

2006

# A comparison of dominance and affiliation ratings based on emotional state, sex, and status

Jennifer Bernardi

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

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A COMPARISON OF DOMINANCE AND AFFILIATION RATINGS BASED ON  
EMOTIONAL STATE, SEX, AND STATUS

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by  
Jennifer Bernardi  
B.A., Sam Houston State University, 2004  
May 2006

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank everyone who helped me throughout this process, especially those who helped with the completion of this document and my coursework.

First, I would like to thank the members of my committee- Dr. Loretta Pecchioni, Dr. James Honeycutt, and Dr. Renee Edwards. You have helped me through each stage of revision and throughout the courses I have taken with each of you. Thanks to you the exams were relatively painless. For Dr. Pecchioni, my adviser, I could not have done this without you. You helped through each and every moment of panic that came with this process, in spite of my tendency to obsess over details. You were wonderful.

Second, I would like to thank those who have been with me throughout this stage of my life. To my family, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks for your understanding, patience, and caring. Your guidance and continued optimism made everything worthwhile. For my friends, those I met during this process and those who have been with me through different stages of my life, thank you for being there.

Finally, for all of those within the department, thank you for a wonderful experience. You made these two years enjoyable and memorable. A special thanks to Dr. Lyman Hunt who helped me through my first year of graduate school. I owe you a lot.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Perceptions of interpersonal dominance and affiliation have been extensively examined throughout past research. In the current study, the purpose was to fill in the some of the gaps of existing research well, specifically the gap created by current confusion in the literature regarding the effects of sex, status, and emotional display on ratings of dominance and affiliation. Also, interactions between the primary variables of interest (sex, status, and emotional display) were observed. Results revealed significant relationships within several of the dimensions addressed, specifically between emotional display and ratings of dominance and affiliation such that individuals displaying anger were viewed as more dominant than those displaying happiness whereas those displaying happiness were viewed as more affiliative than those displaying anger. Sex, both of the participant and of the source, affected ratings of affiliation and dominance such that women were viewed as more affiliative than men but men were viewed as more dominant than women. Results also revealed significant interactions such that overall ratings were mediated by the interactions between variables as well as by single variables. Also, the findings revealed a negative correlation between ratings of dominance and ratings of affiliation.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

#### 1.1 Overview

In every culture, emotional messages dealing with interpersonal traits are communicated through faces and behaviors of the members. Two of the most pervasive traits that are manifested in the nonverbal behaviors of humans are dominance and affiliation (Barbatsis, Wong, & Herek, 1983; Keating, 1985; Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003). Humans, much like other primates, incorporate nonverbal behaviors associated with social dominance and appeasement through interactions with others (Keating, 1985; Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003). These messages, while negotiated through interaction, are evident in diverse aspects of society, including interactions among members of different status groups and in media portrayals. For example, Barbatsis et al. (1983) found that “dominance asserting messages accounted for 54 percent of the messages in prime time drama, 44 percent in soap operas, and 49 percent in cartoons” (p. 151). Dominance is a pervasive construct in our society.

Wish, Deutsch, and Kaplan (1976) identified four dimensions which characterize all interpersonal relationships: equal versus unequal, evaluative, intense versus superficial, and socioemotional and informal versus task oriented and formal. These dimensions identify the current state of the relationship, dealing primarily with power differential, intensity, affect, and functions of the relationship. In 1984, Burgoon and Hale studied the ways in which the traits of relational partners are defined. They found that relational communication occurs primarily along two dimensions: dominance and affiliation (Burgoon & Hale, 1987). In the current study, the traits of dominance and affiliation were of key interest. While dominance deals with a predisposition to influence, affiliation deals with levels of warmth and friendliness (Knutson,



1996). According to Edwards (2000), dominance and affiliation are not conceptual opposites but rather are separate concepts that may both be present in a given situation. Knutson (1996) suggested that “if emotional expressions carry interpersonal information, then different expressions should carry different messages concerning both dominance and affiliation” (p. 166). According to ecological theorists, when evaluating traits, individuals use a gestalt judgment based on an overriding trait as the basis for evaluations (McArthur & Baron, 1983). For example, if you make a gestalt judgment of an individual being kind, you might also expect that person to be nurturing or understanding.

