

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:                   **SELF-PRESENTATION STYLES, STATUS,  
AND INFLUENCE**

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This research examined effects of individual self-presentation styles on influence in groups. Perceived competence and social acceptance both play a role in determining how much influence group members enjoy. Aggrandizing and deprecating self-presentation styles may affect perceived competence, social acceptance, and ultimately influence. I predicted that aggrandizing self-presentation would lead to perceptions of competence and that self-deprecation would lead to social acceptance. The anticipated strength of those trends, however, was unclear, and I proposed that they would vary depending on status. I conducted two studies designed to assess whether aggrandizing or deprecating self-presentation styles lead to differences in influence outcomes for high and low-status individuals. In Study 1, participants gave feedback and a promotion recommendation for a fictitious (male or female) job candidate based on employee evaluation information presenting the candidate as either deprecating or aggrandizing. The main findings from Study 1 were that

aggrandizers were rated as less likable than deprecators. No other predictions were supported. Study 2 was an online experiment in which participants made hiring recommendations in reference to résumés from fictitious applicants that varied by race, gender, and presentation style (aggrandizing, deprecating, or neutral). Results provided some evidence that low-status candidates were punished for using aggrandizing self-presentation strategies. The results of the studies suggest no one- best technique for self-presentation and that there may be costs for aggrandizing or deprecating depending on race and gender.

SELF-PRESENTATION STYLES, STATUS, AND INFLUENCE

by

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Strategies for achieving workplace success abound in the popular business press, as well as generating countless books and seminars. Much of the advice proposes that humility is the key to workplace success while others suggest that self-promotion is the best path. It is difficult to imagine being successful in an organization without influence. How far these strategies go toward achieving influence may depend on how well-respected someone already is. What happens when someone who is low-status is self-promoting? Will people see him as more competent or self-interested? What about someone who is high-status? What if someone who is low-status is self-deprecating? Will this reinforce the expectation that she is less competent or make her seem more likable, or both? What about a high-status person?

A large body of social psychology research focuses on relationships between status and influence in groups. According to the Status Characteristics and Expectations States tradition of theory and research, certain group members are held in high esteem, assumed to be more competent, and exercise greater influence on group decisions relative to others in the group. Their elevated positions in groups' status hierarchies result from personal characteristics such as race and gender in addition to skills specific to the group task (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972).

A large volume of research illustrates the processes by which status characteristics lead to position in the status hierarchy. Noticeably fewer studies deal with the ways in which personal presentation styles relate to influence in a group. If someone's influence in a group is contingent on the group's expectation of that person's



competence, it seems logical that group members would attend to how others present themselves when forming their opinion, especially if self- presentation represents an assessment of their own competence. Those self-presentations, though, are be set against a backdrop of existing expectations.

I conducted two studies designed to further understanding of how personal presentation styles interact with status and influence. Study 1 tests whether self- presentation styles could affect promotion decisions and whether that interaction is different for women and men. In this web-based experiment, participants read that a human resources department is seeking feedback about hiring and promotion decisions in order to improve its process. Participants were presented with information about a finalist being considered for a position and asked to answer a number of questions about that candidate, including whether they would recommend the candidate for the position. Participants read descriptions of the candidate's work performance and evaluation summary.

Candidates were listed as either male or female and evaluations described candidates as either deprecating or aggrandizing. In Study 2, participants read application materials including a cover letter and resume, and made a hiring recommendation for a fictitious company. The candidate's cover letter was aggrandizing, deprecating, or neutral, and varied by race and gender. The studies are designed to reasonably capture processes of evaluation that typically occur during hiring and promotions within an organization. In chapter 2, I explain the research questions and highlight the bodies of literature I draw from in developing my explanation. I describe research on status in groups, status violations, self-presentation, status and gender in

organizations. Chapter 3 outlines my propositions and accompanying hypotheses. Chapter 4 describes the methods for Study 1. Chapter 5 lists results for the first study. Chapter 6 describes the methods for Study 2. Chapter 7 lists the results for Study 2. In Chapter 8 is the discussion and conclusions section. Here I summarize and compare the results for the two studies, discuss theoretical and practical implications, note limitations, and discuss directions for future research.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Development

Status literature shows that group members with relatively less status face resistance when they attempt to gain status and have influence in a group. They are assumed to be less competent than their higher-status counterparts. Therefore, they face greater urgency to be perceived as competent. One strategy is to highlight personal contributions and individual performance. However, self-promotion is risky for low-status individuals because it leads to social rejection (even while working to demonstrate competence). Low-status members using self-deprecating presentation styles may just end up reinforcing the expectation that they are less competent (even if concurrently gaining social acceptance). High-status group members are assumed to be competent.

They are given the benefit of the doubt and the burden of proof rests with them to demonstrate otherwise. Because people initially assume high-status group members are competent, they can get away with aggrandizing behavior without eliciting the strong negative visceral reaction that low-status aggrandizers encounter. Deprecating behavior by a high-status group members should do little to undermine their perceived competence while increasing social acceptance.

### 2.1 Status in Groups

Status Characteristics Theory is a program of research that explains how societal inequalities map onto status hierarchies in groups using status organizing principles (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1966, 1972; Berger, Fisek, and Norman 1989). These inequalities manifest as status hierarchies through a process called status generalization. Status generalization is when external status characteristics like gender, race, and

education level affect rates of participation and influence in task groups (Berger, Fisek, Norman, and Zelditch 1977). Status refers to someone's position in a social structure based on respect, honor, and prestige. Two conditions are necessary for status hierarchies to develop in newly formed groups. The groups must be task-oriented such that they are working on a task (rather than loitering by the water cooler). Input from all group members is required to complete the task.

According to the theory, status hierarchies emerge based on culturally shared expectations of competence for selves and others. People act as though these expectations are non-conscious however they have real implications for group interactions. Group members combine their expectations associated with respective status characteristics for each group member and then rank members in a hierarchy. High-status group members have more influence in groups due to the expectation that they are more competent and make more valuable contributions to the group than lower-status group members. Status characteristics vary across individuals and link to culturally shared beliefs that certain states of the characteristics are more valued than others and carry respective expectations of competence (Berger, Fisek, Norman, and Zelditch Jr. 1977).

Status Characteristics Theory contains five key assumptions that link beliefs about status to behavior. The first is the salience assumption. A characteristic must be salient in order to affect performance expectations. It must differentiate between group members or be seen as relevant to task completion (Balkwell 1991, Berger et al., 1977). Next, the burden of proof assumption posits that actors behave as though the burden of proof rests with proving that a certain status characteristic is NOT relevant to the task at

hand. This assumption is why diffuse status characteristics like race, gender, age, education level, and wealth among others, affect emerging status hierarchies. According to the sequencing assumption, people carry with them their newly formed performance expectations from one situation over to the next.

For example, if a man sees a woman perform better than he does, he is increasingly likely to develop a more favorable expectation of women in a subsequent task group.

Those are the five key assumptions that link beliefs about status to behavior in groups.

Two types of characteristics influence performance expectations, diffuse and specific. Diffuse status characteristics influence performance expectations across a wide range of situations. Race, gender, and educational attainment are examples of diffuse status characteristics in the U.S. (Berger et al 1972). For instance, there is a general expectation that men will perform better than women on most tasks (Ridgeway 1982). Specific status characteristics influence performance expectations across a narrower range of situations. Musical ability is an example of a specific status characteristic because someone with musical talent would be expected to perform better than others at composing a musical piece, but not necessarily in other areas, fixing a car for example.

When a group lacks information about a member's task ability, members use external status characteristics to form performance expectations. Status characteristics are salient when they differentiate between members of a group. For example, if a group is all male, then gender would not function as a status characteristic. Again, the evaluation of group members based on status characteristics contributes to their performance expectations within the group, which in turn leads to the emerging status hierarchy (Ridgeway 2001). Low-status group members are assumed to have less task

ability than those with a valued state of the characteristic unless the status characteristic is specifically dissociated from the task. As a result, they have fewer opportunities to contribute, their contributions are less likely to be accepted, and consequently they have less influence over task decisions. As a result, individuals with devalued states of status characteristics have difficulty achieving status and influence within their groups.

Research supports that in contemporary U.S. society, age, gender, race, education level and physical attractiveness operate as diffuse status characteristics.

## 2.2 Behavioral Effects on the Status Order

Low-status group members face challenges when attempting to gain status due to the self-reinforcing nature of status hierarchies. Because high-status people are expected to be more competent than others, they are given more opportunities to contribute, contribute more, their contributions are evaluated more favorably. High-status group members are evaluated as more competent simply because they are high status, leading to a legitimation of the self-fulfilling status order. Members with low performance expectations will have and will accept fewer opportunities to perform, will speak less, be more hesitant to offer contributions, and will defer more to others who disagree. The result is that people occupying the de-valued state of status characteristics end up with less influence in groups than people occupying the more valued-state of the status characteristic for reasons likely un-related to actual task competence.

Status-disadvantage carries over into the workplace and manifests in the form of lower pay, slower promotion rates, etc., due to the lower performance expectations. One key way to foster the perception of competence is to highlight personal achievements and contributions to group success in order to bring these markers of competence to the

attention of colleagues and supervisors. A potential problem with this approach is that others may perceive these efforts as “status violation”. A status violation refers to behaving in ways expected of someone of higher or lower status. It is more socially acceptable for high-status group members to be assertive, interrupt others, and be persistent or forceful when sharing opinions (Ridgeway and Berger, 1988). In contrast, behaviors associated with a low- status position include making less eye contact, passively and infrequently expressing opinions, and deferring to others in the group. Evidence suggests that status violation may actually hinder low-status actors’ efforts at gaining status, rather than help them (Younggreen and More, 2008).

According to Wagner’s (1988) theory of status violations, when an individual routinely behaves in ways typically associated with a higher-status position, he is violating the group’s behavioral expectations. The group will attempt to correct and socially control the deviant behavior in efforts to realign the behavior in accordance with the lower-status position. If the group member continues to engage in status- deviant behavior, group members may employ expectational control, which takes into account persistent status-deviant behavior. This process introduces a new salient status- dimension, the moral characteristic. The moral characteristic is integrated into the status hierarchy within the group. Status-deviant group members are assigned the de-valued state and status-conformers are assigned the more valued state. This dimension is combined with existing status characteristics, altering the status structure. Those in the higher state would experience status-gain, and those occupying the de-valued state would experience status-loss.

However, researchers have identified a few ways that appear to be effective in

minimizing the status disadvantage. Notably, Ridgeway discovered that low- status group members could gain status in a group by appearing to be group-motivated (1982). This tactic's effectiveness stems from the assumption that high- status group members are operating with the group's best interest in mind. The same assumption does *not* apply to low-status group members and instead, often group members suspect the opposite; that low-status group members are self- interested. So, when low-status group members make task contributions, other group members think they are operating under selfish motivations and are trying to get ahead. Making qualifying statements such as "I think doing such and such would really help the group succeed" helps ameliorate assumptions that the low-status group member is operating out of self-interest (Ridgeway 1978). It is not clear if this strategy works boosts perceptions of competence while it works to reduce the perception of self-interest.

As noted, the assumption that low-status group members are self-interested is a key reason why frequent task contributions are ineffective towards gaining status. Therefore, if a low-status group member behaves in self-aggrandizing way by drawing attention to personal achievements, she will likely reinforce the assumption that she is self-interested.

### 2.3 Social Acceptance and Influence

In addition to the influence effects of status, research also suggests that the degree to which we like or dislike others is linked to their influence in groups (Bianchi 2004, Kalkhoff and Barnum 2000). We tend to defer more to people we like (Shelly 2001). One major factor in our determination of whether or not we like someone is how he or she presents himself or herself. For instance, people tend to feel more positive



about others who are humble rather than those they perceive as narcissistic or self-aggrandizing (Exline and Geyer 2004).

Being humble or self-deprecating about performance or contribution should lead to social acceptance within the group, while self-aggrandizing will likely lead to social aversion. Inflating or minimizing the importance of one's contribution to the group or level of performance, however, may have implications extending beyond social acceptance. In addition to personal disposition, self-aggrandization and deprecation also indicate a personal perception of competence (or a lack thereof).

It is possible that people may interpret and respond differently to self-aggrandizing and/or self-effacing presentation styles depending on an individual group member's status and the accompanying performance expectations.

## 2.4 Gender

### Gender as a Status Characteristic

Gender has been established as a status characteristic by numerous studies (Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch, 1980; Pugh and Wahrman 1983; Ridgeway and Diekema 1989; Carli 1991). Women in the work place are subject to biased evaluations, double-standards in perceived ability, and unequal credit for performance (Foschi and Lapointe 2002). Recent research on samples of college students, however, suggests the gender gap in performance expectations is narrowing for college cohorts, with some studies finding small or no effects of gender on influence, performance evaluations, and/or rates of participation in groups (e.g., Jasso and Webster 1999; Rashotte and Smith-Lovin 1997; Foschi, Enns, and Lapointe 2001; Foschi and Lapointe 2002).

Nonetheless compelling recent research finds that enduring status beliefs continue to bias evaluations favoring men (Troyer 2001; Rashotte and Webster 2005; Kalkhoff, Younts, and Troyer 2008).

More women than men now graduate from college and women also compete successfully with men for entry-level management positions after graduation (Leicht et al. 2007). Women, however, still face increasing disadvantage at each level up the corporate hierarchy, particularly in the pursuit of leadership positions (Morrison et al. 1987; Wright et al. 1995; Federal Glass-Ceiling Commission 1995; Judiesch and Lyness 1999; Cotter et al. 2001; Maume 2004). Barriers to the success of women as college students are lower than the barriers to success for women competing for upper management positions, opportunities which occur at or after mid-career.

While people tend to prefer people like themselves (Brewer and Brown 1998, Tajfel 1978), expectations of competence are culturally shared and consensual. This means that while men in leadership positions are more likely to promote another man than a woman, all things being equal. However, men and women both buy into the culturally shared belief (nonconscious or otherwise) that men are more competent than women (Jost and Burgess 2000, Ridgeway, Boyle, Kiupers, and Robinson 1998). So women may still be more likely to promote or hire a man than a woman, all things being equal.

#### Gender as a Social Role

Society systematically and in predictable ways distributes women and men into different roles. Over time, those roles have come to be seen as naturally occurring outcroppings of biological differences between women and men (Eagley and Steffen 1984).

Much research exists that suggests gender as a status operates via a different process than gender viewed through a lense of role-appropriateness, termed Role Congruity Theory (Yoder 1991). These stereotypes that differentially attribute agentic qualities to men and communal qualities to women are remarkably resistant to change and consistent across cultures (Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Williams & Best, 1990). Role congruity theory (Eagly & Diekman, 2005) posits that a group will be positively evaluated when its characteristics are perceived to align with the requirements of the group's typical social roles. Social roles may thus form the basis of norms that prescribe valued behavior for men and women (Deikman and Goodfried 2006).

