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**Met expectations and the well-being of ethnic remigrants:
A follow-up study**

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Abstract

Previous research has been indicative of the importance of expectations on the adaptation of immigrants. However, most studies have been methodologically retrospective with only limited possibilities to show the optimal relationship between migrants' expectations and their actual acculturation experiences for their adaptation. Moreover, previous research has been conducted mostly among sojourners and students. This follow-up study focused on the relationship between of pre-migration expectations and post-migration experiences of ethnic remigrants from Russia to Finland ($N = 153$). We examined how the fulfilment of pre-migration expectations in social (i.e., family relations, friendships and free time) and economic (i.e., occupational position, working conditions and economic and career situation) domains affects remigrants' well-being (i.e., satisfaction with life and general mood) after migration. Three alternative models of expectation confirmation (i.e., disconfirmation model, ideal point model, and the importance of experiences only) derived from previous organisational psychological research were tested with polynomial regression and response surface analysis. In economic domain, remigrants' expectations, experiences nor their interrelationship affected well-being in the post-migration stage. However, in social domain, the more expectations were exceeded by actual experiences, the better were the life satisfaction and the general mood of remigrants. The results underline the importance of social relationships for and the context-dependent nature of immigrant adaptation. Interventions in the pre-acculturation stage should create positive but realistic expectations for voluntary remigrants, and policies in the post-migration stage should facilitate the fulfilment of these expectations and support especially the social adaptation of remigrants.

Key words: pre-migration, met expectations, well-being, remigrants.

Met expectations and the well-being of ethnic remigrants:

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Introduction

Previous research on immigrant adaptation has shown that positive and accurate expectations are associated with better post-migration adaptation outcomes (e.g., Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique, & Bürgi, 2001; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Often, however, there is a mismatch between expectations and reality, as expectations are either surpassed or falling short, leading to psychological dissatisfaction among immigrants (Ward et al., 2001; Rogers & Ward, 1993). Especially ethnic remigration is characterised by attraction to the ancestral homeland and high expectations, and according to Tartakovsky (2009), poor psychological well-being at the entry stage of migration process may be indicative of post-migration disillusionment rather than, for example, trauma from immigration.

In 1990, a repatriate status was accorded to people of Finnish descent (i.e., Ingrian-Finns) living in the former Soviet Union, which resulted in an annual flow of 3000–3500 new ethnic migrants to Finland. Currently, there are still approximately 5000 ethnic Finns in Russia who are applying for emigration permits to Finland. With their families included, this group constitutes a total of 15 000 potential migrants. Due to ethnic migration, Russian-speaking immigrants represent almost half of the total immigrant population (Statistics Finland, 2010) and consequently, their integration is a matter of a great national interest in Finland. However, many ethnic remigrants from Russia face substantial challenges after their migration to Finland. In comparison to the host population, they suffer from almost four times weaker labour market position (Statistics Finland, 2010). It should also be noted that despite the common cultural and religious heritage, ethnic remigrants are typically monolingual in Russian language and as much discriminated against in Finland as are ethnic Russians (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, & Perhoniemi, 2006). Such experiences have clearly

been shown to be unexpected by the immigrants and to diminish their adaptation outcomes (e.g., Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006). This study is the first to address the impact of expectations on their adaptation.

From expectations to adaptation

The relationship between expectations and their fulfilment has for years been a focal interest in many different areas within psychology. The most classic theoretical developments on met expectations have been seen in the field of organisational psychology: the fulfilment of expectations formed before changing a job has been found to be associated with a higher job satisfaction after changing a job (Porter & Steers, 1973). In the field of met expectations research this original theory has been applied in various ways. The most recent attempt to clarify and classify different approaches concerning the relationship between expectations and experiences has been made by Brown, Venkatesh, Kuruzovich and Massey (2008), who propose three competing models on expectation confirmation: (1) *the ideal point model* suggesting that any difference between expectations and experiences, regardless of the direction, leads to dissatisfaction, 2) *the disconfirmation model* suggesting that exceeding expectations lead to greater satisfaction while negative disconfirmation leads to dissatisfaction, and (3) a model suggesting that *only experiences* matter, regardless of expectations. In previous organisational psychological research, the evidence for these alternative models seems mixed. For example, Irving and Montes (2009) found met expectations not always to be associated with high levels of satisfaction, and exceeded expectations were in some cases negatively associated with satisfaction. Brown and colleagues (2008), in turn, found most support for the third model showing the role of experiences for job satisfaction.

