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# To Match or Not to Match: Effects of Behavioral Congruence on Interpersonal Connectedness

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**ABSTRACT.** This study examined interactions among 96 American college students and tested the prediction that adaptation patterns influence perceptions of interpersonal connectedness. It was proposed that matching positive behavior and not matching negative behavior is interpreted as communicating the most connectedness. Matching negative behavior and not matching positive behavior carries the opposite connotative meaning. These predictions were partially supported. Although the interaction of adaptation and the valence of the stimulus behavior affected the students' encoded meanings of connectedness, it did not influence the extent to which receivers actually felt more connected to senders. This finding suggests the importance of examining multiple perspectives in interaction research rather than presuming that any 1 perspective accurately characterizes the dyad or group.

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THERE HAS BEEN much research examining individuals' propensities for adopting particular adaptation patterns in response to other people's behaviors. Behavioral adaptation is a defining element of effective human interaction, whether it be within intimate, dyadic relationships or with small groups of strangers. In this study, I examined the role congruent behavioral patterns play in communicating and creating perceptions of interpersonal connectedness. Several theoretical perspectives indicate the relationship between behavioral congruence and perceptions of connectedness.

## **Theories of Behavioral Congruence**

Theories relevant to the relationship between congruence and perceptual outcomes have generally taken one of two positions. Early perspectives posited

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that congruence is inherently preferable to incongruence. For instance, in his norm of reciprocity, Gouldner (1960) maintained that people reciprocate other people's behaviors because of a feeling of social obligation, thus rendering reciprocal, congruent behavior normative and expected. Jourard's (1959) dyadic effect similarly predicts that relational partners reciprocate self-disclosive behaviors by responding with disclosures of equal intimacy. This reciprocity has been linked to increased liking, trust, and relational intimacy (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Derlega, Wilson, & Chaikin, 1976).

A more specific link between congruence and outcomes is found in the attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971), which holds that perceived similarity is positively correlated with attraction. Therefore, individuals are attracted to people with similar behaviors more often than they are to people with dissimilar behaviors. Moreover, behavioral similarity carries messages of attraction between individuals. In the uncertainty reduction theory (URT), Berger and Calabrese (1975) posited a linear relationship between similarity and liking. According to the URT, people like other people who are similar to themselves and engage them in uncertainty-reducing behaviors more often than dissimilar people.

The link between behavioral congruence and positive evaluations is also central to communication accommodation theory (CAT; Giles, 1973; Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987). CAT addresses the use of linguistic, vocalic, and nonverbal behaviors and maintains that speakers converge with the communicative behaviors of others in an effort to elicit affiliation or gain approval. Similarly, Condon (1980), Scheflen (1964), Kendon (1970), and Charney (1966) posited that congruent nonverbal behavior indicates association or rapport among people.

These theorists maintain that behavioral congruence, in the form of matching and reciprocity, communicates greater liking, closeness, and affiliation than incongruent behavior. There is some empirical support for this prediction. For instance, LaFrance and Broadbent (1976) observed the level of behavioral congruence in 12 college seminar classes and found it to be positively related to the self-reported rapport people experienced. Similar results were reported by LaFrance (1979) and Bernieri (1988).

Trout and Rosenfeld (1980) experimentally induced nonverbal congruence in videotaped therapist-client interactions and had naive coders indicate the level of rapport they attributed to the participants. They found that congruent client-therapist dyads were judged to have significantly greater rapport than incongruent dyads. Congruence was also manipulated by Maxwell (1985), who had people sit in either similar or dissimilar chairs during a dyadic interaction. She found that those sitting similarly liked each other more than did those sitting dissimilarly.

Although these investigations found that behavioral congruence is routinely preferred over incongruence, none of them controlled or manipulated the valence of the behavior being matched. Even when the form of adaptation was induced, these investigators used naturally occurring behavior as the stimulus. Because the sociocultural expectancy favors moderately pleasant behavior, par-

ticularly among strangers (Burgoon & Hale, 1988), it is unlikely that many participants in these studies had the opportunity to adapt to truly negative behavior. Therefore, although these investigations support the main effect of congruence on outcomes by using positive behaviors, they do not provide a fair test of the prediction with respect to negative stimulus behavior. As such, they do not unequivocally indicate that congruence itself determines the nature of outcomes.