People expect women to behave in ways traditionally associated with their gender “roles”. People associate more communal traits (rather than agentic) with low (rather than high) status social groups (One study showed that even when women displayed dominant traits (typical of leaders), they were nonetheless blocked from occupying leadership positions (Ritter and Yoder 2004). Women who behave in ways that are not typically associated with femininity often suffer social or organizational consequences (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins 2004).

There is some evidence to suggest that normative role expectations are shifting over time to be less disparate, but differences do remain (Diekman and Eagley 2000, Deikman and Goodfried 2006). In fact, there is growing evidence to suggest that women internalize these role stereotypes, and avoid entering occupations or presenting themselves in ways that go against gendered role norms (Rudman and Phelan 2010). That women actively avoid going against gendered norms serves to reinforce these stereotypes and expectations in the minds of others.

### Gender and Self-Presentation Styles

People tend to be quite accurate when determining their own status across a broad range of situations in a group setting regardless of gender (Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spataro 2006). Awareness of personal status within the group helps avoid social rejection and maintain self-esteem and belongingness. It enables group members to behave in accordance with expectations associated with a particular status.

Consequences vary for behaving in ways that are unexpected for someone of a particular status. Expressing emotions that are incompatible with status can increase status differences within groups (Lovaglia and Houser 1996). Further, group members engaging in self-enhancement tend to be trusted less, liked less, and socially rejected more often than their counterparts. Status self-enhancement refers to acting in ways that are typical of higher-status actors (Pfeffer and Cialdini 1998. Phelan, Moss-Racusin, and Rudman 2008). Self-promotion often leads to what has been termed the backlash effect, when low-status group members self-aggrandize (Glick and Rudman 2001). Group members reject self-enhancers because they view them as illegitimately demanding and undeserved of certain privileges and control over group decisions generally reserved for higher-status group members (Anderson, Ames, and Gosling 2008).

In their study, Anderson et al found that those who accurately interpreted their status and acted accordingly were better liked than those who engaged in self-enhancement. Interestingly, they also found that those who were self-effacing or overly humble were liked and accepted more than the other two groups (2006). Still other research suggests that group members stereotype against those seen as incompetent but likable and those seen as competent but not warm (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, and Glick

1999). While there is evidence suggesting that although acceptance and liking are highest among self-effacers, the costs of potentially foregoing some benefits of status may outweigh the advantages that come from acceptance (Flynn, 2003). For instance, self-deprecating behavior may lead to a group member receiving less credit for accomplishments than they would otherwise. Foregoing credit for accomplishment or recognition of performance may outweigh the benefits that accompany social acceptance by hindering organizational advancement.

While both genders appear equally able to recognize their own status relative to others, they differ in self-presentation tendencies. Research shows that women are more likely than men to avoid self-promotion, often out of fear of backlash (Guadagno and Cialdini 2007, Rudman and Phelan 2008, Moss-Racusin and Rudman 2010). As previously noted, gender operates as a diffuse status characteristic, carrying expectations for performance in a wide range of situations (Ridgeway 2004; Wagner and Berger 1997).

Studies show that in the U.S. people tend to expect men to out-perform women on a broad range of tasks (Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980; Eagley and Karau 1991; Pugh and Wahrman 1983). Women tend to have less influence than men on group tasks and their performances are evaluated less-favorably (Eagley, Makhijani, and Klonsky 1992).

While gender operates as a status characteristic, it is also linked to culturally pervasive stereotypes of masculinity and femininity (Eagley 2002). People generally expect women to be more communal, behaving in caring, helpful, sympathetic and interdependent ways. Their male counterparts are seen as agentic, typified by

independence, aggression, confidence and ambition (Williams and Best 1990 and Heilman and Okimoto 2007). So, while women are generally low-status relative to men, they are also held accountable for adhering to a distinct set of gendered stereotypes also prevalent in work environments (Heilman, Block, & Martell 1995, Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins 2004).

Key to securing employment is demonstrating competence when applying for jobs. Applicants are likely to be most successful at demonstrating competence by strongly highlighting their skills and achievements using a self-aggrandizing presentation style (Jones and Pitman 1982, Rudman 1998, Wade 2001). An aggrandizing presentation style is consistent with masculine/agentive characteristics and in opposition to feminine/communal gender stereotypes (Rudman and Phelan 2008). The necessity to go against gender norms in order to demonstrate competence presents a dilemma in that women are concurrently likely to be viewed as less-likable and lacking social skills (Rudman and Glick, 2001 and Phelan, Moss-Racusin, and Rudman 2008).

### 2.5 Race as a Status Characteristic

An abundance of research suggests that race operates as a status characteristic disadvantaging African Americans in mixed-race groups. Expectation States research outlines the process by which whites come to dominate blacks in task- groups (Cohen 1982). Not only do others project lower expectations of competence on to racial minorities but minorities also internalize these expectations and it affects their own self-concept and levels of efficacy (Stets and Harrod 2004). For example, being aware of racial stereotypes and lower social- status, experience anxiety about status- based rejection due to their membership in a devalued group when applying to colleges and

universities (Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, Pietrzak 2002).

#### Race and Self-Presentation Styles

As previously discussed, race operates as a status characteristic disadvantaging racial minorities. Further, just as there are stereotypes and expectations about which characteristics are typical of women and men, there are also racial stereotypes. Research shows that there are culturally prevalent stereotypes that African Americans are less intelligent than whites, and that African Americans suffer social sanctions when they violate these expectations (Rubovits and Maehr 1973, Lovaglia, Lucas, Houser, Thye, and Markovsky 1998). Research also suggests that people have lower standards of competency, but higher standards for ability for women than for men and for blacks than for whites (Biernat and Kobrynowicz 1997). While we may expect that women may fare worse than African Americans during a hiring process because aggrandizing behavior goes against gender norms, African Americans are often disadvantaged due to in- group/out- group processes. People tend to like people like themselves. Because African Americans are so often excluded from structural positions of authority, they tend to encounter employment gatekeepers of different races than themselves (Smith 2002, Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley 1990, Elliott and Smith 2004, Wingfield 2009).

## Chapter 3: General Predictions

Research suggests that women are faced with a gendered dilemma. With low-status relative to men, they are under greater pressure to demonstrate their competence in the workplace. This requires that they highlight their contributions and accomplishments on-the-job when applying for them. This type of behavior goes against gender stereotypes of women being passive (vs. agentic). Necessity to go against gender norms in order to demonstrate competence requires potentially sacrificing likability and others' perception of social skills (Rudman and Glick 2001, Phelan, Moss-Racusin, and Rudman 2008)

I designed an online study to test for outcomes in terms of perceived competence and likability when male and female promotion candidates in an organization are presented as employing either aggrandizing or deprecating self-presentation strategies.

Men in contemporary US society are generally perceived as more competent than women in most situations. High-status actors are assumed to be more motivated towards group goals relative to low-status actors, who people assume to be self-interested. As such, I predict that participants will rate male candidates as more competent and better liked than female promotion candidates.

*Prediction 1:* Men compared to women will be (a) evaluated as more competent by participants, (b) evaluated as more likable, and (c) be more frequently recommended for promotion or hiring (respectively).

High-status actors are assumed more competent than low-status actors.



Engaging in aggrandizing behavior will likely increase perceptions of competence more for low-status actors than for high-status actors because high-status actors are already assumed competent, whereas low-status actors are not. Therefore, aggrandizing behavior by high-status actors should only serve to reinforce the existing perception where aggrandizing behavior from low-status actors would challenge and potentially raise perceptions of competence.

Aggrandizing behavior elicits a negative reaction from others while people generally like and are socially drawn to humble deprecating people. Aggrandizing behavior by low-status actors is also seen as an illegitimate status claim and goes against gendered stereotypes for women. These reasons combined suggest that low-status actors likely pay a greater social price for aggrandizing behavior than high-status actors.

*Prediction 2:* (a) Aggrandizing behavior will have a larger net positive effect on competency ratings of low-status than high-status actors.

(b) Aggrandizing behavior will have a larger net negative effect on likability ratings of low-status than of high-status actors.

Low-status actors are perceived as less competent than high-status actors so, deprecating self-presentations should be more consistent with expectations by others and may reinforce those low performance expectations. Conversely, people are likely to perceive deprecating behaviors by high-status actors as an indication of humility rather than an accurate representation of their true ability due to their higher pre-

existing performance expectations. In this regard, it is unlikely deprecating behavior will damage the perception that high-status actors are competent relative to their lower-status peers but may be socially advantageous.

Deprecating behavior from low-status actors aligns with expectations of both demeanor and competence. Because deprecation is congruent with pre-existing expectations of appropriate behavior for low-status actors, it is unlikely that low-status deprecators will gain a significant social advantage from deprecation.

*Prediction 3:* (a) Deprecating behavior will have a larger negative effect on competency ratings of low-status than high-status actors.

(b) Deprecating behavior will have a larger positive effect of likability ratings of high-status than of low-status actors.

Consistent with the theoretical development, I expect to find social acceptance effects of self-presentation styles. Deprecating self-presentations should lead to greater social acceptance and aggrandizing styles should lead to diminished social acceptance.

*Prediction 4:* Participants will rate aggrandizing candidates as less likable than deprecating candidates.

It is likely that the deprecating high-status partners will benefit from seeming agreeable to an extent that outweighs any potential loss of perceived competence. Group members tend to give high-status actors the benefit of the doubt regarding competence and are likely to attribute their deprecating presentation to humble characteristics rather than an indication that they lack competence.

Low-status partners employing a deprecating presentation style will seem more likable than low-status aggrandizing partners. Their deprecating presentation may reinforce the expectation that they are less competent potentially hurting their relative influence.

*Prediction 5:* (a) High-status actors who self-deprecate will gain social acceptance without sacrificing competence ratings or overall influence.

(b) Low-status actors who self-deprecate will gain social acceptance but sacrifice competence ratings and overall influence.

*Prediction 6:* (a) High-status actors who self-aggrandize will sacrifice social acceptance without benefitting their competence or influence ratings.

(b) Low-status actors who self-aggrandize will sacrifice social acceptance but observe higher competence and overall influence ratings than low-status self-deprecating actors.

### 3.1 Possible Alternative Outcomes:

While theory and research seem to support to my initial predictions, it may be the case that these processes operate differently than I predict. For instance, people may actually be more socially accepting of low-status than high-status people because they may not see them as a threat to their own status in the group. Research suggests that people evaluate others on two dimensions that may be at odds, competence and warmth (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and XU 2002, Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2006). Because high-status actors are perceived as more competent than low- status actors, low-status actors may

be better liked. If that holds true, participants may rate female candidates as more likable than male candidates in Study 1 and minority candidates as more likable than white candidates in Study 2. It is also possible that seeming likable is more closely related to influence than seeming competent. While this is at odds with much research, there is some evidence to support the idea. If so, findings may contradict Prediction 1 (b).

Further, it is possible that the expectation that competence ratings more closely align with influence than do likability ratings is incorrect. If likability ratings have as much to do with influence in a group as competency expectations, there could be higher costs and fewer benefits of self-promotion. If so, low-status actors may lose influence by engaging in self-aggrandizing behavior as their social acceptance is likely to suffer. It is also possible that being likable is more closely tied to influence depending on status. For example, low-status actors' influence in a group may depend more on others thinking they are likable than competent, especially because being likable is less threatening than being competent.

### 3.2 The Issue of Scope Conditions

As noted earlier, Status Characteristics Theory is bound by scope conditions.

Scope conditions are a set of requirements that must be present for a theory to maintain predictive value (Foschi 1997). Two scope conditions constrain the breadth of implications Status Characteristics Theory has. The conditions are task orientation and collective orientation (Berger et al 1977). Task orientation means that the group is formed around the purpose of accomplishing a task or solving a problem. Collective orientation means that the group members consider it legitimate and important for task

success to consider the input of everyone in the group.

Not all groups are collective and task oriented. Some examples include committees, sports teams, and informal work groups. This means that groups with a predominantly social purpose would fall outside the scope of Status Characteristics Theory (Correll and Ridgeway 2003). The scope conditions of Status Characteristics Theory are important because without task and collective orientation, group members do not have a reason to form performance expectations. These expectations drive the formation of the status hierarchy.

Below I describe two studies and a pilot study conducted using a web-based program. In each, lone participants make evaluations of either a potential job candidate or a candidate for promotion. All of these studies fall outside of the scope conditions of Status Characteristics Theory. I would argue, however, that the theory still holds predictive value for all three studies. First, participants are working on a task. Their task is to evaluate a job or promotion candidate. Second, while there is not a collective orientation to drive the formation of performance expectations, the task is explicitly to form performance expectations.

### 3.3 Pilot Study

I conducted an early pilot version of Study 1 using Mechanical Turk to test the manipulations. Mechanical Turk is a survey service owned and operated through the online shopping and selling website, Amazon.com. It is a crowdsourcing internet marketplace where individuals and businesses can recruit people to perform tasks that computers are currently unable to do. Requesters can upload or post jobs to MTurk known as Human

Intelligence Tasks (HITs). The service allows users to set their own hours and earn extra money from the comfort and convenience of their home or office. Mechanical Turk offers several benefits to the research process. Mechanical Turk samples tend to be significantly more diverse than traditional participant samples at U.S. Colleges and Universities. Participants can be recruited rapidly (several hundred in a few hours) and at relatively low-cost (\$1-3 per participant compared to \$10-20 in a lab). The data also tends to be reliable (Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling 2011).

In the pilot study, I posted four distinct HITs on Mechanical Turk using a 2x2 factorial design with two gender categories (male and female) and two self-presentation strategies (aggrandizing or deprecating). I listed them as taking about 10 minutes and paying \$1.00 (averaging about \$6.00 an hour). There, participants read an introduction explaining that they would be evaluating a promotion candidate for a large company and clicked a link to Qualtrics, where they rated a promotion candidate for a fictitious company after reading an evaluation of the candidate written by their superior.

I included a supervisor's summary evaluation describing characteristics and skills of the promotion candidate. The supervisor summary contained both the gender and self-presentation manipulations. The supervisor's summary descriptions in both the aggrandizing and deprecating condition were glowing. They described both candidates as capable and skilled. They differed in that in the aggrandizing conditions, the candidate was proud and boastful of accomplishments and makes personal attributions for success (according to the evaluation report). In the deprecating condition, the evaluation describes the candidate as making external attributions for success, passing off the credit for accomplishments to other group members and luck. I tried to keep the level of accomplishment and the number of words consistent in each condition. The aggrandizing summary evaluation contained ninety-

seven words and the deprecating version contained one hundred three.

In the pilot study, participants were told that a company is seeking outside input in their promotion decision and asked to make a promotion recommendation based on information provided to them about a job candidate. They were assigned a candidate with a male or female name (the gender manipulation) who was presented as either aggrandizing or deprecating in an employee evaluation. There were thirty-two participants in the low-status deprecating condition, thirty-five in the high-status deprecating condition, thirty-six in the low-status aggrandizing condition, and thirty-five in the high-status aggrandizing condition.