In research on immigrant adjustment, expectations regarding future migration are found to decrease uncertainty related to the decision to move (Black, 1992), as well as to proportion experiences (Ward et al., 2001, p. 204) and to help behavioural adjustment (Bürgelt, Morgan, & Pernice, 2008) after migration. However, as pointed out by Szkudlarek (2010), most of the research on the relationship between pre-migration expectations and post-migration adaptation has been theoretically inconsistent and/or methodologically retrospective. Moreover, it remains unclear what is the *optimal* relationship between migrants' expectations and their actual acculturation experiences for their adaptation. It should also be noted that previous research on met expectations in the context of immigration has been conducted almost exclusively among sojourners (Black, 1992; Caligiuri et al., 2001; Szkudlarek, 2010) or students (Rogers & Ward, 1993). Thus, more theoretically and methodologically sound research on met expectations among different groups of migrants is called for.

Finally, it should be recognised that the confirmation of *any* expectation does not necessarily have an impact on the adaptation of migrants. In their original met expectations hypothesis, Porter and Steers (1973) stressed that they are namely expectations related to *relevant* things for the person which truly have an impact on his/her level of satisfaction. Thus, when studying the relationship between met expectations and life satisfaction after migration, the expectations measured should be related to personally relevant factors for the migrants studied (Porter & Steers, 1973). What, then, are the key reasons immigrants migrate for? A division has been typically made between expectations related to work and economic welfare on the one hand, and expectations related to family and social relations, on the other (see, e.g., Baptiste, Hardy, & Lewis, 2007; Black et al., 1992; Murphy & Mahalingam, 2006). A similar division can also be found in more general acculturation models distinguishing between the public and private domains of acculturation

(e.g., Arends-Tóth & Van De Vijver, 2003; Navas, Garcia, Sánchez, Rojas, Pumares, & Fernández, 2005), as well as in psychological models on developmental tasks in adulthood (e.g., Levinson, 1986). Thus, in the present study we focus on pre-migration expectations related to both social and economic domains and examine how their fulfilment affects adaptation after migration.

Aim and hypotheses

In sum, we aim to extend previous research on immigrant adaptation by testing three alternative models of the relationship between expectation confirmation and adaptation developed within organisational psychology (Brown et al., 2008). As in many studies on immigrant acculturation (e.g., Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006), we use two indicators of psychological well-being (i.e., satisfaction with life and general mood) as proxies for adaptation. Satisfaction with life is one of the most widely used indicators of psychological adaptation of immigrants (e.g., Berry et al., 2006), and both job opportunities (De Jong, Chamrathirong, & Tran, 2002) and good family life (Bürgelt et al., 2008) have been attested to predict immigrants' life satisfaction. To examine immigrants' well-being in a more multifaceted manner, also another factor of the widely used General Well-Being Index (Gaston & Vogl, 2005), namely general mood, is used as a measure of adaptation.

As regards the alternative hypotheses tested, first, according to the ideal point model, remigrants' post-migration well-being is a function of the congruence between expectations and experiences. The greater the congruence between the pre-migration expectations and post-migration experiences in both social and economic domains, the higher is the post-migration well-being (i.e., life satisfaction and general mood) among ethnic remigrants (H1). Second, according to the disconfirmation model, remigrants' post-migration well-being is not a function of the difference between expectations and experiences in social

and economic domains as such, but a function of the *direction* of the difference between expectations and experiences. Positive disconfirmation (i.e., experiences positively exceeding social and economic expectations) is expected to increase the well-being of remigrants and negative disconfirmation to decrease it (H2). Finally, it is tested whether the well-being of remigrants is solely determined by their experiences in social and economic domains of adaptation, regardless of their expectations in the pre-migration stage (H3).