Algoe, Buswell, and DeLameter (2000) related dominance to being self-assured, self-confident, or assertive; submission to being timid, unauthoritative, shy, or unaggressive; affiliation to being gentle, tender, agreeable, or sympathetic; and coldheartedness to being cold, unsympathetic, warmthless, or hardhearted (dominance and submission being two ends of a scale and affiliation and coldheartedness being two ends of a scale). Although dominance is such a central aspect of society, the research concerning the topic found contradictory results. The aim of this study was to evaluate some of the means for assessing dominance and affiliation as well as to clarify conflicting areas in previous research, especially those dealing with the effects of biological sex, emotional displays, and actual status on views of dominance and affiliation. Also, as dominance and affiliation are often addressed together within the existing literature, this study is interested in the relationship between the concepts.

For some researchers, dominance is portrayed as a negative attribute. Keating (1986), for example, used the phrases “tells others what to do,” “looks tougher and fights about [the issue] the hardest,” and “looks like they are going to fight the most” in a study to determine which targets observers rated as most dominant. Because of this negative evaluation, researchers often

contend with the social desirability of labeling oneself or others as dominant. Instead of negatively labeling dominance through traits associated with bullying or aggression, Ellyson and Dovidio (1985) defined dominance as “a desire and a predisposition to attempt to influence others” (p. 6). This definition, unlike those used by other researchers, portrays dominance as a personality trait, much like extroversion, that predisposes people to behave in certain ways.

Another viewpoint of dominance is that it is interactional. “Interpersonal dominance is an interaction variable that can only be studied within the context of a dyad or group and can only exist in relation to the responses of another person” (Burgoon, Johnson, & Koch, 1998, p. 331). Dominance is a means for exertion of power and influence, but the dominance of one person is dependent on the submission of another (Burgoon et al., 1998; Harper, 1985). Because of this characteristic, a person’s exhibition of dominance occurs in response to a given situation (e.g., a child may be dominant at the playground but is submissive at home). Dominance, therefore, is dynamic.

## **1.2 Statement of Purpose**

This study will contribute to the existing research on dominance and affiliation by examining the influence of the variables typically associated with both traits. Often within the literature, researchers look for cues used by participants to create trait impressions of a given target. Although the different factors that influence trait formation have been looked at individually, in reality, people would be able to perceive several of the factors at one time. The current study addresses the impact of combining different variables to the impressions of dominance and affiliation. Specifically, status, biological sex, and emotional display are often examined within the literature regarding their effects on ratings of dominance and affiliation. The current study will examine how the traits interact to affect the overall perceptions of a target.

Also, the current study aims to clarify some of the areas of confusion within the literature regarding the effects of biological sex and status on ratings of dominance and affiliation.

### **1.3 Organization of the Thesis**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the concepts of dominance and affiliation, states the purpose of the study, and provides an organizational structure for the rest of the thesis. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on dominance, affiliation, status, and biological sex.

Following the review of literature is the rationale section, which provides the basis for the research questions and hypotheses addressed in the current study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the current study to address the different indicators of dominance and affiliation. Chapter 4 provides the results of the statistical analysis employed to address the research questions and hypotheses. Finally, Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the results, limitations to the current study and directions for future research, and conclusions that can be drawn from the current study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Indicators of Dominance and Affiliation