Participants read the following introduction on Amazon's Mechanical Turk website: *We are from the Human Resources Department of a large organization with headquarters on the East Coast of the United States. We are continually in the process of evaluating our personnel decisions and trying to find ways to get better. We are beginning a project to attempt to crowdsource evaluations of hiring and promotion decisions in the organization. As part of this HIT, we would like you to evaluate an actual promotion candidate from our organization. We will present you with information from a finalist for the position and ask you to answer a number of questions about them, including whether or not you would recommend them for the position.*

After reading the introduction, participants clicked on a link directing them to Qualtrics website where the survey was administered.

Participants answered a number of demographic questions including their gender, age, race/ethnicity, highest level of education, and marital status. They then read a list of responsibilities and requirements for the marketing and sales manager position the candidate

was being considered for.

Participants then read an evaluation (shown below) of a candidate consisting of numerical ratings across the following characteristics: attendance and punctuality, dependability, initiative, judgment, cooperation, cooperation, knowledge, quality of work, time management, responsibility, interpersonal skills, and responsibility. (Both candidates received high marks in these categories).

**Employee Performance Evaluation- Sharon or Mike Schwartz**

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Time at company: 4 years

Male  Female

Position & Department: Manager, Department of Sales and Marketing Evaluation

Period: 6/15/2014---6/15/2015 **Evaluation Criteria**

*(Exceptional:5 Good:4 Fair:3 NeedsImprovement:2 Unsatisfactory:1)*

**\_5\_\_Attendance and Punctuality.** Consider absences, times arriving late, time devoted to actual work, and promptness in reporting for assignments.

**\_4\_\_Dependability.** Consider the employee's ability to follow instructions and complete tasks with minimum supervision.

**\_4\_\_Initiative.** Consider the employee's self-reliance, self-directedness, the ability to develop new ideas, and the desire to achieve goals.

**\_5\_\_Judgment.** consider the employee's judgment used in decision-making: the ability to respond in a calm, logical, and rapid way under stress.

**\_5\_\_Cooperation.** consider effectiveness and efficiency in work relationships with supervisor, co-workers and others.

**\_5\_\_Knowledge of Job.** Consider the employee's understanding of his/her full job duties.

**\_4\_\_Quality of Work.** consider accuracy, skill, and thoroughness in completing job assignments.

**\_5\_\_Time Management.** consider the employee's amount and promptness of work produced based on job requirements.



**\_5\_Responsibility.** Consider the employee's sense of responsibility and willingness to carry out assigned duties.

**\_4\_Interpersonal Skills.** consider attitude, helpfulness, knowledge, and the overall communication skills toward customers and internal departments.

Following the numerical ratings, was a summary comment; a paragraph describing the candidate's character and performance on the job. This is where the self- presentation manipulation took place.

The aggrandizing candidate's description read:

*Candidate consistently contributes valuable input in meetings and brain-storming sessions. She works diligently and gets results. She is vocal about her contributions to the many successful group projects she has been a part of and proud of her accomplishments. She is knowledgeable and often goes out of her way to show newer hires the ropes. She generated up to 12 percent of total brand revenues by developing three national sales offices. She is quick to highlight her abilities and attributes success to her intellect and drive. She also implements effective pricing strategies and employs efficient distribution channels.*

The deprecating candidate's description read:

*Candidate is innovative and makes valuable contributions to strategic marketing plans. Though she rarely accepts credit for the group's success, she is often the reason her teams produce such successful marketing campaigns. She consistently meets deadlines, producing quality work. She makes a point to mentor junior colleagues. She captured a 28% expansion in customer base since 2009 during a period of overall decline in the industry. She says the expansion strategy worked partly because her team was so great at implementing it and partly*

*because she got lucky. She also demonstrates ability to identify target markets before designing a marketing campaign increasing clients.*

Participants then answered a number of questions about the promotion candidate.

**How competent do you think this candidate is relative to other managers?**

- Not at all competent
- Minimally competent
- Slightly incompetent
- Neutral
- Somewhat competent
- Very competent
- Exceptionally competent

**How likable do you think this candidate is relative to other managers?**

- Not at all likable
- Minimally likable
- Slightly less likable
- Neutral
- Somewhat likable
- Very likable
- Exceptionally likable

**How qualified do you think this candidate is for the position of senior manager?**

- Exceptionally qualified
- Very qualified
- Somewhat qualified
- Neutral
- Somewhat unqualified
- Minimally qualified
- Not at all qualified

**Do you think this candidate has strong social skills?**

- Not at all skilled

- Minimal skills
- Slightlyunskilled
- Neutral
- Somewhat skilled
- Very skilled
- Exceptionallyskilled

**How likely would you be to recommend this candidate for the position of senior manager?**

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Neutral
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely
- Very Likely

**This is an attention check. Please answer "neutral" to this question.**

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Neutral
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely
- Very Likely

**Compared to other managers, how likely do you think this candidate is to be further promoted and advance in the career?**

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Neutral
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely

-  Very Likely

Participants then viewed a paragraph explaining the true nature of the study and contact information in case they had any questions, problems, or were upset. There were thirty-two participants in the low-status deprecating condition, thirty-five in the high-status deprecating condition, thirty-six in the low-status aggrandizing condition, and thirty-five in the high-status aggrandizing condition. Some of these (there is no way to know how many), participated in multiple HITs.

Results of the pilot study did not indicate any strong trends or significant differences between conditions except that participants rated deprecating candidates significantly higher on the “likable” scale than aggrandizing candidates. There were some methodological flaws in the pilot study that I attempted to correct in Study 1. One key issue was the lack of random assignment. When I set up the pilot study, I created four separate and individual HITs online instead of one with randomly assigned conditions assigned to participants within that HIT. This meant that participants self-selected into conditions, rather than being randomly assigned. This was problematic for a number of reasons. If I did have interesting findings, it would be impossible to know whether differences between conditions were the result of the study manipulation, some outside factor, or other systematic reason certain participants selected into one condition over another (such as time of day or the order HITs were displayed on the website).

Another issue with the individual conditions being posted simultaneously is that participants could (and did) participate more than once. An unknown number of participants completed the survey in multiple conditions, rendering their (and thus the overall) data invalid.

Another potential issue is with the deprecating manipulation itself. In the first (pilot) version, the evaluator negates the validity of the deprecating behavior “. The summary paragraph reads: *Though she rarely accepts credit for the group’s success, she is often the reason her teams produce such successful marketing campaigns.*” This essentially erases the effect that being deprecating might have had on participants’ perceptions of competence.

However, the candidates in the deprecating condition would still gain the benefit of increased likability.

From the pilot study, it was clear that the manipulations needed to be stronger. There was essentially no difference in perceived competence or likelihood to recommend someone for promotion based on someone’s self-presentation style or gender. Additionally, it was clear that it is important to let an aggrandizing self-presentation strategy do its job of drawing attention to or negating accomplishments. If a job candidate is aggrandizing or deprecating by attributing accomplishments either internally (to their own intellect or work ethic) or externally (to others or luck), the evaluator’s summary cannot undermine those attributions without also taking away from the accomplishments themselves. It is difficult to draw any real conclusions from the data in the pilot study because it is so compromised. However, there was strong evidence that aggrandizers are significantly less likable than deprecators but were not any more likely to be recommended for the promotion position. I attempted to correct for these methodological issues and further delineate what relationship, if any, self-aggrandizing presentation strategies have to do with promotion recommendations in Study 1.



## Chapter 4: Study 1

### 4.1 Methods and Hypotheses

I designed two studies in order to investigate the relationship between self-presentation styles and influence. Study 1 is designed to test whether self-presentation styles interact with gender to produce varied outcomes such as perceived competence, likeability, and recommendation for promotion. Study 2 extends Study 1 to assess whether self-presentation styles interact with gender and race through distinct processes which may manifest in the form of potential consequences in the workplace.

#### General Study Design and Conditions

Again, research shows that women tend to be at a disadvantage relative to men in part because people assume they are less competent. This bias likely carries over into the workplace. Many people have heard the statistic that women earn \$.73 for every dollar men earn. Pay in the workplace is important but is contingent on getting the job and being promoted. Audit studies lend credence to the idea that this bias is present during the hiring process (gender audit studies here). If women are disadvantaged during the hiring process, they are likely similarly disadvantaged during the promotion process. Women then, are under greater pressure to demonstrate their competence in the workplace. This means claiming credit for accomplishments. However, potential employers and bosses may view claiming credit for accomplishments negatively because that behavior falls outside of expectations derived from culturally shared gender norms.

I conducted a web-based experiment that aimed to reasonably approximate the

materials and processes that occur in organizations during promotion procedures. An experiment is suitable and the experimental method is unique in that it allows researchers to randomly assign participants to different conditions and then test and identify causal relationships. Because participants are randomly assigned to conditions, we can attribute observed differences of the dependent variable across conditions to experimental manipulations.

While we are able to use experiments to determine causality, the goal of experimental research is somewhat different than other research methods. Experiments are used to test theoretical principles rather than develop findings that generalize to larger populations (Lovaglia 2003; Lucas 2003).

Many if not most behavioral experiments are conducted in a lab, often at a university. While this controlled setting is ideal for isolating variables, the sample is often restricted to undergraduate students, arguable not representative of a larger sample. While above, I argued that the point of experiments is not to generalize findings to a larger population, it is possible that undergraduate students react in systematically different ways than the larger population. The benefit of conducting web-based experiments is that the sample is not restricted by geographic location or age group. Respondents may participate at any age over 18 and from a much wider range of geographic locations. While the environment surrounding participants may not be controlled, it is not likely to vary in a systematic way.

The present study utilizes a 2x2 factorial design with two gender categories (male and female) and 2 levels of self-presentation style (self-aggrandizing and self-deprecating). I used a web-based survey service called Mechanical Turk to recruit, pay, and administer the



study to participants. I manipulated the gender variable both by attaching a traditionally male or female name to an employee evaluation, and also having either male or female checked off on the evaluation. To present the self-presentation manipulation of either deprecating or aggrandizing, participants viewed evaluations of promotion candidates. Participants then read descriptions of the candidate's behavior, and demeanor, and accomplishments from a supervisor's summary evaluation. In these evaluations, a supervisor listed accomplishments as well as described the candidate's attributions of those accomplishments (internally or externally). The attribution of internal vs. external, self or others as an explanation of accomplishments operationalizes aggrandizing or deprecating self-presentation styles.

I conducted a web-based experiment that aims to reasonably approximate the materials and processes that occur in organizations during promotion procedures. The experimental method is unique in that it allows researchers to randomly assign participants to different conditions and thus test and identify causal relationships.

Because participants are randomly assigned to conditions, we can be confident that it is the experimental manipulations causing any observed differences of the dependent variable across conditions.

#### 4.2 Procedures

Study 1 is similar to the pilot study but included a few small changes. The first is that participants were randomly assigned to conditions. Random assignment assures that we can be confident that the experimental manipulations are responsible for any significant differences in the dependent variable between conditions. Because only one HIT was created in MTurk linking to the Qualtrics program that randomly assigned participants to one of four

conditions, no participant was able to participate in the study more than once. So, for study 1, just like the pilot, participants were told that a company is seeking outside input in their promotion decision and asked to make a promotion recommendation based on information provided to them about a job candidate. They were randomly assigned either a male or female candidate presented as either aggrandizing or deprecating in an employee evaluation. 40 participants each were randomly assigned to 1 of 4 conditions for a total of 160 participants.

*Condition 1: Aggrandizing male*

*Condition 2: Deprecating male*

*Condition 3: Aggrandizing female*

*Condition 4: Deprecating female*

Participants read the following introduction on Amazon's Mechanical Turk website:

*We are from the Human Resources Department of a large organization with headquarters on the East Coast of the United States. We are continually in the process of evaluating our personnel decisions and trying to find ways to get better. We are beginning a project to attempt to crowdsource evaluations of hiring and promotion decisions in the organization. As part of this HIT, we would like you to evaluate an actual promotion candidate from our organization. We will present you with information from a finalist for the position and ask you to answer a number of questions about them, including whether or not you would recommend them for the position.*

After reading the introduction, participants clicked on a link which directed them to Qualtrics website where the survey was administered. Participants answered a number of demographic questions about their gender, age, race/ethnicity, highest level of education, and marital status. They then read a list of responsibilities for the marketing

and sales manager position the candidate was being considered for.

Participants then read an evaluation of a candidate consisting of numerical ratings of the following characteristics: attendance and punctuality, dependability, initiative, judgment, cooperation, cooperation, knowledge, quality of work, time management, responsibility, interpersonal skills, and responsibility. (Both aggrandizing and deprecating candidates earned high marks in these categories).

Following the numerical ratings, was a summary comment; a paragraph describing the candidate's character and performance on the job. This is where participants were presented with the self-presentation manipulation.

The aggrandizing candidate's description read:

*“Candidate consistently contributes valuable input in meetings and brain-storming sessions. She/he works diligently and gets results. She/he is vocal about her contributions to the many successful group projects she has been a part of and proud of her accomplishments. She/he is knowledgeable and often goes out of her way to show newer hires the ropes. She/he generated up to 12 percent of total brand revenues by developing three national sales offices. She/he is quick to highlight her abilities and attributes success to her/his intellect and drive. She/he also implements effective pricing strategies and employs efficient distribution channels.”*

The deprecating candidate's description read:

*“Candidate is innovative and makes valuable contributions to strategic marketing plans. His teams consistently produce very successful marketing campaigns, however he rarely accepts credit for the team's success. He consistently meets deadlines, producing quality work. He makes a point to mentor junior colleagues. He captured a 28% expansion in customer base since 2009 during a period of overall decline in the industry. He says the expansion strategy worked partly because his team was so great at implementing it and partly because he got lucky. He also demonstrates ability to identify target markets before designing a marketing campaign increasing clients.”*

After reading the evaluations and summary comments of the candidates, participants then answered a series of questions about their perception of the candidate's competence, likability, and whether they would recommend the candidate for promotion.

*1. Not at all competent..... 7. Exceptionally competent*  
*How qualified do you think this candidate is relative to other managers?*

*1. Not at all qualified.....7. Exceptionally qualified*  
*How likable do you think this candidate is relative to other candidates?*

*1. Not at all likable.....7. Exceptionally likable*  
*Do you think this candidate has strong social skills?*

*1. Not at all skilled.....7. Exceptionally skilled*  
*How likely would you be to recommend this candidate for the position of senior manager?*

*1. Very unlikely.....7. Very likely*  
*Compared to other managers, how likely do you think this candidate is to be promoted and advance in the career?*

*1. Very unlikely.....7. Very likely*  
*How much increase in percentage of current salary do you recommend for this candidate judging from their work performance evaluation this year?*

Participants read a debriefing statement and an explanation that they actually participated in a social psychology study organized by a Sociology PhD student and that the company and candidates were fictitious. They also read that the study was designed to examine individuals' decision making processes regarding hiring recommendations

and promotion decisions.

