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STATUS, PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS, AND AFFECTIVE IMPRESSIONS: AN EXPERIMENTAL REPLICATION

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ABSTRACT

We present results from a study connecting status characteristics theory and affect control theory. Replicating a previous study (Dippong and Kalkhoff 2015), we examine the relationship between affective impressions and general performance expectations. The current study builds on previous work by employing an experimental setting specifically designed to isolate status as the sole basis of social judgment. Primary results indicate that evaluation and potency impressions positively predicted performance expectations, while activity impressions exerted no influence over expectations. Exploratory analyses show that the effects of affective impressions on performance expectations differed substantially between status-equal and status-differentiated groups.

INTRODUCTION

For a number of years, social psychologists have worked to draw theoretical and empirical connections between expectations states theory (EST) and affect control theory (ACT). Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin (1994) offer an in-depth comparison of the two theoretical traditions, highlighting areas of substantive overlap, as well as differences. Rogalin, Soboroff, and Lovaglia (2007) link the affective impressions at the heart of affect control theory to the social dimensions of power and status which provide the foundation for a variety of social expectations across the various branches of EST. Others (Friedkin and Johnsen 2003; Rogers 2015) have examined a tripartite model linking EST, ACT, and social influence network theory. Social psychological researchers, then, display a clear interest in developing theoretical models that draw on the combined strengths of EST and ACT.

A critical component in linking EST and ACT involves drawing connections between expectations and affective impressions. Identifying quantitative links is a necessary step in

unifying the two theories (Kalkhoff, Friedkin, and Johnsen 2010; Dippong 2013). Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015) focus on the connection between ACT and the status characteristics theoretical branch of EST by outlining the theoretical links between affective impressions and status-based performance expectations. Across two studies, Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015) employ survey and experimental data to demonstrate that the three dimensions of affective impressions within ACT all positively predict the performance expectations that individuals form for other social actors.

We report results from a replication of Dippong and Kalkhoff's (2015) study, with the aim of extending connections between ACT and status characteristics theory (SCT) and clarifying questions left unanswered in the previous study. To do so, the current study examines the relationship between performance expectations and affective impressions within SCT's standardized experimental setting. This allows us to see how affective impressions shape performance expectations while isolating the effects of status.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015) provide a thorough discussion detailing the theoretical connections between the three dimensions of affective impressions—evaluation, potency and activity— and performance expectations. To briefly summarize, according to SCT, individuals in collective task groups form expectations regarding their fellow group members' abilities to contribute to the successful completion of the group's task, and these expectations reflect the group's hierarchy of power and prestige (Berger et al 1977). This hierarchy embodies broadly-held cultural beliefs about the general worth of occupants of a variety of social categories, including race, gender, and social class (Berger et al 1977). A complete discussion of SCT's central tenets is beyond the scope of the present paper. For our purposes, it is most important to note that expectations are the central constructs that mediate the relationship between group members' perceptions of each others' status and a variety of behavioral outcomes in the group (e.g. patterns of influence, provision of opportunities to contribute to the group's task, and the distribution of rewards).

Regarding the relationship between affective impressions and performance expectations, prior researchers have demonstrated a positive relationship between evaluation impressions and perceptions of actors' status and prestige (Rogalin et al 2007; MacKinnon and Langford 1994). Likewise, these same studies found that potency impressions are positively associated with perceptions of power. Given that performance expectations arise based on perceptions of status and power, it is not surprising that Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015) hypothesize and find that evaluation and potency impressions positively predict performance expectations.

At the theoretical level, perceptions of higher-status actors should be associated with impressions of proactive and agentic behavior, while perceptions of lower-status actors should be associated with reactive, passive behavior (Berger et al 2002). These arguments suggest a positive relationship between expectations and activity impressions, which is exactly what Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015) find. Drawing on the theoretical argument laid out by Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015), we offer the following three hypotheses for the present study:

H1: Evaluation ratings will be positively related to the performance expectations.

H2: Potency ratings will be positively related to the performance expectations.

H3: Activity ratings will be positively related to the performance expectations
.