As discussed earlier, dominance is often researched through the theoretical lens that portrays those who are dominant individuals as being overpowering or aggressive. When relating the traits of dominance and affiliation, this negative viewpoint casts dominance as a trait that is opposed to affiliation, a trait that is related to feelings of warmth and friendliness. Wiggins, Trapnell, and Phillips (1988; as cited by Knuston, 1996) proposed a different model of the two constructs. According to their interpersonal circumplex, dominance and affiliation are two intersecting axes of personality. Individuals who are both high in affiliation and high in dominance, for example, are classified as gregarious or extroverted. This matrix allows people to be dominant without sacrificing affiliative aspects of personality. Because the two constructs intersect, it is necessary to look at the relationship between the two. Richmond and Martin (1998) developed the constructs of sociocommunicative style (SCS) and sociocommunicative orientation (SCO) to address the dimensions of assertiveness, responsiveness, and flexibility. Assertiveness and responsiveness are “presumed to represent the core elements in style” whereas the dimension of flexibility addresses how flexible an individual is in adapting communication style to fit different contextual constraints (p. 134). These dimensions, similar to those proposed by Burgoon and Hale (1984) and Wiggins et al (1988; as cited by Knutson, 1996), both address the concept of communication style as fitting basically along the dimensions of dominance and affiliation.

Dominance and affiliation are considered important aspects of social interactions because the accurate reading of both traits is linked to social success. According to Miller (1980), the

“ability to recognize and interpret stylistic cues constitutes an important dimension of social effectiveness” (p. 121). The ability to decode the displays of others is linked to social success, understanding, and relational development (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000; Miller, 1980; Weisfeld & Linkey, 1985). Knutson (1996) stated that emotional expression gives the observer cues about the emotional state of the target as well as conveying information about the target’s interpersonal traits (see also Hess et al., 2000). Because the ability to decode displays of nonverbal behaviors such as dominance and affiliation relates to social success in other areas, researchers seek to determine ways in which those traits are displayed.

The nonverbal behaviors dealing with emotional expressiveness direct the impressions others form of an individual’s personality (Montepare & Dobish, 2003). Montepare and Dobish (2003) found that the link between emotional expressiveness and trait impressions is so strong observers will often impose an emotional state and the accompanying traits on faces that are displaying neutral affect. Henley (1975) pointed out the importance of micropolitics, the trivial gestures or mannerisms that are used for social control, stating, “Nonverbal communication isn’t taught... This doesn’t mean everybody doesn’t *know* that looks and postures mean something, perhaps everything, especially in emotionally-charged interaction” (p. 185-186). Nonverbal decoding is a skill that is taught at a young age and is seen as highly valuable within society. Individuals displaying high levels of expressiveness are viewed as more socially attractive (DePaulo, 1992). Planalp (1999) pointed out that, with regards to emotional expressiveness, the appropriate level of expressiveness is determined by the cultural norms regarding expressiveness. Within a culture, though, members of the culture are aware of and respond to the rules regarding appropriate emotional expression.

In interactions, individuals often observe others in order to determine states of action readiness, or the intentions of others as displayed by behavioral reactions to the surrounding environment (Hess, Blairy, & Kleck, 2000). For example, Borkenau and Liebler (1995) found that people are fairly accurate at judging traits such as extroversion and intelligence from facial and vocal cues. Knutson (1996) found that people use facial expressions to form a general impression of others that is used to judge both immediate behaviors and personality traits. Dominance, like extroversion, is also displayed through nonverbal behaviors. Weisfeld and Linkey (1985) argued that the purpose of dominance displays in humans, much like those in primates, is to claim social status and intimidate others. Subtle and overt nonverbal behaviors that are used to convey dominance are key in understanding the processes through which dominance is socially constructed in an interaction or a relationship (Carney et al., 2005). The dominance-submission relationship is present in all interpersonal relationships and is the basis of social organization (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000). The ability to decode nonverbal displays of dominance is pivotal in understanding interpersonal interactions.

## **2.2 Emotional Display**

The traits of dominance and affiliation are associated with specific emotions (Knutson, 1996). The basic emotions researchers have examined in relation to displays of dominance and affiliation are happiness, anger, fear, disgust, and sadness (Knutson, 1996; Montepare & Dobish, 2003). These emotions are consistently identified by participants and used by researchers to determine levels of affiliation and dominance, but the research regarding which emotions are associated with which degrees of either affiliation or dominance is conflicting.

