source, and communicator are common words referring to a person whose expressed attitudes or behavior either confirms or disconfirms the expectancy. This can be rather confusing since a communicator normally can refer to both a person sending and receiving a message (see e.g. Shannon and Weaver, 1949), and the word subject simply refers to a person undergoing research in a scientific experiment. Because of this, for the sake of clarity, the word *receiver* or *participant* will be used when referring to a person receiving a message and/or holding an expectancy (in the context of a scientific experiment). The word *sender* or *target* will be used when referring to a person expressing a certain attitude or behavior. Hence, the participant of the experiment holds an expectancy about the behavior of the target person.

1.2 Central theories

1.2.1 EXPECTANCY VIOLATIONS THEORY (EVT)

Expectancies have a fundamental role in all human communication and are thus universal. They both shape and define interactions between people and function as a kind of

interaction schemata that are activated whenever a communicative act takes place. There are different kinds of expectancies depending on if they apply to many members of a culture or community, or to a specific person. The general expectancies are related to norms and standards for what is seen as proper and acceptable behavior within a certain context, while the specific expectancies are related to how a certain individual usually interacts or behaves. In both cases the expectancies work as perceptual filters that to a high degree influence how the information is processed, that is, how the social interaction and behavior of the other person is interpreted and evaluated. According to the expectancy violations theory (EVT), when a communicator's behavior is different enough from the expectancy, the violation directs the attention toward the characteristics of the communicator and the meaning of the violation. Depending on the interpreted meaning assigned to the violation, together with the person who has committed it, the violation is evaluated and valenced as either positive or negative. The more ambiguous the meaning of the violation is, the more important the communicator reward valence becomes, that is, the characteristics of the communicator (Burgoon, 1993).

1.2.2 ATTRIBUTIONS THEORY

Attribution theory is in fact a term referring to a group of sub-theories with the focus on the perceived causes of other people's behavior. The general idea is that depending on which cause that is interpreted as bringing about a certain behavior, the reactions to and evaluations of that behavior will differ. One common way of making attributions is by interpreting if the cause of the behavior is internal or external, that is, if the cause should be attributed to a personal disposition or characteristic of the person, or some situational factor in the environment. According to attribution theory people have expectations both about the attitudes and behavior of specific individuals and about common behavior in different situations. The first kind of expectation builds on beliefs about past consistency and the assumption that people will behave in a similar way as they have done in the past. The second kind of expectation builds on beliefs about consensus and the likelihood that particular behaviors take place in particular situations. The effects of a person acting in another way than expected usually depend on which sort of expectation that is disconfirmed (Kelley & Michela, 1980).

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the methodological choices will be presented. The process of searching for and selecting the articles will be described together with an account of how the analysis was made. Finally, possible limitations of the review will be outlined.

2.1 Best-evidence synthesis

In order to review the existing literature on the impact of expectancy violations/disconfirmations a *best-evidence synthesis* was conducted. This kind of review has been proposed by Slavin (1986) as a good way of combining some of the advantages of both the systematic and the narrative review. A *systematic review* is according to Ridley (2012) often conducted by a group of experienced professionals in order to synthesize findings from a large number of studies. It is common that the review is requested by some part of the government to function as a basis for decision making. An important point is that the aim of a systematic review is to look at *all* of the published and unpublished literature on a particular topic (Cronin, Ryan & Coughlan, 2008). A *narrative review* on the other hand is not as systematic since it often does not mention the criteria for the selected sources and does not look at all the different findings available within the topic (Cronin et al, 2008). Moreover, the narrative review often includes an interpretation and critique of the findings based on the reviewers' own experience ("Elsevier Guide", n.d.). Neither of these kinds of reviews is to prefer for this paper. The reason for this is that there is not enough resources in form of time and people to be able to in a credible way present and analyze all published and unpublished studies available within the topic, which disqualifies the systematic review. Moreover, the reviewer does not have the right experience and expertise to comment on and interpret the findings based on own experience, which disqualifies the narrative review.

Considering the purpose of this review and the sources available, the best-evidence synthesis is especially suitable since it, according to "Elsevier Guide" (n.d.), lets the reviewer focus on and perform a deeper analysis of a selection of the most relevant studies, rather than just listing a brief summary of all studies conducted within the topic.

Slavin (1986, p. 7) expresses it in the following way: “The greatest problem with exhaustive inclusion is that it often produces such a long list of studies that the reviewer cannot possibly describe each one. I would argue that all other things being equal, far more information is extracted from a large literature by clearly describing the best evidence on a topic than by using limited journal space to describe statistical analyses of the entire methodologically and substantively diverse literature”. For this reason, eleven articles that are seen to represent the main ideas of the field have been selected for analysis. A more detailed account on how this selection proceeded follows in the next section.

2.2 A four-stage process of conducting the literature review

The main goal of this literature review was not simply to summarize what studies have been conducted within the topic and to list the findings and methods used. Instead the hope was to be able to combine the small pieces of knowledge from different studies into a whole and see how they relate to each other. This is where the method of conducting the literature review based on grounded theory came in handy. It was developed by Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller and Wilderom (2013) and as they express it: “Grounded theory [...] enables the researcher to come up with a theory-based or concept-centric yet accurate review (p.47)”. At the heart of this method lies the opportunity to compare themes and integrate theories and different perspectives. This opportunity was highly valued for this review since it aimed to integrate the findings related to expectancies from two fields of studies and see how the different concepts relate to each other.

Here follows a description of the five stage process of conducting a literature review as suggested by Wolfswinkel et al (2013) together with an account of how that has been applied in this particular review.

2.2.1 STAGE 1: DEFINING

The first step involves identifying a topic of interest that is worth looking closer into. In this paper the interest started out by looking at the fleeting nature of people's opinions and attitudes and the fact that we sometimes seem to hold attitudes more for the sake of

them giving us a solid identity than actually guiding our behavior. Then the search continued by looking at credible sources reasoning that having very strong opinions or attitudes are neither very common nor always the optimal. Moving on from there the question arose that if consistency of behavior and strong convictions are the ideal, what does happen when these are violated, and thus the concept of expectancies came into focus. When the focus had been narrowed and a research question had been specified it was time to define the more specific criteria for inclusion.

Criteria for inclusion and exclusion

The articles used in this literature review have exclusively been derived from peer-reviewed scholarly sources which is to prefer according to the Elsevier Guide (n.d.) since the claims made there have been scrutinized, and are thus likely to be more trustworthy. The researcher of this review does not have enough experience to be able to critically evaluate the quality of the methodological choices and claims made in articles from other sources that have not gone through the extensive process of peer reviewing. Because of this, information from newspaper articles, websites, non-academic research and books have been excluded from the review. Furthermore, only articles in English have been selected due to the language proficiency of the researcher as well as the ease of comparing terminology and concepts between the studies. In the first stage of the search process no limitation regarding year of publication was applied since an overview of the total scope of the field was preferred. Also in the later stage of the search no time limitation was applied since the initial search revealed that the relevant studies within the topic were conducted within a rather broad time frame. Lastly, both studies that directly answered any of the two research questions, as well as studies that described any of the concepts relevant for the questions were included. An example of this was studies describing the effect of expectancy violations, and thus directly answering one of the research questions, as well as studies describing factors that moderate this effect, and thus expanding the explanations.

