Supplemental Information for

Talking With Strangers is Surprisingly Informative

Pretest Studies: Study A and Study B
Method

Sample. The final sample of Study A comprised 77 participants (42 female, 34 male, one unreported; 46 aged 20-30, 17 aged 31-40, seven aged 41-50, six aged 51-60, and one aged 61-70), who completed the experiment in exchange for a small gift. These participants were recruited at a reception preceding a public lecture on behavioral science, organized by the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. The final sample of Study B comprised 93 U.S.-based participants (27 female, 66 male; M_{age} = 37.32, SD = 11.12) recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk in exchange for monetary compensation. We excluded four additional participants because their IP address suggested they were either not in the U.S. or using a Virtual Private Server, and seven additional participants for failing at least one of two attention checks.

Procedure. After providing informed consent, participants read the following instructions:
Many of the conversations you have are with people that you already know well: friends, family, colleagues, etc. However, sometimes you are in a position to have a conversation with someone you don't know. We will now ask you to think about multiple strangers you could talk to. For each person, please answer the questions that follow.

We then asked participants to imagine themselves in a position to talk to a stranger in four hypothetical scenarios. Scenarios in Study A: "Imagine that a stranger is seated next to you on a flight from Chicago to New York City," "Imagine that a stranger sits down next to you in a lecture hall. You are both there to attend the same presentation from a University of Chicago professor," "Imagine that you are using a service like Lyft or Uber. You are headed to the airport. The driver is someone you don't know," "Imagine that you and a stranger are looking at the same art piece in a museum." Scenarios in Study B: "Imagine that a stranger is seated next to you on a domestic flight," "Imagine that you're sitting next to someone you don't know at a sports game," "Imagine that you are using a service like Lyft or Uber. You are headed to the airport. The driver is someone you don't know," "Imagine that you are at a music concert on your own. You're waiting for the concert to start. You don't know the person sitting (or standing) next to you."

After reading each scenario, participants reported how much they expected to learn from interacting with the person in the scenario: "How much do you think you'll learn from having a conversation with this person?," Participants also reported their expectations about how interesting the person would be, how much they would like the person, and how interested this person would be in talking to them. Finally, participants rated the likelihood that they would engage the person in the scenario in conversation: "How likely would you be to strike up a conversation with this person?" All ratings were made on scales question-specific anchors that ranged from 0 (e.g., "Learn very little") to 8 (e.g., "Learn a lot").

Results

Because each person provided ratings for four different scenarios, we used the package rmcorr (1) in R (2), which computes a repeated-measures correlations without violating the assumption of independence of observations. As predicted, the more participants expected to learn from someone in conversation, the more willing they reported being to strike up a conversation with that person. This was the case in Study A, r_{rm} (230) = .35, 95% CI [.23, .46], $p < .001$, and Study B, r_{rm} (278) = .56, 95% CI [.48, .64], $p < .001$.

We also tested whether beliefs about learning predicted willingness to start a conversation above and beyond other relevant expectations – specifically, how interested they believed the other person was in talking to them, how much they expected to like the person, and how interesting the person would be. For these analyses, we used a linear mixed effects model. As expected, even controlling for these variables, the more people expected to learn from someone in conversation, the more likely they reported being to actually start a conversation with that person (in Study A, $b = .18$, $t(301.26) = 2.34$, $p = .02$, and Study B, $b = .15$, $t(363.72) = 2.34$, $p = .02$)

Experiments 1-6: Additional Results and Discussion
Experiment 1 (Mundane vs. Interesting Prompts)

   Non-Learning Measures. As show in Figure 1S, participants enjoyed the conversation more, $b =$ 1.83, $t(206) = 12.60$, $p < .001$, liked their partner more, $b = 1.70$, $t(206) = 14.54$, $p < .001$, thought their partner was more complex, $b = .77$, $t(206) = 4.98$, $p < .001$, and thought their partner was more interesting, $b = 1.27$, $t(206) = 10.38$, $p < .001$, than they initially expected. Participants also felt luckier than they expected to feel for having been paired with their specific conversation partner, $b = 1.88$, $t(206) = 12.24$, $p < .001$, suggesting that participants may have believed that their positive experience stemmed from their particular conversation partner rather than from the nature of conversations with strangers more generally. These differences between expectations and experiences did not vary significantly by conversation prompt condition, $|b|s < .24$, $|t|s < .77$, $ps > .44$.

   Self vs. Other. Participants thought their partner found them to be more interesting after the conversation than expected before the conversation ($M_{pre} = 5.41$, $SD = 1.74$ vs. $M_{post} = 6.29$, $SD = 1.69$), $b = .88$, $t(206) = 6.95$, $p < .001$. After the conversation, participants rated their partner as more interesting than they thought their partner rated them ($M = 6.29$, $SD = 1.69$ vs. $M = 7.44$, $SD = 1.68$), $b = 1.15$, $t(206) = 10.65$, $p < .001$.
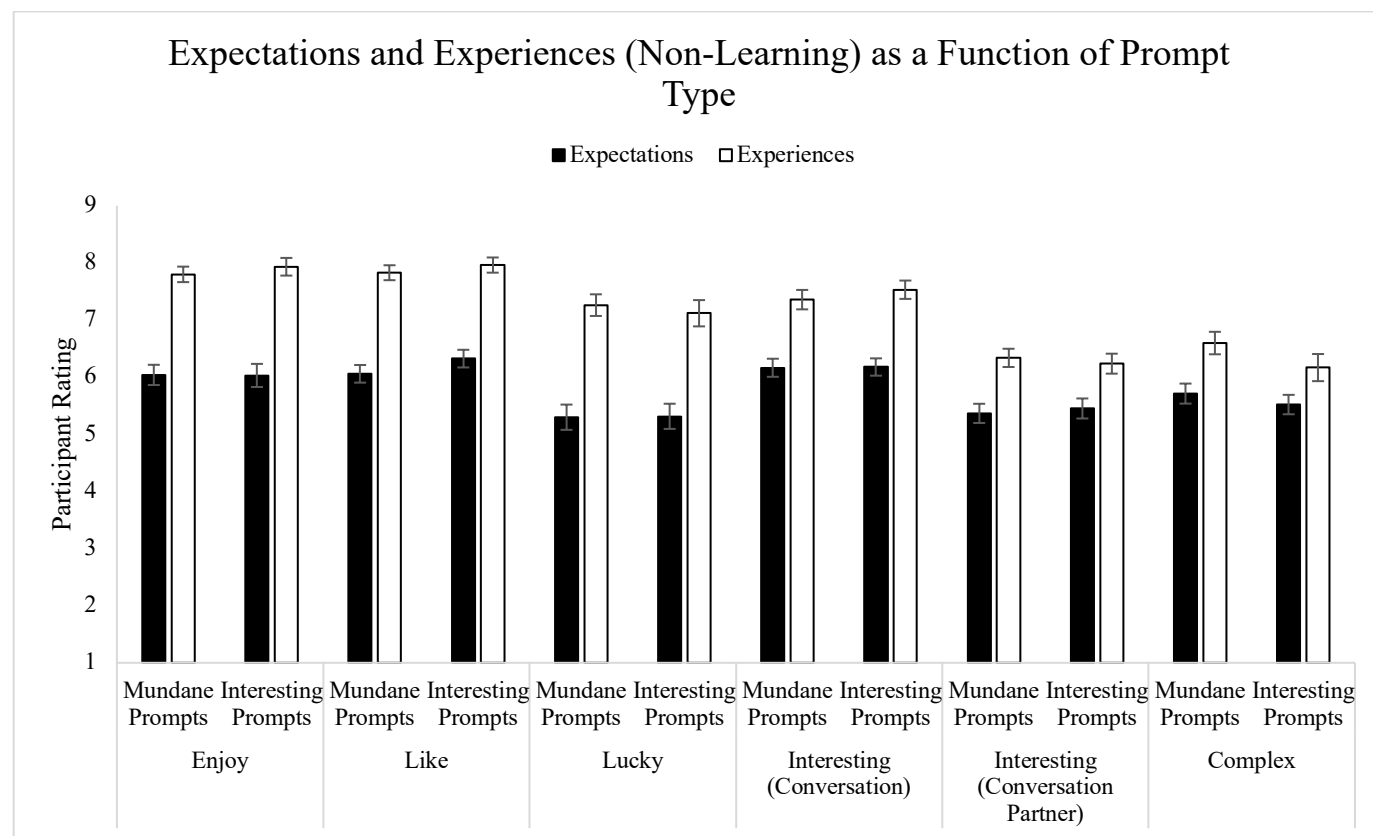