By contrast, more recently advanced theoretic positions propose that nonverbal congruence does not dictate the nature of outcomes by itself but rather in its interaction with the valence of the stimulus behavior. According to this view, congruence is preferable to incongruence only when the behavior being matched is positive; negative behavior must be mismatched to produce favorable outcomes. This prediction was made by Burgoon, Stern, and Dillman (1995) in their interaction adaptation theory (IAT), which proposes that, in instances involving negative behaviors (e.g., hostility), communicators produce more positive messages and garner more favorable assessments by behaving incongruently so as not to reciprocate the negativity.

Other theoretic perspectives yield similar suggestions. For instance, in his interpersonal circle, Kiesler (1982) proposed that when using behaviors that carry messages of control and dominance (e.g., gaze or talk time), communicators elicit greater attractiveness and satisfaction by being incongruent than by being congruent (Cappella, 1984; Kiesler, 1983). Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, and Lipkus (1991) proposed in their accommodation process theory that people in close, committed relationships compensate for each others' negative behaviors rather than reciprocate them. However, the opposite pattern characterizes less satisfying relationships, suggesting an association between relational satisfaction and the propensity to be incongruent with negative behavior.

Preliminary support for the interaction effect prediction was found by Honeycutt (1991), who examined the association between responses to *preinteraction* expectancies and subsequent evaluations of liking and sociability in 66 same-gender dyads. Individuals were induced to expect either a friendly or an unfriendly conversational partner. Honeycutt reported that the people in the unfriendly-expectancy condition who behaved in a manner incongruent with their expectations by increasing affiliative behaviors were judged as more likable and sociable than those who did not behave incongruently. Similarly, Newton and Burgoon (1990) demonstrated that people who compensate for other people's antagonistic behaviors have more persuasive success than people who match such behavior. Other studies have demonstrated that reciprocating involvement behaviors is associated with greater liking (Burgoon, Newton, Walther, & Baesler, 1989; Burgoon, Olney, & Coker, 1987; Coker & Burgoon, 1987).

Several studies of marital interaction have provided additional empirical support by demonstrating that satisfied couples are more likely to reciprocate positive affect cues than distressed couples (Manusov, 1995). Conversely, distressed couples are more likely to reciprocate negative affect cues than satisfied

couples (Gottman, 1979; Pike & Sillars, 1985). These findings indicate that congruence with negative stimuli is associated with relational distress, whereas congruence with positive stimuli is more characteristic of satisfying marriages.

However, Burgoon et al. (1995) pointed out that many of the findings linking adaptation patterns to outcomes have been purely correlational in nature, making it difficult to determine whether the adaptation patterns produced their accompanying assessments or merely covaried with them. They noted that "a direct test connecting the patterns themselves to the outcomes is needed" to ascertain whether adaptation patterns produce assessments on their own or whether they interact with the valence of the stimulus behavior to determine the nature of outcomes (Burgoon et al., 1995, pp. 291–292). My study provides such a test by experimentally inducing positive or negative stimulus behavior and congruent or incongruent adaptation patterns and then examining the effects of these combinations on subsequent assessments of interpersonal connectedness.

As several previous investigations have shown, adaptation patterns in interactions influence perceptions of interpersonal connectedness, liking, and rapport. According to IAT and related theories, the greatest connectedness is communicated by people whose behavior is congruent with positive behavior (CP) or incongruent with negative behavior (DN). Conversely, the least connectedness is communicated by people whose behavior is congruent with negative behavior (CN) or incongruent with positive behavior (DP). Thus, I hypothesized that greater interpersonal connectedness is attributed to the behaviors of people in CP and DN conditions rather than to people in CN and DP conditions.

Previous studies' varied findings may be partially accounted for by the variations in the perceptions examined. For example, if Person B is matching Person A's behavior, one might ask Person B how connected he or she feels to Person A (i.e., how much connectedness was communicated). Conversely, one might look at how much connectedness was created. Thus, if Person B is matching Person A's behavior, one might ask Person A how connected he or she feels to Person B (see Bernieri, 1988). Largely unaddressed thus far is the extent to which the communicated and created levels of connectedness covary (i.e., the extent to which a given adaptation pattern actually creates feelings of connectedness on the part of the receiver and conveys a sense of connectedness by the sender).

According to Burgoon and Newton's (1991) social meaning model, encoders and decoders have a certain level of agreement as to the interpretations of enacted behaviors. Thus, the meanings attributed to communicators' messages and the responses they elicit covary to some extent. However, the two are not necessarily linearly related. For example, messages thought to communicate liking or affection do not always elicit increased feelings of liking or affection on the part of the decoder (see Floyd, 1997a; Floyd & Morman, 1997).