Search terms

The process of formulating relevant search terms started out by identifying keywords from the research questions. This attempt resulted in the following terms: *expectancy/cies/, violation/s/, disconfirmation/s/, interpretation, evaluation, attitude/s/, communication, and behavior*. As a second step Ridley (2012) suggests to read a few

different articles within the specific topic to identify other alternative phrases and synonyms. This turned out to be a good strategy since it was fairly common that for example articles related to attribution theories often used the term *expectation* instead of expectancy. Additional words identified were the following: *unexpected, consequence/s/, explanation/s/, perception, opinion/s/, interaction, action/s/*. Finally, the different keywords were combined with Boolean Operators such as AND, OR, and NOT.

2.2.2 STAGE 2 & 3: SEARCHING AND SELECTING

Since the relevant articles for this review were expected to be found in journals related to both the field of communication and social psychology, the search started out in the **bibliographical database of Gothenburg University** which subscribes to a number of databases and journals within these fields. This gave the advantage of examining if the search would generate any relevant articles published in other journals that would have been missed out on if the search had only been conducted within specific databases. According to Ridley (2012) bibliographical databases are becoming increasingly important in providing sources of information for literature reviews since they include a multitude of electronic journals.

After some relevant initial articles had been found, the sources of those were located and a search was conducted within the specific databases. In this way the databases were not decided in beforehand. During the search every step of the process was documented in a spreadsheet in order to keep track of the combination of keywords that had been used in each database, together with the information about each article. The mere part of the articles could be excluded based on the title and by reading through the abstract, while some required a more thorough reading of the main parts. When no more relevant articles was found, the **snowball technique** was applied which means that references from the different articles are followed up. This technique is according to Ridley (2012) the most common way of extending the scope of the reading and helps to focus the research on the most relevant studies. After a while the researcher got more familiar with the most recurring texts and cited authors within the topic. After reading through the remaining articles in a more thorough way, the final selection was made. Table 1 demonstrates the number of selected articles from each database, while table 2 provides an overview of the details of each selected article.

Table 1: The selection from the different databases

Resource	First selection	Final selection
JSTOR	9	1
Wiley Online Library	17	3
ScienceDirect (Elsevier)	23	4
ProQuest	26	2
Business Source Premier	5	1

Table 2: The final selection of articles

Author & Year of Publication	Title	Journal	Database	Cross-referencing (the article refers to)	Research approach
Karmarkar, U. R., & Tormala, Z. L. (2010)	Believe me, I have no idea what I'm talking about: The effects of source certainty on consumer involvement and persuasion.	Journal of Consumer Research	JSTOR		Experimental
Burgoon, J. K., & LePoire, B. A. (1993)	Effects of communication expectancies, actual communication, and expectancy disconfirmation on evaluations of communicators and their communication behavior.	Human Communication Research	Wiley Online		Experimental
Burgoon, M., Birk, T. S., & Hall, J. R. (1991)	Compliance and satisfaction with physician-patient communication.	Human Communication Research	Wiley Online		Experimental
Reeder, G. D., Fletcher, G. J. O., & Furman, K. (1989)	The role of observers' expectations in attitude attribution.	Journal of Experimental Social Psychology	ScienceDirect (Elsevier)	Jones, E. E., Worchel, S., Goethals, G. R., & Grumet, J. F. (1971)	Experimental
Burgoon, J.K, Stacks, D.W., & Burch, S.A. (1982)	The role of nonverbal violations of expectations in interpersonal influence.	Communication	Wiley Online		Experimental
Eagly, A. H., Wood, W., & Chaiken, S. (1978)	Causal inferences about communicators and their effect on opinion change.	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	ProQuest	Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1975); McPeck, R. W., & Edwards, J.D. (1975)	Experimental
Bell, L. G., Wicklund, R. A., Manko, G., & Larkin, C. (1976)	When unexpected behavior is attributed to the environment.	Journal of Research in Personality	ScienceDirect (Elsevier)		Experimental

Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1975)	An attribution analysis of the effect of communicator characteristics on opinion change: The case of communicator attractiveness.	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	ProQuest		Experimental
McPeck, R. W., & Edwards, J.D. (1975)	Expectancy disconfirmation and attitude change.	Journal of Social Psychology	Business Source Premiere	Jones, E. E., Worchel, S., Goethals, G. R., & Grumet, J. F. (1971)	Experimental
Regan, D. T., Straus, E., & Fazio, R. (1974)	Liking and the attribution process.	Journal of Experimental Social Psychology	ScienceDirect (Elsevier)		Experimental
Jones, E. E., Worchel, S., Goethals, G. R., & Grumet, J. F. (1971)	Prior expectancy and behavioral extremity as determinants of attitude attribution.	Journal of Experimental Social Psychology	ScienceDirect (Elsevier)		Experimental

2.2.3 STAGE 4: ANALYZING

Before starting the analysis of the papers one could divide them into sub-areas, but Wolfswinkel et al (2013) point out that this should only be done in cases when it is really necessary, for example when two different disciplinary cases are involved. In the case of this literature review it served a purpose to divide the papers into two categories depending on if the article's frame of reference was related to the expectancy violations theory or the attributions theory. In nine out of eleven articles it was rather evident which frame of reference the study was built upon since either the EVT or some aspect of the attribution theory was referred to. In two of the articles however, no clear reference to either theory was given. In those cases a closer examination of the concepts and themes discussed in each article was conducted, and in this way the articles could be placed in the category with the most similar perspective on the topic.

As suggested by Wolfswinkel et al (2013), each article was then carefully read through and any findings relevant for the scope of the review was highlighted, and in this way got to represent an excerpt. The excerpts were then divided into groups depending on which concepts and ideas they represented, for example communicator characteristics. This process is within grounded theory referred to as open-coding. Thereafter interrelations between categories and their sub-categories were identified, for example different kinds of communicator characteristics. This process is referred to as axial-coding. As the final step, also known as selective coding, the relations between the main categories were identified and developed, in the case of this review between the combined findings related to EVT and attribution theory.