Method

Participants and procedure

One-year follow-up data was collected for the study as a part of the longitudinal INPRES (*Intervening at the Pre-migration Stage: Providing tools for promoting integration and adaptation throughout the migration process*) research project on the integration of immigrants from Russia to Finland. Participation in both stages of the project was voluntary, and written consents for collecting follow-up data were obtained.

The baseline data ($N = 224$; 68.3 % females) was collected in Russia in spring 2008 among potential Ingrian-Finnish remigrants (and their family members; $n = 192$) who attended Finnish language as a part of their immigration training program. The sample also included those potential migrants who had already passed the language test and were waiting to be officially granted a place of residence in Finland ($n = 32$). The mean age of the baseline participants was 44.4 years ($SD = 15.0$ years, range 19-85 years). Most participants were married or cohabiting (62.1 %) and had children (74.6 %). Further, most of them had full-time employment (55.4 %), while only four per cent were unemployed at the time of baseline data collection. Every second (44.2 %) of these 224 participants estimated to be able to migrate within the following seven or eight months.

The follow-up data was collected between autumn 2009 and spring 2010. The participants were tracked using the Finnish population register. At that time, the participants had stayed 3-15 months ($M = 9.5$, $SD = 4.0$) in Finland. The follow-up data consisted of 153 respondents (68 % of the baseline sample and 90 % of all the Ingrian-Finnish base-line participants remigrated to Finland by August 2010). The mean age in the follow-up sample was 45.4 years ($SD = 14.3$). The majority of participants were females (71.9 %), and they were married or cohabiting (61.4 %). The participants were well-educated prior to migration: 45.8 per cent had attended high school or university. Most participants (89.5 %) had visited Finland before, and almost all of them (95.4 %) had friends and/or relatives living in Finland.

To examine possible selection bias due to sample attrition, t -tests on relevant demographic factors and baseline variables were performed. Compared to the respondents who participated only in the baseline stage and did not move to Finland by the time follow-up stage, respondents who had participated in both data collection rounds evaluated their proficiency in Finnish language more positively in the baseline data ($t = -2.56$, $p = .01$). Otherwise, the participants who took part in both rounds of data collection not differ from respondents participating only in the baseline stage of the study.

Measures

Psychological well-being was assessed by two indicators: life satisfaction and general mood. Both measures were taken from the General Well Being Index (GWBI) by Gaston & Vogl (2005). *Life satisfaction* was measured with six GWBI items. Participants were asked to evaluate on a five-point scale (1 = not at all – 5 = very much so), how well they have been doing during the past two weeks (e.g., “How happy, pleased or satisfied have you been with your personal life?”) ($\alpha = .80$ at T_1 ; $\alpha = .81$ at T_2). In the thirteen-item GWBI measure for *general mood* participants reported their feelings during the past two weeks (e.g., “Have you

been anxious, worried or upset?") on a five-point scale (1 = not at all – 5 = very much so) ($\alpha = .91$ at T₁ and at T₂).

