

***Gender Differences in Attribution and Person
Perception***

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Abstract

This study examines gender differences in attribution and person perception. We are interested in seeing whether men and women differ in how they perceive other people. Participants were asked to imagine themselves in a scenario in which they had to complete a task with an unhelpful partner. Four different scenarios were used in the experiment. The only variation between the scenarios was the gender and attractiveness level of the uncooperative and confrontational partner. These variables were manipulated in order to study the effect they had on a participant's impressions and attributions. This specific study focuses on how these perceptions work in a challenging social situation. We are interested in seeing whether the participant's perceptions are influenced by their own gender, confederate's gender, and/or his or her physical attractiveness.

Participants were uniformly negative in their perceptions of the confederate's adverse attributes. They described the incident in comparably negative terms, and were equally unwilling to interact with the confederate in the future. However, there was a difference regarding participant perception of positive attributes. Both gender's use of positive terms, feelings of closeness, and the use of cause-related words were higher for attractive confederates than for unattractive confederates. This finding suggests that participants tried harder to excuse the behavior of attractive confederates. Men and women did differ in their perception of confederate attractiveness however. Whereas both genders agreed on the appeal of unattractive partners, and attractive men, attractive women were perceived as being much more attractive by male participants than by female participants.

Although men and women differed in their perception of female attractiveness, few gender-dictated differences were found in regard to overall person perception. We did

however, learn that both women and men, are generally, equally biased toward attractive people. Despite boorish comportment on the part of attractive partners, both genders were more willing to let them “off the hook” for their bad behavior.

The way situations are perceived dictates the manner in which a person appraises and reacts to life. A great deal of studies, establish a strong and reliable connection between a person's specific evaluation of a situation and their consequent experience of emotion. (e.g., Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989; Roseman, 1991; Roseman, Spindel, & Jose, 1990; Scherer, 1997; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993; Smith & Lazarus, 1993) The factors a person considers, specifically while interacting with other people in social situations, are of great importance to their overall impression and judgment of them. These factors help them form an overall 'picture' of what other people are like, and, are fundamental to social interactions, and decision making. (Shanteau & Nagy, 1976).

Past studies indicate that a person's final impression of a stimulus reflects a dynamic process in which separate traits interact to form unitary impressions, (Asch, 1946, Stewart 1965, Anderson 1962). Early research focused on understanding how individual items of information were combined to form a final impression. It was reasoned that if individual items of impression formation were combined via a dynamic interactive process, then significant interactions in an ANOVA would be observed, (Anderson, 1962). Individual items or traits, are weighed, averaged, and used to form an impression of a person, or situation.

Research since then has shown that items, which contribute to impression formation often, carry different weights. Many times, the weight of one factor considered in an impression formation, is dependant on another factor, (Lampel & Anderson 1965). This finding is called the differential-weighting averaging rule. It means that although many

factors are involved in the process of impression formation, some factors will have a larger effect on overall perception, than others will have.

“Support for differential weighting is an important development because it exemplifies the psychological importance of weights within the judgment process,” (Herriot, 1984).

The information, which is used to form an impression about another person, is gathered in various ways and is derived from a diverse number of sources. Findings suggest that factors such as physical appearance, negatively valued information, inferred personality traits and perceived other-person acceptance, heavily influence someone’s impression formation, (Lampel & Anderson, 1968., Shanteau & Nagy 1979)

A great deal of research has focused on the different factors that affect perception. Within this research, it has been found that gender is a heavily influencing factor in person perception. Even when no other clues about a person are available (as would be the case in a computer mediated-communication), the knowledge that someone is of a certain gender, heavily factors into an observer’s judgment of them, (Lee, 2004),

Although a fair amount of research has been dedicated to examining the gender differences in person perception,(Ashmore & Del Boca, 1986, Lipman-Bluemen & Tickameyer, 1976, Nisbett & Ross, 1980, Sanday, 1981), research has seldom focused on the difference in the effect perceived physical attractiveness can have on a man or woman’s perception and impression formation. Person perception and impression theory draw general speculations regarding gender differences in the way men and women evaluate their experiences, few studies though have explored the specific weight other-attractiveness, and gender has on a person’s overall averaging and appraisal of a

situation. With so little research done in this area, it is important not only to explore gender dictated differences in perception, but also look into factors that may be influencing this perception. Since past studies indicate physical attractiveness, and other-person sex, heavily influence perception, we are interested in seeing whether they affect one gender, more than they do the other. We seek to examine sex differences in attributions and social inferences and explore the effect a participant's perception of attractiveness has on their overall appraisal of a social situation.