Fig. 1S. Results of Experiment 1. Participants' expectations of non-learning aspects (black bars) generally underestimated experiences (white bars), regardless of which prompts they received. Error bars represent ±1 standard errors.

Experiment 2 (Learning vs. Non-Learning Goal)

   Learning Goal vs. Control Goal. The analyses in the main text were conducted with condition at the level of the participant, who was assigned to a learning goal or a control goal. Similar results emerged

in analyses conducted at the level of the conversation, where a conversation was categorized as a "learning conversation" when one person in the pair was instructed to try to learn. We again observed a nonsignificant interaction between goal condition and time (pre vs. post conversation), $|b|$s < .41, $|t|$s < 1.49, ps > .13.

Non-Learning Measures. Overall, participants found the conversation to be more enjoyable, b = 1.91, t(197) = 14.03, p < .001, liked their conversation partner more, b = 1.83, t(197) = 15.02, p < .001, thought their partner was more complex, b = 1.02, t(197) = 6.96, p < .001, thought their partner was more interesting, b = 1.39, t(198) = 10.10, p < .001, and felt luckier to have been paired with him or her, b = 2.20, t(197) = 13.28, p < .001, than they had expected, Fig. 2S. Participants also believed that their conversation partner found the conversation to be more interesting after the conversation than they expected before the conversation, b = .88, t(197) = 7.52, p < .001, Fig. 2S. All interactions with goal condition were nonsignificant, $|b|$s < .41, $|t|$s < 1.31, ps > .19
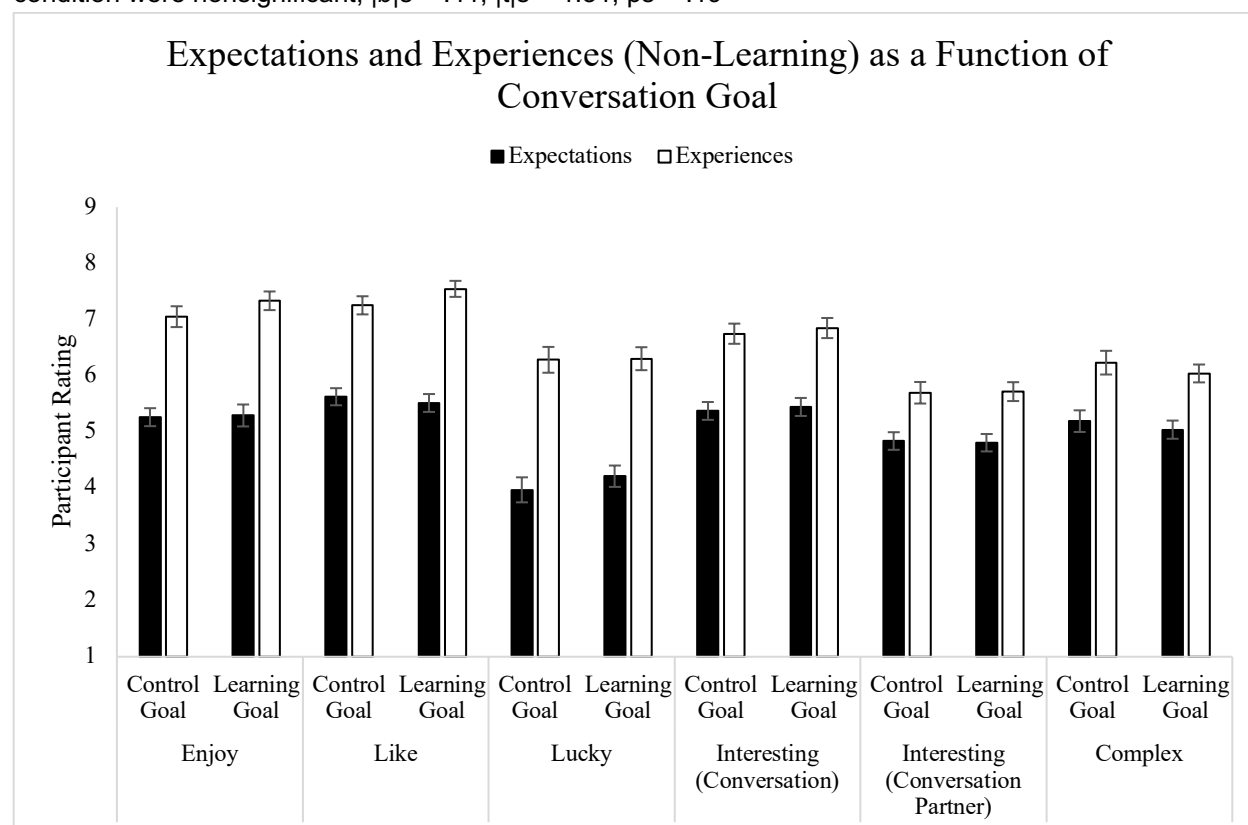

Fig. 2S. Results of Experiments 2. Participants significantly underestimated non-learning aspects of the conversation regardless of their conversational goal. Error bars represent ±1 standard errors.

Experiment 3 (Self vs. Other)

Expectations vs. Experiences of Learning in Text Descriptions. Participants' general tendency to underestimate how much they would learn was reflected in their open-ended descriptions. Specifically, participants wrote shorter descriptions of what they expected to learn (M = 14.6, SD = 11.1) than of what they actually learned (M = 31.2, SD = 30.4), as measured by the number of words, b = 16.58, t(205) = 9.22, p < .001.