2.3 Limitations

One possible limitation of this review is that the mere part of the articles included are published before the year of 2000. This can have the consequence that some of the external circumstances that prevailed at the time when the studies were conducted may have changed. It is thus possible that the results would have looked different if the experiments had been conducted today. However, this does not mean that the findings are no longer valid. As an example, in one of the studies Burgoon et al (1991) concluded that male physicians were more successful than female physicians in gaining compliance

when violating expectancies. It was thus concluded that high valenced communicators had a broader range of acceptable behavior while low valenced communicators did best in conforming to the norm. If the purpose of this review had been to investigate the difference between men and women in gaining compliance from patients, then the year of publication could have been a significant problem. The reason for this is that the acceptance and status of women within male dominated professions may have changed a lot since the year of 1991 when the study was conducted. However, for the aim of this review it is enough to conclude that the reward valence of a person influences how we interpret and evaluate an expectancy violation. Hence, it is not of interest for this article whether the status of women has improved or not. This also means that even though the same experiment possibly would have generated different findings if it has been conducted today, the findings are still of interest and the group of women could have been replaced by another group of low-valenced individuals. Furthermore, the more recent articles included in this review have come to similar conclusions as the preceding ones and the older articles are also frequently referred to in more recent research since they laid much of the foundation of the ideas and concepts used within the field today. However, most of the later research that relates their findings to the notion of expectancies does not focus on attitudes. Similarly, most recent research related to attitudes and persuasion does not focus on the effect of expectancies. For this reason the most relevant articles on the topic that have been included in this review are a bit older.

Another limitation of this study is that only articles from peer-reviewed journals have been included. This due to the lack of experience and knowledge of the researcher when it comes to evaluating the quality and validity of other resources. This can have the consequence that relevant information related to the topic have been left out. Furthermore, the selection of articles is based on an interpretation of the titles, abstracts, summaries and by skimming through the articles. Consequently, even though the same key words are used in the search process, different researchers may interpret the content of the articles differently and this may influence the selection. Because of this Wolfswinkel et al (2013) argues that it can be beneficial for the reliability of the study to be at least two researchers with a minimum of 90% overlap when selecting the articles. It is thus considered a limitation for this review that the articles were selected by only one person, even though this lack has tried to be compensated for by a more thorough screening of the articles.

3. FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings from the analysis of the eleven articles included in this literature review will be presented. The chapter is divided into three sections. First, the relationship between expectancies and actual behavior will be described. Second, findings related to persuasion, objectivity, and credibility will be presented. Third, the effect of expectancy violations on perceived sincerity and honesty will be outlined.

3.1 Expectancies vs the actual communicative behavior

People's expectancies regarding how another person will behave or act influence how the actual behavior of that person is interpreted and evaluated. This was shown in a study conducted by Burgoon and Le Poire (1993) in which the participants were led to form either positive or negative expectancies regarding their interaction partner's personal characteristics and communication style. The partner then engaged in either a pleasant and involved, or an unpleasant and uninvolved communication style. The results showed that the pre-expectancies persisted throughout the interaction and influenced the evaluations of both the partner's personal characteristics and communicative behavior. Positive expectancies regarding the partner's personal attributes influenced the perception of his or her communicative behavior, and as a result the person was seen as more socially competent. Conversely, positive expectancies regarding the partner's communicative behavior led to more favorable evaluations of his or her character. However, even though the pre-expectancies influenced the final evaluation of the person, the actual interaction did matter and made a difference as well. A pleasant and involved communication style led to more positive evaluations of the target over all. As the researchers put it: "the research indicates that pre-interaction expectancies persist despite strong intervening effects of actual communication and combine additively with actual communication to influence post-interaction target and communication evaluation" (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1993, p. 91). This shows that people reason both deductively from general characteristics

to the specific communicative behavior, and inductively from the specific interaction to assessments of more enduring attributes.

Another interesting finding from the same study was that when the actual communication violated the expectancy, that is, when the interaction partner communicated in either a more or less pleasant way than expected, the evaluation of the target's competence, attractiveness, and character increased compared to when the expectancy was confirmed. That means that when the partner interacted in a more positive way than expected, the characteristics of that person was evaluated in a more positive way than when his or her behavior confirmed the expectancies (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1993). This gives support to the EVT's prediction that violations heighten the focus on the personal characteristics.

3.1.1 GENERAL AND SPECIFIC EXPECTANCIES

In the Burgoon and Le Poire (1993) study described above, a miscalculation was made. The researchers only took the specific expectancies about the targets of the study into account. What they did not think about is that on top of the specific expectancies about the character or communicative style of a certain individual, there are also more general expectancies based on societal norms of how to behave in certain situations. The researchers were confused by the fact that when the participants were induced to hold negative expectancies about their interaction partner, and the partner then did interact in a negative way, there was a violation effect even though it technically should have been a confirmation of the expectancy. The authors reasoned that the explanation for this miscalculation must be that there are general preferences in the society for pleasant interactions, and when the interaction partner then interacted in an unpleasant way, these general expectancies were violated.

A similar miscalculation was made in the McPeck and Edwards (1975) study. The experiment tested the hypothesis that a person expressing unexpected attitudes would be more persuasive than the same person delivering expected messages. In the study a long-haired hippie and a religious person were arguing against and pro marijuana. The hypothesis was only confirmed in the case of the persons arguing anti marijuana. One possible explanation for this according to the researchers is that an unseen person was used in the experiment, who also argued against and pro marijuana, and about whom the

participants did not have any information. The researchers therefore assumed that no expectancies would be formed about the nature of this person's attitudes. Nevertheless, since an anti-marijuana standpoint is more common in society at large, there might have been general expectancies in that direction. As a matter of fact, the unseen person arguing pro marijuana did elicit more attitude change than both the unseen person arguing against marijuana, as well as any other person in the experiment. Hence, the pro-attitude might have violated the general societal expectancies. More information about the relationship between expectancies and persuasion will be given in a later section.

3.1.2 ATTRIBUTION OF CAUSALITY

The notion that there are different kinds of expectancies that are based either on information about a specific person's character, attitudes or communication style, or information about some kind of external situation or reality, has been investigated further by Bell, Wicklund, Manko and Larkin (1976). Taking the perspective of the attributions theory, they conducted a study in which the participants were informed about two possible causes for an event to occur and were then given more information about the nature of one of those causes. The experiment showed that the participants most often attributed the reason for the event to the cause about which they had the least information. This made the researchers contend that: "a disconfirmed expectancy will lead the person to direct his attention toward possible causes about which he is uninformed" (p. 316). The explanation for this is that people base their expectancies about other people's behavior either in knowledge of the person or knowledge of the environment. Also, it is often the case that parallel expectancies exist both about the person and the environment, and usually one of them is dominant. When the behavior of a person is unexpected, the strongest expectancy will survive and the weakest will change and serve as an explanation for the behavior. This means that if the strongest expectancy originates from knowledge about the person's character, the environment or situational constraints will be seen as a plausible cause of the behavior. Likewise, if the strongest expectancy has to do with knowledge about the situation, disconfirmatory behavior will be attributed to some internal trait of the person. This way of either explaining the cause of an event by looking at the internal dispositions of a person or at the situational constraints in the environment, is called to make "causal attributions" (Bell et al, 1976). What can be concluded from this

study is that depending on which kind of expectancy that is disconfirmed, this will have different results for which kind of causal attributions that are made, that is, how the behavior or attitude is explained.