### 4.3 Results of Study 1

#### Participants

213 participants took part in Study 1. Of the participants, one was excluded for non-completion. A second was excluded for failing the attention check. The attention check question read, “Please answer neutral to this question”, which was a 4. The participant selected 6. 51.2% of participants were male, and 48.8% were female.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 84 years old, with an average age of 38.39 years old. 12 participants listed black or African American as their race (5.7%). One listed Arab American (.005%). 12 listed Asian (5.7%), two listed Asian American (.95%) and one listed Chinese (.005%). 160 listed white or Caucasian (75.8%). 10 people identified as Hispanic (4.7%). One person identified as latino (.005%), one as latina (.005%). One person identified as mixed (.005%). Two people identified as Native American (.95%), and one person identified as Caucasian and native American (.005%). One person responded with “djdasd”. 92 (43.6%) participants reported being single/never married. 89 (42.2%) reported that they are currently married. 23 (10.9%) reported being divorced/separated and 7 (3.3%) reported that they are widowed. There were 49 (23.2%) participants in Condition 1 (female aggrandizing), 55 (26.1%) participants in Condition 2 (male aggrandizing), 53 (25.1%) participants in Condition 3 (female deprecating), and 54 (25.6%) participants in Condition 4 (male deprecating). Only one person (.5%) reported having a less-than high school education. 27 people (12.8%) reported having graduated from high school. 74 people (35.1%) responded that they have had some college. 90 people (45%) reported that they are college graduates while 19 people (9%) reported to have a post-graduate degree.

### Dependent Variables by Gender

Due to higher status in contemporary U.S. society, men hold higher status and are expected to be more competent at most things compared to women, more group-motivated and have more influence. Therefore, in my first Hypothesis I predicted that *:Men compared to women will be (a) evaluated as more competent by participants, (b) evaluated as more likable, and (c) be more frequently recommended for promotion or hiring (respectively).*

When comparing just males and females across all of the dependent variables (competence, likability, whether qualified, socially skilled, recommend for the position, likely to be further promoted, or recommended salary increase there were no significant differences between the two groups). The mean competence rating for females was 6.05, for males, 6.17. The difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.232$ ). The mean likability rating for females was 5.80 and 5.69 for males. This difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.486$ ). The mean qualification rating for females was 2.15 and 1.90 for males. This question was reverse-coded with 1 = exceptionally qualified and 7 = not at all qualified. While females were rated slightly less qualified for the position, this difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.114$ ). When asked whether the candidate has strong social skills relative to other candidates, the mean rating for females was 5.83 and 5.82 for males. The difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.897$ ). When asked if participants would recommend the candidate for the position of senior manager, females had an average rating of 6.21 and males, 6.3. This difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.475$ ). When asked how likely this candidate is to be further promoted in their career, females had a mean rating of 6.09 and males, 6.23.

This difference was not significant (two- tailed  $p=.264$ ). When asked how much of an increase in current salary the candidate should receive from 0%-100%, the average increase suggested for females was 23.57% and 21.01% for males. This difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.307$ ).

Therefore, my hypothesis was not supported.

Table 1: Group Statistics

	1 = fem, 2 = male	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
How competent	Female	102	6.05	.837	.232
	Male	109	6.17	.664	
How likable	Female	102	5.80	1.144	.486
	Male	109	5.69	1.267	
How qualified	1.00	102	2.15	1.238	.114
	2.00	109	1.90	1.009	
strong social skills?	1.00	102	5.83	.868	.897
	2.00	109	5.82	1.020	
recommend for senior manager?	1.00	102	6.21	.978	.475
	2.00	109	6.30	.986	
how likely do you think this candidate is to be further promoted	1.00	102	6.09	.976	.264
	2.00	109	6.23	.846	
increase in percentage of salary	1.00	102	23.5686	19.48267	.307
	2.00	109	21.0092	16.62132	

Female Aggrandizing, Male Aggrandizing Variable

Because high-status actors are already assumed to be more competent than low- status actors, low-status actors have more to gain regarding competence evaluations than high-status actors, therefore demonstrations of competence should pay higher dividends for low-status than high-status actors. Because aggrandizing

behavior is seen as an illegitimate status claim and goes against gender stereotypes, I predicted that female promotion candidates would be rated as significantly less-likable than male promotion candidates.

Hypothesis 2: (a) *Aggrandizing behavior will have a larger net positive effect on competency ratings of low-status than high-status actors.*

Hypothesis 2: (b) *Aggrandizing behavior will have a larger net negative effect on likability ratings of low-status than of high-status actors.*

I compared the means of the dependent variables for aggrandizing and deprecating males across the dependent variables and aggrandizing and deprecating females. First I will list the means for the males, then the females below but will note, neither the male or female candidates' competency ratings were significantly different regardless of whether they used an aggrandizing or deprecating self- presentation style. Therefore, Hypothesis 2: (a) was not supported. Also, both male and female aggrandizing candidates were rated as significantly less likable than the deprecating candidates respectively, so Hypothesis 2: (b) was supported.

The mean competence rating for deprecating males was 6.14, not significantly different from aggrandizing males' score of 6.22 (two-tailed  $p=.489$ ). The mean likability score for deprecating males was 6.02, significantly higher than the score for aggrandizing males of 5.33 (two-tailed  $p=.004$ ). Deprecating males were rated as slightly less qualified than aggrandizing males, but not significantly so (two-tailed  $p=.305$ ). Deprecating males had a mean social skill score of 5.92, not



significantly different from the aggrandizing males' score of 5.67 (two-tailed  $p=.195$ ). On a scale of 1-7, when asked whether they would recommend the candidate for senior manager, deprecating males scored an average of 6.47 which is not significantly different from the aggrandizing males' score of 6.11 (two-tailed  $p=.06$ ), however it is approaching significance, with participants more likely to say they would recommend the deprecating male over more often than the aggrandizing male for senior manager.

Table 2: Male Aggrandizing, Male Deprecating

condition 2 - male agg, 4 = male dep		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How competent	Male Aggrandizing	54	6.22	.664	.090
	Male Deprecating	51	6.14	.693	.097
How likable	Male	54	5.33	1.244	.169
	Aggrandizing	51	6.02	1.241	.174
How qualified	Male	54	1.80	.810	.110
	Aggrandizing	51	2.00	1.217	.170
strong social skills?	Male	54	5.67	1.046	.142
	Aggrandizing	51	5.92	.997	.140
recommend for senior Aggrandizing manager?	Male	54	6.11	1.144	.156
	Male	51	6.47	.784	.110
how likely do you think this candidate is to be further Deprecating promoted	Male Aggrandizing	54	6.26	.851	.116
	Male	51	6.22	.879	.123
increase in percentage of salary	Male Aggrandizing	54	20.0185	16.90204	2.30008
	Male Deprecating	51	21.5490	14.65239	2.05175

Aggrandizing females' mean competence rating was not significantly different than deprecating females' (two-tailed  $p=.542$ ). Deprecating females were rated as significantly more likable, with a mean score of 6.08 compared to

aggrandizing females' score of 5.49 (two-tailed  $p=.008$ ). Aggrandizing females were not rated as significantly more qualified than deprecating females on average with scores of 2.06 and 2.24 respectively (two-tailed  $p=.5$ ).

Aggrandizing females and deprecating females were not rated significantly differently on average regarding their social skills with scores of 5.84 and 5.86 respectively (two-tailed  $p=.970$ ). Aggrandizing females were no more likely to be recommended for senior manager than deprecating females, with respective scores of 6.16 and 6.22 respectively (two-tailed  $p=.677$ ).

Participants rated aggrandizing females as slightly more likely than deprecating females to be further promoted with scores of 6.20 and 5.96 respectively, however the difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.247$ ). And although participants recommended a slightly higher percentage increase for deprecating female candidates than aggrandizing female candidates (24.96% compared to 22.57%), the difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.622$ ).

Because deprecating behavior is consistent with expectations for low-status actors, it likely serves to reinforce the low expectations of competence. Being inconsistent with expectations of competence for high-status actors and the burden of proof on them to prove that they are less competent than others give them credit for, deprecating behavior likely does not seriously undermine others' perception of high-status actors' competence. Further, because high-status actors' deprecating self-presentation is not likely to be believed, others are likely to attribute it to their down-to-earth characteristic whereas are likely to view it as an accurate representation of low-status actors' ability.

Hypothesis 3: (a) *Deprecating behavior will have a larger negative effect on competency ratings of low-status than high-status actors*

Hypothesis 3: (b) *Deprecating behavior will have a larger positive effect of likability ratings on high-status than low-status actors.*

There were not significant differences between mean competency ratings of high and low-status actors and the degree to which likability ratings increased mean likability scores increased for deprecating actors did not vary for high and low-status actors. Therefore, Hypotheses 3 (a) and 3 (b) were not supported.

Table 3: Female Aggrandizing, Female Deprecating

condition 1- fem agg, 3 - fem dep		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How competent	Female Aggrandizing	49	6.10	.872	.125
	Female Deprecating	51	6.00	.825	.115
How likable	Female Aggrandizing	49	5.49	1.340	.191
	Female Deprecating	51	6.08	.845	.118
How qualified	Female Aggrandizing	49	2.06	1.107	.158
	Female Deprecating	51	2.24	1.365	.191
strong social skills?	Female Aggrandizing	49	5.84	.986	.141
	Female Deprecating	51	5.86	.722	.101
recommend for senior manager?	Female Aggrandizing	49	6.16	1.087	.155
	Female Deprecating	51	6.22	.879	.123
how likely do you think this candidate is to be further promoted	Female Aggrandizing	49	6.20	.866	.124
	Female Deprecating	51	5.96	1.076	.151
increase in percentage of	Female Aggrandizing	49	22.5714	20.10286	2.87184

The mean competence rating for aggrandizing females was 6.10 and 6.22 for aggrandizing males. The difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.442$ ). The mean likability rating for aggrandizing females was 5.49 and 5.33 for aggrandizing males. This

difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.571$ ). The mean rating for how qualified the candidate seemed was 2.06 for aggrandizing females and 1.80 for aggrandizing males. This difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.176$ ). Aggrandizing females received a mean rating of 5.84 on perceived social skills, while aggrandizing males received a mean rating of 5.67. This difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.467$ ).

When asked on a scale of 1-7 how likely they would be to recommend the candidate for senior manager (with one being very unlikely and seven being very likely) participants responded with an average of 6.16 for aggrandizing female candidates and 6.11 for aggrandizing male candidates. This difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.869$ ). When asked to answer on a scale of 1-7 how likely participants thought it was that this candidate would be further promoted (with 1 being very unlikely and seven being very likely), they had a mean response score of 6.20 for aggrandizing females and 6.26 for aggrandizing males. This difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.765$ ). Participants recommended a 22.6% salary increase for aggrandizing females and a 20.02% salary increase for aggrandizing males. This difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.456$ ).

Table 4: Female Aggrandizing, Male Aggrandizing

condition 1- fem agg, 2 - male agg,		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How competent	Female Aggrandizing	49	6.10	.872	.125
	Male Aggrandizing	54	6.22	.664	.090
How likable	Female	49	5.49	1.340	.191
	Aggrandizing Male	54	5.33	1.244	.169
How qualified	Female	49	2.06	1.107	.158
	Aggrandizing Male	54	1.80	.810	.110
strong social skills?	Female	49	5.84	.986	.141
	Aggrandizing Male	54	5.67	1.046	.142
recommend for senior Aggrandizing manager?	Female	49	6.16	1.087	.155
	Male Aggrandizing	54	6.11	1.144	.156
how likely do you think this candidate is to be further Aggrandizing promoted	Female Aggrandizing	49	6.20	.866	.124
	Male	54	6.26	.851	.116
increase in percentage of salary	Female Aggrandizing	49	22.5714	20.10286	2.87184
	Male Aggrandizing	54	20.0185	16.90204	2.30008

Combining the initial predictions, I also predict that social acceptance and competence will combine to elicit different promotion recommendations (the measure of influence) for high vs. low-status actors.

Prediction 5:

(a) *High-status actors who self-deprecate will gain social acceptance without sacrificing competence ratings or overall influence.*

(b) *Low-status actors who self-deprecate will gain social acceptance but sacrifice competence ratings and overall influence.*

Prediction 6:

(a) *High-status actors who self-aggrandize will sacrifice social acceptance without benefitting their competence or influence ratings.*

*(b) Low-status actors who self-aggrandize will sacrifice social acceptance but observe higher competence and overall influence ratings than low-status self-deprecating actors.*

#### 4.4 Additional Findings

I compared mean ratings of just the aggrandizing candidates and deprecating candidates. Aggrandizing candidates had a mean competence rating of 6.16 compared to deprecating candidates' mean score of 6.07. The difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.346$ ). Deprecating candidates were rated as significantly more likable than aggrandizing candidates with mean ratings of 6.07 and 5.41 respectively (two-tailed  $p=.000$ ). Deprecating and aggrandizing candidates received average "qualified" ratings of 2.11 and 1.92 respectively. This difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.223$ ).

Aggrandizing candidates were rated 5.76 on average on a scale of 1-7 while deprecating candidates had a mean score of 5.89 on social skills. The difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.328$ ). Participants gave aggrandizing candidates an average of 6.14 out of 7 when asked whether they would recommend them for senior manager while giving deprecating candidates an average score of 6.36. The difference was not significant although it was approaching significance (two-tailed  $p=.103$ ). The average score for aggrandizing candidates was 6.23 and 6.09 for deprecating candidates when participants responded to whether they thought they would be promoted further. However, the difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.274$ ).

Participants recommended an average salary increase of 21.13% for aggrandizing candidates and 23.34% for deprecating candidates. The difference was not significant.

Table 5: Aggrandizing, Deprecating

	1 = agg, 2 = dep	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How competent	aggrandizing	104	6.16	.765	.075
	deprecating	107	6.07	.743	.072
How likable	aggrandizing	104	5.41	1.282	.126
	deprecating	107	6.07	1.040	.100
How qualified	aggrandizing	104	1.92	.962	.094
	deprecating	107	2.11	1.269	.123
strong social skills?	aggrandizing	104	5.76	1.019	.100
	deprecating	107	5.89	.872	.084
recommend for senior manager?	aggrandizing	104	6.14	1.110	.109
	deprecating	107	6.36	.829	.080
how likely do you think this candidate is to be further promoted	aggrandizing	104	6.23	.850	.083
	deprecating	107	6.09	.967	.093
increase in percentage of salary	aggrandizing	104	21.1250	18.38936	1.80323
	deprecating	107	23.3364	17.75884	1.71681

#### 4.5 Participant Gender

There were 108 male participants and 103 female participants. Male participants gave candidates a mean competency rating of 6.05 which was not significantly different from the average competency rating female participants gave them of 6.18 (two-tailed  $p=.183$ ). Male participants gave candidates an average likability score of 5.7, not statistically different than the 5.79 score female participants gave candidates on average (two-tailed  $p=.620$ ). Male participants had an average qualified rating of 2.13 for candidates, not significantly different than the female participants' rating of 1.90 (two-tailed  $p=.143$ ). Male participants gave

an average social skill rating of 5.74, compared to female participants' average rating of 5.91. This difference was not significant (two-tailed  $p=.190$ ). Female participants were no more likely to recommend candidates for senior manager than male participants with mean scores of 6.25 and 6.26, respectively (two-tailed  $p=.960$ ). Female participants were slightly more likely to think candidates were likely to be further promoted in their job than male participants with mean scores of 6.26 and 6.06 respectively. These scores were not significantly different (two-tailed  $p=.115$ ) however the p-value is approaching significance. Male participants recommended a slightly higher percentage salary increase than female participants (22.58% and 21.89% respectively), but the difference was not significantly different (two-tailed  $p=.783$ ).