Non-Learning Measures. As shown in Figure 3S, participants underestimated how much they would enjoy the conversation, b = 1.45, t(205) = 10.28, p < .001, find their conversation interesting, b = 1.41, t(205) = 8.75, p < .001, like their partner, b = 1.53, t(205) = 11.75, p < .001, and feel lucky to have

been paired with their partner, b = 1.95, $t(205)$ = 13.18, p < .001, while overestimating how difficult it would be to carry out the conversation, b = 1.56, $t(205)$ = 9.11, p < .001.

Self vs. Other. Just as participants reported learning more after the conversation than they expected before the conversation, they also thought that their partners learned more after the conversation than expected before the conversation. This pattern was significant for learning about the other person (M_{pre} = 5.53, SD = 1.81 vs. M_{post} = 6.13, SD = 1.92), b = .58, $t(205)$ = 4.17, p < .001, and directionally significant for learning from the conversation in general (M_{pre} = 5.10, SD = 2.00 vs. M_{post} = 5.35, SD = 2.40), b = .25, $t(205)$ = 1.65, p = .099.

After the conversation, participants felt that they had learned more about their partner (M = 6.77, SD =1.82) than vice versa (M = 6.13, SD = 1.92), b = .65, $t(205)$ = 4.61, p < .001, and that they had learned more general information (M = 5.81, SD =2.22) than their partner had (M = 5.35, SD =2.40), b = .46, $t(205)$ = 3.01, p = .003. Similarly, after the conversation, participants wrote significantly more words describing what they personally learned than what they believed their partner learned (M_{self} = 31.2, SD = 30.4 vs. M_{other} = 21.8, SD = 19.9), b = 9.46, $t(205)$ = 6.15, p < .001.

Abstractness – Self vs. Other. As with learning ratings, expectations and experiences varied for the self and other, b = -.52, $t(615)$ = -3.99, p < .001. Based on ratings by third party coders, participants wrote marginally more abstract descriptions of what they expected to learn from their conversation partners than of what they expected their conversation partners to learn from them (M_{self} = 4.45, SD = 1.03 vs. M_{other} = 4.31, SD = 1.18), b = .14, $t(205)$ = 1.94, p = .053. This self-other difference in abstractness was significantly larger after the conversation (M_{self} = 4.45, SD = 1.03 vs. M_{other} = 4.31, SD = 1.18), b = .39, $t(205)$ = 5.31, p < .001.
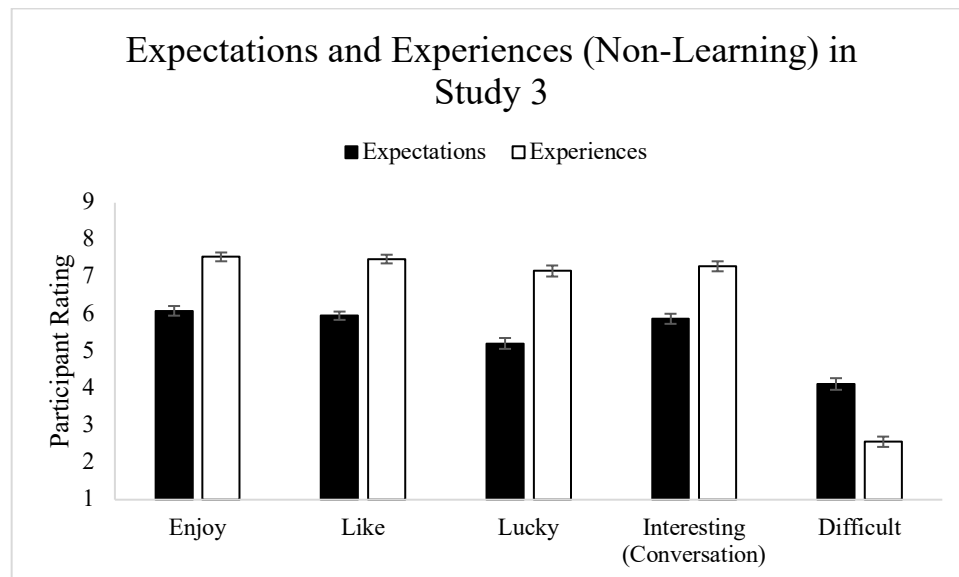

Fig. 3S. Results of Experiment 3. Participants overestimated negative and underestimated positive non-learning aspects of the conversation. Error bars represent ±1 standard errors.

Experiment 4 (Social vs. Non-Social Task)

Non-Learning Measures. As shown in Figure 4S, participants who had a conversation enjoyed it significantly more than they expected, b = 1.27, $t(101)$ = 6.53, p < .001, but those who surfed the web did not, b = -.18, $t(99)$ = -.82, p = .42, yielding a significant interaction, b = -1.45, $t(200)$ = -4.89, p < .001. Participants' also found their experience to be interesting than expected in both conditions, $b_{conversation}$ = 1.22, $t(101)$ = 6.80, p < .001, b_{web} = .52, $t(99)$ = 2.44, p = .016, but a significant interaction indicates that this gap was significantly larger when having a conversation than when surfing the web, b = -.69, $t(200)$ =

-2.48, p = .014. Participants also reported being significantly happier with their assigned condition after the conversation than they expected, b = 1.41, $t(101)$ = 6.23, p < .001, but those who surfed the web did not, b = -.10, $t(99)$ = -.51, p = .61, yielding a significant interaction, b = -1.45, $t(200)$ = -4.89, p < .001.
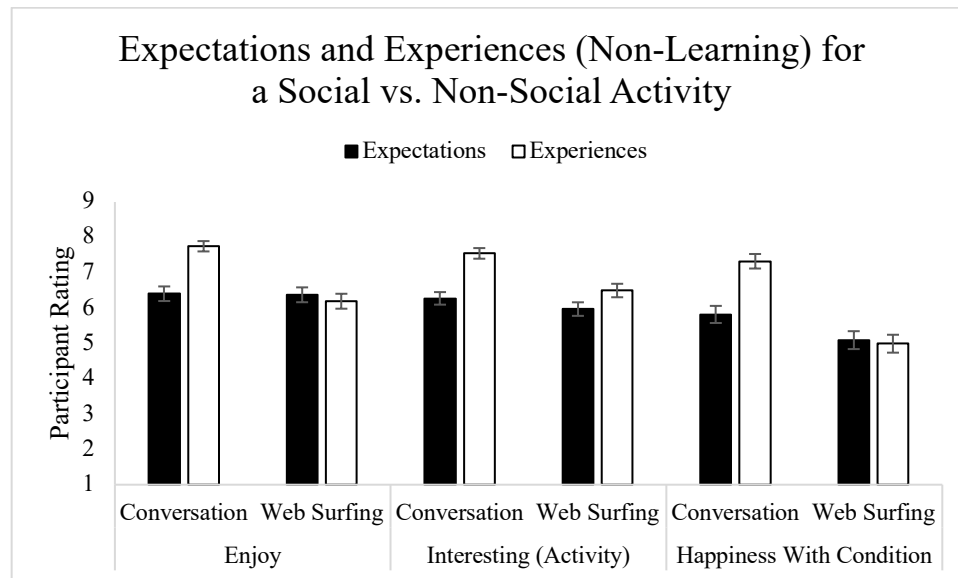

Fig. 4S. Results of Experiment 4. Participants significantly underestimated how much they would enjoy and how much they would be happy to engage in a social activity (conversation; left) but not a non-learning activity (web surfing; right). Error bars represent ±1 standard errors.