Although Dippong and Kalkhoff's research shed important light on the relationship between ACT and SCT, they employed methods that did not strictly isolate the effects of status differences. In study one, the authors employed survey methods that did not instantiate SCT's scope conditions of a collective group task. In study two, while activating salient status differences between group members, the authors employed an open-interaction type task, which allowed behavioral and personality differences (e.g. dominance, humor, apathy, etc.) between group members to alter the initial status structure of the group. The purpose of our replication is to assess the relationship between impressions and expectations within an experimental setting that meets the theoretical conditions of SCT and isolates the effects of status from other potentially confounding factors.

METHODS

We collected our experimental data as part of a larger study examining the cognitive and affective underpinnings of status organizing processes. In all, 269 participants completed the study. We recruited participants from undergraduate courses a large Midwestern university. Participants scheduled experimental sessions through an online research management program. We staggered appointment times by several minutes and employed multiple waiting areas to ensure that participants did not come into contact with each other. Volunteers received extra credit in one sociology course.

Procedures

Upon arriving at the laboratory, each participant was greeted by the experimenter, who escorted him or her to a private room to complete the study. Following the completion of a separate task unrelated to the current study, the experimenter informed each participant that she or he would work with a partner via computer network to complete a test of a "newly discovered ability" known as contrast sensitivity (see Moore 1968 for a thorough description of the contrast sensitivity task). The entire interaction was controlled so that participants never exchanged information with a true task partner, but rather, with a computer-simulated partner. The contrast sensitivity test, when employed within SCT's standardized experimental setting, offers a well-established and reliable indication of research participants' openness to influence from a task partner. Although the contrast sensitivity results are unrelated the analyses we present here, it is important to note that the specific task our participants completed and the larger experimental setting are both tailored to inducing status differences and isolating social status (and the consequent performance expectations) as the sole basis of differentiation between task partners. This setting provides an optimal situation for examining the link between performance expectations and affective impressions because social status provides the only meaningful source for affective impressions.

To induce status-based expectations, we employed information about participants' self-identified gender category. Substantial research supports the contention that gender functions as a diffuse status characteristic, with gender-based performance expectations typically advantaging men (Rashotte and Webster 2005; Kalkhoff, Younts, and Troyer 2008). During the instruction phase of the contrast sensitivity test, participants were prompted by the computer program to exchange a small amount of personal information—including first name and year in school—with their interaction partner. We manipulated partner feedback so that half of the participants learned that they were interacting with a partner of the opposite sex (status-differentiated conditions), and half learned that they were completing the task with a partner of the same sex (status-equal conditions). Manipulation checks revealed that in every case, the name exchange conveyed the expected gender information. Participants were all informed that their interaction partner was in the same year of schooling as they were.

Upon completing the experimental task, participants completed a post-experiment questionnaire, and we derive the variables for the present analyses from the questionnaire. Our questionnaire contained a variety of items assessing the instantiation of SCT's scope conditions, participants' perception of the experimental task, and manipulation check items. As part of this questionnaire, participants provided subjective ratings of their general performance expectations and affective impressions for themselves and their interaction partners. Participants provided ratings on performance expectations first, then provided affective ratings, with the two indices separated by several unrelated questions.

Dependent Variable

Our measurement procedure is identical to the procedure employed by Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015). The dependent variable for our analyses comes from Zeller and Warnecke's (1973) index of general performance expectations. We measured performance expectations using the following three items:

> *1) How would you rate this person in terms of* ***how well you expect him or her to do in situations in general****?*
>
> *2) How would you rate this person in terms of* ***intelligence****?*
>
> *3) How would you rate this person in terms of* ***other things that count in this world****?*

Each item was measured on a nine-point scale ranging from (1 = Low Ability) to (9 = High Ability). We created our measure of expectations by taking the mean of the three Zeller and Warnecke items. Reliability analyses revealed an acceptable degree of internal consistency among the three items (Cronbach's alpha = .803). Driskell and Mullen (1988) demonstrate that a variety of subjective measures of expectations—including the Zeller and Warnecke index— are reliable indicators of actors' performance expectations.