We used a vignette to describe a specific social situation to the participants, in which they tried to work with another person (who turned out to be interpersonally difficult) on a cooperative task, and asked him or her to imagine themselves in the situation they were reading about. We had initially planned to use a real life staging of the situation described in the vignette, but decided against it due to time and logistical constraints. We decided that results obtained from vignettes would be similar to the results obtained from a real-life staging of the scenario since studies have indicated high correspondence between participant's self predicted behavior, and their actual behavior in social situations (Robinson & Clore, 2001). We then asked participants to answer a series of questions regarding their impressions, and perception of the other person in the study.

Method

Participants

Participants were 74 Vanderbilt University undergraduates (36 male and 38 female). Over 85% of the subjects received course credit for participating in the study. The rest of the subjects received a \$5 dollar compensation for their participation. The participant's ages ranged from 18-22.

Method and Design

After arriving at the lab, participants were informed they were taking part in a study on interpersonal behavior and social emotions. We explained to them that we were interested in how emotions are involved in the interpersonal process. We then told them that they were going to read about a particular interpersonal scenario and then asked to answer a series of questions regarding the reading. We then informed participants that they should try to imagine themselves in the scenario as much as possible and try to experience the thoughts and feelings they would be having, if the imagined scenario were really occurring.

After explaining the procedure and obtaining the participants consent, the experimenter opened the study on Survey Monkey, entered his or her own name, the participant's ID number, the particular experimental condition randomly assigned to that number (1 through 4), and the participant's gender.

The initial paragraph presented to the participant describes a scenario in which they have volunteered to take part in a psychology experiment. After a couple of minutes

the second participant arrives and the experimenter asks both participants to introduce themselves.

All four experimental conditions were exactly the same up until this point in the paragraph. Depending on the experimental condition assigned to a specific participant, the “other” participant (who, for the remainder of this paper will be referred to as the second participant) was described as either, an attractive male, or an attractive female, or an unattractive male, or unattractive female.

The rest of the scenario in the paragraphs are identical in all four conditions. The participants are instructed to work together to build a model out of Tinker Toys. The original participant is told that they will be the Commander, and the second participant will be the Builder.

After studying the model, the original participant starts to instruct the second participant about what to do to build the model. However, it quickly becomes apparent that things are not going well.

For a little while the second participant does what is suggested. Then after doing a couple things as the original participant asked, the second participant starts to do things that are contrary to what is instructed. Things continue for another couple of minutes, with relatively little progress being made on the model. Then, all of a sudden, the second participant glares at the original participant, slams down a Tinker-Toy stick, and exclaims “This is a waste of my time. You give terrible directions, and there is no way we will win those gift certificates. I’m done with this!” (Note: The full text of all four versions of the scenario can be found in the attached appendix).

After this, the experimenter takes the second participant to another room to fill out a survey. The participant in the real experiment is then asked to imagine himself or herself in the previous situation (in the part of the original participant) as vividly as possible and answer an anonymous survey regarding their imagined thoughts, feelings and opinions regarding the previously stated situation.

On this survey, participants first answered two open-ended questions. The first asked them to describe how they were feeling as a result of the imagined experience, and the second asked them to indicate why the other person had acted the way that he/she did. Of these two questions, the second is of particular interest in this study, and the participants responses to this question were subjected to a linguistic analysis, as described in the measures section below.

The participants then completed a series of close-ended questions designed to assess a broad array of constructs related to emotion and social perception. For the present study, six constructs, related to social perception were of particular interest, and are considered further below. These constructs were: 1) Appraisals/attributions of other-responsibility; 2) Positive impressions of the confederate; 3) Negative impressions of the confederate; 4) Perceptions of the confederate's attractiveness; 5) Feelings of closeness to the confederate; and 6) Willingness to interact with the confederate in the future.

We chose to focus on these constructs because we felt they covered a fair amount of perception influencing factors. Appraisal theory suggests that attribution of other responsibility is a crucial initial phase in perception evaluation, (Smith, & Pope, 1992). Previous research also indicates that negatively valued information has a significant

effect on overall perception, (Nagy, 1981). We included positively valued information into our analysis, expecting to see a differential-weighted averaging rule. We combined the items asking whether participants would like to socialize with the confederate, would talk to him/her at a party, and be willing to date the confederate or fix him/her up with a friend in order to examine the lasting effect, the impression made by the second participant, would have on the original participant's perception of them.

Once the survey was completed, the participant joined the experimenter in the control room and was debriefed. We explained to participants that we were interested in seeing how men and women's perception of others, in a socially challenging situation, varied.

Measures

Linguistic Analysis.