Experiment 5 (Strangers vs. Acquainted Partners)

Non-Learning Measures. As shown in Figure 5S, the extent to which participants underestimated non-learning aspects of the conversation depended on whether their partner was a stranger or an acquainted person (ts > 5.70, ps < .001), with participants underestimating positive outcomes for a stranger significantly more than for an acquainted person. Participants significantly underestimated how much they would enjoy a conversation with a stranger, b = 1.72, $t(103)$ = 10.68, p < .001, but not with their acquainted conversation partner, b = .17, $t(103)$ = 1.20, p = .23. Participants also significantly underestimated how interesting the conversation would be with a stranger, b = 1.48, $t(103)$ = 8.37, p < .001, but not with their acquainted partner, b = .16, $t(103)$ = .83, p = .41. Finally, participants underestimated more how much they would like, b = 1.81, $t(103)$ = 11.95, p < .001, and feel lucky to have been paired with, b = 2.12, $t(103)$ = 10.51, p < .001, a stranger compared with an acquainted partner, bs = .73 & .61, respectively, ts(103) = 5.75 & 3.62, ps < .001.
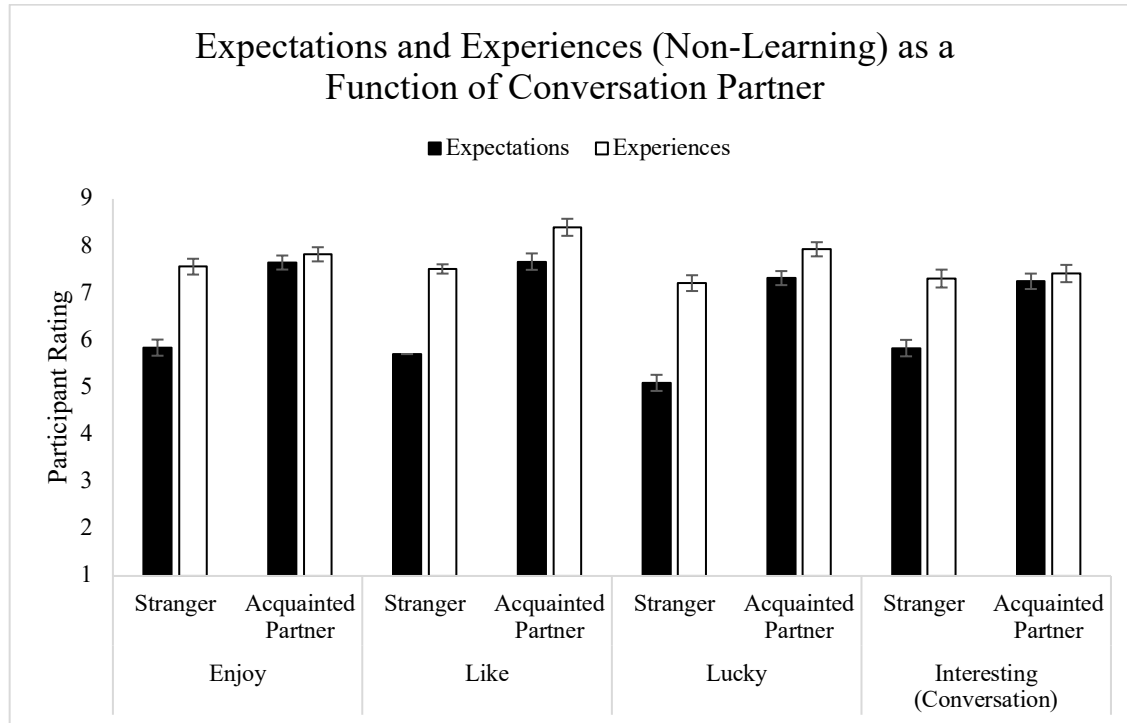
Fig. 5S. Results of Experiment 5. Participants were better calibrated about how much they would enjoy a conversation with an acquainted partner, like him or her, and feel lucky about being paired with a given conversation partner, compared to a conversation with a stranger. Error bars represent ±1 standard errors.

Experiment 6 (Observers)

Materials and Original Study. As explained in the main text and the Method section, the conversations that observers evaluated in Experiment 6 were recorded as part of a separate experiment (N = 200 participants; 100 pairs; 140 women, 55 men, three non-binary, one trans, one unreported; M_{age} = 27.30, SD = 10.86), in which randomly assigned pairs of participants engaged in a 10-minute conversation over the videoconferencing platform Zoom. Participants reported their expectations about how much they would learn from the conversation: "Over the course of the conversation, how much do you think you will learn about the other person?," "Over the course of the conversation, how much general information (not about the other person) do you think you will learn?," "Over the course of the conversation, how much useful information do you think you will learn?," "How interesting do you think the conversation will be?") as well as about non-learning aspects of the conversation: "How much do you think you will enjoy the conversation," "How much do you think you will like the other person?," "How lucky do you think you will feel for being paired up with this particular person (as opposed to another participant)?" After the conversation, participants reported their actual experiences. All scales were the same as in the studies reported in the main text. Pairs were randomly assigned to talk about whatever they wished during the conversation or one person in the pair was assigned to come up with 3-5 topics to talk about. The conversations were recorded with participants' consent.

Observer's Estimates. As shown in Figure 6S and as described in the main text, observers were generally better calibrated about participants' experiences of learning after they watched the conversation than before.

As shown in Figure 7S, observers estimated that the participants learned more about each other, b = -.46, t(439) = -3.28, p = .001, if they made their ratings after watching the conversations than before watching it. Observers' estimates about how much general or useful information the original participants

had learned did not differ significantly depending on whether they made their ratings before or after watching the conversation, |b|s = .25, |t|s < 1.38, ps > .16.

Non-Learning Measures. As show in Figure 7S, observers estimated that participants enjoyed the conversation more, b = -.72, $t(441)$ = -5.29, p < .001, found the conversation to be more interesting, b = -.31, $t(440)$ = -2.07, p = .04, liked each other more, b = -.77, $t(441)$ = -5.92, p < .001, and felt luckier to have been paired together, b = -.93, $t(440)$ = -5.82, p < .001, if they made their ratings after watching the conversations than before watching it.