Table 6: Male, Female

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How competent	Male	108	6.05	.778	.075
	Female	103	6.18	.724	.071
How likable	Male	108	5.70	1.162	.112
	Female	103	5.79	1.258	.124
How qualified	Male	108	2.13	1.254	.121
	Female	103	1.90	.975	.096
strong social skills?	Male	108	5.74	.869	.084
	Female	103	5.91	1.020	.101
recommend for senior manager?	Male	108	6.26	.858	.083
	Female	103	6.25	1.100	.108
how likely do you think this candidate is to be further promoted	Male	108	6.06	.979	.094
	Female	103	6.26	.828	.082
increase in percentage of salary	Male	108	22.5833	15.82564	1.52282
	Female	103	21.8932	20.21837	1.99218



## Discussion

Results, generally, did not support my hypotheses. There were no differences in competency ratings, likability ratings, or rates of recommendation for promotion between men and women. Hypothesis 1 predicted that men compared to women will be evaluated as more competent, better liked, and more likely to be recommended for promotion, however, findings do not support that prediction.

Hypothesis 2 (a), that aggrandizing behavior will have a larger net positive effect on competency ratings of low-status than high-status actors was also not supported.

Aggrandizing behavior did not seem to make either men or women seem more competent to participants. Further, aggrandizing behavior did not seem to affect men or women's likability ratings differently. Therefore the study does not yield supporting evidence for hypothesis 2(b). While aggrandizing behavior did reduce likability ratings of both women and men significantly, there was no significance in degree between the two. In other words, aggrandizing behavior did not affect the likability ratings of women or men more severely. While deprecating behavior did reduce competence ratings of both women and men, the difference was not significant (either within or across genders), which does not support hypothesis 3(a). Findings show that deprecating behavior did not seem to interact with gender when affecting likability. While both deprecating men and women seemed more likable, results do not indicate a difference in degree, which fails to support hypothesis 3(b).

*Hypothesis 4: (a) High-status actors who self-deprecate will gain social acceptance without sacrificing competence ratings or overall influence.*

Results do suggest that high-status actors are rated as more likable without concurrently reducing their competence ratings, which does support hypothesis 4(a).

Participants rated female deprecators as more likable but they too did not appear to suffer a lack of perceived competence as a result, failing to support hypothesis 4(b).

*Hypothesis 5:* (a) High-status actors who self-aggrandize will sacrifice social acceptance without benefitting their competence or influence ratings.

Results support hypothesis 5 (a) in that male candidates who aggrandized were rated as less likable but still were rated as competent. Findings do not support hypothesis 5(b) because female candidates with aggrandizing cover letters were rated as less likable but they maintained their competence rating and had qualification ratings that went up.

There is not a significant difference between competency ratings of men and women, which does not support my first hypothesis, however if we view “qualified” as a related stand-in for competence, participants rated men as more qualified for the position than women to a degree approaching significance. However, male aggrandizers were rated as significantly more qualified than female deprecators.

There also is not a significant difference in likability ratings between women and men, so part two of my first hypothesis is also not supported. Again, almost no difference between whether participants think women or men are more likely to be recommended for promotion, failing to support the third part of my first hypothesis.

While support for my hypotheses was abysmal, there were some spurious findings. Both male and female aggrandizers were rated as less likable, and the difference was significant. Another finding that is not entirely surprising, is that male aggrandizers were rated as more qualified for the position than deprecating females. That difference was significant. While aggrandizing self-presentations did not give males enough of a competence boost to be rated as significantly more competent

than deprecating males, it was enough to have them rated significantly more competent than females. This provides some evidence that there may be some association between aggrandizing self-presentation strategy and the perception of competence.

There were also some findings that were approaching significance which may suggest some trends. My parameters for including those here were findings that would have been significant at the .06 level (one-tailed). Among those is the finding that female aggrandizers were rated less likely to be recommended for the position. This finding is interesting because it suggests that perhaps being disliked for women is more important than seeming competent (if we can assume that aggrandizing made them seem more competent). Or, perhaps being disliked for men is not that important when it comes to being recommended for a position. Also, males were rated as more qualified than females (.111 two-tailed). This suggests that gender does still operate as a status characteristic disadvantaging women in the workforce. A third surprising finding, is that in general, participants were more likely to recommend deprecators for promotion than aggrandizers. This may suggest that being liked is more important than seeming qualified when applying for a position. Results of ANOVA do not suggest an interaction-effect of self- presentation style and gender. Implications are that there may not be significant differences in how people respond to or interpret self-aggrandizing or deprecating behavior from women and men.

#### 4.6 Limitations of Study 1

There are a number of methodological limitations of Study 1. One potential limitation is that the methods fail to satisfy the scope conditions of Status Characteristics Theory. Status Characteristics Theory only holds in situations where a group is newly formed, task oriented, and collectively oriented. In this study, participants are evaluating promotion materials of a candidate. They are not working in a group with other people to complete a task. Another scope condition of Status Characteristics Theory is that success or failure is clearly defined. In this situation, an individual is asked to evaluate someone and make a promotion recommendation. There is no clear picture of success in this instance, indeed, the participant has no way of knowing if their recommendation will be heeded, and certainly not if it was a successful or correct recommendation, and again, they worked alone.

In addition to scope condition considerations, there is the issue of manipulating self-presentation style without manipulating demonstration of competence. The goal is to present identical evidence of competence, but to manipulate only the attributions (internal or external) of that evidence. However, the attributions of evidence of competence directly relates to the weight of the evidence, so there is in a sense, a built-in moderator of evidence which is the attribution itself. For example, if Sally and Jim are in separate work groups and they are both equally and remarkably successful, that would seem to be equal evidence of competence. However, if I attribute Sally's group's success to the whole group but Jim's group's success to Jim, that equal evidence is no longer equal because of the attributions made regarding it.

A third potential limitation of the methods is that participants are viewing an evaluation of someone, not someone's evaluation of their own accomplishments. This puts

participants one-person removed from the candidate they are providing feedback on. Evaluating someone else's evaluation may lead to diminished investment in the process, as though they are relying on someone else who has already done their job for them. Participants may be of the mind that if someone else has already evaluated this person, what do we need them for? Also, the evaluation relays information about candidates' attributions. This requires the participant to trust the evaluator is not being biased towards the promotion candidate.

Another potential limitation of Study 1 is that it is unclear whether findings (or non-findings) are or would be due to gender as a status characteristic or gender as a role with a different set of normative expectations. In other words, there is no way to tell from Study 1 data whether people had a negative reaction to aggrandizing women because they are low-status or because aggrandizing behavior goes against gender norms (or both).

In Study 2, I attempted to sidestep some of these pitfalls. In the second study, participants evaluated an applicant's cover letter and resume directly, taking out the middle-person. That way they were the immediate recipient of a candidate's presentation style, and had less distance from the person they were tasked with evaluating. I also included a race variable, which will hopefully shed some light on the different processes for race and gender as a status, as roles with accompanying normative expectations, and the intersection of the two.

## Chapter 5: Study 2

### 5.1 Hypotheses

Study 2 followed the same general format as Study 1 was is designed to test for consequences status and self-presentation style may have for hiring outcomes in the labor market for job applicants. Specifically, do gender and race elicit different responses when combined with the presentation style manipulations? Evidence shows that race continues to operate as a status characteristic in contemporary U.S. society disadvantaging minorities and advantaging whites. As previously noted, gender is a status characteristic but is also tied to larger cultural stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. Those stereotypes include the expectation that women be supportive while men are expected to be more independent.

Women in contemporary US society are expected to be nurturing, passive, and selfless compared to the more masculine characteristics like being assertive and competitive. Those expectations of what people should be like become normative and people are faced with consequences for violating those norms (Cialdini and Trost 1998). While race continues to operate as a status characteristic that benefits whites as people perceive them as more competent than non-whites, racial stereotypes differ from gender stereotypes in important ways (Rudman and Glick 2002, Bowles, Babcock, and Lei 2007). The implication may be that consequences for aggrandizing women seeking work may extend beyond those observed for other status-disadvantaged groups. I conducted an experiment in which participants rated a job applicant based on their application materials which included a cover letter and resume.

Applications varied by gender (male or female) and race (black or white) as well as self- presentation style (aggrandizing, deprecating, and neutral) and will be presented as

real. While a number of studies show that gender continues to operate as a status characteristic disadvantaging women, the few audit studies examining gender differences in hiring do not point in a conclusive direction. I predict the applicant's gender and race will affect participant ratings of competence and likability. I predict that female and minority applicants will receive less-favorable evaluations and will be recommended for the position less.

*Hypothesis 1:* Male candidates will be rated as (a) more likable, (b) more competent, and (c) participants will suggest the company hire them more often than female candidates.

*Hypothesis 2:* White candidates will be rated as (a) more likable, (b) more competent, and (c) participants will suggest the company hire them more often than minority candidates.

*Hypothesis 3:* Race and gender disadvantages will combine so that white male candidates are rated as (a) most likable, competent (b), and (c) participants suggest the company hire them more often than female minority candidates.

I also varied the self-presentation style of the applicants' cover letter. Cover letters either portray a neutral, deprecating, or aggrandizing presentation style.

Considering the divergent societal expectations for appropriate levels of humility and pride for women compared to men, I expect males (in the gender condition) and whites (in the race condition) to benefit most from deprecating presentation styles on likability ratings.

*Hypothesis 4:* White and male candidates in the deprecating condition will experience a larger positive increase on likability ratings than minority and female candidates.

Status research has shown that people possessing the devalued state of a status characteristic are seen as less competent relative to those with the valued state. As gender and race are status characteristics, employers are likely to perceive female and minority applicants as less competent than their male/white counterparts. Female and minority applicants employing a deprecating self-presentation style may be reinforcing the diminished expectation of competence. People expect men and whites to be more competent than women and minorities at most tasks. Because the expectation of competence is high for men and whites, a deprecating self-presentation style will likely be seen as more of a reflection of a humble character rather than low competence. I predict women and minority applicants will incur negative consequences of a deprecating presentation style on their competence ratings.

*Hypothesis 5:* Female and minority candidates will experience larger decrease on competence ratings than male and white candidates in the deprecating conditions.

Due to the backlash effect, women and minority candidates should experience a significant negative social reaction in aggrandizing conditions for making illegitimate status claims.

*Hypothesis 6:* Women and minorities will experience a larger decrease in likability ratings than men and whites in the aggrandizing conditions.

Because gender and race are both status and role, and aggrandizing self-presentation goes against gender norms and is an illegitimate status claim, minority candidates are likely to experience the strongest backlash to aggrandizing behavior. The intersectionality of race and gender may coincide with the least favorable ratings from participants for minority females. According to earlier work, gender and race should combine for an additive effect, where women of color should be most



disadvantaged in status hierarchies. *Hypothesis 7*: Female minority candidates in the aggrandizing condition will receive the lowest likability ratings.

It is unclear if being liked or seeming competent will have a stronger relationship with hiring, or whether that relationship will be different based on status.

In Study 1, there were not strong findings to suggest that aggrandizing behavior actually makes people appear more competent. It may be that aggrandizing presentations do lead to increased perceptions of competence, but that the manipulation was not a valid measure of aggrandizing behavior or perhaps the manipulation was simply too weak. The benefit of an aggrandizing self-presentation is that it draws attention to achievements, or facilitates claiming credit for them.

In Study 1, a third party was describing the demeanor of a promotion candidate as being either aggrandizing or deprecating. So, rather than a candidate championing their own accomplishments (the benefit of aggrandizing behavior) someone else simply described their style of interaction. This essentially would portray someone as self-promoting but without the actual benefit the self-promotion would afford. I hope to remedy this manipulation problem in study 2. In study 2, participants will read cover letters written by a job applicant rather than a description by a third party. In the aggrandizing cover letter, the candidate will take credit for many accomplishments of the group. In the deprecating cover letter, the candidate will pass the credit of those accomplishments onto the other members of the group.

## 5.2 Procedures

In order to test whether a potential relationship between status and presentation style leads to measurable outcomes in labor market hiring and promotion processes, I conducted an on-line experiment. Conducting an experiment in which participants rate application

materials should shed some light on how self-presentation and status- processes interact during hiring and highlight potential consequences in the labor market. This allows for the isolation of specific characteristics in order to assess their impact on potential hiring procedures.

Utilizing a web-based survey program, participants rated application materials by completing a questionnaire. I chose a marketing job for applications due to the likelihood that participants will have at least some level of familiarity with the occupation while occupational requirements are relatively less specific than perhaps others (data analyst, for example).

Similar to procedures outlined by Correll (2007) and Bertrand and Mullainathan (2003), participants were randomly assigned to view documents from a set of applicant materials consisting of a resume and cover letter. The materials were customized with an aggrandizing, neutral, or self-deprecating cover letter as well as a female, male, Caucasian or African American sounding name. I used names to manipulate race to reduce the salience of race in the minds of participants. If participants think they are going to be subject to judgment of how they rate a minority, they may behave differently (be less likely to be critical of a minority) due to social desirability. I pulled the names Tyrone and Latoya from Correll's 2007 study to represent the African American candidates, and Allison and Matt for the white candidates.

The last name of all applicants is Clark. Clark as a last name is roughly proportionally represented in the black and white population in the US with 78% of 'Clarks' being white and 18% being black (<http://names.mongabay.com/data/1000.html>). I will pre-test these using the same online service (Mechanical Turk) in order to verify the ratings are consistent.

Using a 2x2x3 factorial design with two gender categories (female and male), two race categories (black and white), and 3 types of presentation styles (aggrandizing, neutral, and deprecating) participants were randomly assigned to one of 12 candidate conditions: The goal was to have at least participants per condition with a total of 480 participants. The manipulations assigned to each condition were as follows:

Condition 1= Aggrandizing Black Female

Condition 2= Neutral Black Female

Condition 3= Deprecating Black Female

Condition 4 = Aggrandizing White Female

Condition 5 = Neutral White Female

Condition 6 = Deprecating White Female

Condition 7 = Aggrandizing Black Male

Condition 8 = Neutral Black Male

Condition 9 = Deprecating Black Male

Condition 10 = Aggrandizing White Male

Condition 11 = Neutral White Male

Condition 12 = Deprecating White Male

Participants were told that a company on the east coast is hiring an HR manager. In order to avoid potential pitfalls and biases that can be associated with simply in-house hiring procedures, they have decided to gather some fresh outside perspective from the general public to gain new insights about their applicants' perceived strengths and weaknesses. Participants were instructed that their feedback is to be combined with other reviews and used to inform the actual hiring decision.