The participants responses to the question asking why the other participant had acted the way that she/he had were examined and quantified using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) program (Pennebaker, Chung, Ireland, Gonzales, & Booth, 2007). Using a predefined dictionary, this program examines the contents of written text, and indicates the percentage of words in a writing sample that correspond to a wide variety of linguistic categories, including parts of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, personal pronouns, etc., as well as positive and negative affective words, achievement words and the like). Of the wide range of categories classified by LIWC, we retained variables representing three categories that we believed to be most central to the present study: The rates of participant's use of positive emotion words, negative emotion words, and

cause-related words. We focused on these three categories because we were specifically interested in words with a high correspondence to person perception. Since the use of positive emotion words, negative emotion words, and cause related words are good indicators of certain types of person perception, we estimated that they would be effective measures to use in our study.

Attributions/Appraisals of Other-Responsibility

Attributions of other-responsibility were assessed with two items measuring the degree to which the participant considered the other person to be responsible for a) how the pair had performed on the task, and b) how things had gone interpersonally between the two of them. These items were modeled after the items used to assess other-accountability by Smith and colleagues (e.g., Griner & Smith, 2001). These two items, which were assessed using a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all responsible) to 9 (extremely responsible) were averaged to yield a single measure of other-responsibility ($\alpha = .86$)

Impression measures.

To assess the participants' impressions of the hypothetical other participant, they were asked to indicate, using a 9-point scale (not at all to extremely), the degree to which each of 55 adjectives were "descriptive of what you think your partner is like as a person." Based on the results of a hierarchical cluster analysis of these ratings, these items were combined into three separate scales. The first, positive impression scale, combined 26 adjectives representing positive traits (e.g., coolheaded, friendly, nice, optimistic), and demonstrated an alpha reliability of .94. The second, negative impression scale, combined 24 adjectives representing negative traits (e.g., annoying,

immature, unpleasant, insulting), and demonstrated an alpha reliability of .91. The third combined six items (attractive, good-looking, fit, hot, sexy) representing how attractive the participant found the other person to be, and demonstrated an alpha of .91. All adjectives contributing to each of these three scales are listed in the appendix.

Feelings of Closeness toward the Other Participant

An additional four items were developed specifically for this study. Feelings of closeness were assessed by a single 9-point Likert scale asking the participants to indicate the extent to which they felt “close or connected to” the other participant. Willingness to interact with the participant in the future was assessed by three items assessing: the participants desire to socialize with the other person, the likelihood that one would talk to the person if they ran into them at a party; and whether they would be willing to either, date this person or fix them up with a friend. These three items were combined into a single scale that demonstrated an alpha reliability of .87.

Results

ANOVA tests were run using each of the six theme clusters as variables to find significant interactions within each set of data.

Within the ANOVAs, for each variable we tested for main effects of Subject Sex, Confederate Sex, and Confederate Attractiveness. We also checked for two-way interactions between Subject Sex * Confederate Sex, Subject Sex * Confederate Attractiveness, Confederate Sex * Confederate Attractiveness. We also checked for a three-way interaction between the Variable* Subject Sex * Confederate Sex * Confederate Attractiveness. In order to conserve space, for each analysis we focus

primarily on effects that were significant at $p < .05$, although in cases in which marginal ($p < .10$) effects correspond to statistically reliable effects in other variables, we report on those effects as well.

Negative Impressions of the Second Participant

The ANOVA test regarding negative impressions of the second participant did not show any significant results. Negative impressions were generally high though, and equal for both men and women. Overall mean of negative impressions was a 6.9 on a 1-9 scale. Standard error was .123.

Willingness to interact with the Second participant in the future

The ANOVA test did not render any reliable difference regarding a participant's willingness to interact with the confederate. Overall willingness was very low. The overall mean was 1.72. Standard error was .163.

ANOVA of Negative Emotion Words in answering the "Why" Question

No significant differences were found among the conditions. However, considerably more negative, than positive emotion words used in the writings.

The grand mean for negative emotion words used was 4.65. Standard error was .468

The grand mean for positive emotion words was 1.99. Standard mean was .329

Attributions of Other-Responsibility

There was a significant interaction of confederate sex by confederate attractiveness ($F(1, 66) = 6.33, p < .05$), although, other-responsibility was generally very high, regardless of the confederates attractiveness. Both genders attributed attractive

female participants with the most other-responsibility, followed by unattractive male participants. Attractive male participant obtained the third highest mean for other-responsibility, while unattractive females received the fourth place.