Expectations about future life in Finland were measured in the pre-migration stage with seven items developed for the INPRES project. The respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale (1 = very poor – 5 = very good), how they expected their life situation to be after their migration. The same items were used in the post-migration stage to measure *experiences*, but in the instruction the respondents were asked to evaluate their current life situation in Finland. The items measuring pre-migration expectations and post-migration experiences were examined with factor analysis (Principal Axis Factors extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation), which produced two factors. At T₁, three items tapping family relations (e.g., relationship with parents, spouse and children), friendships (quantity and quality of relationships with friends and acquaintances) and hobbies and free time formed a factor named *social domain* (explaining 10.6 % of variance), and four items tapping occupational position (e.g., post, assignment), working conditions (e.g., work community, working culture), opportunities for ascending the career ladder and economic situation (e.g., salary, income level, social support) formed a factor named *economic domain* (explaining 42.5 % of variance). At T₂, the pattern of loadings remained similar, except for friendships and economic situation which correlated with both factors in the post-migration stage. At T₂, the factors representing social and economic domains explained 8.2 % and 31.3 % of the variance, respectively. Finally, four composite scores were constructed: (1) *expectations and (2) experiences* related to *social domain* (i.e., family, relationships and leisure; three items in each point of measurement, $\alpha = .65$ at T₁; $\alpha = .41$ at T₂) and (3) *expectations and (4) experiences* related to *economic domain* (i.e., occupation and standard of living; four items in each point of measurement, $\alpha = .84$ at T₁; $\alpha = .78$ at T₂). The reliability of the social domain

measure at T₂ was less than ideal, but in order to have comparable measures in both time points, the composite scores were constructed similarly.

Data analysis

Previously, linear regression and difference scores have been typically used to analyse the effects of expectation confirmation on different outcomes. However, following recent recommendations (Brown et al., 2008; Shanock, Baran, Gentry, Pattison, & Heggestad, 2010), polynomial regression analysis and response surface methodology were used in this study to examine the relationships between the different combinations of the two predictor variables and well-being. This way it was possible to tap the possible non-linear relationships and graph the results of polynomial regression analyses in a three-dimensional space. This technique has been shown to have more explanatory potential compared to traditionally used difference scores and regression analyses (Shanock et al., 2010).

In total, we conducted four polynomial regression analyses in which the outcome variables (i.e., life satisfaction and general mood) were regressed on expectations and experiences of the predictor variable (i.e., social and economic domains), the interaction between the two predictors and the squared terms for each of the two predictors.

Demographic background variables were not controlled for, as the use of covariates in polynomial regression with response surface analysis is not reasonable (Shanock et al., 2010).

Results

Preliminary analyses

The descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of the variables used in the study are presented in Table 1. Respondents' life satisfaction had decreased slightly after migration ($t(145) = 2.09, p = .038$), but there was no statistically significant change in their general

mood ($t(144) = -1.86, p = .065$). Pre-migration expectations were higher than post-migration experiences both in social ($t(134) = 7.44, p < .001$) and economic domain ($t(98) = 11.97, p < .001$). As regards the correlates of the outcome variables, expectations in the social domain and experiences in both social and economic domain correlated positively with life satisfaction and general mood in the post-migration stage.

Insert Table 1 about here

Following the recommendations by Shanock and colleagues (2010) and the procedure presented in Fleenor, McCauley and Brutus (1996), we examined how many participants could be considered to have discrepancies between expectations and experiences before conducting the polynomial regression analysis. In social domain, the expectations of approximately 47.4 % of participants had exceeded and the expectations of approximately 33.3% of participants had fallen short, while the expectations of approximately 19.3 % of participants were fully met. In economic domain, the expectations of approximately 41.4 % of participants had exceeded and the expectations of approximately 31.3 % of participants had fallen short, while the expectations of approximately 27.3 % of participants were fully met.

Testing of the alternative hypotheses

In polynomial regression analysis with surface analysis, the results are evaluated with regard to surface test values rather than regression coefficients, when the regression model significantly predicts the outcome variable studied (Shanock et al., 2010; see tables 2 and 3). As regards *economic domain*, none of the three hypotheses gained support (see Table 2): expectations, experiences nor their interrelationship predicted remigrants' general mood and

life satisfaction in the post-migration stage. However, as can be seen from the surface test value a_3 (see Table 3) and from Figures 1 and 2, hypothesis H2 gained support in *social domain*. The more expectations were exceeded by experiences, the better were the life satisfaction and general mood of remigrants in the post-migration stage. Although the results of the response surface analyses presented in Figures 1 and 2 slightly differ, the pattern of results is similar for both outcome measures of well-being. It can be seen from the three-dimensional spaces that the well-being of remigrants is highest when their experiences exceed their expectations.