Independent Variables

Participants provided affective ratings of their interaction partners along the dimensions of evaluation, potency, and activity. Following Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015, Study One), we measure affective impressions using three separate nine-point semantic differential scales. Following standard practice in ACT research, we measure the evaluation dimension with the semantic anchors "Bad, Awful" at one end of the scale and "Good, Nice" at the other. Again based on previous research, we measure the potency dimension using the terms "Powerless, Little" and "Powerful, Big" as semantic anchors. And lastly, we measure activity impressions using the semantic anchors "Slow, Quiet, Old" and "Fast, Noisy, Young." We rescaled participant responses to conform to ACT's measurement standards. Scores on each dimension ranged from -4.3 (Infinitely Bad/ Powerless/ Slow) to 4.3 (Infinitely Good/ Powerful/ Fast). The scale midpoint (zero) indicates neutral impressions.

We also include a measure of participants' self-expectations as a control variable. We control for self-expectations because the preponderance of SCT research models status differentiation as the combined effects of expectations for self and other. In other words, status differentiation is relative; we speak of actors forming higher or lower expectations for partners *relative to* self. As such, we argue that modeling the relationship between affective impressions and performance expectations necessitates accounting for the effects of self-expectations on partner-expectations. Our self-expectation variable consists of the mean of the three Zeller and Warnecke items described above, with participants rating themselves. Despite the relatively low degree of internal consistency among the three self-expectation items (Cronbach's alpha = .569), we include the self-expectation variable in our model based on the substantial body of research indicating the index's reliability.

Analytic Strategy

We employ OLS regression to test our hypotheses. First, we estimate our predictive models employing our entire sample (i.e. including data from status-equal and status-differentiated conditions). And second, as an exploratory matter, we estimate separate models for status-equal and status-differentiated conditions, and compare regression coefficients across models. In the absence of status differences, performance expectations can arise based on any number of idiosyncratic factors, and SCT offers no predictions regarding how actors will behave in such conditions. Our comparison across conditions casts light on the unique effects that status differences exert on the relationship between impressions and expectations, which is essential if our findings are to be relevant to SCT.

RESULTS

We analyze data from 240 participants (120 male; 120 female). Half of the participants (60 male; 60 female) interacted in mixed-sex, status differentiated groups. The other half interacted in same-sex, status-equal groups. We exclude data from 29 participants (10.8 percent), including 15 for violating SCT's scope conditions, 8 for participant suspicion, 5 for failing to understand task instructions, and 1 for equipment malfunction. This exclusion percentage is consistent with overall exclusion rates within SCT research (see Dippong 2012), and exclusions were fairly

equally distributed between status-differentiated and status-equal groups (13 status-differentiated, 16 status-equal). The mean age of our participants was 19.53 years old. Just over 80 percent of our sample identified their race/ ethnicity as white (non-Hispanic). An additional 7.9 percent identified as Black or African American, and 2.9 percent identified as white (Hispanic). In terms of academic standing, college freshmen and sophomores comprised 87.1 percent of our sample.

Participants' subjective performance expectations for task partners range from 3.67 to 9.00, with a mean of 6.899 [1]. See Table 1 for means and standard deviations (in parentheses) for all independent variables (i.e. the partner ratings). Table 1 presents data for the entire sample and separated by status-equal and status-differentiated conditions. A series of one-way ANOVAs and follow-up t-tests reveals that the overall values for our dependent and independent variables do not differ significantly between status-equal and status-differentiated conditions. The exception is activity ratings, which are significantly higher in status-differentiated groups compared to status-equal groups ($t = 3.390$; $p < .001$). This provides an initial indication that impressions of activity may play a key role in the way we differentiate between equal-status partners and higher (or lower) status partners. Additionally, paired-sample t-tests reveal that for participants in both status-equal and status-differentiated conditions, average self-expectations are significantly higher than partner-expectations (analyses available from first author).

Table 1: Means and SD (Full Sample, Status Equal and Status-Differentiated Groups)

	Evaluation	Potency	Activity	Partner Expectations	Self-Expectations
Full Sample	1.845	0.896	1.312	6.899	7.422
	(1.457)	(1.361)	(1.434)	(1.094)	(0.835)
Status-Equal	1.707	0.967	1.002	6.854	7.395
	(1.444)	(1.231)	(1.385)	(1.062)	(0.865)
Status-Different	1.981	0.826	1.617	6.942	7.449
	(1.462)	(1.480)	(1.450)	(1.127)	(0.808)

Table 2 presents coefficients and standard errors for our regression model employing the entire analytical sample. Looking at model 1, we see that although evaluation and potency impressions significantly and positively predict general performance expectations, activity impressions are not significantly related to expectations. These relationships hold up when we control for participants' self-expectations in model 2. Based on regression results for model 2, we find support for hypotheses 1 and 2, but we fail to find support for hypothesis 3. As such, our results differ from those presented by Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015), indicating that activity impressions may not function as previously thought. We return to this difference in our discussion below.