Observers' Experiences. All observers also reported *their own* experience after watching the conversations. Overall, observers believed that watching a conversation was not as positive or valuable an experience as actually participating in the conversation. Compared to their beliefs about the original participants, observers believed they learned less about the person, ($M_{observers}$ = 6.49, SD = 1.67 vs. $M_{participants}$ = 6.81, SD = 1.42 vs.), b = -.32, $t(606)$ = -2.59, p = .010, learned less in general ($M_{observers}$ = 5.30, SD = 2.14 vs. $M_{participants}$ = 5.79, SD = 1.92), b = -.53, $t(607)$ = -3.23, p = .001, learned less useful information ($M_{observers}$ = 4.30, SD = 2.23 vs. $M_{participants}$ = 5.07, SD = 1.81 vs.), b = -.80, $t(601)$ = -4.95, p < .001, and found the conversation to be less interesting ($M_{observers}$ = 5.55, SD = 2.22 vs. $M_{participants}$ = 6.49, SD = 1.72 vs.), b = -.94, $t(600)$ = -5.96, p < .001. Compared to their beliefs about the original participants, observers also reported enjoying their experience less ($M_{observers}$ = 5.43, SD = 2.21 vs. $M_{participants}$ = 6.90, SD = 1.51), b = -1.47, $t(602)$ = -9.56, p < .001, liking the participants less ($M_{observers}$ = 6.42, SD = 1.81 vs. $M_{participants}$ = 6.91, SD = 1.46 vs.), b = -.47, $t(597)$ = -3.68, p < .001, and feeling less lucky about the pairing ($M_{observers}$ = 4.98, SD = 2.35 vs. $M_{participants}$ = 6.25, SD = 1.76), b = -1.24, $t(599)$ = -7.45, p < .001.
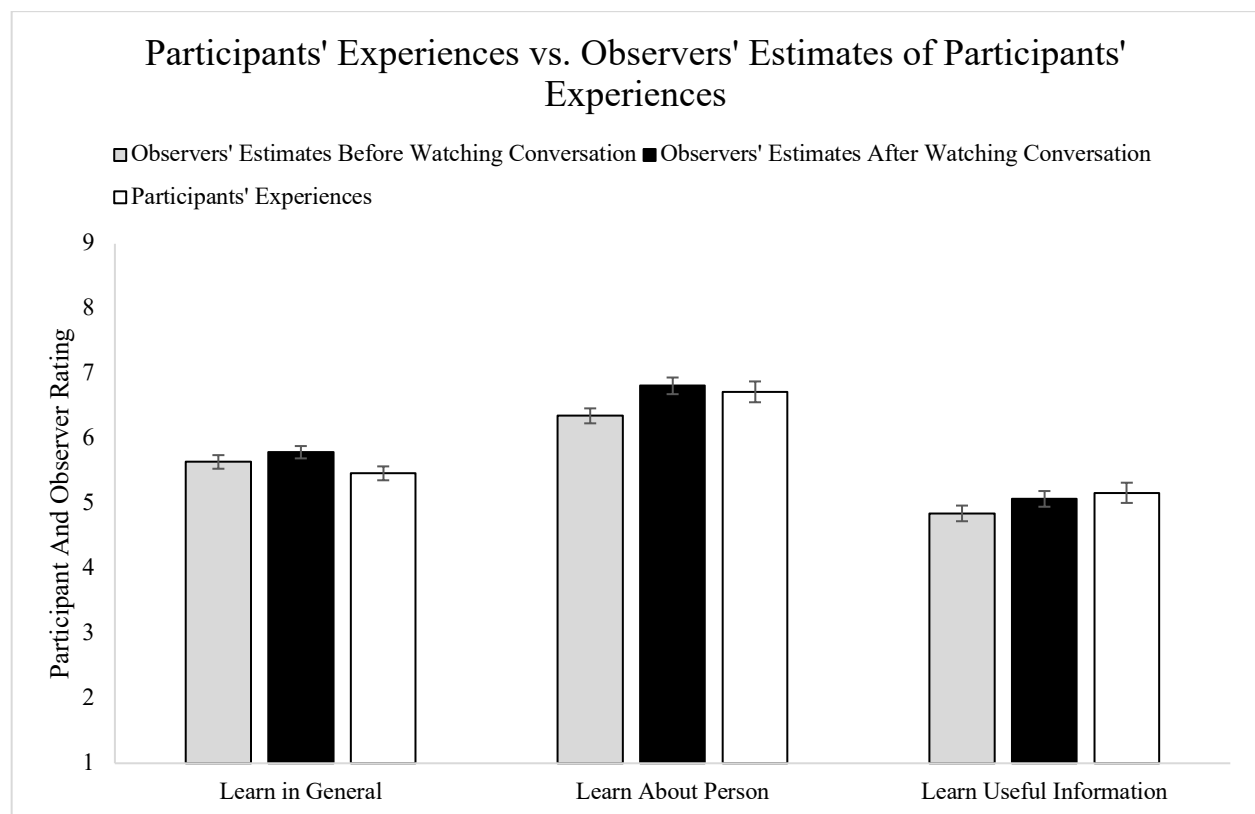

Fig. 6S. Results of Experiment 6. After (vs. before) watching a video of the conversation, observers were generally better calibrated about how much the original participants learned from their conversation. Error bars represent ± 1 standard error.
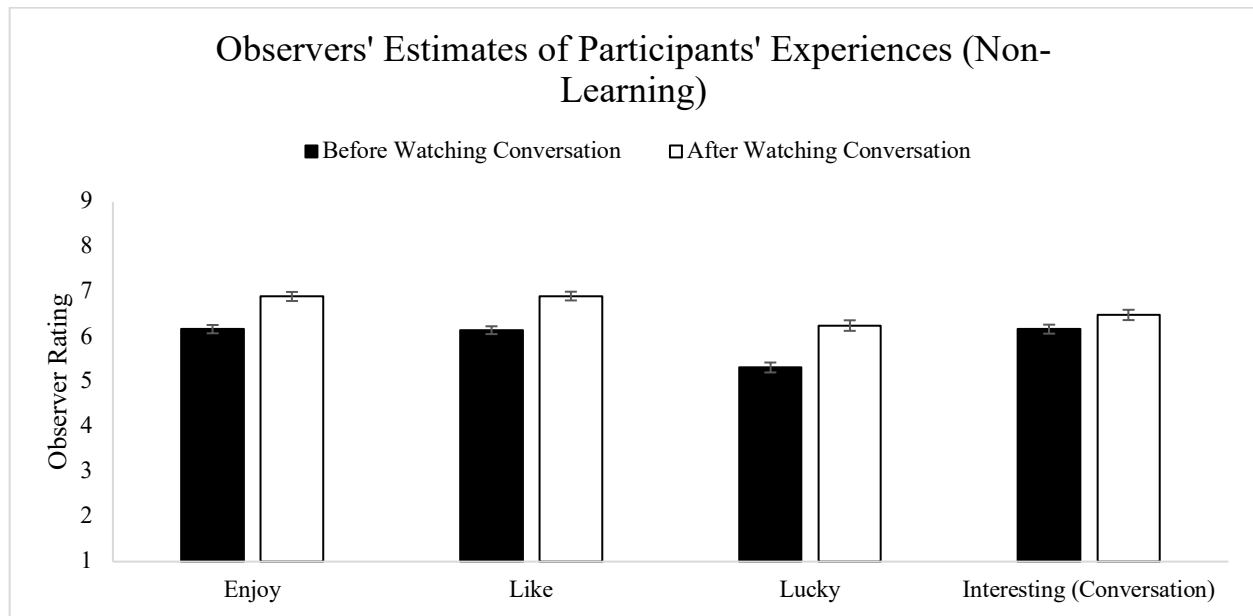
Fig. 7S. Results of Experiment 6. After (vs. before) watching the conversation, observers rated people's experiences as more positive on some dimensions (learning about each other, conversations interestingness, enjoyment, liking, and luck), and similarly on other dimensions (learning general information, learning useful information). Error bars represent ±1 standard errors.