According to Knutson (1996) and Montepare and Dobish (2003), happiness is associated with higher levels of dominance and higher levels of affiliation. Even when not intentionally

posed to display a certain emotion, observers rate targets with happier-looking affect as high in dominance and high in affiliation (Montepare & Dobish, 2003). The relation of happiness to increases in dominance and affiliation is not supported in other research, though. Carney et al. (2005) found that impressions of dominance are unrelated to the degree of happiness expressed, a finding that corresponds with Keating (1985), who found that smiling is related to affiliation but not to dominance. Although researchers have argued for the link between happiness and dominance, there is conflicting research arguing for the link between happiness and submission. Consistently, though, researchers have upheld the link between affiliation and happiness (Henley, 1975; Keating, 1985; Knutson, 1996; Montepare & Dobish, 2003).

Two emotions commonly linked to ratings of dominance and affiliation are fear and sadness. Algoe, Buswell, and DeLamater (2000) and Keating (1996) found that fearful or sad expressions are rated as low in both dominance and affiliation. Other research, though, suggests that for displays of either fear or sadness, there are significantly lower levels of dominance, but levels of affiliation are relatively unaffected (Montepare & Dobish, 2003). Algoe et al. (2000) found that when compared to expressions of anger or disgust, fearful expressions are rated as significantly more affiliative. Neutral faces that appear sadder are rated as low in dominance but not low in affiliation, while neutral faces that appear more fearful are rated as low in affiliation but not low in dominance (Montepare & Dobish, 2003). While much of the research on dominance and affiliation groups sadness and fear together and has found similar results for ratings of dominance and affiliation, some research suggests that the two result in different perceptions of the target.

Anger and disgust are the final two emotions most often tied to research on dominance and affiliation. Unlike the emotions previously discussed, the research on anger and disgust has

consistently found that targets displaying either emotion are rated as high in dominance and low in affiliation (Algoe et al., 2000; Knutson, 1996; Montepare & Dobish, 2003). According to Keating (1985), dominance is associated with lowered or frowned brows, an expression that is related to anger. These results are upheld in studies using neutral faces that appeared angry (Montepare & Dobish, 2003). Participants rate these targets as being more dominant but less affiliative.

The face's degree of emotionality, or how closely it corresponds with recognized emotional expressions, partially determines how much dominance or affiliation it conveys (Knutson, 1996). Hess et al. (2000) found that the amount of a trait attributed to a given emotion is dependent on the level of emotion displayed. Affiliative ratings differ between neutral and weak expressions but not between weak and strong expressions while dominance ratings differed between strong and weak but not between weak and neutral. "Put another way, whereas a slight smile is a sign of affiliation, only a strong frown signals dominance" (Hess et al., 2000, p. 282). Although the emotion is tied to the impressions formed by observers, the degree of the emotion influences the associated traits.

According to Knutson (1996), facial configurations influence inferences of dominance and affiliation. One of the primary facial features used in perceptions of dominance and affiliation is smiling. The mouth, especially the smile, conveys affiliation (Keating, 1985; Keating & Bai, 1986; Knutson, 1996). The effects of smiling on ratings of dominance, though, are conflicting. Keating et al. (1981) and Keating and Bai (1986) found that nonsmiling is associated with dominance whereas Knutson (1996) found smiling to be associated with dominance. Knutson (1996) argued that because the act of expressing acknowledges a desire to interact, any expression will carry some degree of affiliation.



Dominance and affiliation are also conveyed by nonverbal behaviors not associated with facial expression. For example, Burgoon and LePoire (1999) found that dominance is associated with high immediacy, expressivity, and relaxation. Touching behaviors influence perceptions of dominance and affiliation (Burgoon, 1991). Touches to the arm, face, shoulder, or waist or the absence of touching is related to dominance. Participants observed holding hands are rated least dominant. Face touching and handholding are related to affiliation. Participants who interact without touching are rated least affiliative. Specific gestures are related to dominance or submission (Henley, 1975). Staring, pointing, or touching are viewed as dominant while lowering or averting the eyes, stopping action or speech, or cuddling to the touch are viewed as submissive. Emotions dealing with inferiority or superiority, submissive or dominant emotions, are also associated with head angle (Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003).