Because I tested my hypothesis by examining the perspectives of adapting encoders concerning the messages communicated by their different adaptation patterns, I posed the following research question to address the receivers' per-

spectives as to how much connectedness was actually created: To what extent does the interaction of adaptation pattern and stimulus valence affect receivers' feelings of connectedness with communicators?

## Method

### *Participants*

A total of 96 unacquainted American college students were placed into 48 dyads. There were 16 dyads in each of the congruent, incongruent, and control conditions, with half involving positive stimulus behavior and half involving negative stimulus behavior. The dyads were equally divided by gender, with 24 male-male and 24 female-female triads<sup>1</sup> after the inclusion of Persons C.<sup>2</sup> The participants were recruited from undergraduate communication and business courses at a large southwestern university and had an age range of 20 to 42 years ( $M = 23.33$ ,  $SD = 4.14$ ). Participants received extra course credit for their participation.<sup>3</sup>

### *Procedure*

Participants signed up for the project in pairs and were asked during the recruiting process not to sign up with people they already knew. The dyads were made up of strangers to avoid the possibility that participants would enact adaptation patterns idiosyncratic to their relationships and evaluate and interpret them accordingly.

On the basis of their order of arrival at the communication laboratory, participants were assigned to the role of Person A or Person B. They were told that they would be engaging in a short conversation with their partners and that they would each be asked to indicate their perceptions of the conversation. After the participants gave their consent to participate in the study, they separately completed premeasures dealing with their familiarity with each other and read written instructions corresponding to their respective manipulations.

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<sup>1</sup>Same-gender triads were used because previous research has suggested that patterns of interaction in cross-gender dyads can be influenced by gender role socialization that encourages women's accommodation to men (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991) and may therefore introduce an implicit power differential that can confound the interpretations made of adaptation patterns.

<sup>2</sup>Persons C were undergraduate students at the same university who were recruited to observe the interactions and provide assessments of the confederates' behaviors for the purpose of checking the manipulations. Persons C were 18 men and 18 women ranging in age from 21 to 39 years ( $M = 22.79$  years,  $SD = 3.95$ ). Data from Persons C were used only to check the manipulations.

<sup>3</sup>The dyads were participating in a larger experiment on adaptation reported in Floyd (1997b), in which portions of the current procedures are also reported.

After the participants read the instructions, I conferred with them individually to answer any questions. They were then seated in the interaction portion of the lab, a converted living room with bookshelves, a coffee table, and comfortable swivel chairs. They were asked to discuss a series of four moral dilemmas, adapted from research by Hale and Burgoon (1984). They received a sheet of paper describing the situations, which included (a) the theft of a friend's valuables by a sibling, (b) a Catholic friend who is contemplating an abortion, (c) the infidelity of a best friend's fiancée, and (d) the impending visit of a cohabiting couple's unsuspecting parents. These situations served as material for the conversation and were selected because they allowed for multiple positions and opinions and because of their demonstrated utility in generating conversation (Hale & Burgoon, 1984; White, 1996). The order in which the situations were described and discussed by participants was counterbalanced across conditions.

Participants were instructed to discuss how they would deal with each situation and were allowed to interact for no more than 10 min. After the conversation, they completed postmeasures and were debriefed and excused.

The experimental procedure used a 2 (positive vs. negative behavioral stimulus)  $\times$  3 (congruent vs. incongruent response pattern vs. control) completely crossed factorial design. Persons A were the positive-negative confederates. Participants in the positive condition were asked to exhibit a very positive demeanor during the conversation; specifically, they were told to engage in high levels of gaze, smiling, and touch; sit close to their partners and face them directly; maintain an open posture (i.e., with neither arms nor legs crossed); and compliment their partners on their ideas. Participants in the negative condition received the opposite instructions. These instructions were adapted from Manusov (1993).

Persons B were the congruent-discongruent confederates. The participants in the congruent condition were told to match their partners' posture and seating position; mirror what their partners did with their arms, legs, head, and trunk; and reciprocate their partners' movements and postural changes (e.g., if their partners leaned forward, they were to lean forward). Participants in the incongruent condition were told to maintain postures and movements distinctly different from those of their partners. For example, they were to sit differently and do something different with their arms and legs. Furthermore, they were to compensate for their partners' movements and postural changes by enacting opposite movements and changes. The participants in the control group were given no adaptation instructions.