Table 2: OLS Results Predicting Partner Expectations from EPA Ratings (Full Sample)

	Model 1	*Model 2*
Constant	6.161***	2.305***
	(0.098)	(0.483)
Evaluation	0.297***	0.227***
	(0.048)	(0.044)
Potency	0.204***	0.150***
	(0.049)	(0.044)
Activity	0.005	-.025
	(0.047)	(0.041)
Self-Expectations		0.549***
		(0.068)
R^2	.306	.456

***$p < .001$

Exploratory Analyses

Table 3 presents regression results for our sample separated by status-equal and status-differentiated conditions, as well as for z-tests comparing model coefficients (see Paternoster et al 1998). Looking at the results for status-equal conditions, model 4 shows that evaluation is positively associated with performance expectations for interaction partners when controlling for self-expectations. Regarding status-differentiated conditions, models 5 and 6 also demonstrate a positive relationship between evaluation and expectations. The relationship between evaluation impressions and performance expectations is unaffected by the presence or absence of salient status differences. This conclusion is further supported by the lack of significant difference between evaluation coefficients across models 3 and 5. Regression coefficients are statistically similar across status conditions [2].

Table 3: OLS Results for Status-Differentiated and Status-Equal Conditions and Model Comparison

	Status-Equal (N=120)		*Status-Differentiated (N=120)*		*Comparison*
	Model 3	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*	*z*
Constant	6.111***	3.253***	6.299***	1.606***	1.711*
	(0.124)	(0.671)	(0.153)	(0.690)	
Evaluation	0.283***	0.232***	0.312***	0.227***	0.057
	(0.069)	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.058)	
Potency	0.095	0.066	0.258***	0.186***	1.290+
	(0.080)	(0.075)	(0.063)	(0.055)	

Activity	0.168*	0.115+	-0.116+	-0.117*	-2.486**
	(0.069)	(0.066)	(0.065)	(0.055)	
Self-Expectations		0.409***		.661***	1.876*
		(0.095)		(0.095)	
R^2	.336	.425	.315	.511	

+$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Our results indicate that potency impressions are not significantly related to performance expectations between status equals (models 3 and 4). This is not the case for status-differentiated groups, in which potency impressions significantly and positively predict expectations. Comparing potency coefficients across models 3 and 5, z-tests reveal a difference that falls just short of statistical significance (p = .055). Although the evaluation dimension is typically viewed as encompassing the affective effects of status perceptions, our results point to the possibility that impressions of potency provide the affective basis for differentiating between status positions, as they exert no influence over expectations in status-equal groups.

Finally, looking at the activity dimension of affective impressions, we see a marked difference between status-equal and status-differentiated conditions. Controlling for self-expectations, in status-equal groups, the relationship between activity and performance expectations is positive, though the effects fall short of statistical significance (p = .084). Conversely, in status-differentiated groups, activity impressions are inversely related performance expectations. This finding runs counter to the theoretical argument laid out by Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015), who argue that activity is positively related to status. As expected, model comparisons reveal that regression coefficients for activity significantly differ between status conditions (models 3 and 5).

DISCUSSION

Replicating Dippong and Kalkhoff's (2015) analytical approach, the current study was designed to further advance connections between ACT and SCT by examining how affective impressions shape performance expectations when salient status characteristics provide the sole basis for social differentiation. To accomplish this task, we employed status characteristics theory's standardized experimental setting to induce a status hierarchy and to measure our variables in a controlled context in which status effects are isolated from potentially confounding factors. Our results suggest that the relationship between affective impressions and expectations is slightly more complex than originally thought.