Table 1

confederate sex * confederate attractiveness

Dependent Variable: Other
Responsibility

confed sex	confederate attractiveness	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
male	attractive	7.648	.240	7.169	8.127
	unattractive	8.111	.259	7.594	8.628
female	attractive	8.278	.259	7.761	8.795
	unattractive	7.451	.267	6.919	7.984

Positive Impressions of the Second Participant

When analyzing the positive impressions the participant made of both men and women, we found that, although positive impressions were universally low, attractive partners received the highest ratings ($F(1,66) = 8.35, p < .01$).

Both male and female participants formed more positive impressions, regarding attractive partners, than they did of unattractive partners.

Table 2

Confederate attractiveness

Dependent Variable: Positive Impressions

confederate attractiveness	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
attractive	2.068	.114	1.840	2.296
unattractive	1.588	.120	1.348	1.829

Perceptions of the Second Participant Attractiveness

An ANOVA test which measured confederates perceived attractiveness rendered various significant results.

Impression Formation * Subject Sex

(F (1,66)=10.328, p< .01)

Impression Formation * Subject Sex * Confederate Sex

(F (1,66)=10.986, p< .01)

Impression Formation * Subject Sex * Confederate Attractiveness

(F (1,66)= 6.815, p< .05)

Although the three previously mentioned F tests all show significant effects, we focused primarily on Perceived Attractiveness * Subject Sex * Confederate Sex * Confederate attractiveness since it subsumes the all the significant effects shown by this ANOVA (F (1,66)= 14.530, p< .001).

Table 3

Subject Sex * Confederate Sex * Confederate Attractiveness

Dependent Variable: Impressions of attractiveness

SubSex	confeds ex	confederate attractiveness	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	male	attractive	4.640	.356	3.930	5.350
		unattractive	1.378	.375	.629	2.126
	female	attractive	6.333	.375	5.585	7.082
		unattractive	1.450	.398	.656	2.244
Female	male	attractive	4.982	.339	4.305	5.659
		unattractive	1.089	.375	.340	1.838
	female	attractive	2.933	.375	2.185	3.682
		unattractive	1.422	.375	.674	2.171

Males and females do not differ in their perceptions of unattractive confederates, (they are all found equally unattractive.). Mean scores attributed by both men and women to unattractive confederates ranged from 1.0 to 1.4, on a 1-9 scale. Women and Men found physically attractive males, equally attractive. Their scores ranged from 4.6 to 4.9. Males and Females did differ however, in their perceptions of physically attractive female partners. Males find physically attractive females very attractive, scoring them at a 6.3 on a 9-point scale. While women, did not find physically attractive female partners, attractive at all. Female participants gave a mean score of 2.9 on attractiveness to physically attractive females.

Feelings of closeness to the second participant

An ANOVA test measuring the feelings of closeness participants felt toward their partners, indicated that there was a significant main effect in association with the attractiveness of the partner ($F(1,66) = 4.107, p < .05$).

Although participants did not feel particularly close to the second participant (as indicated by the low means, overall), attractive partners scored significantly higher than their unattractive counterparts.

Table 4

confederate attractiveness

Dependent Variable: closeness to
Confederate

confederate attractiveness	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
attractive	2.578	.244	2.092	3.064
unattractive	1.861	.257	1.349	2.373

ANOVA of Positive Emotion Words used in answering the “Why” Question

There is a significant effect between Positive Emotion Words, and Confederate Attractiveness ($F(1,66) = 5.418, p < .05$). Both men and women, used more Positive Emotion Words, regarding attractive partners, when answering “how they would characterize the second participant’s behavior, and why they thought their partner behaved in this way”.

Table 5

confederate attractiveness

Dependent Variable: Positive
Emotion Words Used in “Why”
Question

confederate attractiveness	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
attractive	2.757	.449	1.861	3.654
unattractive	1.225	.482	.262	2.187

ANOVA of use of causal words in answering the “Why” question

More Causal words were used in connection with attractive partners ($F(1,66) = 9.686, p < .01$).

Table 6

confederate attractiveness

Dependent Variable: Causal
Words used in “Why” question.

confederate attractiveness	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
attractive	4.278	.368	3.542	5.013
unattractive	2.596	.395	1.807	3.386

Discussion

This study sought to examine gender differences in person perception. Although there were relatively few differences found, the ones that did surface, seem to be informative and interesting. Both genders reported uniformly negative perceptions of the second participant's negative behavior, and in the main, this was true regardless of whether the confederate was a man or a woman, or whether he or she was physically attractive. ANOVA tests gauging Negative Impressions, Negative Emotion Words used in Writing, and Willingness to interact with the second participant, showed there was little gender bias regarding these variables. In line with the second participant's boorish behavior, participants were uniformly negative in their perceptions of their partner's negative attributes, discuss the incident in uniformly negative terms and are uniformly unwilling to interact with the second participant in the future. Gender, or second participant attractiveness, did not influence a participant's negative perceptions of their partner.