Experiment 7 (Open-Ended vs. Us-Focused Conversation)

Agreement between learning measures. We measured learning in two different ways in Experiment 7: a self-report measure of how much participants felt like they learned, and the number of items that participants wrote down that they actually learned. Comparing these reports of learning against expectations of learning on both measures yield a similar pattern of results. For both measures, the extent to which participants underestimated how much they would learn in conversation varied by condition, with participants underestimating learning more in the open-ended condition than in the U.S.-Focused condition. For both measures, participants in the open-ended condition significantly underestimated how much they would learn. Participants in the U.S.-Focused condition also underestimated the number of items they would learn, but did not significantly underestimate learning on the self-report measure, $b = 0$, $t(100) = 0.00$, $p = 1$, as shown in Figure 8S. We can only speculate about whether and how this slight difference is meaningful. It could be that the item-listing contains a systematic bias for people to underestimate how many things they will actually talk about and hence how differentiated their learning might be after the conversation, but that their subjective assessment of learning is less differentiated or perhaps sensitive to smaller details that participants are willing to list. Note that in both cases, participants expectations of learning did not vary condition but their experiences did, indicating that participants actually learned more in the open-ended condition (See Figure 8S). Exp. 3 offers additional evidence of correspondence between self-reported measures of learning, as third-party raters found what participants actually learned to be indicative of more learning than what participants would have learned based only on their expectations. Taken together, we conclude that in this context, people's self-reported learning tracks with potentially more objective measures of learning.

Additional analyses. We also observed a significant 3-way interaction between condition, time (expectations vs. experiences), and target (self vs. other) on self-reported learning, $b = .79$, $t(609) = 2.31$, $p = .021$. Follow up analyses indicated that this was driven by a 2-way interaction between time and target in the open-ended condition, $b = -.62$, $t(309) = -2.50$, $p = .013$, but not the US condition, $b = .18$, $t(300) = .75$, $p = .45$. In the open-ended condition, participants underestimated their own learning, $b = -$

.92, $t(103) = -5.16$, $p < .001$, to a greater extent than their partner's (compared to their own estimates of their partner's learning after vs. before the conversation), , $b = -.31$, $t(103) = -1.70$, $p = .091$.

Non-Learning Measures. As shown in Figure 9S, we did not observe a significant interaction between condition and the extent of underestimation of non-learning aspects of the conversation: how much they would enjoy the conversation, how much they would like they partner, and how lucky they would feel to have been paired with this partner, $|t|$ values < 1.34, ps > .18.
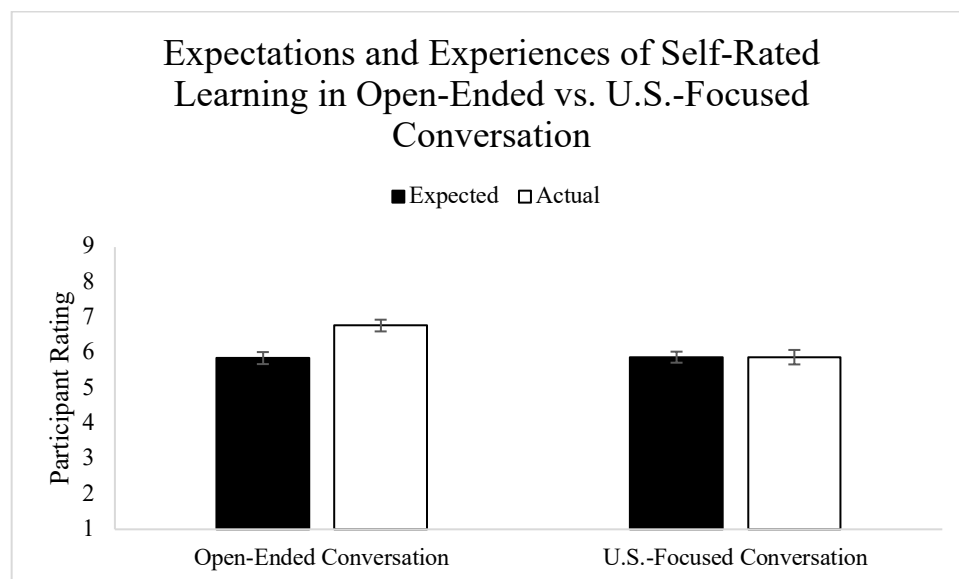

Fig. 8S. Results of Experiment 7. Participants who had an open-ended conversation significantly underestimated how much they would report learning, whereas participants who had a U.S.-focused conversation did not. Error bars represent ±1 standard errors.
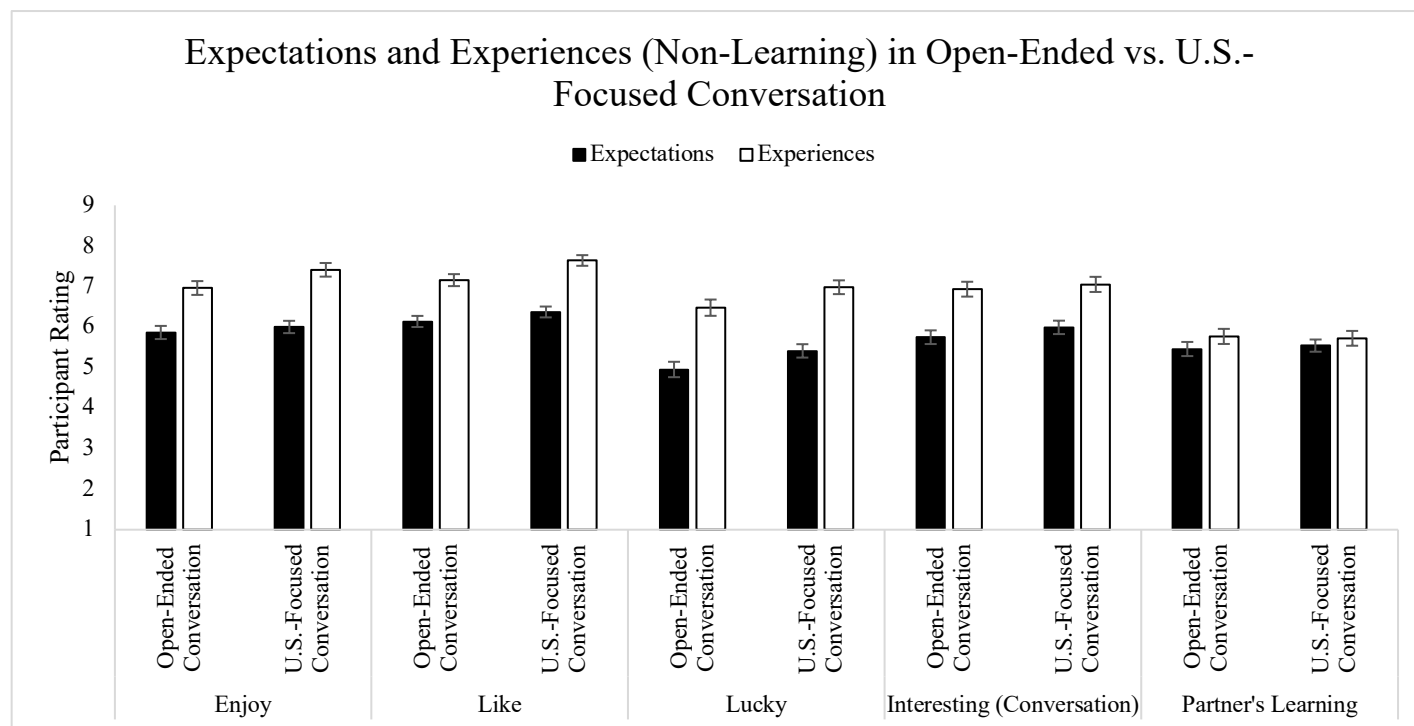
Fig. 9S. Results of Experiment 7. Participants significantly underestimated how interesting the conversation would be, how much they would enjoy it, how much they would like their conversation partners, and how lucky they would feel for being paired with their particular conversation partner. This underestimation did not significantly differ between open-ended and topic-constrained conversations. Error bars represent ±1 standard errors.