Insert Tables 2-3 and Figures 1-2 about here

Discussion

To date, the robust empirical testing of the role of expectation confirmation in the adaptation of immigrants has been neglected in acculturation research. The present study on the well-being of remigrants was, to our knowledge, the first to employ longitudinal research design with two domains of expectation confirmation (i.e., social and economic) and two proxies of well-being (i.e., life satisfaction and general mood). As a methodological approach, we employed three-dimensional, non-linear analysis (i.e., polynomial regression analysis with response surface analysis) in the examination of pre-migration expectations and post-migration experiences as the adaptation of immigrants. The asset of this methodology is in its explanatory potential compared to traditionally used difference scores and regression analyses (Shanock et al., 2010) when probing an issue as complex as expectation confirmation over time. The results obtained showed that in social domain, the life satisfaction and general mood of remigrants is determined by the relationship between their expectations and experiences: the more their expectations are exceeded, the better their well-

being after migration. However, remigrants' expectations, experiences and their relationship in economic domain do not seem to affect their post-migration well-being (which in this study was affected only by the level of their well-being in the pre-migration stage).

So why does the pattern of results seem to be different depending of the domain studied? According to the original theorisation on met expectations by Porter and Steers (1973), the relevance of different kinds of expectations varies in different situations and contexts. Thus, it is possible that in the context of remigration from Russia to Finland the importance of social relationships and free time is greater than the importance of economic situation and work life. For example, Tartakovsky and Schwartz (2001) found young Jewish emigrants from Russia to choose their country of remigration according to their emigration motives: preservation motivation (i.e., security for oneself and one's family) was stronger than motivations related to self-development (i.e., personal growth in knowledge and skills) and materialism (i.e., wealth and control over material resources) among people preferring to emigrate to Israel as compared to economically more developed countries, Germany and the USA. Similarly, it may be that the decision to remigrate to Finland is driven primarily by expectations related to social relationships (i.e., the role of positive expectation confirmation), while material well-fare is experienced as a factor enhancing psychological well-being after migration (i.e., the role of experiences only). Indeed, a recent study by Lönnqvist, Jasinskaja-Lahti and Verkasalo (in press) showed in the same sample of Ingrian-Finnish remigrants that the importance of values related to power and achievement decreased, while the importance of values related to universalism and security increased after migration. However, it should be recognised that the respondents of present study, as well as of the study by Lönnqvist and colleagues (in press), were recent remigrants. For them, the role of social relationships and free time might be accentuated, as finding a job right after remigration due to poor language skills and the negative attitudes of the national majority

group are common hardships faced by remigrants from the FSU (e.g., Heleniak, 2006).

However, in the long run, the role of work and economic status may become greater and affect their long-term adaptation.

Despite its theoretical and methodological contributions, the present study is not without limitations. First, the results obtained need to be interpreted with caution due to the poor reliability of our measure of post-migration experiences in social domain. Second, as the follow-up data represents recent remigrants, the results of this study may not be generalisable for explaining the long-term adaptation of migrants. Moreover, different kinds of expectations can affect satisfaction and adaptation in different contexts (see Black et al., 1992; Irving & Montes, 2009): thus, the generalisability of the results needs to be tested in immigration contexts other than remigration. In future studies it is also worth examining more thoroughly the variety of micro- (e.g., values, personality traits), meso- (e.g., intra- and intergroup processes) and macro-level (e.g., immigration policy) factors possibly affecting the formation of expectations in the pre-migration stage. Field-experimental intervention studies would also give important information about the claimed effects of different pre-migration programs on the expectations, expectation confirmation and post-migration behaviour of remigrants and other groups of voluntary migrants.