However, when considering perception of positive attributes, the use of positive terms, feelings of closeness to the second participant, and the use of cause related words, attractive partners of both genders, are seen in more positive terms, despite their boorish behavior. The results of the ANOVA test, relating to Use of Causal Words, suggest that, both male and female participants, tried harder to explain attractive confederate's boorish behavior.

A key gender specific difference in perception was present in the perceived attractiveness of the second participant. Both male and female participants judged

unattractive confederates, as being equally unattractive. However, there was a marked sex difference in the perception of how attractive, physically attractive women partners actually were. Males saw them as being much more attractive than females did, whereas both men and women agreed on the attractiveness of physically attractive men. This finding suggests that men are more willing, or able to put aside their negative personal feelings about a physically attractive woman, allowing them find her appealing despite her behavior. Whereas a women's negative judgment of a physically attractive woman's, personal character, will more heavily influence her perception of that woman's attractiveness.

The other somewhat complicated finding was the attributions of responsibility, where the observed effect suggests that attractiveness has a cost for women that it does not have for men. Attractive women were held more responsible for how things went than unattractive women were. This finding could mean that attractive women were being held to a higher standard. The reverse was true for men, unattractive men were held more responsible than attractive men were for the negative outcome of the task. Thus, in terms of responsibility, whereas attractiveness seemed to get attractive men "off the hook," attractive women were held to a higher standard and received more of the blame for the failed task.

Men and women generally perceived the second participant in similar ways with the exception of perceived attractiveness regarding women. With this exception in mind, their perceptions were similarly influenced by the second participant's attractiveness and they were both more likely to attribute more responsibility to attractive, than to unattractive women. Results obtained from ANOVA tests indicate that both genders tried

harder to excuse attractive men's and women's boorish behavior, consequently letting them "off the hook" for the poor outcome of the task.

An interesting exception to this somewhat more general trend is that attractive women were attributed more responsibility for the failed task than attractive men were.

Attractive male attribution of responsibility mean= 7.64

Attractive female attribution of responsibility mean= 8.27

Studies based on data collected from self-reports, tend to suffer from limitations due to participant self-bias. Since the participants were imagining their reactions in a frustrating scenario it is logical to assume that some participants might incorrectly predict what their reaction would be like, had the situation actually occurred. Many participants might like to think they would react in a calmer less judgmental manner than they actually would in real life. Since all participants are potentially facing the issues concerning self-report, it is possible to assume incongruence between imagined reactions and real reactions, would even out between the genders. However, one gender might be less likely than the other, to express certain emotions due to societal factors and expectations.

With the results of this study in mind, it might be beneficial to conduct further research regarding what types of situations people are likely to let attractive men "off the hook" for. It would also be interesting to see if the attribution of more responsibility onto attractive women is only limited to social situations.

Adding an element of inter-group competition within this same study could also be interesting and seeing whether men and women's perceptions of the confederate are influenced by competitive tension could be an interesting avenue to pursue.

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Appendix

Vignette – Attractive Male

You have volunteered to take part in a psychology experiment as part of a course requirement for your Psych 101 class. You arrive at the assigned location a couple of minutes early, and the experimenter greets you and asks you to take a seat in what appears to be an entry-way waiting area. She explains that the experiment is one investigating social interaction, and that you are waiting for another participant to arrive, who you will be working with on the experiment. After a couple of minutes the other participant arrives, and the experimenter invites him in to take a seat, and asks you both to introduce yourselves. The other person introduces himself as Jason, and mentions that he is an HOD major at Peabody. As Jason takes his seat, you can't help but notice that he is quite good-looking. He is obviously physically fit, and he is very neatly dressed.

Once you are seated, the experimenter explains that you both will be taking part in an experiment on interpersonal communication. As the main task in this experiment, the two of you will be asked to work together to build a model out of Tinker Toys. The way that it will work is that one of you will be assigned to be the "Commander" and the other the "Builder," and that you each will have a different job to do. The Commander will have a chance to study a copy of the model you will be building, and then working from a couple of photographs of the model, the Commander will instruct the Builder on what to do. However, the Commander will not be able to actually touch the Tinker Toys while the model is being built. The Builder, on the other hand, won't be able to see what the model looks like, but rather will need to follow the Commander's instructions to build the model. The experimenter then says that it is time to assign you to your different roles, and picks up a baseball cap. She then puts two folded slips of paper in the cap, and asks you to take one of them out, and to look at it. You take one, open it, and see the word "Commander." You tell the experimenter this, who then says that you will be the Commander, and Jason will be the Builder. The experimenter also notes that, as an incentive, to encourage you to do your best at the task, you will be timed as you work on the model. In addition, she notes that once the study is done, both members of the team that correctly builds the model the fastest will receive \$50 gift certificates from Amazon.com.