Conversation Length: A Discussion and Supplemental Experiment 8S

As mentioned in the Discussion section of the main text, Schroeder et al. (3) report an experiment with London-area train commuters and found that commuters instructed to try starting a conversation with a stranger did not underestimate how much they would learn from a conversation with a fellow commuter. Although the measure used in that experiment was different than those in Experiments 1-7, specifically asking participants to report how much they would learn on this particular commute compared to their normal commute, we believe discussing these results in more detail is informative. Critically, in Experiment 1 of Schroeder et al. (3), there was a significant interaction between time (expectations versus experiences) and conversation length, $b = .04$, $t(94) = 3.80$, p < .001, such that participants underestimated how much they would learn more as the actual length of the conversation they had increased. Importantly, many of the conversations participants reported having in this field setting were very short, lasting less than 3 minutes, which would likely indicate a simple hello or brief acknowledgement, and some participants reported not being able to find someone they felt was willing to have a conversation with them and hence did not have a conversation at all. Because conversation length was not manipulated, we do not know whether the correlation between conversation length and underestimating learning reflects a tendency for people to underestimate learning less for shorter conversations, or for people to learn less when they are unable or unwilling to have conversations.

To better understand the connection between these reported results and the robust tendency to underestimate learning in conversation observed in Experiments 1-7, we conducted an experiment to test whether manipulating conversation length would affect underestimating learning in conversation. In Experiment 8S, we randomly assigned participants ($N = 205$) to have what they were told was either a 5-minute or 20-minute conversation (full details about the method and additional results are reported after this discussion). As in the experiments reported in the main text, participants reported how much they expected to learn and, after the conversation, how much they had learned. As shown in Figure 10S, participants underestimated how much they would learn in the conversation, $b_{learnAboutPartner} = 1.10$, $t(205) = 6.60$, $p < .001$; $b_{learnInGeneral} = .78$, $t(205) = 4.90$, $p < .001$; $b_{useful} = 1.04$, $t(194) = 6.00$, $p < .001$. Underestimation of learning did not vary significantly by conversation length, $b_{learnInGeneral} = -.56$, t(205) = -1.77, $p = .078$, $b_{learnAboutPartner} = -.47$, $t(205) = -1.40$, $p = .16$, $b_{learnUseful} = -.46$, $t(195) = -1.32$, $p = .19$. Although nonsignificant, it is worth noticing in the full reports presented below that the gap between expected and experienced learning was directionally larger in the 20-minute conversation condition than in the 5-minute condition, with participants reporting learning significantly more on some measures in the 20-minute condition compared to the 5-minute condition but with no between-condition differences in expectations approaching significance. This pattern could suggest that participants would underestimate learning even more for even longer conversations as observed in the Schroeder et al. (3) field experiment if we examined conversations even longer than 20 minutes.

These results again indicate that the tendency to underestimate learning in conversation with strangers is robust across relatively short and longer conversations. In everyday life, of course, the kinds of conversations that people have with strangers may not be of the same quality or intensity that they have in an experiment in which people know that their task is to have a conversation. The results reported by Schroeder et al. (3) seem likely to stem from a sizeable percentage of participants not actually having conversations that they could learn from. These results do not, we believe, suggest that conversations are not surprisingly informative in field settings. Instead, we believe they indicate that asking people in

field settings to have a conversation with a stranger on a train does not always mean they will actually do so.
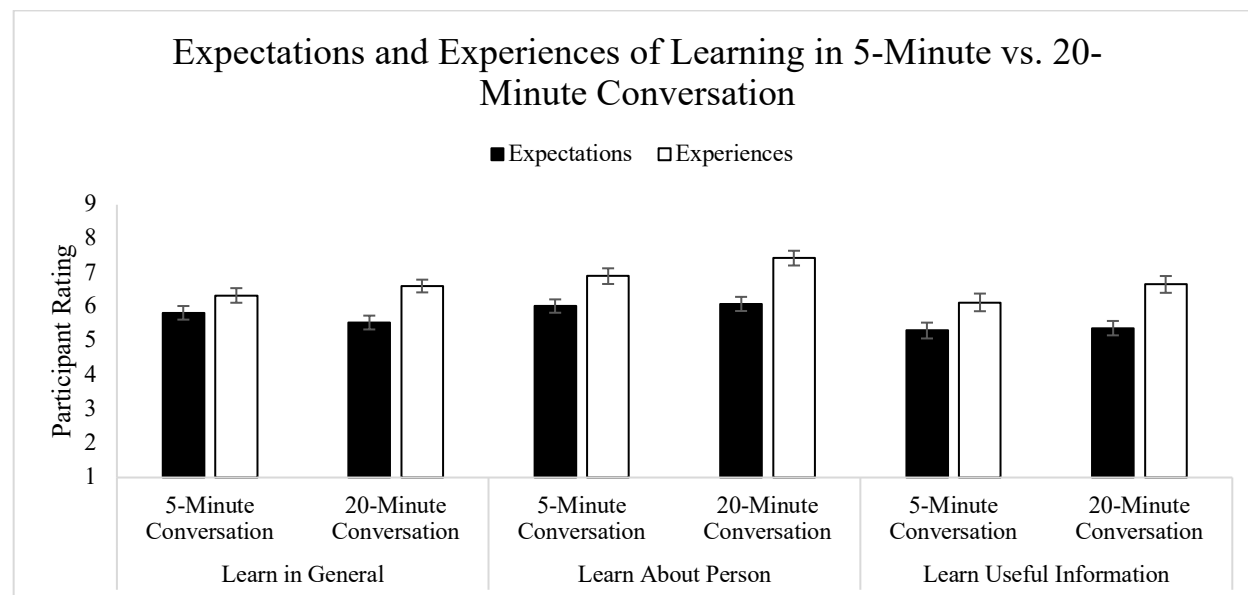

Fig. 10S. Results of Experiment 8S. Participants significantly underestimated learning from both a 5-minute and a 20-minute conversation. This underestimation did not significantly differ by conversation length. Error bars represent ±1 standard errors.

