

“Others Expectations” And Their Effect on the Behavior of Ego
Dr. Joseph Woelfel



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written in 1966

"OTHER'S EXPECTATIONS" AND THEIR EFFECT ON THE BEHAVIOR OF EGO

"Other's Expectations" is one of those key concepts around which the main body of sociological theory has been built. Parsons says that *"INTERACTION of TWO OR MORE INDIVIDUAL ACTORS IN WHICH EACH CONFORMS TO THE EXPECTATIONS of the other(s)"* is . . . the fundamental point of reference for all motivational analysis of social process." (1) The reaction of the individual to the expectations of others is certainly central to Mead and the symbolic interactionists in general, and such concepts as social structure, role, significant other, cross pressures, relative deprivation, status, status inconsistency, reference group, role conflict, norms, generalized others, sanction, culture, institution, and many others are derivative of or related to "other's expectation." "Other's Expectation" holds this lofty position in sociology as a consequence of the two-fold role it is seen to play: 1.) it is seen to be one of the primary ways in which alter can exercise control over the behavior of ego, and 2.) it is in terms of his own expectation about ego's behavior what alter orients his own behavior toward or in respect to ego. (2) The important point here is that expectations are seen to be related to behaviors, and it is the relationship of expectation to behavior that is the focus of this paper.

Hidden in this dual role of expectation is a "dual Nature", or perhaps just a potential confusion in the way the term is used. On the one hand, expectation is said to exert a controlling function over Ego's behavior, because he will be sanctioned (by Alter or Alters)

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1. Talcott Parsons, The Social System, Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1951, pp. 204-205.
 2. This is what Parsons means by "double contingency". Parsons, *ibid.*

if he does not fulfill it.⁽³⁾ In this sense, expectation refers to a normative demand. But this expectation is also seen to direct alter's behavior: in this sense it loses the character of a demand and becomes a prediction. Alter can (or must) act in a given manner because he anticipates a certain behavior from ego. Thus when alter goes into a store, he expects ego to yield some merchandise to him in exchange for a sum of money. Ego must conform to alter's expectation (demand) or be sanctioned (perhaps alter won't shop there again, etc.). But alter orients his behavior (going to the store, presenting the money, etc.) to his prediction that ego will vend the merchandise.

There seem to be, then, two facets to the term expectation:

- 1.) There are normative expectations, or alter's judgment of what ego's behavior should be and 2.) predicted expectations, or alter's judgment of what ego's behavior will be.

Behaviors are always performed toward or in regard to some social object, though, and so can be considered an individual: orientation toward some social object or set of objects. Since this is the case, we can redefine the two kinds of expectations this way:

- 1.) A norming expectation is alter's judgment of what ego's relationship toward certain objects is. This brief argument yields four sets of variables which must be included in any analysis of the effect of alter's expectations on ego's behavior: 1.) Alter's normative definition of normative the object of the behavior, b) ego, and c) the consequent real relationship of ego to the object (what that relationship is) 2.) Ego's normative definition of a) the object of the action, b) himself, and c) the consequent ideal relationship of ego to the object (ego's conception of what ego thinks the relationship should be) and 4.) Ego's real definition of a) the object of the action, b) himself, and c) the consequent real relationship between himself and the object.

3. Parsens, *Ibid*, p. 38, Neal Gross et.al., Explorations in Role Analysis, pp. 58-59.

The basic argument of this paper will be that (1) above determines (3) above; that (2) above determines (4) above, and that under certain conditions, (3) above, can determine (4) above.

The assumption that makes this analysis worthwhile is this: it is ego's real definition of his relationship to the social object which determines his actual behavior.⁽⁴⁾ Thus the critical dependent variable is variable 4 above.

Where:

V₁ =

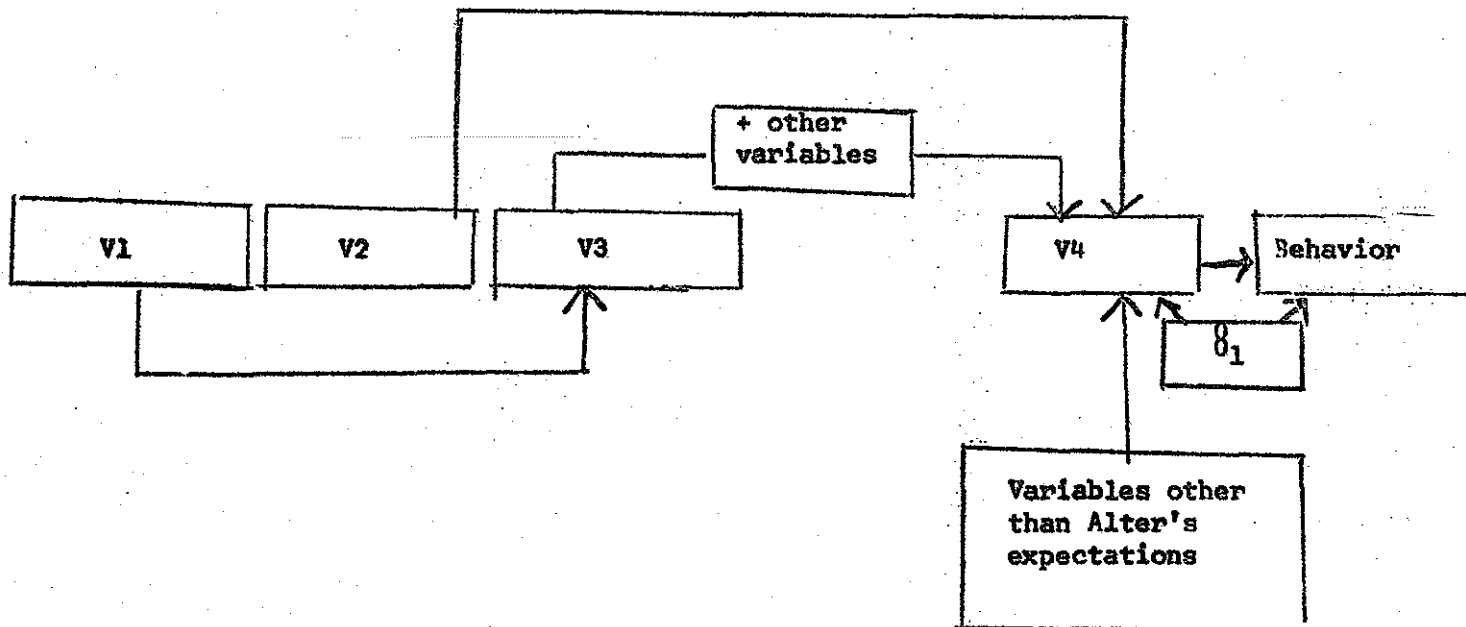
V₂ =

V₃ =

V₄ =

See Page 3

Figure 1



The theory up to this point may be represented diagrammatically as in Figure 1.

4. This assumption is analyzed in much greater detail in Joseph Wodfel, A Non-Motivational Theory of Behavior, Unpublished, PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1967, Ch. 4 and 5.

A.) The Predictive Expectation:

The predictive component of alter's expectation for ego has probably not received the attention it deserves. Gross, for example, clearly delineates the concept, names it "anticipation", then goes on to deal with normative expectations, leaving the predictive component to others.⁽⁴⁾ The predictive expectation deserves better than that.

A prediction by alter of ego's relationship to an object serves as a bit of evidence ego can use to define that relationship for himself. Again, an individual's judgment of how he is related to an object must depend on some evidence, e.g., what he has seen in the past, what others have told him, etc. In the absence of any other evidence, alter's judgment of what ego's relationship to the object was (V₂) would wholly determine ego's own judgment about that relationship.^(V₄) This is extremely important, since it influences ego's conception - not of what he should do - but of what he is going to do. Given no other intervening variables, alter's predictive expectation should wholly determine ego's subsequent behavior.⁽⁵⁾

B.) The Normative Expectation:

The normative expectation, as I have said, is alter's judgment about what ego's relationship to an object should be. Insofar as this normative expectation is communicated to ego, it serves as information for ego. It tells ego what alter's judgment is. Now, insofar as any notion ego has in his head at any time rests on some evidence from somewhere, we may suggest that alter's expectation about what ego's relationship to an object should be serves as a bit of evidence on which ego bases his definition of what it should be (and, of course, what the consequences of its not being what will be). Alter's judgment of what he should do then, influences ego's judgment of what he should do. If there were no other evidence available to ego about what

4. Gross, *ibid.*

5. This whole analysis is predicted on the assumption that a person's behavior is wholly contingent on his conception of his relationship to objects, (his self conception), See footnote 2, p. 2. The argument essentially suggests that what ego thinks he is going to do has mere bearing on ~~him~~ *his subsequent behavior than his conception of what he should do, or even of what he wants to do.*

his relationship to the object should be, there alter's normative expectation would wholly determine ego's own judgment, since it would be the only evidence ego had to go on. In other words, all the evidence available to ego (alter's normative expectation) indicated that his relationship to the object should be thus and so there is no contrary evidence.

But alter's normative expectation also contains a predictive element: it predicts the state of affairs that will hold should ego not conform to alter's expectation. It predicts subsequent behavior when his conception of what he should do or even of what he wants to do. That alter will sanction ego's failure to meet alter's normative demand. Thus alter's normative expectation serves as evidence for two conceptions ego forms: 1.) what his relationship to the object should be, and 2.) what state of affairs will occur if ego does not conform to this ethical mandate. Again, in the absence of any other evidence (e.g., other alters, ego's past experiences in similar situations, etc.) alter's expectation will be determining.