Emotions have been linked to expressions of dominance and affiliation, regardless of the direction of the relationships or the contradictions in previous research. The research could possibly contradict due to depictions of the two concepts as exclusive such that the studies that found affiliative behaviors such as smiling to be inversely related to portrayals of dominance asked the questions in such a way as to frame dominant individuals as those who are overbearing or controlling instead of authoritative (see Keating et al., 1981, and Keating and Bai, 1986, as opposed to Knutson, 1996). Overwhelmingly, the research has shown that the emotional expressiveness of individuals is one of the main factors used by observers to rate targets' dominance and affiliation. This study aimed to clarify the relation of specific emotions to ratings of dominance and affiliation when viewed through the framework proposed by Knutson (1996).

### **2.3 Status and Sex**

The social context in which an interaction occurs contains rules for expected emotions and traits (Hess et al., 2000). Even in situations in which minimal contextual information is presented, raters will use stereotypes based on social group membership of the target in order to form judgments. Because members of different groups decode emotions differently, the membership of a target affects the efficacy of emotional judgments as well as emotional communication between groups. Research dealing with dominance and affiliation typically divides individuals on the basis of two social categories, status and gender.

Status, or the actual rank of an individual, influences judgments of individuals' affiliation and dominance, as evidenced through effects of status on perceptions of nonverbal behaviors. Carney et al. (2005) found that high-status individuals are believed to pay less attention to their partners, have higher levels of touch, display little regard for proxemic zones, have more direct gaze, express less facial fear and sadness, engage in less self-touch, use more gestures, and have open body positions. High-status individuals are also believed to be more skilled in expressing emotions facially. Dovidio and Ellyson (1985) found that high-status individuals have higher visual dominance ratios, the ratio of looking while speaking to looking while listening. Algoe et al. (2000) found that the status of the target affects ratings of emotions and affiliation. Supervisors are rated as higher on anger, dominance, and coldheartedness while employees are rated as higher on submission and affiliation. Low status individuals are also believed to display more anger, disgust, sadness, and fear (Conway, DiFazio, & Mayman, 1999). Although status has an impact on beliefs regarding dominance and affiliation, Carney et al. (2005) found that trait dominance has more of an impact than rank. The difference in dominance ratings between high

and low trait dominant individuals is greater than the difference in dominance between high and low rank individuals.

For many researchers, the primary determinant of an individual's perceived dominance is biological sex. Dominance is typically considered a masculine trait (Barbatsis et al., 1983). According to Thorne and Henley (1975), "Identification of sex is probably the primary organizing variable in thinking about ("processing information" about) other human beings... The male is associated with the universal, the general, the subsuming; the female is more often excluded or is the special case" (pp. 6, 15). One study conducted by Weinberg and Weinberg (1980) demonstrated the ways in which researchers often promote the stereotypes that create negative associations with feminine traits. Subjects were asked to rate targets as either feminine based on being weak, upset, dissatisfied, passive, unpleasing, disinterested, or tense or as masculine based on being strong, powerful, attentive, happy, active, or content. In business settings, supervisors, for example, were associated with masculine characteristics (Algoe et al., 2000). In general, masculine traits are considered positive and powerful while feminine traits are considered negative and weak.

Status characteristics theory stated that gender is a status characteristic with two states: male and female (Johnson, 1992). This viewpoint has been upheld in much of the research on status and dominance. Job status carries certain expectations based on sex of the individual (Algoe et al., 2000). In work situations, women and men performing the same behaviors are viewed differently. Hess et al. (2000) found that perceptions of emotional displays differ by sex. When displayed by females, anger is rated differently than when displayed by males (Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003). Females are perceived as less likely to display anger or superiority emotions. One study suggested that the reason women were viewed as less likely to display

anger is because the commonly-held assumption is that men are provoked to anger whereas women are provoked to anxiety (Frodi, McCaulay, & Thome, 1977). Although the emotion displayed is similar, the perception on the part of the observer differed.