Experiment 8S Method

Participants. The final sample comprised 205 participants (73 female, 131 male; one chose "other"; M_{age} = 37.68, SD = 14.43; 136 non-student community members, 34 University of Chicago students, 35 students at other institutions) recruited through 2 university laboratories, who completed the experiment in exchange for $5. We excluded 11 additional participants from all analyses who accidentally answered the pre-conversation questions after the conversation (n = 5), responded incoherently to an open-ended question (n = 4), or did not wish to have a conversation that day (n = 1, plus the partner). This yielded a sample of 98 complete pairs plus nine individuals whose partners' responses were excluded.

Procedure. The experiment followed the procedure in the General Method with exceptions described below. We briefly introduced participants to each other at the beginning of the experiment so that they would have a specific person in mind when answering the pre-conversation questions, told participants they would interact with each other later in the experiment, and then separated them to completely the pre-conversation survey.

We randomly assigned participants to report either their own interest in having a conversation with their partner or their beliefs about their partner's interest in having a conversation with them. All participants also reported how much they expected they *could* learn from their partner in general, not in a conversational context ("People vary in their backgrounds, the things they've learned, their hobbies, their interests, etc.; How much do you think you have to learn from this person?"). All ratings were on a scale ranging from 1 (Very little) to 9 (A lot).

We randomly assigned pairs to have a either a 5-minute conversation (N = 106) or a 20-minute conversation (N = 99). In both cases, we told participants to try to have a pleasant conversation and to try to learn from their partner.

Participants reported their expectations about learning from the conversation: "Over the course of the conversation, how much do you think you will learn about the other person?," "Over the course of the

conversation, how much general information (not about the other person) do you think you will learn?,” “Over the course of the conversation, how much useful information do you think you will learn?” (this question wasn’t displayed to the first 10 participants due to an error), “How interesting do you think the conversation will be?,” and their expectations of non-learning aspects of the conversation: “How much do you think you’ll enjoy the conversation?,” “How much do you think you’ll like the other person?,” “How lucky do you think you'll feel for being paired up with this particular person?”

After the conversation, participants reported their experiences. We also asked participants what they learned in an open-ended question. Participates then rated the extent to which they had learned each of the following: “information about my conversation partner”, “general information (not about my conversation partner).” Finally, participants reported how much they learned in each of the following categories – “general trivia,” “useful information,” “how to do something (e.g., skill),” “biographical or personal information about the other person,” and “other.” – on scales ranging from 1 (did not learn at all) to 9 (learned a lot).

After reporting their experiences, participants were asked to imagine having been in the other experimental condition, having either a longer or shorter conversation. Participants reported their expectations about this counterfactual on the same measures.
Participants then reported if they had ever spoken to their conversation partner before, with 7 participants reporting that they had done so. Participants provided optional open-ended feedback about the conversation’s duration. To keep the overall experiment length similar across conditions, participants who had had a short conversation were redirected to a filler questionnaire measuring creativity.

Experiment 8S Additional Results

Expectations and Experiences of Learning. Participants’ expectations about learning did not vary significantly by condition, $|t|$s < 1.01, ps > .31. The amount participants reported learning varied nonsignificantly across conversation duration. Specifically, we observed statistically nonsignificant differences between conditions in the amount participants reported learning about their partner, $b = .52$, $t(104) = 1.71$, $p = .091$, learning general information, $t(105) = -.86$, $p = .40$, learning useful information, $t(101) = -1.41$, $p = .16$, and finding the conversation to be interesting, $t(107) = .32$, $p = .75$. In addition, participants who had a 20-minute (vs. 5-minute) conversation did report learning more of these specific types of information: general information, $b = -.82$, $t(100) = -2.12$, $p = .037$, general trivia, $b = -1.21$, $t(98) = -2.89$, $p = .0047$, useful information, $b = -.98$, $t(100) = -2.49$, $p = .014$, skills, $b = -1.15$, $t(99) = -2.62$, $p = .010$, and nonsignificantly more biographical information, $b = .58$, $t(97) = -1.60$ $p = .11$. Durations conditions did not differ significantly in reported learning about one’s partner, $b = -.39$, $t(97) = -1.24$, $p = .22$, or “other,” $b = -.70$, $t(93) = -1.25$, $p = .21$.

Self vs. Other. Participants reported being marginally more interested in talking to their partner than they thought their partner was in talking to them ($M_{selfinterest} = 6.06$, $SD = 2.36$ vs. $M_{estimatedPartnerInterest} = 5.38$, $SD = 2.37$), $b = .68$, $t(75) = 1.85$, $p = .068$. The more interested people thought their partner was, the more they thought they would learn from their partner, $.56 > r$s $> .65$, ps $< .001$.

Counterfactual Expectations of Learning. Participants expected different amounts of learning when imagining a counterfactual conversation of a different length, expecting to learn more from a 20-minute conversation than a 5-minute conversation (learning in general: 20-minute conversation ($M_{predicted} = 5.55$, $SD = 2.06$ vs. $M_{predictedShort} = 4.71$, $SD = 2.51$), $b = .84$, $t(147) = 3.00$, $p = .003$; 5-minute conversation ($M_{predicted} = 5.83$, $SD = 2.02$ vs. $M_{predictedLong} = 6.98$, $SD = 2.14$), $b = -1.15$, $t(157) = -4.26$, $p < .001$; learning about their conversation partner: 20-minute conversation ($M_{predicted} = 6.19$, $SD = 2.02$ vs. $M_{predictedShort} = 5.00$, $SD = 2.46$), $b = 1.09$, $t(147) = 4.01$, $p < .001$; 5-minute conversation, ($M_{predicted} = 6.03$, $SD = 2.05$ vs. $M_{predictedLong} = 7.98$, $SD = 1.62$), $b = 1.95$, $t(156) = -8.07$, $p < .001$; learning useful information: 20-minute conversation, ($M_{predicted} = 5.38$, $SD = 2.03$ vs. $M_{predictedShort} = 4.61$, $SD = 2.58$), $b = .77$, $t(137) = 2.77$, $p = .006$; 5-minute conversation ($M_{predicted} = 5.31$, $SD = 2.36$ vs. $M_{predictedLong} = 6.93$, $SD = 2.29$), $b = -1.62$, $t(153) = -5.45$, $p < .001$.

Non-Learning Measures. Participants underestimated how much they would enjoy the conversation, b = 1.75, t(204.01) = 12.20, p < .001, find the conversation interesting, b = 1.62, t(205) = 10.62, p < .001 like their partner, b = 1.65 t(204.0) = 13.16, p < .001, and feel lucky to have been paired with their partner, b = 1.78, t(204.00) = 11.16, p < .001. None of these effects varied significantly by conversation length |t|s < 1.12, ps > .26.

References

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