In conclusion, two policy recommendations can be made based on previous research and the present study. *In the pre-migration stage*, training offered for voluntary migrants should create positive but realistic expectations for future remigrants (cf., Caligiuri et al., 2001, on expatriates). Previous research has indicated that the expectations of potential remigrants are often too rosy, which may lead to a disappointment after migration (see, e.g., Tartakovsky, 2009). However, creating people as low expectations as possible in order to ensure their positive exceeding (cf., Irving & Montes, 2009) might not be wise: positive expectations make the migrant to face the new homeland in a positive way, while

negative expectations may hinder the actual formation of intergroup relations after migration, for example (see, e.g., Crisp & Turner, 2009). Thus, *in the post-migration stage*, policies should facilitate the fulfilment of positive expectations and support especially the social adaptation of remigrants, who are facing major changes in their social networks. As pointed out by Bürgelt and colleagues (2008), receiving societies need to live up to the image they create to attract migrants.

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of the variables used in the study.

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Life satisfaction T ₁	3.79 (.56)		.70**	.53**	.38**	.21*	.10	.28**	.16
2. General mood T ₁	3.94 (.61)			.45**	.45**	.14	.04	.25**	.15
3. Life satisfaction T ₂	3.70 (.53)				.72**	.26**	.12	.59**	.26**
4. General mood T ₂	4.04 (.56)					.21*	.04	.54**	.23*
5. Expectations: social T ₁	4.21 (.48)						.47**	.45**	.20*
6. Expectations: economic T ₁	3.70 (.58)							.27**	.37**
7. Experiences: social T ₂	3.90 (.51)								.27**
8. Experiences: economic T ₂	2.80 (.65)								

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Results of the polynomial regression analysis on the effects of expectation confirmation in the economic domain ($N = 98$).

Step 1	Step2	DV: Life satisfaction T ₂	DV: General mood T ₂
DV T ₁		.48***	.38***
	DV T ₁	.45***	.35***
	Expectations	-.05	-.10
	Experiences	.23	.17
	Expectations x Expectations	.04	.04
	Expectations x Experiences	-.04	.03
	Experiences x Experiences	.06	-.02
	<i>R</i> ²	.29	.21
	<i>F</i>	6.08***	4.00***
<i>Surface tests</i>			
	a ₁	.18	.07

a ₂	.07	.04
a ₃	-.27	-.27
a ₄	.14	-.01

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$. The regression coefficients presented are unstandardized betas.

$a_1 = (b_1 + b_2)$, where b_1 is beta coefficient for expectations and b_2 is beta coefficient for experiences. $a_2 = (b_3 + b_4 + b_5)$, where b_3 is beta coefficient for expectations squared, b_4 is beta coefficient for the cross-product of expectations and experiences, and b_5 is beta coefficient for experiences squared. $a_3 = (b_1 - b_2)$. $a_4 = (b_3 - b_4 - b_5)$.

Table 3

Results of the polynomial regression analysis on the effects of expectation confirmation in the social domain ($N = 131$).

Step 1	Step2	DV: Life satisfaction T ₂	DV: General mood T ₂
DV T ₁		.51***	.41***
	DV T ₁	.35***	.26***
	Expectations	-.60	-.44
	Experiences	.88	.92***
	Expectations x Experiences	.29	.14
	Expectations x Experiences	-.16	.10
	Experiences x Experiences	-.10	-.31*
	<i>R</i> ²	.49	.21
	<i>F</i>	19.86***	4.00***
<i>Surface tests</i>			
	a ₁	.28	.48

a ₂	.03	-.07
a ₃	-1.48**	-1.37*
a ₄	.36	-.26

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The regression coefficients presented are unstandardized betas. For information on surface test coefficients, see Table 2.