### Study Materials

Participants viewed an introduction on the Mechanical Turk website explaining that a company is hiring for an HR representative and a description of the job they are seeking to fill. Please find job description at end of the document.

Upon clicking the designated link, the participants were taken to a separate site to view the application materials with another copy of the job description for their reference. The application materials consisted of two documents, a cover letter and a resume. They viewed a resume that varied race and gender accompanied by one of three corresponding cover letters tailored to the presentation styles. In each case, gender and race of applicant were randomly assigned. Participants then completed an assessment form (found at the end of this document) where they rated the applicant on aspects of competence, social dimensions, and hireability partially adapted from Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004<sup>1</sup>. Participants were then debriefed and told the true nature of the study. This concluded the participants' role in the study. Responses were collected and analyzed using Qualtrics.

### Participants

There were 636 participants total. All participants had access to the internet, a computer, and an Amazon Mechanical Turk account. Using Amazon Mechanical Turk allows for in some ways, a more representative sample than the traditional experimental model that typically largely relies on undergraduate students at large universities. Amazon Mechanical Turk allows for greater range of age, education, and geographic location.

Of the 636 participants, 37 self-identified as black or African American (5.8%). 46 (7.2%) identified as Asian or Asian American. There were 480 participants who identified as white or Caucasian (75%). Of the participants, 38 identified as Hispanic, Mexican, or Latino/a (6%). One person identified as English, 4 (.6%) people as Indian, 1 as Muslim, and the rest either “other” or indecipherable entries. There were 355 males (55.8%) and 281 females (44.2%). Participants ranged in age from 18-74 with the average age being around 32.5 years old. Their levels of education ranged from less than high-school to post graduate degrees. 7 participants have not finished high school (1.1%), 94 have a high school degree (14.8%), 180 have had some college (28.3%), 281 are college graduates (44.2%), and 74 have a post graduate degree (11.6%). Most participants responded that they are single/never married (330, 51.9%). 247 (38.8%) are currently married. 54 (8.5%) are divorced/separated, and there were five participants who responded that they are widowed (.8%).

There were 50 participants in Condition 1 (7.9% in the aggrandizing black female condition). 50 participants were in condition 2 (7.9% in the neutral black female condition). 60 participants were in condition 3 (9.4% in the deprecating black female condition). There were 58 people in condition 4 (9.1% in the aggrandizing white female condition). 48 people were in condition 5 (7.5% in the neutral white female condition).

There were 53 people in condition 6 (8.3% in the deprecating white female condition). 54 people were in condition 7 (8.5% in the aggrandizing black male condition). There were 55 people in condition 8 (8.6% in the neutral black male condition). 50 people were in condition 9 (7.9% in the deprecating black male condition). 50 people were in condition 10 (7.9% in the aggrandizing white male condition). There were 55 people in condition 11 (8.6% in the neutral white male condition). And finally there were 53 people in condition 12 (8.3% in the deprecating white male condition).

### 5.3 Results of Study 2

*Hypothesis 1:* Male candidates will be rated as (a) more likable, (b) more competent, and (c) participants will suggest the company hire them more often than female candidates.

Findings do not support to hypothesis 1a, b, or c. There were no differences in average ratings of likability, competence, or hiring recommendation rates between males and females. In fact, the scores along these dimensions and the other dependent variables were almost identical, except recommended salary with the average suggestion for males being about \$1,000 higher than the average suggestion for females. However again, the difference was not statistically significant.

#### DVs by Candidate Gender

Participants rated female candidates (holding race and self- presentation style constant) 5.61 on average and male candidates 5.60. Females were rated 5.08 and males 5.11 on average for likability. Females received an average score on whether they were qualified of 2.52 while males had a 2.48. Females were rated an average of 5.42 and males 5.47 on social skills. Female candidates had an average score of 5.38 and males 5.33 regarding whether participants would recommend them for the position. Females had an average of 5.47 and males 5.51 on whether participants thought they were likely to be further promoted. Participants suggested an average salary of \$82,066 for females and \$83,016 for males. Females had an average score of 1.18 and males 1.19 on whether participants thought the company should hire them. None of these differences were statistically significant.

Table 7: DVs by Candidate Gender

gender		competent	likable	qualified	social skills	recommend for position	be further promoted	salary	hire them?
female	Mean	5.61	5.08	2.52	5.42	5.38	5.47	82.0662	1.18
	N	317	317	317	317	317	317	317	317
	Std. Deviation	.903	1.247	1.163	1.144	1.349	1.151	11.96985	.387
male	Mean	5.60	5.11	2.48	5.47	5.33	5.51	83.0158	1.19
	N	318	318	318	318	318	318	317	318
	Std. Deviation	.923	1.206	1.120	1.190	1.381	1.212	12.63821	.389
Total	Mean	5.60	5.09	2.50	5.45	5.36	5.49	82.5410	1.18
	N	635	635	635	635	635	635	634	635
	Std. Deviation	.912	1.226	1.141	1.167	1.364	1.181	12.30802	.388

*Hypothesis 2:* White candidates will be rated as (a) more likable, (b) more competent, and (c) participants will suggest the company hire them more often than minority candidates.

Findings do not support to hypothesis 2a, b, or c. There were no differences in average ratings of likability, competence, or hiring recommendation rates between black and white candidates. Similar to the gender comparison, the scores along these dimensions and the other dependent variables were very close. Recommended salaries did differ slightly, with the average suggestion for black candidates being about \$100 higher than the average suggestion for white candidates. However again, the difference was not statistically significant.

Participants rated black candidates (holding gender and self-presentation style constant) 5.56 on average and white candidates 5.65. Black candidates were rated 5.14 and white candidates 5.05 on average for likability. Black candidates

received an average score on whether they were qualified of 2.54 while white candidates had a 2.47. Black candidates were rated an average of 5.47 and white candidates 5.42 on social skills. Black candidates had an average score of 5.37 and white candidates 5.35 regarding whether participants would recommend them for the position. Black candidates had an average of 5.41 and white candidates 5.57 on whether participants thought they were likely to be further promoted.

Participants suggested an average salary of \$82,638 for black candidates and \$82,527 for white candidates. Black candidates had an average score of and white candidates 1.17 on whether participants thought the company should hire them. None of these differences were statistically significant.

Table 8: DVs by Candidate Race

race		competent	likable	qualified	social skills	recommend for position	be further promoted	salary	hire them?
black	Mean	5.56	5.14	2.54	5.47	5.37	5.41	82.6375	1.19
	N	320	320	320	320	320	320	320	320
	Std. Deviation	.925	1.195	1.166	1.111	1.320	1.205	12.14773	.396
white	Mean	5.65	5.05	2.47	5.42	5.35	5.57	82.5270	1.17
	N	316	316	316	316	316	316	315	316
	Std. Deviation	.897	1.255	1.114	1.220	1.407	1.151	12.55745	.380
Total	Mean	5.60	5.10	2.50	5.44	5.36	5.49	82.5827	1.18
	N	636	636	636	636	636	636	635	636
	Std. Deviation	.912	1.225	1.140	1.166	1.363	1.181	12.34305	.388

*Hypothesis 3: Race and gender disadvantages will combine so that white male candidates*



are rated as (a) most likable, (b) competent, and (c) participants suggest the company hire them more often than female minority candidates.

Findings do not support hypothesis 3a, b, or c. There were not significant differences between likability, competence, whether participants thought the company should hire candidates between white male and black female candidates. Participants did rate white males on average as being more likely to be further promoted in their career than black females at a rate approaching significance (two-tailed  $p=.08$ ).

DVs by race and gender

When comparing scores in the dependent variable categories of white men and black women, there were no significant differences. One question where average rates did differ was the question asking whether participants expect the candidate to be further promoted. On this question, white male candidates had an average score of 5.59 and black female candidates had an average score of 5.35. This difference was approaching statistical significance (two-tailed  $p=.08$ ).

*Hypothesis 4:* White and male candidates in the deprecating condition will experience a larger positive increase on likability ratings than minority and female candidates.

Likability ratings across all four groups significantly decreased in the aggrandizing condition from both the deprecating or the neutral condition. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is not supported. The results do suggest that aggrandizing hurts social acceptance, but not that deprecating helps any group. It may be that is the case, that being deprecating or neutral does not lead to different consequences. It is more likely, however, that my deprecating and neutral manipulations were too subtle to be distinguished from each other.

## Likability by presentation style by race and gender

When comparing means between likability ratings by gender and presentation style, every group (aggrandizing white females 4.36, deprecating white females 5.58 (two-tailed  $p=.000$ ), aggrandizing black females 4.54, deprecating black females 4.54 (two-tailed  $p=.003$ ), aggrandizing white males 4.46, deprecating white males 5.30 (two-tailed  $p=.002$ ) and aggrandizing black males 4.74, deprecating black males 5.42 (two-tailed  $p=.007$ )) were rated significantly more likable in the deprecating conditions than the aggrandizing conditions. However, each group was also rated as significantly more likable in the neutral condition than the aggrandizing conditions, as well: black females (two-tailed  $p=.002$ , white females (two-tailed  $p=.000$ ), black males (two-tailed  $p=.001$ ), and white males (two-tailed  $p=.004$ ).

*Hypothesis 5:* Female and minority candidates will experience larger decrease on competence ratings than male and white candidates in the deprecating conditions.

Findings did not support hypothesis 5. Black female candidates' competence ratings did not seem to be based on whether or not they were aggrandizing, deprecating or neutral. Black male candidates were rated as most competent when they were neutral. White female candidates in the aggrandizing condition were rated as most competent, with the difference between aggrandizing and deprecating conditions approaching significance. White male candidates actually got a competence rating boost as well in the aggrandizing condition with the difference in rating between aggrandizing and deprecating conditions approaching significance.

## Competence and self-presentation style by condition

Competence scores were not significantly different for black females regardless of their presentation style. Black female candidates received competence scores of 5.42 (aggrandizing), 5.58 (neutral), and 5.57 (deprecating). Aggrandizing black female candidates actually received the lowest competency ratings compared to the other two groups, although differences were not significant. White females did seem to benefit a bit from an aggrandizing self-presentation with aggrandizing white females receiving an average competence rating of 5.84, neutral white female candidates received an average score of 5.63, and deprecating white female candidates an average rating of 5.55.

Although differences were not statistically significant, the difference between the mean ratings of aggrandizing white females and deprecating white females was approaching significance (two-tailed  $p=.078$ ). Black male candidates' competence ratings did differ depending on whether they were aggrandizing, deprecating, or neutral. Aggrandizing black males had an average rating of 5.43, significantly lower than neutral black males' average rating of 5.84 (two-tailed  $p=.030$ ). Neutral black male candidates were rated as significantly more competent than deprecating black male candidates who had an average rating of 5.46 (two-tailed  $p=.010$ ). Aggrandizing white male candidates had an average competence score of 5.80, neutral white males had an average score of 5.64, and deprecating white male candidates had an average score of 5.47. The difference between the average score for aggrandizing and deprecating white male candidates was approaching significance (two-tailed  $p=.067$ ).

*Hypothesis 6:* Women and minorities will experience a larger decrease in likability ratings than men and whites in the aggrandizing conditions.

Table 9: DVs by Race and Gender

**Report**

likable

condition	Mean	N		Std. Deviation
aggrandizing black female	4.54	50		1.474
neutral black female	5.30	50		.789
deprecating black female	5.32	60		1.081
aggrandizing white female	4.36	58		1.619
neutral white female	5.42	48		.919
deprecating white female	5.58	53		.745
aggrandizing black male	4.74	54		1.469
neutral black male	5.53	55		.813
deprecating black male	5.42	50		1.032
aggrandizing white male	4.46	50		1.528
neutral white male	5.20	55		.890
deprecating white male	5.33	52		1.024
Total	5.10	635		1.225

Participants answered the question “How likable do you think this candidate is, relative to other candidates.” Choices ranged from “not at all likable” (1) to “exceptionally likable” (7). Mean scores in order from highest to lowest (or rated as most likable to least likable) by condition are as follows: deprecating white female (5.58), neutral black male (5.53), neutral white female and deprecating black male (5.42), deprecating white male (5.33), deprecating black female (5.32), neutral black female (5.30), neutral white male (5.20), aggrandizing black male (4.74), aggrandizing black female (4.54), aggrandizing black female (4.54), and aggrandizing white male (4.46).

Participants rated aggrandizing black females as significantly less likable than deprecating or neutral black females (two-tailed  $p=.002$  for both). Participants rated aggrandizing white females as significantly less likable than neutral or deprecating white females (two-tailed  $p=.000$  for both groups). Participants rated aggrandizing black males as

significantly less likable than neutral or deprecating black males (two-tailed  $p=.001$  and  $.008$  respectively). Participants rated aggrandizing white males as significantly less likable than deprecating or neutral white males (two-tailed  $p=.003$  and  $.001$  respectively).

These results show with strength and clarity that aggrandizing behavior greatly reduces how likable someone seems. Findings suggest that when it comes to likability, aggrandizing hurts more than deprecating helps

*Hypothesis 7:* Female minority candidates in the aggrandizing condition will receive the lowest likability ratings.

Findings do not support hypothesis 7. White aggrandizing female candidates and then black male aggrandizing candidates were both rated as less likable than black female aggrandizing candidates (coming in third from last). It is unclear if being liked or seeming competent will have a stronger relationship with hiring, or whether that relationship will be different based on status. This question is distinct from the hiring question in a potentially important way. Participants are being asked to endorse a candidate when recommending them for the position, rather than just saying that they think an organization should hire someone. This essentially is the difference between hoping someone gets a job and personally saying that they will do a good job.

Measures of Influence: Hirability

Participants responded to the question “Do you think we should hire this candidate?” and checked either 1 (yes) or 2 (no). The higher the number, the less supportive participants were of the company hiring the candidate. Mean scores in order from least to greatest by condition are as follows (or most often suggested the company hire to the least often

suggested the company hire): neutral black male (1.07), neutral white female (1.10), neutral white male and deprecating white female (1.15), neutral black female and deprecating black female (1.18), deprecating white male (1.19), aggrandizing white female (1.21), aggrandizing white male (1.22), and finally aggrandizing black female and deprecating black male both with mean ratings of 1.26. There is a significant difference between a the mean rating of deprecating black males' hirability, and a neutral black males', with the respondents significantly less likely to say that they think the company should hire deprecating black male (two-tailed  $p=.009$ ). Participants responded "no" most often for aggrandizing black females and deprecating black males.