But even in this world of the analytic ideal, where "all other factors are equal", ego's behavior is still problematic. Even if there are no other sources of influence; even if alter's normative expectation wholly determines ego's conception of A.) what his relationship to the object should be, and B.) what consequences will take place if ego fails to conform to it, - ego still may not conform to it. People sometimes do not do what they think they should, even though they are sanctioned for not doing so. In order to account for the effect of a demandive expectation of alter on ego's behavior we must assess the conditions under which A.) ego does what he thinks he should=do, and B.) ego acts to avoid sanctions. That is, we must account for the conditions under which what ego's conception of what his relationship to an object should be (V_3) influences his judgment of what it is (V_4).

C.) The Effect of the Individual's Normative Expectation
on His Predictive Expectation:

As we suggested in the last section, the normative expectation has its

effect on behavior in an indirect fashion. It establishes an individual's conception of what he should do in order to avoid certain consequences. But whether or not he will choose to avoid those consequences depends on certain other conditions which have yet to be specified.

Our assumption, of course, is that an individual's predictive expectation for his own behavior is what determines that behavior. The connection between his normative expectation for his own behavior ~~The connection between his normative expectations and his own behavior~~ and that behavior, then, must lie in a conceptual premiss or set of premisses linking, in ego's mind, his normative expectation with his predictive expectation. The number and variety of such conceptual links is probably not limited, but some are fairly common (or at least are assumed to be common in the general literature.) If an individual (1) valued his relationship with alter, for example, and (2) saw that relationship as contingent on his fulfillment of alter's normative expectation, and (3) saw himself as the kind of person who (a) always, or (b) in this situation, acted to achieve desirable states, and (4) did not see his fulfillment of alter's normative expectation as leading to the loss of some other state of affairs more highly valued than his relationship with alter, then he would end up conceiving of himself as the kind of person who fulfilled alter's expectation under the conditions that prevailed as he saw them. His prediction for his own behavior would be that he would fulfill alter's expectation.

Or, if an individual (from a negative point of view) saw that he would be otherwise sanctioned by alter for failing to fulfill alter's normative expectation, and saw himself as the kind of person who (a) always, or (b) in this situation acted to avoid sanctioning, and that no greater sanction would result from fulfillment of the expectation than non-fulfillment, he would act in accordance with the normative expectation.

Third, if the individual simply conceived of himself as the kind

of person who always (or in that situation) did what alter wanted he would fulfill the expectation. Just as an illustration of the range of these potential conceptual links, the theory would argue that if ego conceived of himself as the kind of person who did whatever anyone with brown eyes asked him, he would fulfill the normative expectations of all brown eyed people.

The important point of this passage is that, no matter their variety, the effect of normative expectations on which serve to link ego's conception of what he thinks alter wants him to do with what ego thinks he will do. *Behavior is ALWAYS MEDIATED BY A SET OF COGNITIVE PREMISES*

The basic suggestion of this part of the paper, then, is this: If all other factors are controlled, alter's predictive expectations will lead directly to ego's behavior, but, even if all other factors were held equal, alter's normative expectation would not lead directly to ego's behavior unless some cognitive linkage between ego's conception of what alter wanted him to do and what ego thought he was going to do were provided. This is a vital consideration when any correlational analysis between alter's expectation and ego's behavior is attempted.

But all other factors are ^{II} never equal. People do not often come into situations with no prior conception of what they should do or what they will do. And there is almost never just one alter; predictive and normative expectations may be in conflict for any single alter. The purpose of this section is to delineate some new variables that must be taken into account when this additional complexity is introduced into the interaction situation.

We have so far described the expectation-behavior relationship as a two-step process, whereby the expectation of alter serves as evidence ego used to establish his conception (a) of what his relationship to some object should be, (i.e., what consequences will result from its ~~feature~~ ^{FAILURE} to be such) and (b) of what his relationship to some object is. The second step involves the movement from the conception to behavior. The latter conception, we said, leads directly to behavior, while the former must pass through additional intervening

variables (conceptual linking premisses) before action will result. In any event, in the analytic situation described in section I, the expectation was portrayed as the only evidence available to ego, and so automatically determining of his conception. When other sources of evidence are available, however (self-reflexive acts, past experience, other expectations, etc.) it is necessary to consider the conditions upon which alter's expectation will be accepted as determining evidence as to what ego's relationship to objects is or should be. Then we can consider the conditions necessary for the inactment of this conception into behavior.