**Expectation confirmation in social domain:
Effects on life satisfaction**

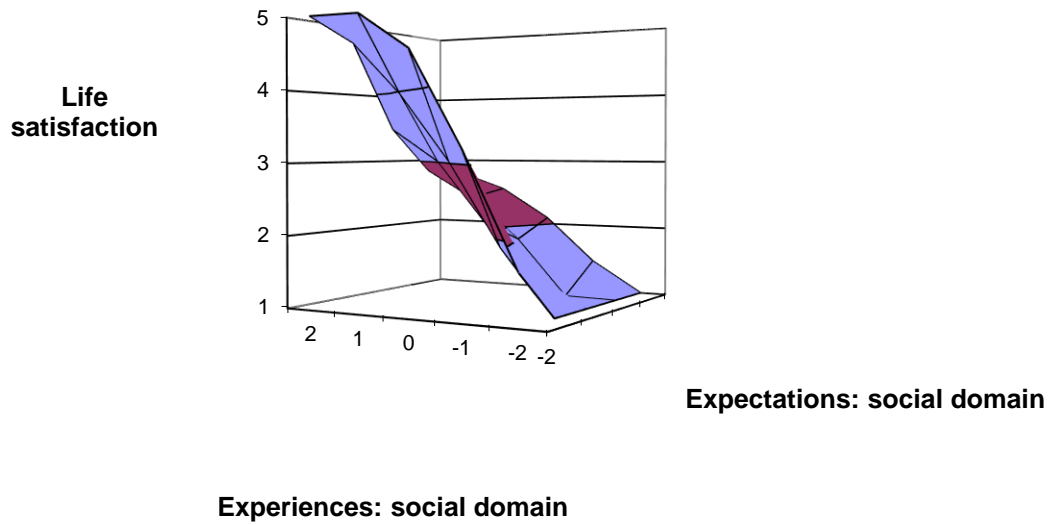


Figure 1. The effect of expectation confirmation in the social domain on life satisfaction.

**Expectation confirmation in social domain:
Effects on general mood**

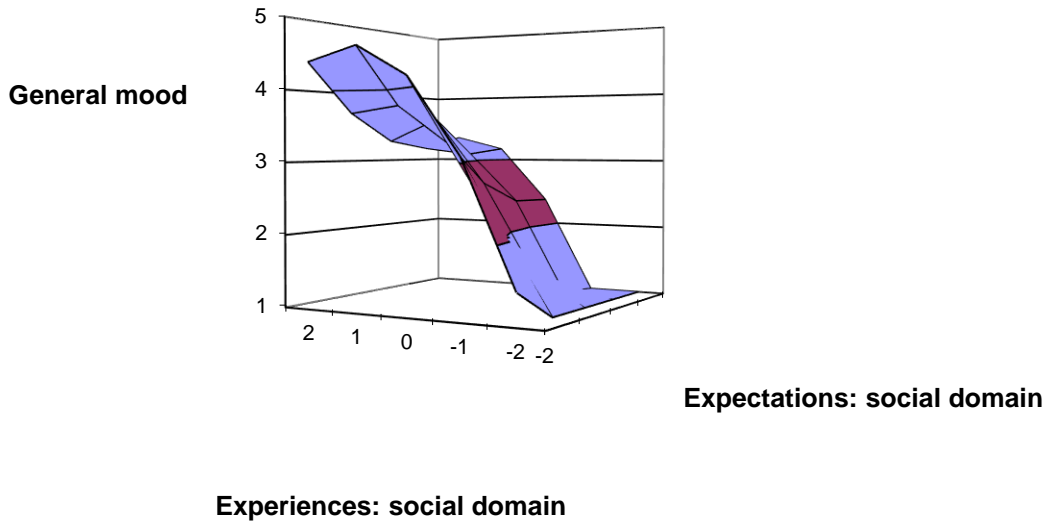


Figure 2. The effect of expectation confirmation in the social domain on general mood.