In another study conducted by Regan et al (1974) the notion of causal attributions was examined in relation to liking. In two different experiments observers were asked to attribute the behavior of either a disliked or liked person to situational or personal factors. The liking was developed both in the lab by giving certain information about the target persons to the participants, and naturally by letting the participants attribute the behavior of actual acquaintances that they already liked or disliked. The behaviors they had to analyze were related to either the performance on a task or a prosocial act. The results showed that a liked person is expected to perform well and do good actions while a disliked person is expected to perform poorly and do bad actions. When these expectancies are disconfirmed we tend to attribute them to factors that can help us preserve our existing levels of liking. This means that when a liked actor performs poorly or a disliked actor performs well we tend to attribute the behavior to an external factor, for example a difficult task in the first case and an easy task in the second case. Conversely when the liked actor performs well or the disliked actor performs poorly, we tend to attribute the behavior to some internal disposition, for example talent in the first case and poor skills in the second case. The experiment also showed that prosocial acts like helping a person in need, were internally attributed for a liked person and externally attributed for a disliked other. In this way the good deed was either downplayed or enhanced depending on whom it concerned. This tendency to use attributions in order to stabilize and preserve existing levels of liking can, according to Regan et al, make it more difficult to change one's opinion about a disliked other. Notable in this experiment is the fact that the prosocial act conducted by a stranger was most often attributed externally in the same way as with a disliked other. The researchers explain this by pointing to the fact that the situation was explained to the subjects as one with strong situational pressures to help.

3.1.3 ATTITUDE STRENGTH AND CONTRAST EFFECT

Jones, Worchel, Goethals and Grumet (1971) were also interested in finding out which source of information that is usually trusted when the expectancy and the actual behavior does not match. Their focus was on attitudes and in an experiment they asked the

participants to estimate the true attitude of a target person. This was achieved by letting them read an essay in which the person argued for one side of a controversial issue. What was altered between the different conditions was the direction of the essay and its extremity, whether the target person was free to choose the position or not, and the prior expectancies of the participants. It was predicted that under no-choice conditions, when the participants knew that the position of the essay was assigned to the target person, they would discount the essay and fall back on prior expectancies. This was shown to be correct to some extent. However, when the assigned attitude expressed in the essay was weak, the subjects attributed the opposite attitude to the person.

Similarly, in an experiment conducted by Reeder, Fletcher and Furman (1989) the participants were informed about the target person's pre-attitude and then watched the person being instructed to write an essay in favor of the opposite position. After reading the essay which contained surprisingly extreme arguments they were asked to estimate the person's real attitude. The results showed that their estimation of the person's post-attitude was more in line with the essay even though they knew that the position was assigned. The researchers argue that this is due to the assumption that the writer must have changed his or her attitude while writing the essay. They contended that "observers may overestimate the consistency between an actor's attitude and the actor's behavior" something referred to as the correspondent bias (Reeder et al, 1989, p. 169). People are simply not thought as likely to express extreme attitudes that they do not agree with, even though the situation requires them to do so.

Another interesting phenomenon that was found in the study by Jones et al (1971) was that when a person holds overly strong early expectancies about the attitudes or behavior of a person and then gets new information which shows that they were wrong, they tend to overreact to this new information. The authors describe it as follows: "It is apparent that the shift is striking indeed, as if the subject, having been earlier misled to form one impression of the target person, now swings too far in the other direction" (p. 78). What this means is that in some cases when people jump to hasty conclusions about the attitudes of another person without basing this on deep enough knowledge about that individual, and the target person then expresses another attitude than expected, this attitude seems to get a disproportionate importance in the mind of the observer. This kind of overcompensation is in the article referred to as a contrast effect and seems to occur only in those cases when there is no obvious factor in the situation which can explain the unexpected attitude. Furthermore, the findings point to the fact that the contrast effect

mostly occurs when the person has not publicly committed him- or herself to a certain impression that he or she feels the need of defending. However the researchers express that they still do not know exactly at which point the behavior displaces the expectancy: “At some point of the continuum [...] the tendency to discount new information in favor of a prior expectancy shifts into a tendency to reject the expectancy and to embrace completely the new information” (Jones et al, 1971, p. 79).

3.2 Persuasion, objectivity, and credibility

3.2.1 INCREASED COGNITIVE ELABORATION

As mentioned in the first section of the findings the violation of expectancies often result in a heightened attention on the meaning of the violation and the characteristics of the target person (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1993). Karmarkar and Tormala (2010) thus wanted to investigate if this attention could lead to increased persuasion by putting focus on the content of the message or the attitude. From a logical point of view the most persuasive combination should be that a person with a high level of expertise expresses an attitude with great certainty since the arguments should be most valid then. The researchers argue that this is probably the case when there is an objectively correct answer. However, when it comes to subjective judgments like attitudes other forces need to be taken into account. They hypothesized that incongruity between certainty and credibility could increase persuasion by raising involvement and promoting cognitive elaboration. This happens when an expert within an area expresses uncertainty about his or her attitudes and when an amateur or person with a low level of expertise expresses a high level of certainty. The reason for this is that the unexpected message feels more surprising and as a consequence makes the recipient feel more involved. The result of the experiment did confirm the hypothesis and showed that the most persuasive combination was when a famous food critic expressed uncertainty about his evaluation of the food in a restaurant review, and when a person without any knowledge about food expressed certainty in another review of the same restaurant. Important to note is that this effect only appeared when the message contained strong arguments. When the message instead included weak

arguments, the greater involvement and focus on the arguments highlighted the deficiencies of the weak arguments and consequently reduced or reversed the effect.

Another factor moderating the effect that expectancy violations can have on persuasion is the characteristics of the person, that is, the *communicator's reward valence*. Burgoon and Le Poire (1993) argued that target persons who are expected to be rewarding to talk to due to some positive quality like attractiveness, similarity, status, or social skills, are positively valued, while persons who are dissimilar from oneself or who are in a bad or negative mood, are negatively valenced. In the experiment of Burgoon and Le Poire (1993) positively valenced targets were for example more positively evaluated than negatively valenced targets when it came to their competence, character, communicative behavior, social attractiveness, and task attractiveness. This independently of their actual behavior.

For this reason Burgoon et al (1982) wanted to test what kind of impact communicator valence would have on persuasion. They did this by letting two assistants with high valence and two assistants with low valence argue for two opposite sides of a legal case with the goal of persuading a third person. One of the assistants then moved either too close or too far away from the person in relation to the norm, and hence committed a proxemic violation. The other assistant remained on the same spot. What is interesting is that the findings showed that the high-valenced persons were more persuasive when violating the proxemic expectancies, both in comparison to themselves when conforming to the norm, and relative to the other assistant. The low-valenced persons, on the other hand, were most persuasive when conforming to the norm, and a proxemic violation would in this case instead lower their credibility.