The experimenter then takes Jason to the main room next door, and asks him to take a seat. Then she takes you to a little side-room, in which you find a model car made out of tinker-toys. The experimenter hands you a clipboard with two different pictures of the model, and tells you that you have three minutes to study the model. During this time you can pick it up and examine it however, you want, but that when it comes time to teach, you will only have the pictures on the clipboard to work from. You study the model. You note that although it has a fair number of parts, the actual design is quite simple, and you also note that the pictures you will be working from do a very good job of depicting how

the parts go together. When the experimenter comes to take you to join Jason in the main room, you are thinking that that this task will be pretty easy, and you are expecting that your team will do quite well.

The experimenter then seats you across from Jason at a round table that is covered with Tinker Toys. After asking if you both are ready, she then says “Alright, begin” and starts her stopwatch. The experimenter then goes back into the next room saying, “Call me as soon as you have finished the model.” You start to instruct Jason about what to do to build the model. However, it quickly becomes apparent that things are not going well. Before you have a chance to say much of anything, Jason starts to go through the Tinker-Toys and starts putting them together in seemingly random ways. When you start to give Jason some directions, he responds by saying “Hold on, I’m trying to figure out how these work.” You wait quietly for about 30 seconds while he continues to work with the Tinker Toys on his own. Suddenly, he looks right at you, and with a curt tone in his voice he asks: “Well, are you going to give me instructions, or what? I’m waiting.” You start to give him some instructions and for a little while he does what you suggest, although it seems to you he is moving rather slowly. Then after doing a couple things as you asked, he starts to do things that are contrary to what you ask. For instance, when you ask him to pick up a long, green stick, he picks up a small yellow plastic piece. When you try to correct him, saying “No, we need a green stick now,” he just glares at you and sighs irritably. Things continue like this for a couple of minutes, with Jason sometimes doing what you ask and sometimes not. At one point, when you try to correct him, he snidely asks: “Well, why don’t you just do it yourself?” Things continue for another couple of minutes, with relatively little progress being made on the model, because Jason only does what you ask him to do about half the time. Then, all of a sudden, Jason glares at you, slams down the stick he was holding, and exclaims “This is a waste of my time. You give terrible directions, and there is no way we will win those gift certificates. I’m done with this!” Jason then calls out to the experimenter, who is still in the next room, and asks if he can leave now. The experimenter comes into the room and indicates that, yes, the experiment can be over. She then asks Jason whether he would be willing to fill out a couple of questionnaires before he leaves. Jason asks whether he would have to work any more with you, and when the experimenter indicates that he would be completing the questionnaires in a different room, Jason says “I guess that’s fine.”

Right now the experimenter has just taken Jason next door to get him set up with the questionnaires, and you are waiting for the experimenter to return.

When you are imagining yourself in this situation as vividly as you can, please answer the questions that follow.

Vignette – Attractive Female

You have volunteered to take part in a psychology experiment as part of a course requirement for your Psych 101 class. You arrive at the assigned location a couple of minutes early, and the experimenter greets you and asks you to take a seat in what appears to be an entry-way waiting area. She explains that the experiment is one investigating social interaction, and that you are waiting for another participant to arrive, who you will be working with on the experiment. After a couple of minutes the other participant arrives, and the experimenter invites her in to take a seat, and asks you both to introduce yourselves. The other person introduces herself as Jennifer, and mentions that she is an HOD major at Peabody. As Jennifer takes her seat, you can't help but notice that she is quite good-looking. She is obviously physically fit, and she is very neatly dressed.

Once you are seated, the experimenter explains that you both will be taking part in an experiment on interpersonal communication. As the main task in this experiment, the two of you will be asked to work together to build a model out of Tinker Toys. The way that it will work is that one of you will be assigned to be the "Commander" and the other the "Builder," and that you each will have a different job to do. The Commander will have a chance to study a copy of the model you will be building, and then working from a couple of photographs of the model, the Commander will instruct the Builder on what to do. However, the Commander will not be able to actually touch the Tinker Toys while the model is being built. The Builder, on the other hand, won't be able to see what the model looks like, but rather will need to follow the Commander's instructions to build the model. The experimenter then says that it is time to assign you to your different roles, and picks up a baseball cap. She then puts two folded slips of paper in the cap, and asks you to take one of them out, and to look at it. You take one, open it, and see the word "Commander." You tell the experimenter this, who then says that you will be the Commander, and Jennifer will be the Builder. The experimenter also notes that, as an incentive, to encourage you to do your best at the task, you will be timed as you work on the model. In addition, she notes that once the study is done, both members of the team that correctly builds the model the fastest will receive \$50 gift certificates from Amazon.com.