Table 10: Hiring Recommendations, Means by Condition

Hiring Recommendation: Means by condition			
condition	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
aggrandizing black female	1.26	50	.443
neutral black female	1.18	50	.388
deprecating black female	1.18	60	.390
aggrandizing white female	1.21	58	.409
neutral white female	1.10	48	.309
deprecating white female	1.15	53	.361
aggrandizing black male	1.22	54	.420
neutral black male	1.07	55	.262
deprecating black male	1.26	50	.443
aggrandizing white male	1.22	50	.418
neutral white male	1.15	55	.356
deprecating white male	1.19	52	.398
Total	1.18	635	.387

### Recommend for the position

Participants also answered a slightly different question. "How likely would you be to recommend hiring this candidate for the position?" with options ranging from "very likely" (7) to "very unlikely" (1). Mean scores in order from highest to lowest (or most

recommended for the position to least often recommended for the position) by condition are as follows: neutral black male (5.89), neutral white female (5.81), deprecating black female (5.52), neutral black female (5.50), neutral white male (5.44), deprecating white male (5.38), deprecating black male (5.36), aggrandizing white female (5.17), aggrandizing black male (4.98), aggrandizing white male (4.96), and aggrandizing black female (4.88). Aggrandizing black females were significantly less likely to be recommended for the position than neutral or deprecating black females (two-tailed  $p=.022$ ).

Participants were significantly more likely to recommend neutral white female candidates for the position than aggrandizing white females (two-tailed  $p=.012$ ). However, there was no significant difference for white males' recommendation for promotion depending on their self-presentation.

Table 11: Recommend for Position by Race and Gender

**Report**

recommend for position

condition	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
aggrandizing black female	4.88	50	1.637
neutral black female	5.50	50	1.111
deprecating black female	5.52	60	1.242
aggrandizing white female	5.17	58	1.428
neutral white female	5.81	48	1.085
deprecating white female	5.42	53	1.365
aggrandizing black male	4.98	54	1.434
neutral black male	5.89	55	.854
deprecating black male	5.36	50	1.336
aggrandizing white male	4.96	50	1.603
neutral white male	5.44	55	1.411
deprecating white male	5.38	52	1.402
Total	5.36	635	1.363

### Additional Results

While not explicitly stated in the predictions, one main expectation was that aggrandizing presentation styles would increase the perception of competence, in turn, leading to hirability or promotability. The only group that seemed to benefit from an explicit link of self-presentation style to perceived competence was black males, however, not in the direction I predicted. Neutral black males were rated as significantly more competent than deprecating or aggrandizing black males.

Participants evaluated the candidates on perceived competence. They were asked, “How competent do you think this candidate is relative to other candidates?” Choices ranged from “not at all competent” (1) to “exceptionally competent” (7). Mean scores in order from highest to lowest (or rated most competent to least competent) by condition are as follows: aggrandizing white female and neutral black male (5.84), aggrandizing white male (5.80), neutral white male (5.64), neutral white female (5.63), neutral black female (5.58), deprecating black female (5.57), deprecating white female (5.55), deprecating white male (5.50), deprecating black male (5.46), aggrandizing black male (5.43), and aggrandizing black female (5.42). Aggrandizing white females received ratings higher on competence than deprecating white females, at rates approaching significance (two-tailed  $p=.078$ ). Neutral black males received significantly higher competence scores than aggrandizing black males (two-tailed  $p=.028$ ) and deprecating black males (.009).

This suggests that deprecating black males may be undermining their own perceived competence and aggrandizing may lead to a backlash effect. While black and white females do not see as strong a pattern as black males, this lends some support to my hypothesis that low- status actors may confirm perceptions of incompetence with deprecating self-presentation strategies and also suffer a backlash effect from aggrandizing self-presentation



strategies.

Aggrandizing black females had the lowest competency ratings which suggests that the backlash effect might be more powerful than the deprecating self-presentation confirming low perceptions of competence.

Table 12: Competence by Race and Gender

condition	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
aggrandizing black female	5.42	50	1.032
neutral black female	5.58	50	.883
deprecating black female	5.57	60	.851
aggrandizing white female	5.84	58	.790
neutral white female	5.63	48	.890
deprecating white female	5.55	53	.972
aggrandizing black male	5.43	54	1.222
neutral black male	5.84	55	.601
deprecating black male	5.46	50	.838
aggrandizing white male	5.80	50	.700
neutral white male	5.64	55	.890
deprecating white male	5.50	52	1.057
Total	5.61	635	.910

### Social Skills

Participants rated candidates on their perception of social skills. To the question “Do you think this candidate has strong social skills?” participants responded with choices ranging from “not at all skilled” (1) to “exceptionally skilled” (7). Mean scores in order from highest to lowest (or rated as having the best social skills to the lowest ratings) by condition are as follows: neutral black male (5.85), deprecating white female (5.81), deprecating black male (5.70), deprecating white male and deprecating black female (5.60), neutral white female (5.58), neutral white male (5.53), neutral black female (5.52), aggrandizing black male (5.11), aggrandizing black female (5.02), aggrandizing white

female and aggrandizing white male (5.00).

Participants rated neutral black males as having the strongest social skills.

Table 13: Social Skills by Race and Gender

**Report**

social skills

condition	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
aggrandizing black female	5.02	50	1.378
neutral black female	5.52	50	.789
deprecating black female	5.60	60	.924
aggrandizing white female	5.00	58	1.499
neutral white female	5.58	48	.986
deprecating white female	5.81	53	.856
aggrandizing black male	5.11	54	1.550
neutral black male	5.85	55	.591
deprecating black male	5.70	50	.886
aggrandizing white male	5.00	50	1.565
neutral white male	5.53	55	1.016
deprecating white male	5.60	52	1.053
Total	5.44	635	1.167

### **Be further promoted**

In order to measure perceptions of potential, participants responded to “Compared to other candidates, how likely do you think this candidate is to be further promoted and advance in their career?” with choices ranging from “very unlikely” (1) to “very likely” (7). Mean scores in order from highest to lowest (or rated as most likely to advance to least likely to advance) by condition are as follows: deprecating white female (5.72), neutral white female (5.67), aggrandizing white male (5.66), neutral white male (5.64), neutral black male (5.58), neutral black female (5.52), deprecating white male (5.50), deprecating black male (5.40), aggrandizing black male (5.37), aggrandizing white female (5.36), deprecating black female (5.35), aggrandizing black female (5.18).

Participants rated aggrandizing black females as least likely to be further promoted and advance in their career, and deprecating white females as most likely to advance in their career, being promoted. Deprecating white females were significantly more likely than aggrandizing black females to be rated as likely to advance in their career (two-tailed  $p=.03$ ).

Table 14: Likely to Advance by Race, Gender, and Presentation Style

condition	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
aggrandizing black female	5.18	50	1.438
neutral black female	5.52	50	1.054
deprecating black female	5.35	60	1.176
aggrandizing white female	5.36	58	1.135
neutral white female	5.67	48	1.155
deprecating white female	5.72	53	.968
aggrandizing black male	5.37	54	1.350
neutral black male	5.58	55	1.100
deprecating black male	5.40	50	1.143
aggrandizing white male	5.66	50	1.136
neutral white male	5.64	55	1.238
deprecating white male	5.50	52	1.196
Total	5.49	635	1.180

Table 15: Means by Presentation Style

		<b>Group Statistics</b>			
	presentation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
hire them?	deprecating	216	1.20	.400	.027
	aggrandizing	212	1.23	.420	.029
salary	deprecating	215	81.2279	12.84593	.87609
	aggrandizing	212	82.5189	11.87872	.81583
be further promoted	deprecating	216	5.48	1.129	.077
	aggrandizing	212	5.39	1.270	.087
recommend for position	deprecating	216	5.42	1.327	.090
	aggrandizing	212	5.00	1.516	.104
social skills	deprecating	216	5.68	.928	.063
	aggrandizing	212	5.03	1.491	.102
qualified	deprecating	216	2.61	1.199	.082
	aggrandizing	212	2.42	1.105	.076
likable	deprecating	216	5.40	.983	.067
	aggrandizing	212	4.52	1.522	.105

Participants rated candidates in the deprecating condition (holding race and gender constant) as more likable (two-tailed  $p=.001$ ), more socially skilled (two-tailed  $p=.000$ ), and were more likely to recommend them for the position (two-tailed  $p=.003$ ).

### **Participant Gender**

Female participants suggested significantly lower salaries for applicants on average (two-tailed  $p=.047$ ). Female participants rated applicants significantly more likely to be promoted (two-tailed  $p=.001$ ). Female participants also rated candidates more qualified on average (two-tailed  $p=.014$ ). Female participants on average also rated candidates as more socially skilled (two-tailed  $p=.034$ ).

#### 5.4 Study 2 Discussions and Limitations

One main limitation is the use of names in Study 2 to manipulate race and gender. The names “Tyrone” and “Ebony” while traditionally African American names, are also confounded with class. Because race and class are so intertwined, it is not possible to be sure that participant ratings were not tied more or as much to their perception of the candidate’s class than their race. Further, “Tyrone” and “Ebony” might be perceived as a particularly low- class African American name, potentially confounding the findings even more. I used names instead of explicitly listing race as a way to reduce salience and social-desirability bias.

According to Status Characteristics Theory and Expectation States Theory, people act as though their biases are non-conscious. For instance, if asked why they elected a white male to be foreperson of a jury, they are much more likely to respond that he seemed most competent compared to the others, rather than saying that he is a white male. In contemporary U.S. society, it is a social taboo to be overtly racist so much so that some people likely go out of their way to show that they are not. If participants read a cover letter with African American checked on a box, they may be suspicious that the study was about race or answer differently than they would if race was not made explicitly salient. So, I decided it was best to leave a race category off of the candidates’ cover letters and resumes. One potential problem, however, is that I cannot be sure participants associated the names used to manipulate race with the intended race.



## Chapter 6: Conclusions

In this paper, I set out to determine whether aggrandizing and deprecating self-presentation styles lead to disparate influence outcomes for high and low status people, and if social acceptance (liking) mediated and/or moderated the relationship between self-presentation and influence. Drawing on Status Characteristics Theory, Role Congruity Theory, and research on behavioral effects on the status order, I made several initial overall predictions for the two studies. I predicted that *men and whites would be rated as more competent, likable, and ultimately experience more success during hiring and promotion processes than women and racial minorities*. Findings did not support these hypotheses in either study. There did not seem to be any difference in how likable women compared to men, or whites were rated compared to blacks. Similarly, there were not significant differences in average likability or promotion/hirability ratings between the groups.

Because low-status actors are assumed to be less competent than their higher-status counterparts, they have more room to gain perceived competence. Therefore, I predicted that *low-status actors would gain more perceived competence than high-status actors with an aggrandizing self-presentation strategy*. I found no evidence from Study 1 to support this prediction. However, there was actually support in the opposite direction for prediction 1. In Study 2, white male participants actually gained the most perceived competence from the aggrandizing presentation style. However, they were no more likely than in their neutral or deprecating condition to be recommended for the position or for participants to suggest that the company should hire them.

Because aggrandizing behavior is consistent with expectations of high-status but

not low-status actors, *low-status aggrandizers will pay a higher social cost than high-status aggrandizers*. Findings from Study one and two did not directly support this prediction, however there may be some indirect support from findings in Study 2. Directly, every race and gender group was rated as significantly less likable when aggrandizing (the social cost) which would be the direct measure. However, aggrandizing black females were significantly less likely to be recommended for the position than neutral or deprecating black females (two-tailed  $p=.022$ ). They were not rated as significantly more competent but were rated as significantly less likable. It may be reasonable to infer that the reason they are less-likely to be recommended for the position is because participants found them to be less-likable.

Because deprecating presentation is congruent with the existing expectations of competence others have of low-status actors but inconsistent with expectations they have of high-status actors' competence, I expected deprecating self-presentation styles to be taken as literal representations of competence for low-status actors and be attributed to personality type for high-status actors. If true, I should have found that *high-status actors' competence ratings were not damaged by a deprecating self-presentation style but that low- status actors' competence ratings would be*. Again, I did not have results supporting this hypothesis.

People generally do not like boastful self-promoting individuals. *I predicted that candidates in aggrandizing conditions would be rated as less likable than candidates in the deprecating conditions*. Here findings from both studies strongly supported this prediction. These were really the only findings from Study 1. In Study 2, the difference between the aggrandizing and deprecating and the aggrandizing and neutral condition



was significant for every group (black females, white females, black males, and white males). Results from Study 2 further suggest that deprecating self-presentation strategies do not necessarily lead to social acceptance, but that aggrandizing ones lead to social rejection, as neutral and self-deprecating candidates for the most part, seemed to elicit similar ratings (except for black males who were punished for both deprecating and aggrandizing presentation styles).

Because high-status deprecators are likely to likely to benefit socially to an extent that outweighs any potential loss in perceived competence, but that low-status actors likely would experience loss in perceived competence, I predicted that *both high and low-status deprecating candidates would gain social acceptance but that for low-status candidates it would come at a cost of perceived competence and in turn, social influence (measured by promotability/hirability ratings)*. These predictions were partially supported in Study 2. Black females in the aggrandizing condition were significantly less likely to be recommended for the position than in the neutral or deprecating condition.

I also predicted that high-status aggrandizers would lose social acceptance but gain competence ratings without benefitting their overall influence (or promotability/hirability). There was some evidence from Study 2 to support this prediction. White male aggrandizers, like every other group did lose social acceptance, however they gained perceptions of competence at a rate approaching statistical significance compared to the white-male deprecating condition (two-tailed  $p=.067$ ).

## 6.1 Overall Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to add clarity amidst the conflicting suggested strategies for achieving workplace success. Much of the advice suggests humility is the key to workplace success while others suggest that self-promotion is the best path. It is likely and findings suggest that no one strategy is best for all social categories. For white males, it did not seem to matter whether they were aggrandizing, deprecating, or neutral when it came to being recommended for a position where it did matter for black females, white females, and blackmales, but in different ways.

This research will advance work on status by potentially showing an additional way individuals can manage their own position in a status hierarchy. It may be of broad interest to social psychologists if results show different strategies to be effective for high and low-status group members. If likability and competence (vs. just competency expectations) are shown to both be tied to influence, it may be of particular interest to people studying management strategies.

Status Characteristics Theory and tradition of research has been very successful. A potential worthwhile direction or step to take may be to accommodate the additional role-related expectations of different social groups in addition to their position within the status hierarchy. However, even without acknowledging how role expectations alter status processes, it is worth recognizing that self-presentation strategies are not one-status-fits-all.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### **Study 1 Job Responsibilities**

#### MARKETING AND SALES MANAGER JOB POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES:

Accomplish marketing and sales human resource objectives by recruiting, selecting, orienting, training, assigning, scheduling, coaching, counseling, and disciplining employees; communicate job expectations; plan, monitor, appraise, and review job contributions; plan and review compensation actions; enforce policies and procedures.

Meet marketing and sales financial objectives by forecasting requirements; prepare an annual budget; schedule expenditures; analyze variances; initiate corrective actions.

Determine annual and gross-profit plans by forecasting and developing annual sales quotas for regions; project expected sales volume and profit for existing and new products; analyze trends and results; establish pricing strategies; recommend selling prices; monitor costs, competition, supply, and demand.

Accomplish marketing and sales objectives by planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating advertising, merchandising, and trade promotion programs; develop field sales action plans.