The primary contribution of the present study is that our findings help clarify the distinct effect that each affective dimension exerts over status-based performance expectations. The effect of evaluation impressions on performance expectations was essentially uniform across experimental conditions. In the absence of salient status information, group members rely primarily on evaluation impressions, and to a lesser degree, on activity impressions. Given that evaluation impressions function the same regardless of status information, they are likely assessing aspects of social status—such as liking and perceived friendliness—that are distinct from the

differentiating effects of prestige and task abilities. In other words, within the framework of SCT, group members affectively experience status differences as differences in potency and activity.

Further illustrating the connection between potency and perceptions of abilities, our exploratory models demonstrate that potency impressions exert no significant effect on expectations in equal-status groups. Conversely, potency is a strong predictor of expectations in status-differentiated groups. In equal status groups, potency impressions accounted for less than one percent of the variance in performance expectations. In status-differentiated groups, potency impressions accounted for ten percent of the variance in expectations. Potency impressions may not, then, strictly reflect power differences between actors, but rather, a combination of power and prestige.

Our findings shed new light on the relationship between activity impressions and performance expectations. When analyzing our sample as a whole, we found that activity impressions were not significantly related to performance expectations. However, when we separated our sample based on the presence or absence of salient status characteristics, we found that activity was inversely related to performance expectations in status-differentiated groups. This finding runs counter to the theoretical argument developed in the original study, which argues for a positive relationship between status and activity.

Although Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015) found a positive relationship between activity and expectations, existing theory and research also contain evidence of a possible inverse relationship between the two. To this end, Rogalin and colleagues (2007) find some evidence for an inverse relationship between activity impressions and perceptions of status related to occupational titles. Rogalin and colleagues' (2007) findings—along with ours—make sense when considering that many high-status occupations are relatively sedentary, and involve cognitive and creative work rather than physical activity. The lower-status, physically active worker might be associated with greater activity than the higher-status supervisor. Accordingly, the behaviors typical of a higher-status actor appear to be associated with perceptions of lower activity.

The unique effects of activity impressions observed in the previous study are likely explained by two facets of the study procedures: *a*) as discussed above, Dippong and Kalkhoff (2015) measured performance expectations in contexts in which status effects were not isolated from other factors like dominance behaviors and personality characteristics; and *b*) the previous study did not control for the effects of self-expectations. Our analyses (specifically Table 2) show that even when status effects are not strictly isolated—as when combining equal- and mixed-status groups—the effect of activity on expectations is positive (though not significant) on its own. But when controlling for self-expectations, the relationship became inverse. Thus it is possible that the previous study might have produced results similar to ours if self-expectations had been controlled.

In conclusion this study contributes to a growing body of literature aimed at developing theoretical and empirical pathways between SCT and ACT. The research we present here helps to further such connections by clarifying the relationship between the three dimensions of

affective impressions and performance expectations when status characteristics are the sole source of information that group members share. Furthermore, as a replication study, our findings clearly and directly build upon and extend existing knowledge. By refining knowledge about the quantitative relationships among the central theoretical constructs of SCT and ACT, we move closer to building a framework in which these two important social psychological theories can be employed together to explain small group interactions.

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ENDNOTES

[1] To demonstrate the effectiveness of our status manipulation, we collected behavioral data on participants' openness to influence from a higher- or lower-status group member. Using participants' p(s), a well-established indicator of influence, we found—as SCT predicts—that in mixed-sex groups, female participants demonstrated significantly greater openness to influence than male participants ($t = 2.356$; $p = .01$, one-tailed). This indicates that our status manipulation induced the expectations we intended. See Berger et al (1977) for a description of the p(s) measure.

[2] We chose to include all status-differentiated actors in a single model because prior work theorizes that the empirical relationship between EPA and performance expectations is the same for higher- and lower-status actors. To test this assumption, we estimated separate regression models for higher- and lower-status conditions. In comparing regression coefficients, z-tests revealed no significant differences between the two models.

APPENDIX: BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS

Bivariate Correlations*

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Evaluation	-							
2	Potency	.453	-						
3	Activity	.442	.339	-					
4	Partner: Intelligence	.438	.413	.159	-				
5	Partner: Situations	.419	.321	.278	.594	-			
6	Partner: Other	.450	.377	.241	.604	.548	-		
7	Partner Expectations	.513	.435	.268	.856	.845	.847	-	
8	Self-Expectations	.338	.294	.249	.447	.452	.545	.568	-

* All correlations significant at $p < .02$ or less

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