The experimenter then takes Jennifer to the main room next door, and asks her to take a seat. Then she takes you to a little side-room, in which you find a model car made out of tinker-toys. The experimenter hands you a clipboard with two different pictures of the model, and tells you that you have three minutes to study the model. During this time you can pick it up and examine it however, you want, but that when it comes time to teach, you will only have the pictures on the clipboard to work from. You study the model. You note that although it has a fair number of parts, the actual design is quite simple, and you also note that the pictures you will be working from do a very good job of depicting how the parts go together. When the experimenter comes to take you to join Jennifer in the main room, you are thinking that that this task will be pretty easy, and you are expecting that your team will do quite well.

The experimenter then seats you across from Jennifer at a round table that is covered with Tinker Toys. After asking if you both are ready, she then says “Alright, begin” and starts her stopwatch. The experimenter then goes back into the next room saying, “Call me as soon as you have finished the model.” You start to instruct Jennifer about what to do to build the model. However, it quickly becomes apparent that things are not going well. Before you have a chance to say much of anything, Jennifer starts to go through the Tinker-Toys and starts putting them together in seemingly random ways. When you start to give Jennifer some directions, she responds by saying “Hold on, I’m trying to figure out how these work.” You wait quietly for about 30 seconds while she continues to work with the Tinker Toys on her own. Suddenly, she looks right at you, and with a curt tone in her voice she asks: “Well, are you going to give me instructions, or what? I’m waiting.” You start to give her some instructions and for a little while she does what you suggest, although it seems to you she is moving rather slowly. Then after doing a couple things as you asked, she starts to do things that are contrary to what you ask. For instance, when you ask her to pick up a long, green stick, she picks up a small yellow plastic piece. When you try to correct her, saying “No, we need a green stick now,” she just glares at you and sighs irritably. Things continue like this for a couple of minutes, with Jennifer sometimes doing what you ask and sometimes not. At one point, when you try to correct her, she snidely asks: “Well, why don’t you just do it yourself?” Things continue for another couple of minutes, with relatively little progress being made on the model, because Jennifer only does what you ask her to do about half the time. Then, all of a sudden, Jennifer glares at you, slams down the stick she was holding, and exclaims “This is a waste of my time. You give terrible directions, and there is no way we will win those gift certificates. I’m done with this!”. Jennifer then calls out to the experimenter, who is still in the next room, and asks if she can leave now. The experimenter comes into the room and indicates that, yes, the experiment can be over. She then asks Jennifer whether she would be willing to fill out a couple of questionnaires before she leaves. Jennifer asks whether she would have to work any more with you, and when the experimenter indicates that she would be completing the questionnaires in a different room, Jennifer says “I guess that’s fine.”

Right now the experimenter has just taken Jennifer next door to get her set up with the questionnaires, and you are waiting for the experimenter to return.

When you are imagining yourself in this situation as vividly as you can, please answer the questions that follow.

Vignette – Unattractive Male

You have volunteered to take part in a psychology experiment as part of a course requirement for your Psych 101 class. You arrive at the assigned location a couple of minutes early, and the experimenter greets you and asks you to take a seat in what appears to be an entry-way waiting area. She explains that the experiment is one investigating social interaction, and that you are waiting for another participant to arrive, who you will be working with on the experiment. After a couple of minutes the other participant arrives, and the experimenter invites him in to take a seat, and asks you both to introduce yourselves. The other person introduces himself as Jason, and mentions that he is an HOD major at Peabody. As Jason takes his seat, you can't help but notice that he is not very good-looking. He is obviously out of shape, and he is very sloppily dressed.

Once you are seated, the experimenter explains that you both will be taking part in an experiment on interpersonal communication. As the main task in this experiment, the two of you will be asked to work together to build a model out of Tinker Toys. The way that it will work is that one of you will be assigned to be the "Commander" and the other the "Builder," and that you each will have a different job to do. The Commander will have a chance to study a copy of the model you will be building, and then working from a couple of photographs of the model, the Commander will instruct the Builder on what to do. However, the Commander will not be able to actually touch the Tinker Toys while the model is being built. The Builder, on the other hand, won't be able to see what the model looks like, but rather will need to follow the Commander's instructions to build the model. The experimenter then says that it is time to assign you to your different roles, and picks up a baseball cap. She then puts two folded slips of paper in the cap, and asks you to take one of them out, and to look at it. You take one, open it, and see the word "Commander." You tell the experimenter this, who then says that you will be the Commander, and Jason will be the Builder. The experimenter also notes that, as an incentive, to encourage you to do your best at the task, you will be timed as you work on the model. In addition, she notes that once the study is done, both members of the team that correctly builds the model the fastest will receive \$50 gift certificates from Amazon.com.