These findings are quite similar to the ones of Burgoon (1991) in which male physicians were shown to gain more compliance from patients regarding medical prescriptions and recommendations when they communicated in both a more and less aggressive manner than the expected neutral direction giving tone. For the female physicians however, the strategies for gaining compliance from the patients were much more limited and any deviation from the expected low-intense nonaggressive interaction style led to negative violations. The researchers contended that the reason for these findings is that women generally speaking have a lower status in society compared to men. They also argued that with this lower valence comes a much narrower bandwidth of socially accepted behavior: “[...] it is very difficult for females to positively violate expectations; in fact, it is quite likely that any deviations, even relatively trivial changes,

from the expected roles of females result in negative violations of expectations (Burgoon, 1991, p. 182).” In contrast, the higher valenced male physicians were much freer to select communication style and benefited from violating the expectancies. The combined results from these two studies point to the fact that high-valenced individuals can gain benefits from violating the expectancies of the person they want to persuade or gain compliance from. It does not seem to matter if the violation concerns verbal or nonverbal behavior. For low-valenced people on the other hand, it is more beneficial to conform to the expectancies and norms of society.

3.2.2 REDUCTION OF BIASES

In the former section the increased persuasion that resulted from expectancy violations was described from the perspective of the expectancy violations theory. When instead looking at persuasiveness from the perspective of attribution theory it is important to consider people’s explanations and attributions for *why* a person holds a certain attitude or position. This is the reason why Eagly, Wood and Chaiken (1978) chose to look closer at the role of biases in relation to persuasiveness. They identified two types of perceived biases that influenced how persuasive a person was considered to be: *knowledge bias* and *reporting bias*. The first bias refers to the belief that a person’s knowledge does not match reality and is somehow incorrect. The reason for this can for example be that the person has a certain background or personal characteristics that may influence his or her attitudes or beliefs, for instance a young person who thinks that less money should be spent on elderly care. The second bias refers to the belief that a person is unwilling to convey truthful information. The reason for this can be for instance that the person is very polite or wants to make a good impression. The researchers then predicted that when a recipient of a persuasive message generates an expectancy about the position that they think the other person will take, it is likely that this is made based on some characteristic of the person, his or her background, or some pressures in the external situation. Hence these are all factors that are likely to influence the extent to which the knowledge of the sender is perceived as objective, as well as his or her willingness to report a correct version of reality. When the persuasive message do not match the expectancies based on what is believed to be the person’s character or personal circumstances, the recipient will try to identify other possible reasons for the position taken. The reason that often seems most

probable is then that the true external reality made the sender form an objective truthful argument free from bias. Such an argument should be seen as more valid and credible and thus be more persuasive. The actual experiment did confirm this prediction and the researchers managed to demonstrate that disconfirmation of expectancies can lead to increased persuasion by reducing the perceived biases, and as a consequence make the arguments seem more objective.

In the study above, all of the persons arguing for different positions were constructed to be equal in all aspects except for their opinions. What this means is that it was made sure that none of them were considered to be more attractive or similar to the audience than the others, and thus the increased persuasiveness was only a result of the disconfirmed expectancies. In another study however, Eagly and Chaiken (1975) wanted to test how a certain characteristic, namely communicator attractiveness, which is known to affect persuasiveness would influence the result. They therefore manipulated the perceived attractiveness of the persons who were going to give a persuasive speech by either letting them praise or insult students, after which they either argued for a very desirable or undesirable position. In addition to that they measured the pre-expectancies of another group of participants and concluded that attractive people were expected to say pleasant things while unattractive people were expected to say unpleasant things. As predicted the attractive persons were significantly more persuasive than the unattractive individuals when arguing for undesirable positions. The researchers did expect this to occur since attractiveness is known to increase persuasion. What is worth noting is that the attractive and unattractive communicators were equally persuasive when arguing for the desirable position. The researchers explain this finding by stating that since the unattractive person was not expected to argue for a desirable position, the disconfirmation of expectancies led to increased persuasion by removing perceived biases, just as in the Eagly et al. (1978) study described earlier. This shows that even though attractive and likeable persons are often more persuasive, the attribution effect, i.e. the tendency of viewing unexpected communicators as less biased, can moderate this effect. “With undesirable positions the usual persuasive advantage of attractive communicators became even more pronounced, while with desirable positions, the attribution effect served to contract and slightly reverse the usual difference favoring attractive communicators” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1975, p. 143).

The findings in this section show that violated or disconfirmed expectancies about a person’s attitudes can increase persuasion and perceived credibility. However, the

explanations for why this effect occurs differ depending on if it is viewed from the perspective of the EVT or the attributions theory. In the next section the role of expectancies in relation to sincerity will be described.

3.3 Sincerity and honest attitudes

McPeck and Edwards (1975) found in their study support for the notion that violations of expectancies can lead to increased perceived sincerity. As described earlier they focused on different expectancies associated with social roles and appearances. The participants in their study had to form their expectancies naturally about one person who looked like a long-haired hippie and another person looking like a religious seminarian. The prediction was that when a person acts out of role and expresses another attitude than expected, the attitude will be seen as more sincere since the person is believed to act out of strong inner convictions instead of adjusting to the external requirements of the role. Furthermore, the researchers predicted that this increased perceived sincerity would lead to increased persuasion. The results of the experiment did indeed show that the violation of expectancies about which kind of attitudes a certain stereotype or person with a certain social role would express, did increase both the perceived sincerity and honesty of the person. However, the researchers failed to find support for the prediction that the increased sincerity would also lead to increased convincingness, and thus concluded: "Failure to confirm the predictions regarding convincingness is confusing in light of the other confirmed hypothesis. Apparently, a communicator who is perceived as sincere and honest is not necessarily perceived as convincing [...]" (p. 203).

These findings can be related to the Eagly et al (1978) study of which the results show that both increased sincerity and persuasion can be a result of expectancy disconfirmations, but one of them does not necessarily lead to the other. The reason for this is that in order for an attitude to be considered as sincere or honest, the only thing that is needed is that the person expressing the attitude believes it to be true. This means that the person does not convey a misleading attitude that he or she does not hold, what the authors call a reporting bias. For this reason, in the experiment conducted by Eagly et al, the more an attitude differed from the views of the audience, the more sincere and honest it was considered to be. The explanation for this is related to the reporting bias that

was mentioned earlier. If a person advocates the same position as his or her audience, the receivers of the message may assume that he or she has to some extent shifted the message towards the position of the audience in order to be more liked or respected. Because of this, receivers of different attitudinal messages often adjust for what they believe to be the true opinion of the sender toward the opposite attitude than they have themselves. No such adjustment is however made when the position already opposes the attitudes of the audience. As a result, in the experiment of Eagly et al, a person's real opinion was considered to be more pro-environment when talking to a pro-business audience than when addressing a pro-environment audience.

In the case of the knowledge bias on the other hand, a person is perceived as more sincere when the bias is confirmed. What this means is that it does not matter if the attitude is influenced by personal experiences or interests, the arguments does not have to be valid in order for a person to be seen as sincere as long as he or she really believes in them. In order to be persuasive however, the arguments should be perceived as objective and based on true facts about the external reality and thus be violating the knowledge bias expectancy (Eagly et al, 1978).