A.) Conditions for the Acceptance of Expectations as Evidence for a Self-Object Relationship:

In the case of a normative expectation, when alter delineates what ego's relationship to an object should be, he is suggesting that there will be consequences of its failure to be that. It is clearly necessary for ego to believe this before the expectation has any effect. Similarly, when alter communicated a predictive expectation to ego, ego's judgment of its correctness is the key variable in its effectiveness. The primary condition for the effectiveness of an expectation, there, is its credibility. There are certain characteristics of both the alter and the expectation which affect credibility.

1. The credibility of alter:

There has been some research on the kinds of alter that are credible, and this research is well summarized by Cohen*. Some of the variables that seem to be important are 1.) the degree to which ego sees alter to be motivated by his own self-interest, and 2.) The degree to which alter is judged competent to deal with the problem. Generally, it would seem that the two major factors of alter's credibility are ego's conception of alter's (1) competence and (2) honesty.

These variables are undoubtedly contingent on other variables, such as the congruity between alter's other expectations, (and continuity over time), the intensity of alter's expectation, etc.

* Cohen

2.) The credibility of the expectation:

Jerome Bruner lists 3 criteria for the acceptance of any new information: 1.) Reality checking (correspondence of the new evidence with what ego can observe for himself) 2.) Censensual validation (correspondence of the new information with what others say) and 3.) ^NInter^Nyal consistency, (correspondence of the new information with what ego ~~already~~ believes.)* While these conditions (all of which may be seen as congruity variables) may be exhaustive, some may be seen to depend on other conditions (or other phraseology) common in the expectation literature. (2) above is generally rendered consensus.

[Insert Fink Material]

Clarity, of course, should be important, since ego must understand the expectation before it makes sense to discuss his believing it. Specificity is important, in that it renders all three of Bruner's congruence checks mor or less easy to perform. Further

[Insert Fink Material]

IT This important in all of this discussion to take note of the dual relativity of all ^{these} ~~theses~~ variables. In the first place, in the real world of conflicting alters and conflicting expectations the important concern is always relative credibility, or the degree to which alter is more or less believeable them other alters, and the degree to which this expectation is more or less credible than other expectations.

Secondly, the alter or the expectation is credible or not credible for this ego, not for some unbiased credibility rater. In all instances, what ego considers credible is the key variable, and it is very likely that different kinds of alters and expectation are differentially credible to different egos. Credibility then is relative to the ego. In short, we should be beginning to see that the problem of others' expectations is more complex than the literature would lead one to believe.

B.) Conditions under which the Expectation Credible to Ego Will Lead To Behavior:

We have suggested so far that, if ego sees them as credible,

BRUNER (M.N.H.)

predictive expectations will lead ego to form a conception of what he will do (a predictive expectation for his own behavior), and normative expectations will lead ego to form a conception of what he should do (a normative expectation for his own behavior.) In the analytically perfect world of section I, ~~the~~ ego's conception of his real relationship to the object alone, or ego's conception of what his relationship to the object should be along with a cognitive linking premiss or premisses, will lead directly to behavior.

In the world of changing concrete particulars, though, nothing is that simple. At best, we can suggest that, if the conditions above are fulfilled, behavior will be initiated. Not all egos are capable of performing all behaviors, and can perform some behaviors only with great difficulty. As soon as behavior is initiated, a new source of evidence about what he will do and what he should do becomes available to ego. If a particularly credible expectation from a particularly persuasive (credible) alter were to convince ego that he was an airplane about to fly around the block, the initiation of that activity would almost surely lead ego to conclude that alter was mistaken. More realistically, the attempt of a subnormal IQ ego to achieve an advanced degree would be fruitless no matter the efforts of his alters. The difficulty of the task, both real and as it is perceived by ego, then, is an important variable interposed between the accepted expectation and the behavior.

III

This analysis has yielded several variables, then, which should be considered when assessing the effect of alter's expectations on ego's behavior. A table of these variables is presented in the appendix, along with the interrelationships likely to be found among them. Before considering these variables, however, several caveats must be made, and they should be apparent from the previous analysis:

First of all, the expectation of an alter must be seen as a competitor for the acquiescence of ego among a universe of other powerful sources ^{more or less} ^{of} influence. It competes against ego's ^{own} observations, against what ego already holds to be true, and against other expectations from other ^{ALTERS} alters. In any case, the amount of variance in Ego's behavior that can be explained by any given expectations, and, indeed by the sum total of all expectations held by all alters, will never be total. Insofar as most of the information ego has about the world, however, comes to him from others, and insofar as time and space allow for only selective exposure to a few others, the expectations of ego's "significant others" should probably account for the largest part of the variance in ego's behavior.

Operationalisation:

(Operationalization will be accomplished (note will and the uncompromising optimism it reflects) in the Expectation Elicitor.)