The experimenter then takes Jason to the main room next door, and asks him to take a seat. Then she takes you to a little side-room, in which you find a model car made out of tinker-toys. The experimenter hands you a clipboard with two different pictures of the model, and tells you that you have three minutes to study the model. During this time you can pick it up and examine it however, you want, but that when it comes time to teach, you will only have the pictures on the clipboard to work from. You study the model. You note that although it has a fair number of parts, the actual design is quite simple, and you also note that the pictures you will be working from do a very good job of depicting how the parts go together. When the experimenter comes to take you to join Jason in the main room, you are thinking that that this task will be pretty easy, and you are expecting that your team will do quite well.

The experimenter then seats you across from Jason at a round table that is covered with Tinker Toys. After asking if you both are ready, she then says “Alright, begin” and starts her stopwatch. The experimenter then goes back into the next room saying, “Call me as soon as you have finished the model.” You start to instruct Jason about what to do to build the model. However, it quickly becomes apparent that things are not going well. Before you have a chance to say much of anything, Jason starts to go through the Tinker-Toys and starts putting them together in seemingly random ways. When you start to give Jason some directions, he responds by saying “Hold on, I’m trying to figure out how these work.” You wait quietly for about 30 seconds while he continues to work with the Tinker Toys on his own. Suddenly, he looks right at you, and with a curt tone in his voice he asks: “Well, are you going to give me instructions, or what? I’m waiting.” You start to give him some instructions and for a little while he does what you suggest, although it seems to you he is moving rather slowly. Then after doing a couple things as you asked, he starts to do things that are contrary to what you ask. For instance, when you ask him to pick up a long, green stick, he picks up a small yellow plastic piece. When you try to correct him, saying “No, we need a green stick now,” he just glares at you and sighs irritably. Things continue like this for a couple of minutes, with Jason sometimes doing what you ask and sometimes not. At one point, when you try to correct him, he snidely asks: “Well, why don’t you just do it yourself?” Things continue for another couple of minutes, with relatively little progress being made on the model, because Jason only does what you ask him to do about half the time. Then, all of a sudden, Jason glares at you, slams down the stick he was holding, and exclaims “This is a waste of my time. You give terrible directions, and there is no way we will win those gift certificates. I’m done with this!” Jason then calls out to the experimenter, who is still in the next room, and asks if he can leave now. The experimenter comes into the room and indicates that, yes, the experiment can be over. She then asks Jason whether he would be willing to fill out a couple of questionnaires before he leaves. Jason asks whether he would have to work any more with you, and when the experimenter indicates that he would be completing the questionnaires in a different room, Jason says “I guess that’s fine.”

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Vignette – Unattractive Female

You have volunteered to take part in a psychology experiment as part of a course requirement for your Psych 101 class. You arrive at the assigned location a couple of minutes early, and the experimenter greets you and asks you to take a seat in what appears to be an entry-way waiting area. She explains that the experiment is one investigating social interaction, and that you are waiting for another participant to arrive, who you will be working with on the experiment. After a couple of minutes the other participant arrives, and the experimenter invites her in to take a seat, and asks you both to introduce yourselves. The other person introduces herself as Jennifer, and mentions that she is an HOD major at Peabody. As Jennifer takes her seat, you can't help but notice that she is not very good-looking. She is obviously out of shape, and she is very sloppily dressed.

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Right now the experimenter has just taken Jennifer next door to get her set up with the questionnaires, and you are waiting for the experimenter to return.

When you are imagining yourself in this situation as vividly as you can, please answer the questions that follow.

Items defining the three Impression Scales

Positive Impressions: Considerate, polite, pleasant, warm, respectful, patient, easygoing, cooperative, open-minded, agreeable, appealing, reasonable, friendly, positive, optimistic, nice, practical, productive, happy, mature, good-humored, competent, smart, enthusiastic

Negative Impressions: lazy, stupid, unenthusiastic, argumentative, cranky, grouchy, irrational, impatient, short-tempered, stubborn, rude, unpleasant, annoying, immature, inefficient, bossy, uptight, incompetent, overcritical, unfriendly, unproductive, demanding, insulting, pessimistic, arrogant

Physical Attractiveness: Attractive, hot, sexy, fit, good-looking