In sum, a person can be seen as more sincere when violating the expectancies associated with a certain role since he or she is thought to do this out of strong inner convictions. Furthermore, a person is also seen as more sincere and honest when expressing attitudes that differ from the ones of his or her audience. In addition, when the expressed attitudes of someone is seen to be a result of one's character or personal dispositions, the perceived sincerity of the person will increase. The persuasiveness on the other hand, will decrease if the arguments are thought to be based on subjective personal characteristics or interests. Because of this, persuasiveness is not necessarily a consequence of perceived sincerity.

The combined findings from the studies included in this literature review show a number of ways in which expectancies and expectancy violations/disconfirmations influence the way we interpret the meaning and evaluate the consequences of a person's attitudes. A summary of this will be found in figure 1. Also, the different ways in which pre-expectancies relate to the actual behavior of a person have been identified and a summary of this is shown in figure 2. In the following section these findings will be compared and contrasted to see if it is possible to integrate some of the notions in order to enhance the understanding of the role of expectancies in relation to attitudes.

Figure 1

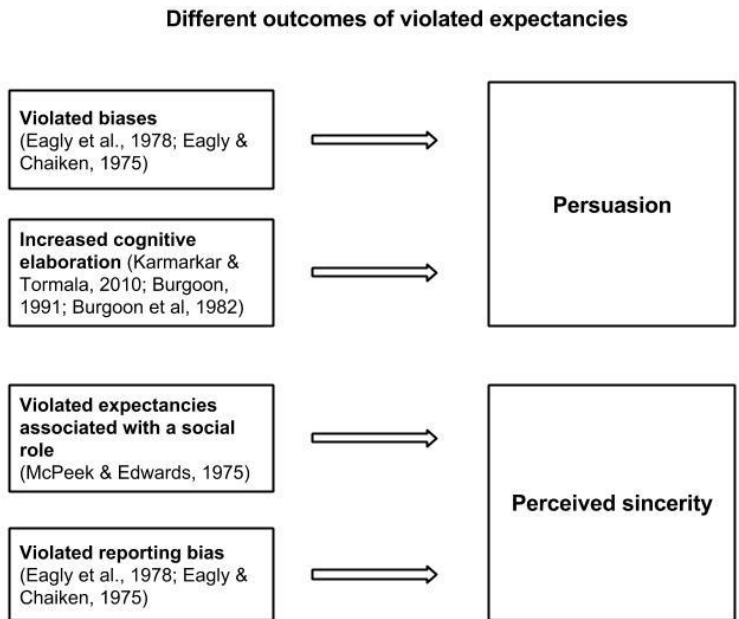
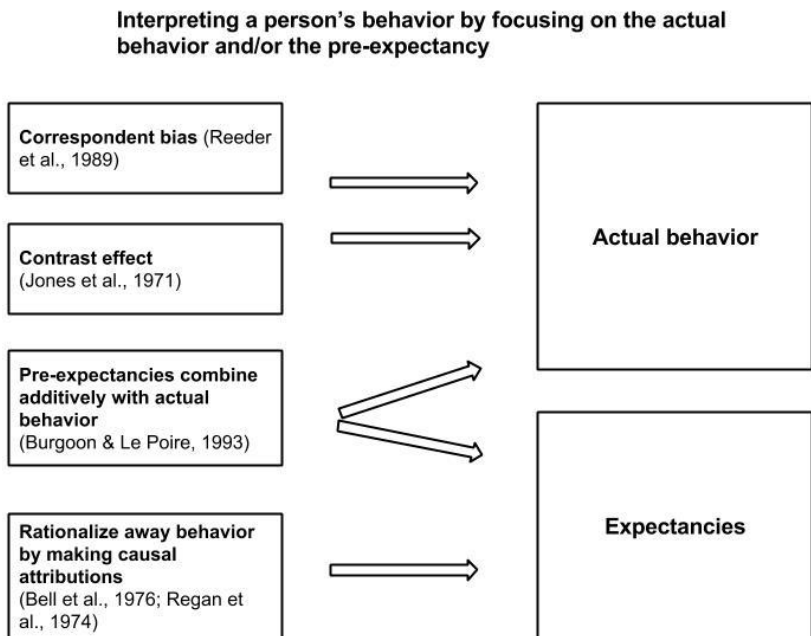


Figure 2



4. DISCUSSION

In this chapter the findings presented in the previous chapter will be discussed, compared, and contrasted in order to see how the different concepts relate to each other. The chapter is divided into two main sections. First, the findings related to the relationship between expectancies and actual behavior will be discussed. Second, the consequences of expectancy violations will be discussed.

4.1 Explaining the unexpected behavior

4.1.1 DIFFERENT KINDS OF EXPECTANCIES

First of all, before discussing the consequences of violated or disconfirmed expectancies, the findings of this review have shown that it is of great importance to distinguish between different kinds of expectancies. Both Burgoon and Le Poire (1993) and Mc Peek and Edwards (1975) only took the person specific expectancies into account when conducting their respective experiments and failed to account for the influence that more general expectancies based on societal norms have on expected behavior and attitudes. The researchers incorrectly assumed that when no person specific expectancies were induced regarding the behavior and attitudes of an unknown target person, the participants of the experiment would not form any expectancies at all, and thus be like a blank page without any assumptions of how the person would act. This did not occur and instead the participants assumed that the target person would express the kind of attitudes most prevalent in society (Mc Peek & Edwards, 1975). This shows that when no background information exists and thus no specific expectancies, general norm based expectancies still can influence how the behavior of a person is perceived. It also demonstrates how frequently we generate expectancies about the behavior and attitudes of others and to which great extent they are present in different interactions. Furthermore, just as the person specific expectancies are based on knowledge and information about the characteristics, background, or communicative behavior of a certain individual, the

general expectancies are in a way also based on specific information about how to behave within a certain culture, may it be of a country, sub-group, or company.

The findings also indicate that the specific and general expectancies are weighted against one another resulting in one of them being more dominant than the other. An example of this was found in the Burgoon and Le Poire (1993) study where the general expectancies of pleasant interactions that prevail in society at large, managed to defeat the specific expectancies that the researchers induced the participants to hold about a target person acting in an uninvolved and unpleasant manner. This shows that it might be problematic to manipulate expectancies in a lab environment since there may well be other pre-conceptions and experiences that the participants bring with them since before and that can influence how they interpret and evaluate a certain situation. It would thus be interesting to see if this effect would change if the participants had been given a longer period of time to naturally establish stronger expectancies about the specific communicative behavior of the target person.