Identify marketing opportunities by identifying consumer requirements; defining market, competitor's share, and competitor's strengths and weaknesses; forecast projected business; establish targeted market share.

Improve product marketability and profitability by researching, identifying, and capitalizing on market opportunities; improve product packaging; coordinate new product development.

Update job knowledge by participating in educational opportunities; read professional publications; maintain personal networks; participate in professional organizations.

## Appendix 2

### **Study 1: Female Aggrandizing Condition**

Employee Performance Evaluation- Sharon Schwartz

---

Time at company: 4 years \_\_\_\_ Male  Female

Position & Department: Manager, Department of Sales and Marketing

Evaluation Period: 6/15/2014---6/15/2015

Evaluation Criteria (Exceptional:5 Good:4 Fair:3 Needs Improvement:2  
Unsatisfactory:1)

\_5\_ Attendance and Punctuality. Consider absences, times arriving late, time devoted to actual work, and promptness in reporting for assignments.

\_4\_ Dependability. Consider the employee's ability to follow instructions and complete tasks with minimum supervision.

\_4\_ Initiative. Consider the employee's self-reliance, self-directedness, the ability to develop new ideas, and the desire to achieve goals.

\_5\_ Judgment. Consider the employee's judgment used in decision-making: the ability to respond in a calm, logical, and rapid way under stress.

\_5\_ Cooperation. Consider effectiveness and efficiency in work relationships with supervisor, co-workers and others.

\_5\_ Knowledge of Job. Consider the employee's understanding of his/her full job duties.

\_4\_ Quality of Work. Consider accuracy, skill, and thoroughness in completing job assignments.

\_5\_ Time Management. Consider the employee's amount and promptness of work produced based on job requirements.

\_5\_ Responsibility. Consider the employee's sense of responsibility and willingness to carry out assigned duties.

\_4\_ Interpersonal Skills. Consider attitude, helpfulness, knowledge, and the overall communication skills toward customers and internal departments.

**SUMMARY COMMENT: Candidate consistently contributes valuable input in meetings and brain-storming sessions. She works diligently and gets results. She is vocal about her contributions to the many successful group projects she has been a part of and proud of her accomplishments. She is knowledgeable and often goes out of her way to show newer hires the ropes. She generated up to 12 percent of total brand revenues by developing three national sales offices. She is quick to highlight her abilities and attributes success to her intellect and drive. She also implements effective pricing strategies and employs efficient distribution channels.**

Appendix 3

### **Study 1 Male Aggrandizing Condition**

Employee Performance Evaluation- Michael Schwartz

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Time at company: 4 years  Male  Female

Position & Department: Manager, Department of Sales and Marketing Evaluation

Period: 6/15/2014---6/15/2015

Evaluation Criteria (Exceptional:5 Good:4 Fair:3 Needs Improvement:2  
Unsatisfactory:1)

5 Attendance and Punctuality. Consider absences, times arriving late, time devoted to actual work, and promptness in reporting for assignments.

4 Dependability. Consider the employee's ability to follow instructions and complete tasks with minimum supervision.

4 Initiative. Consider the employee's self-reliance, self-directedness, the ability to develop new ideas, and the desire to achieve goals.

5 Judgment. Consider the employee's judgment used in decision-making: the ability to respond in a calm, logical, and rapid way under stress.

\_5\_ Cooperation. Consider effectiveness and efficiency in work relationships with supervisor, co-workers and others.

\_5\_ Knowledge of Job. Consider the employee's understanding of his/her full job duties.

\_4\_ Quality of Work. Consider accuracy, skill, and thoroughness in completing job assignments.

\_5\_ Time Management. Consider the employee's amount and promptness of work produced based on job requirements.

\_5\_ Responsibility. Consider the employee's sense of responsibility and willingness to carry out assigned duties.

\_4\_ Interpersonal Skills. Consider attitude, helpfulness, knowledge, and the overall communication skills toward customers and internal departments.

**SUMMARY COMMENT: Candidate consistently contributes valuable input in meetings and brain-storming sessions. He works diligently and gets results. He is vocal about his contributions to the many successful group projects he has been a part of and proud of his accomplishments. He is knowledgeable and often goes out of his way to show newer hires the ropes. He generated up to 12 percent of total brand revenues by developing three national sales offices. He is quick to highlight his abilities and attributes success to his intellect and drive. He also implements effective pricing strategies and employs efficient distribution channels.**

Appendix 4

**Study 1: Female Deprecating Condition**

Employee Performance Evaluation- Sharon Schwartz -----  
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Time at company: 4 years \_\_\_ Male \_X\_ Female

Position & Department: Manager, Department of Sales and Marketing Evaluation

Period: 6/15/2014---6/15/2015

Evaluation Criteria: (Exceptional:5 Good:4 Fair:3 Needs Improvement:2 Unsatisfactory:1)

\_5\_\_ Attendance and Punctuality. Consider absences, times arriving late, time devoted to actual work, and promptness in reporting for assignments.

\_4\_\_ Dependability. Consider the employee's ability to follow instructions and complete tasks with minimum supervision.

\_4\_\_ Initiative. Consider the employee's self-reliance, self-directedness, the ability to develop new ideas, and the desire to achieve goals.

\_5\_\_ Judgment. Consider the employee's judgment used in decision-making: the ability to respond in a calm, logical, and rapid way under stress.

\_5\_\_ Cooperation. Consider effectiveness and efficiency in work relationships with supervisor, co-workers and others.

\_5\_\_ Knowledge of Job. Consider the employee's understanding of his/her full job duties.

\_4\_\_ Quality of Work. Consider accuracy, skill, and thoroughness in completing job assignments.

\_5\_\_ Time Management. Consider the employee's amount and promptness of work produced based on job requirements.

\_5\_\_ Responsibility. Consider the employee's sense of responsibility and willingness to carry out assigned duties.

\_4\_\_ Interpersonal Skills. Consider attitude, helpfulness, knowledge, and the overall communication skills toward customers and internal departments.

**SUMMARY COMMENT: Candidate is innovative and makes valuable contributions to strategic marketing plans. Her teams consistently produce very successful marketing campaigns, however she rarely accepts credit for the team's success. She consistently meets deadlines, producing quality work. She makes a point to mentor junior colleagues. She captured a 28% expansion in customer base since 2009 during a period of overall decline in the industry. She says the expansion strategy worked partly because her team was so great at implementing it and partly because she got lucky. She also demonstrates ability to identify target markets before designing a marketing campaign increasing clients.**

Appendix 5

**Study 1: Male Deprecating Condition**

Employee Performance Evaluation- Michael Schwartz -----  
-----

Time at company: 4 years  Male  Female

Position & Department: Manager, Department of Sales and Marketing Evaluation

Period: 6/15/2014---6/15/2015

Evaluation Criteria: (Exceptional:5 Good:4 Fair:3 Needs Improvement:2  
Unsatisfactory:1)

\_5\_ Attendance and Punctuality. Consider absences, times arriving late, time devoted to actual work, and promptness in reporting for assignments.

\_4\_ Dependability. Consider the employee's ability to follow instructions and complete tasks with minimum supervision.

\_4\_ Initiative. Consider the employee's self-reliance, self-directedness, the ability to develop new ideas, and the desire to achieve goals.

\_5\_ Judgment. Consider the employee's judgment used in decision-making: the ability to respond in a calm, logical, and rapid way under stress.

\_5\_ Cooperation. Consider effectiveness and efficiency in work relationships with supervisor, co-workers and others.

\_5\_ Knowledge of Job. Consider the employee's understanding of his/her full job duties.

\_4\_ Quality of Work. Consider accuracy, skill, and thoroughness in completing job assignments.

\_5\_ Time Management. Consider the employee's amount and promptness of work produced based on job requirements.

\_5\_ Responsibility. Consider the employee's sense of responsibility and willingness to carry out assigned duties.

Appendix 6

### **Study 1 Debriefing**

Thank you for completing this survey. We explained that we are from the Human Resources Department of a large company. In fact, you completed the survey as part of a social psychology study organized by a Sociology PhD student at the University of Maryland. The



company and job finalist mentioned were fictitious. This study involves a web-based experiment designed to examine individuals' decision making processes regarding hiring recommendations and promotion decisions. The study is conducted by Amy Baxter, a PhD student at The University of Maryland. All of your responses will be treated as confidential. Nobody, even the researcher, will be able to link the answers you provided to your name. Also, researchers will only analyze the data in aggregate form for publication purposes. As instructions noted, you will receive compensation of \$1.00 for completing the task. Our hope is that your participation in the study will contribute to research on how people make decisions about job applicants and promotions. We would appreciate it if you would not share any information regarding the study with anyone else who might complete it. You may want to print a copy of this debriefing page for your records. If you have questions and concerns about this study or your rights, or if you wish to lodge a complaint, please contact the principal investigator, Amy Baxter, at (330) 361-9177; Dr. Jeff Lucas, Professor and Director of Research of the University of Maryland Department of Sociology, at (301) 405-6435; or the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board, at (301) 405-4212. Thank you again for completing the survey!

## Appendix 7

### **Study 2: List of Job Responsibilities**

#### MARKETING AND SALES MANAGER JOB POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES:

Accomplish marketing and sales human resource objectives by recruiting, selecting, orienting, training, assigning, scheduling, coaching, counseling, and disciplining employees; communicate job expectations; plan, monitor, appraise, and review job contributions; plan and review compensation actions; enforce policies and procedures.

Meet marketing and sales financial objectives by forecasting requirements; prepare an annual budget; schedule expenditures; analyze variances; initiate corrective actions.

Determine annual and gross-profit plans by forecasting and developing annual sales quotas for regions; project expected sales volume and profit for existing and new products; analyze trends and results; establish pricing strategies; recommend selling prices; monitor costs, competition, supply, and demand.

Accomplish marketing and sales objectives by planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating advertising, merchandising, and trade promotion programs; develop field sales action plans.

Identify marketing opportunities by identifying consumer requirements; defining market, competitor's share, and competitor's strengths and weaknesses; forecast projected business; establish targeted market share.

Improve product marketability and profitability by researching, identifying, and capitalizing on market opportunities; improve product packaging; coordinate new product development.

Update job knowledge by participating in educational opportunities; read professional publications; maintain personal networks; participate in professional organizations.

## Appendix 8

### **Study 2: Aggrandizing Cover Letter**

I am extremely interested in the marketing executive position for BillShrink.com because of my passion to be a part of an exciting startup. My marketing acumen and expertise draw from a broad range of experience successfully analyzing market dynamics and translating them into effective marketing strategies.

My role as a member of a successful six-person management team at ProQuest was invaluable in launching XanEdu and building it as the market leader. My group was lucky to have me on their team as we were successful thanks to my strategic direction. My market research and analysis provided the foundation for our development and penetration of markets through targeted initiatives. My targeted sales strategy and compelling and pertinent sales tools were crucial to our success. I managed public relations, direct and e-direct marketing/promotions, advertising, online marketing, and event planning to build the XanEdu brand and drive sales. I developed strong e-marketing skills. In addition to managing external and internal creative services, I wrote and designed collateral, including award nominations, with our product line named as a finalist for the prestigious Codie Awards.

I also managed customer service and created the customer sales call center, ensuring staff used best-in-practice service, gaining 300% more revenue. Managing both marketing and customer service required my astute responses to critical incidents and as a result, I frequently transformed problems into opportunities.

My impressive resume illustrating my strategic orientation is attached. I welcome the opportunity to expand on how I can build your brand and drive loyal users to BillShrink.com.

## Appendix 9

### **Study 2: Neutral Cover Letter**

I am extremely interested in the marketing executive position for BillShrink.com because of my passion to be a part of an exciting startup that offers unique services for consumers. My marketing expertise draws from a broad range of experience where I have developed skill

at analyzing market dynamics and translating them into effective marketing strategies.

My role as a member of a six-person management team at ProQuest was instrumental in launching XanEdu and building it as the market leader. Our success speaks to my ability to provide strategic direction. Market research and analysis provided the foundation for developing and penetrating markets through targeted initiatives. Key to our success was the targeted sales strategy and compelling and pertinent sales tools. I managed public relations, direct and e-direct marketing/promotions, advertising, online marketing, and event planning to build the XanEdu brand and drive sales. Since an important component of our product line was online and utilized e-commerce as one of its channels, I developed strong e-marketing skills. In addition to managing external and internal creative services, I wrote and designed collateral, with our product line named as a finalist for a prestigious Codie Awards.

I also managed customer service and created the customer care sales call center, helping staff ensure best-in-practice service which lead to 300% more revenue. Managing both marketing and customer service required astute responses to critical incidents and often resulted in transforming problems into opportunities.

My resume illustrating my strategic orientation is attached, and I welcome the opportunity to expand on how I can build your brand and drive loyal users to BillShrink.com.

Appendix 10

### **Study 2: Deprecating Cover Letter**

I am extremely interested in the marketing executive position for BillShrink.com because it is an exciting startup that offers unique services for consumers. My marketing experience has afforded me the opportunity to analyze market dynamics and translate them into effective marketing strategies.

I helped a six-person management team at ProQuest launch XanEdu, which became the market leader. Our team's success was due to my teammates' strategic direction and ability to offer customer insight. Our team's market research and analysis provided the foundation for developing and penetrating markets through targeted marketing initiatives. We provided targeted sales strategy and compelling and pertinent sales tools. Alongside others, I helped manage public relations, direct and e-direct marketing/promotions, advertising, online marketing, and event planning to build the XanEdu brand and drive sales. I developed some e-marketing skills thanks to the on-line component of our product line. In addition to managing external and internal creative services, I was lucky to get to write and design collateral.

I managed customer service and created the customer care sales call center where the helpful staff ensured best-in-practice service, earning 300% more revenue. Managing both marketing and customer service meant responding to critical incidents and fortunately, we often transformed problems into opportunities.

My resume illustrating my strategic orientation is attached, and I welcome the opportunity

to expand on how I can help build your brand and drive loyal users to BillShrink.com.

Appendix 11

## **Study 2: Applicant Resumes**

### **Ebony Clark, Allison Clark, Tyrone Clark, Matthew Clark**

132 Highview Terrace Bethesda, MD 21333 | XXX-854- 5515 |  
XXXXXXXXXX@gmail.com

#### **Sales and Marketing Specialist**

Positioned to draw on record of achievement and success to deliver exceptional marketing strategy results that maximize management and customer service strengths in capital markets arena

#### **Work Experience**

Proquest

*Senior Account Manager*

*July 2009-present*

Launched new products and built brands within target markets

Spearheaded innovative ways to leverage e-commerce

channels Developed brand-loyalty through market research

and analysis Managed and counseled customer service staff

Managed operations including forecasting, inventory control, purchasing, and quality insurance

Managed talent and performance

#### **Education**

Kellogg School of Business, Northwestern University Computer

Skills

- Windows, Microsoft Word, WordPerfect 10, Lotus 1-2-3, Excel, PowerPoint, PageMaker, Netscape Navigator, Internet Explorer
- References available upon request

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