### *Measures*

*Premeasure.* To ensure that they were not familiar with each other prior to their participation, Persons A and B completed two measures of prefamiliarity adapted from a study by Palmer and Simmons (1995). The first question was "How well would you say that you and your partner know each other?" Responses

ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very well*). The second question was "How would you describe your relationship with this person?" Participants chose from among the following options: *stranger, acquaintance, frequent acquaintance, friend, or close friend*.

*Postmeasures.* I measured three dimensions of interpersonal connectedness. First, Persons A indicated their liking for Persons B, and Persons B indicated the extent to which they communicated a sense of liking for Persons A, using the 13-item Liking Scale (Rubin, 1970). The Likert-type scale produces scores ranging from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating more liking. Coefficient alphas were .93 for Persons A and .96 for Persons B.

Persons A reported their desires for affiliation with Persons B by using a 3-item scale I developed for this study. The items included: (a) "I would like to get to know this person better," (b) "I would not like to see or interact with this person ever again" (reverse-keyed), and (c) "I would enjoy becoming friends with this person." Each item was rated on a 7-point scale, with higher scores indicating more agreement. I obtained a composite score by computing the mean of the three scores. I also asked Persons B to indicate how much desire for affiliation was being communicated by their behaviors. Coefficient alphas were .74 for Persons A and .94 for Persons B.

Finally, Persons A reported their feelings of closeness to Persons B by using the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). The scale is a single-item measure consisting of seven pairs of circles that overlap to varying degrees. In each pair, one circle represents the self, and the other circle represents a partner. Respondents were asked to indicate the pair of circles they believe best depicts the relationship between them and their partners. Persons B also indicated the amount of closeness they believed they communicated with their behaviors.

### *Manipulation Checks*

To check the valence manipulation, Persons A rated their success by indicating their agreement with the following three statements: (a) "During this conversation I intentionally tried to communicate in a positive manner," (b) "During this conversation I was trying to make our interaction very negative" (reverse-keyed), and (c) "During this conversation I made an effort to be especially nice to my partner." They recorded their answers on a 7-point scale with answers ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The scale's coefficient alpha was .98.

To check the adaptation manipulation, Persons B rated their successes by indicating their agreement with the following three items: (a) "I acted very differently than my partner did during our conversation" (reverse-keyed), (b) "I matched the way my partner was acting in the conversation," and (c) "I acted in



a way that was similar to what my partner was doing." Higher scores indicate greater congruence. The scale's coefficient alpha was .88.

In addition to these self-reports, 36 observers (Persons C) watched the dyadic interactions from behind a one-way window. They were told that they would be observing the interaction and that they would be asked to provide their assessments of the conversation. Using the same scales, they rated the extent to which Persons A and Persons B successfully enacted their respective manipulations. Coefficient alphas were .88 for the observers' assessments of the valence manipulation and .89 for the observers' assessments of the adaptation manipulation.

## Results

### *Manipulation Checks*

Frequency scores on premeasures of familiarity were examined to ensure that the experiment involved interactions between strangers. First, participants indicated how well they knew each other on a 7-point scale, with higher scores indicating greater familiarity. Persons A reported low familiarity with Persons B ( $M = 1.40, SD = 0.87$ ) as did Persons B with Persons A ( $M = 1.48, SD = 0.83$ ). Likewise, Persons C reported that they were unfamiliar with Persons A ( $M = 1.52, SD = 1.05$ ) and Persons B ( $M = 1.32, SD = 0.75$ ).

Participants also indicated the relationships they had with each other by selecting from among five choices: stranger, acquaintance, frequent acquaintance, friend, and close friend. In all cases, "stranger" was the modal response. Nearly all Persons A considered Persons B to be a stranger (60.4%) or an acquaintance (37.5%). Persons B considered Persons A to be either a stranger (52.1%) or an acquaintance (47.9%). Nearly all Persons C considered Persons A to be a stranger (76%) or an acquaintance (20%) and Persons B to be a stranger (72%) or an acquaintance (20%).

In the positive condition, Persons A saw themselves as having communicated significantly more positively ( $M = 6.68, SD = 0.47$ ) than Persons A in the negative condition ( $M = 1.29, SD = 0.64$ ),  $F(1, 46) = 1113.35, p < .0001$ . (The coefficient alpha for Persons C was .88.) Likewise, according to Persons C, Persons A in the positive condition communicated significantly more positively ( $M = 5.52, SD = 1.07$ ) than Persons A in the negative condition ( $M = 3.98, SD = 1.94$ ),  $F(1, 40) = 10.16, p = .003$ .