4.1.2 CAUSAL ATTRIBUTIONS

From the viewpoint of the attributions theory the expectancies have been shown to have a function in addition to anticipating *how* a person will behave, and that is *why* the person acts as he or she does. As we have seen Bell et al (1976) argue that people often have dual expectancies, one internal expectancy based on the actor and one external based on the environment, of which one or the other usually is dominant. Thus, the concept of specific and general expectancies established within the EVT, can be compared to the concept of internal and external expectancies often referred to within attribution theory. The findings of the study also show that when both external and internal expectancies exist, the unexpected action or attitude of a person will be explained by attributing it to the cause about which the least is known, and in that way changing the weaker expectancy. This has two consequences. *First*, depending on if the strongest expectancy is based on knowledge about the person or the external situation, the unexpected behavior will be attributed to the cause about which there is no strong expectancy. This will influence both the interpretation of the behavior or attitude as well as the evaluation of the person. *Secondly*, these findings show that people have the ability to rationalize away actual behavior that disconfirms our expectancies of how a person will act or which attitudes he or she will express, in order to restore our original impression of that person.

Regan et al (1974) argued along similar lines when concluding that positive acts conducted by a liked person and negative acts conducted by a disliked person are attributed internally to some characteristic of the person. Actions that are not consistent with affect for the person, are however attributed externally. The essence of this issue is summarized in the following quote: “It is unlikely that one will come to like an enemy if his positive actions are consistently attributed externally while his negative actions are seen as expressive of his true characteristics” (Regan et al, 1974, p. 396). According to this argumentation we can always explain away disconfirming behavior and it would thus be very difficult to change our opinions about a person and to realize that we have been mistaken. However, several of the studies included in this review did conclude that the actual communication does matter and that it influences the perception of other people.

4.1.3 EXPECTANCY VS ACTUAL BEHAVIOR

Burgoon and Le Poire (1993) for example found that even though the induced expectancies in their study persisted throughout the interaction and influenced the perception of the person’s communicative behavior and personal attributes, the actual communication did make a difference and pleasant communication led to more positive evaluations of the target. Also, the positive violation of an expectancy resulted in an increased focus on the character of the person and a more positive evaluation than when the person acted in the same way but confirmed to expectancies. This can be related to the study of Jones et al (1971) which showed that the phenomenon of the contrast effect often makes people who have had their early pre-expectancies disconfirmed, overreact to the expressed attitudes of another person and give them a disproportionate importance. To illustrate this we could think of a person who has a rumor of being very cold and unfriendly. If that person then violates these expectancies by interacting in a warm and friendly manner the behavior is often seen as a positive surprise and thus evaluated in a more positive way than if the person had a rumor of always behaving in a pleasant way. These findings can be related to the fact that expectancy violations increase cognitive elaboration and makes the behavior more salient in the mind of the receiver. It can thus have a positive effect to violate expectancies since the unexpected and surprising attitude or behavior heightens the focus on the character of the person and on the act itself (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1993). The fact that people sometimes go from one extreme end

when they generate too early and hasty expectancies, to another extreme end when they overreact to the behavior they see, can be a sign of the fact that people like clarity and distinct attitudes, perhaps since it makes it easier to divide people into categories and make sense of our social worlds. Indeed, there has long been a preference for strong attitudes in our society as discussed in the introduction of this paper (e.g. Hirschmann, 1989).

So, do the findings of these different studies then contradict each other or not? Which source of information is usually trusted when the expectancies and the actual behavior do not match? On one hand there are Bell et al (1976) and Regan et al (1974) who indicate that it is possible to maintain our pre-expectancies and levels of liking for a person by rationalizing away the actual behavior and attributing it to another cause. On the other hand Burgoon and Le Poire (1993) who argue that it is possible to positively violate expectancies, and Jones et al (1971) who show that people sometimes totally adopt and give the expressed unexpected attitudes too much significance. What is important to notice is that both in the studies conducted by Jones et al (1971) and Burgoon and Le Poire (1993), the expectancies were induced by the experimenters and not based on firsthand experience with the targets. One may assume that in such situation it may have been easier for the participants to abandon their earlier expectancies in favor for the expressed behavior. Jones et al (1971) does mention that the contrast effect only seems to occur when the participants have not publicly expressed a certain impression of the target. It can for example be seen in the experiment of Regan et al (1974) that when the participants have to evaluate the behavior of a person they know since before, they tend to attribute the unexpected behavior to an external cause and thus maintain their earlier impression of the person. Perhaps is it so that it is not only more difficult to abandon one's expectancies when they have been made public, but also when one is emotionally attached to them such as in the case of liking and disliking another person, or when they are very deep and built on firsthand experience with the person. If this is the case it should be easier for a person to prove other people wrong and make them change their minds when their expectancies are associated with a social role, appearance, reputation, or some other factor not based on firsthand experience with the person or very specific expectancies based on his or her character.

As an easy example we can take a friend who has as long as we remember always been a fan of pop music. One day when hanging out with a group of hard rock fans you hear the person saying that he hates pop music. Having had long firsthand experience with the

person saying that he loves pop before, it is very likely that this disconfirmed expectancy will be explained by attributing it to an external cause in the situation, such as the fact that there are people around with another taste in music. This is the *interpreted* reason for the change of attitude. Furthermore, this interpretation can lead to different *evaluations* of the person and his character, such as him being insecure or insincere. If we instead did not have firsthand experience with hearing the person saying that he loves pop music, but instead generated a somewhat weaker expectancy by looking at his clothes, social role, or by listening to a rumor about his music taste, it is more likely that we would have trusted the actual attitude that he expressed and hence have realized that we were mistaken. Depending on if we like pop music ourselves or not, this unexpected attitude against pop music would either be a positive or negative violation of our expectancies.

In conclusion, it seems like the extent to which we depend on expectancies in the interpretation of another person's behavior is due to different factors. These include how long experience we have in interacting with the person since before and how much background information we have about his or her dispositions, as well as how publicly we have formulated our impression of the person. Regardless of whether the information taken into account mainly comes from the expectancy or the actual communication, the incongruity that arises between these two sources of information results in a number of consequences that will be discussed in the next section.

4.2 Consequences of expectancy violations and disconfirmations

4.2.1 PERSUASION AND CREDIBILITY

The findings show that violated or disconfirmed expectancies can have a positive effect on persuasion and perceived credibility. This effect was demonstrated both in some of the studies related to EVT as well as attribution theory. What differed between the two perspectives was mainly the explanations for why this effect occurs.