A one-way analysis of variance revealed that in the three adaptation conditions (i.e., congruent, incongruent, and control), Persons B had significantly different self-rated congruence scores,  $F(2, 45) = 49.25, p < .0001$ . Planned 1 degree of freedom contrasts revealed that participants in the congruent condition ( $M = 5.26, SD = 0.85$ ) scored significantly higher on matching than participants in the control group ( $M = 4.29, SD = 1.72$ ),  $t(45) = 4.76, p < .001$ . Participants

in the control group rated their behavior as more congruent than participants in the incongruent condition ( $M = 2.17$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ),  $t(45) = 5.16$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Persons C rated the success of Persons B ( $\alpha = .89$ ). The one-way effect was significant,  $F(2, 39) = 17.77$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Planned contrasts revealed that the participants in the congruent condition ( $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ) were judged by Persons C as being more congruent than participants in the control group ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ),  $t(39) = 2.59$ ,  $p = .01$ . Participants in the control group were also judged by Persons C to be more congruent than those in the incongruent condition ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ),  $t(39) = 2.84$ ,  $p = .007$ .

I had predicted that greater interpersonal connectedness is attributed to the behaviors of participants whose behavior is congruent with positive behavior and incongruent with negative behavior than with the behaviors of those in other conditions. In my research question, I asked whether this same pattern holds with respect to how connected receivers (Persons A) feel to senders (Persons B). I tested my hypothesis and research question separately for each of the three measures of interpersonal connectedness (i.e., liking, desire for affiliation, and closeness).

### *Liking*

The extent to which Persons B communicated liking for Persons A was influenced by a significant Valence  $\times$  Adaptation interaction,  $F(2, 44) = 2.43$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ . The means indicate a pattern partially supportive of my hypothesis. As I predicted, Persons B in the CP condition communicated the most liking. Likewise, Persons B in the CN condition communicated the least liking, with the exception of the participants in the negative control group. However, contrary to my hypothesis, Persons B in the DN condition communicated less liking than Persons B in the CP condition and the positive control group.

The extent to which Persons A liked Persons B was not influenced by the interaction between valence and adaptation,  $F(2, 44) = 0.10$ ,  $p > .05$ . Rather, it was subject to a main effect for valence,  $F(2, 44) = 5.80$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .12$ , in which Persons A in the positive condition liked Persons B more ( $M = 4.68$ ) than Persons A in the negative condition ( $M = 3.96$ ).

### *Desire for Affiliation*

Persons B's communicated desire for affiliation with Persons A was influenced by the interaction of valence and adaptation,  $F(2, 36) = 2.34$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ . Mean scores are provided in Table 1. They follow a pattern partially supportive of my hypothesis. As I had predicted, Persons B in the CP condition communicated the most desire for affiliation, whereas Persons B in the CN condition communicated the least desire for affiliation (excluding the participants in the negative control group). However, as with liking, Persons B in the DP condition

**TABLE 1**  
**Means for Valence  $\times$  Adaptation Interaction**

Valence	Adaptation		
	Congruent	Discongruent	Control
Persons B's communicated liking for Persons A			
Positive stimulus	5.19	4.57	4.81
Negative stimulus	3.56	3.90	2.36
Persons B's communicated desire for affiliation with Person A			
Positive stimulus	6.08	5.81	5.89
Negative stimulus	3.96	4.54	2.47

and positive control group communicated more desire for affiliation than Persons B in the DN condition, contrary to my prediction.

Persons A's desire for affiliation with Persons B was not influenced by the interaction of valence and adaptation,  $F(2, 36) = 1.00, p > .05$ . However, it was subject to a main effect for adaptation,  $F(2, 36) = 3.19, p < .05, \eta^2 = .13$ , in which Persons A desired affiliation most with participants in the congruent condition ( $M = 5.22$ ), followed closely by participants in the control groups ( $M = 5.15$ ) and those in the discongruent condition ( $M = 4.35$ ).

### *Closeness*

The interaction between valence and adaptation did not affect the extent to which Persons B communicated closeness to Persons A,  $F(2, 40) = 1.48, p > .05$ . Persons B's communicated closeness to Persons A was subject only to a main effect for valence,  $F(1, 40) = 4.16, p < .05, \eta^2 = .13$ , in which Persons B indicated communicating more closeness to Persons A in the positive condition ( $M = 3.25$ ) than in the negative condition ( $M = 1.90$ ).

The extent to which Persons A felt close to Persons B was not influenced by the interaction of valence and adaptation,  $F(1, 40) = 1.42, p > .05$ . However, it was subject to a main effect for valence,  $F(1, 40) = 4.16, p < .05, \eta^2 = .13$ , in which Persons A felt closer to Persons B when Persons A were enacting positive patterns ( $M = 3.04$ ) than when they were behaving negatively ( $M = 2.05$ ).

### **Discussion**

Some theorists have suggested that in interpersonal interactions, behavioral congruence is associated more with positive outcomes than with discongruence.

These theorists posit that because matched, synchronous behavior is generally characteristic of relationships high in rapport, it carries that connotative meaning to people who are enacting such behavior. Empirical tests of this prediction have produced promising results. However, none of the tests has controlled for the valence of the behavior that is being matched, making it difficult to ascertain whether congruence is preferred over incongruence with both positive and negative behaviors.

Other theories, such as Burgoon, Stern, and Dillman's (1995) interaction adaptation theory, suggest that when the stimulus behavior is negative, incongruence is the preferred response. Some support for this prediction is found in correlational research on marital interaction and nonverbal affiliation (e.g., Pike & Sillers, 1985); however, my study tested the prediction directly by manipulating both the adaptation pattern and the stimulus valence.

My hypothesis was partially supported. As I had predicted, people whose behavior is congruent with positive behavior communicate the most liking and desire for affiliation toward their partners. This finding is in line with both theoretic traditions. With respect to both liking and desire for affiliation, people in the CP condition do not differ substantially from those in the positive control group, which is not surprising because the sociocultural expectancy for interaction between strangers is for moderate to high pleasantness (Burgoon & Hale, 1988).

My research also showed that people whose behavior is incongruent with positive behavior communicate the least liking and desire for affiliation (except for the people in the negative control group). This finding also supports both theoretic perspectives. The fact that people in the negative control group had the lowest scores of any condition may reflect the fact that Persons B were control group participants and thus were free from the demands of having to enact a particular adaptation pattern and may have concentrated more directly on the valence of their partners' behaviors. As such, they may have responded directly to the negativity they experienced and communicated liking and desire for affiliation commensurate with that negativity.

Contrary to my prediction, participants whose behavior is incongruent with negative behavior communicate less liking and desire for affiliation than those whose behavior is congruent with negative behavior. Given that behaving congruently with a negative stimulus means that one is communicating negatively, this finding is surprising. Although it is speculative, it is possible that people who reciprocate negativity feel greater equality with their partners than those who compensate for it, and this tit-for-tat pattern causes them to experience greater connectedness than is experienced by those compensating for the negativity. This finding certainly warrants replication before further conclusions are drawn.

Addressing my research question involved looking for the effects of valence and adaptation on Persons A's actual reported feelings of connectedness with Persons B. However, the interaction of valence and adaptation had no effects on liking, desire for affiliation, or closeness. This is an important finding because it

illustrates how much senders' and receivers' perspectives can differ with regard to the same interaction. It has become commonplace for researchers of interpersonal interaction and relationships to collect data from only one person in a dyad or small group and assume that those data accurately reflect the relationship as a whole. In practice, this procedure can rest on a dubious assumption, given that participants in the same interaction can have very different reactions to, and evaluations of, the interaction (Burgoon, Buller, Floyd, & Grandpre, 1996). As the present findings illustrate, senders' perceptions that they are experiencing connectedness with receivers are not necessarily accompanied by receivers' feelings of connectedness with senders. This finding suggests the importance of examining multiple perspectives in tandem rather than presuming that one perspective is characteristic of another.

Closeness is not influenced by the interaction of valence and adaptation for either Persons A or B. It is possible that the single-item nature of the measure masked a problem with reliability, which would attenuate the results. Although the measure has been extensively validated by Aron et al. (1992), its single-item format makes estimates of internal or split-half reliability impossible. As a result, if the measure had a reliability problem in my study, such a problem may have attenuated the results without being detected. A replication of the design using the same instrument might illustrate this point.

Two limitations of the research should qualify interpretations of the results and suggest avenues for future research. First, although my participants had a relatively large age range, the average age was slightly greater than 23, a little older than the typical undergraduate. It is possible that people in different age groups interpret and evaluate adaptation patterns differently, according to their different life experiences. This is an empirical question that must be deferred to future researchers. Second, I intentionally chose strangers as my participants to avoid allowing relationships' idiosyncratic interpretations of behavior to confound the results. However, this may limit the applicability of the results to interactions with strangers. Future research addressing the interpretations made of adaptation patterns within established relationships could suggest whether the findings generalize beyond interactions with strangers.

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