Taking the perspective of EVT, Karmarkar and Tormala (2010) explained the findings of their study, which showed that a person is more persuasive when there is a perceived incongruity between his or her level of certainty and credibility, by pointing to the fact that when a message is more surprising and unexpected this leads to an increased

involvement and focus on the message. However, this only applies when the arguments are strong since the increased involvement highlights the deficiencies of weak arguments. Here it is possible to draw a parallel to the studies conducted by Burgoon (1991) and Burgoon et al (1982) in which only well regarded, so called high-valenced persons were more persuasive when violating expectancies. Low-valenced individuals were more persuasive when they conformed to the norm. It is interesting to speculate that the same effect of increased involvement and cognitive elaboration that increased the persuasiveness of strong arguments but showed the deficiencies of weak arguments in Karmarkar and Tormala's study, also highlighted the characteristics of the target persons in Burgoon et al and Burgoon's study. This would explain why only well regarded persons were more persuasive when violating the expectancies. The findings from this literature review do indeed show that expectancy violations increase the focus and evaluation of a communicator's personal attributes. What can be seen as contradictory is however that Burgoon and Le Poire (1993) clearly shows that it can be very positive for a low-valenced person to make a positive violation of expectancies, and that this often leads to more positive evaluations of the person overall. So why were then the low regarded target persons in Burgoon et al (1982) and Burgoon's (1991) studies not more persuasive when they violated the expectancies? The answer is most likely that the kind of violations committed in those experiments were not necessarily positive. Instead they were breaking the social norms for preferred interaction distance, tone of voice and communication style. What can be concluded from these studies are thus that in order to be more persuasive when violating someone's expectancies of how they think you will behave, you have to make sure that your arguments are valid and strong and that you are relatively well regarded by your interaction partner or audience. In any other case it is better to conform to the norm.

By instead focusing on attributions and the reduction of biases, Eagly et al (1978) provided another explanation for why expectancy disconfirmations have a positive effect on persuasion. They argued that when a message disconfirms the expectancies that a person holds based on knowledge about another person's characteristics or situation, the reason for the message will be attributed to an alternative cause, in many cases the true external reality. Hence, the message is viewed as more objective and less influenced by personal interests. This can be compared to the findings of Bell et al (1976) showing that unexpected behavior is attributed to the cause about which the least is known. What would have been interesting to see is whether a variation in argument strength would influence

the results, and if this variable would moderate or reverse the effect of expectancy disconfirmations just like in the Karmarkar and Tormala (2010) study. Eagly and Chaiken (1975) did show that the level of attractiveness of a person giving a persuasive speech moderates the positive effect that expectancy violations have on persuasion in such way that the more attractive the person is, the less it matters if he or she confirms to the expectancies or not.

In conclusion, the violation or disconfirmation of a person's expectancies has been shown to have a positive effect on persuasion, with different causes explaining the effect such as increased involvement and violation of biases. Perhaps do the different explanations for this effect not necessarily have to cancel each other out? Instead it could be possible that the expectancy violation first raises the involvement of the person receiving the message and increases his or her attention on the content of the message and the characteristics of the sender, whereupon the receiver attempts to explain the violation by attributing it to an external or internal cause. More research is needed in order to confirm if it is possible to integrate the findings in this way or not.

4.2.2 SINCERITY

Another positive consequence of disconfirmed expectancies is that they can lead to increased perceived sincerity. As the findings of McPeck and Edwards (1975) indicate, people who violate expectancies that are associated with a certain social role are believed to do so because of inner convictions and are therefore seen as more sincere. This can be related to Eagly et al's (1978) study in which the findings showed that only disconfirmed expectancies that are based on knowledge about some kind of external pressure of how to behave increase perceived sincerity. When the expectancies that are disconfirmed instead are based on knowledge about the dispositions or characteristics of the person, the perceived sincerity of the person will be decreased. Even though the external pressure in the Eagly et al study was constituted of strong opinions from the audience, this could also be applied to the external pressure of acting in accordance with a social role as described in the McPeck and Edwards study. In both cases the violation of external expectancies and what Eagly et al refers to as the reporting bias, leads to the perception that what the person expresses is his or her true opinion not affected by external circumstances. One can therefore assume that if the participants in the Mc Peek and Edwards study had been

given information about the target person's background, experience and personal dispositions as a base for their expectancies about the target person's attitudes, instead of basing it on his social role or appearance, the violation of these expectancies would not to the same extent have led to increased perceived sincerity. To illustrate this we can use an example of a person who is working for a company that manufactures cigarettes and who expresses the attitude that smoking is a disgusting habit. To the extent that the expectancy about her attitude towards smoking would be based on external factors such as the requirements of her professional role within the company, she would probably be considered sincere by many people since she expresses her true inner convictions in spite of the external pressures of not doing so. If the expectancy about her attitude towards smoking instead would be based on personal information about her usually smoking when she is alone at home, the expressed unexpected attitude would probably be seen as insincere and perhaps even hypocritical.

In sum, depending on if the disconfirmed expectancy about a person's attitudes regarding a certain topic was based on information about the external situation or about the internal characteristics or habits of that person, this will have different consequences and can either lead to increased or decreased perceived sincerity.

5. CONCLUSION

In this literature review an attempt has been made to identify in which ways expectancy violations and disconfirmations influence the interpretation and evaluation of a person's attitudes. The studies included in this review have been shown to generate rather similar findings, although the explanations for the results differ quite a bit depending on if the study's frame of reference has been linked to either expectancy violations or attribution theories. An important finding is that the violation of an expectancy will have different consequences depending on which kind of information the expectancy is based on; external information about the conditions of the situation, or internal information about the characteristics, dispositions, or experience of a specific person.

First, expectancy violations have been shown to influence the way a person's attitudes are interpreted by attributing them to the cause about which the least is known. This means that if the strongest expectancy is based on information about the person, the unexpected attitude will be explained by attributing it to something about the situation, for example a need to act in a polite and politically correct manner. If the strongest expectancy on the other hand is based on information about which kind of attitudes that are normally expressed within a certain context, and that expectancy is disconfirmed, the unexpected attitude will be explained by attributing it to something about the person like for example a strong conviction. Depending on how the unexpected behavior is interpreted and attributed, this will have different consequences for the evaluation of the person.

Second, expectancy violations have been shown to raise the involvement of the receiver and increase the attention on the expressed attitudes and characteristics of the sender. In cases when the arguments are strong and valid and the person is well regarded, this heightened focus on the message can lead to increased persuasiveness. In cases when the arguments are weak and the person is not well regarded, the increased involvement will highlight the inherent deficiencies of the arguments and the characteristics of the person, and thus lead to decreased persuasiveness. Furthermore, the findings indicate that expectancy violations can serve to eliminate perceived biases of a person by attributing the cause of the unexpected attitude to an external objective reality. Hence the message will be viewed as more objective and less influenced by personal interests.

Third, the findings show that by violating the expectancies associated with a social role a person can be perceived as more sincere and driven by inner convictions. However, when the violated expectancies are based on specific knowledge about the person this will instead result in a reduced perceived sincerity.

The second research question addresses the issue regarding whether expectancies are decisive when it comes to how we interpret the communicative behavior of others. The answer is both yes and no. The findings show that there are both cases in which we disregard the actual behavior by attributing it to an external cause, and cases in which we abandon our pre-expectancies and instead fully let the actual behavior influence our final interpretations. Factors identified as significant for which scenario that occurs include how strong the expectancy is in comparison to the actual behavior, whether the situation is considered to contain a strong pressure on how to behave or not, together with how publicly one has formulated his or her impression. The findings also show that expectancies often combine with the actual behavior to influence the final interpretation. The question remains under which exact circumstances and to which degree each scenario occurs, and more integrating research building on both previous studies on expectancy violations and attributions is needed in order to further investigate this issue.

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