In addition to emotions, sex also impacts perceptions of dominance and affiliation. Female targets are perceived as displaying more inferiority emotions and less dominance (Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003) and more fear, embarrassment, and submission (Algoe et al., 2000). Men are perceived to display more anger and disgust (Algoe et al., 2000). Henley (1975) suggested that because males typically have power and status, the behaviors displayed are likely a combination of both being male and having power and status. Barbatsis et al. (1983) pointed out that as dominance is typically considered a masculine trait, it is not surprising to find a bias towards associating masculinity with dominance.

Ratings of affiliation are also affected by sex of the target. Women are considered more likely to display happiness (Hess et al., 2000), sadness and joy as seen by the lowered head (Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003) and more affiliative behaviors (Algoe et al., 2000). Edwards (2000) found that perceptions of affiliation differ as a function of sex. When given the same message, female sources are viewed as more affiliative than were male sources, but dominance remains unaffected. In a study conducted by Briton and Hall (1995b), subjects were told to either count or rate smiling behaviors and were informed that men, women, or neither smiled more. Regardless of the manipulative condition, women were viewed as smiling more. One possible reason for this finding is that women are believed to be more expressive, use more involved nonverbal behaviors, and to be more skilled at sending and receiving nonverbal messages (Briton & Hall, 1995a). Saurer and Eisher (1990) found that males used fewer nonverbal and verbal expressions in situations requiring positive emotional expression than in situations requiring

negative emotional expressions, lending credence to the appearance of women as being more affiliative than men.

Although these views of dominance and affiliation based on sex of the target have been upheld in several studies, there are some discrepancies in the research. Hess et al. (2000) found that the main effect in dominance perception is for type of emotion with sex of the participant having minimal impact. In studies conducted by Algoe et al. (2000), Barbatsis et al. (1983), Carney et al. (2005), and Molm and Hedley (1993), sex of the participant was found to have no effect on power level, attempts to assert control, or dominance. On the dimension of positive to negative, Burleson et al. (1996) found that women rate affectively-oriented communication more positively than did men, whereas men rate instrumentally-oriented communication more negatively than did women. Both sexes, however, rate affectively-oriented communication higher than instrumentally-oriented communication. Although there is a difference, it is slight and insignificant when compared to the similarity. Based on these findings, sex of the target does not affect perceptions of dominance or status.

One possible reason behind the lack of difference for sex is based in the structural approach (Johnson, 1992). According to this approach, formal position within a social organization is linked to perceived task ability. If women and men have similar positions and goal objectives, sex of the target has a lesser effect on levels of dominance. Due to social desirability, women may be more free to express aggression or dominance when it is socially acceptable (Frodi et al., 1977; Siderits, Johannsen, & Fadden, 1988). When there is justification for aggression or dominance, females are allowed to assume an atypical role and will display characteristics that are typically associated with males. In communication situations, females may be placed in a double-bind situation (Hitchen, Chang, & Harris, 1997). If females display

dominant behaviors, they are seen as unfeminine and face social sanctions. If they display submissive characteristics, they are viewed as ineffective. Removing social constraints has shown to remove the differences between dominance traits.

#### **2.4 Power, Status, and Dominance**

Although they are often handled as synonymous, power, status, and dominance are separate constructs that incorporate various aspects of a target. In order to understand the issue of dominance, the three constructs must be separated conceptually. The concept of power has played a prominent role in communication research. Although the research is extensive on the subject, defining exactly what constitutes power is a challenge to researchers. According to French and Raven (1959), power is both a trait and a role. As a role, power addresses the actual status of a person as determined by some objective measure such as a rank in an organization. As a trait, power refers to personality dominance, or the image that a person projects with regards to their ability to direct others. For example, a person with trait dominance may have no actual status but may project dominance in such a way as to have some measure of authority. Therefore, power effectively becomes a construct that includes issues of dominance and status.

Through the viewpoint proposed by Carney et al. (2005), power can be measured three different ways- actual associations, perceived relations, and beliefs about the relation. Through the actual association approach, researchers measure both social power (status) and nonverbal behaviors (trait) independently using objective measures. Through the perceived relations approach, impressions of social power based on nonverbal behaviors are measured and correlated with objectively measured behaviors. Finally, researchers can examine the beliefs about the relation by asking participants to explicitly state the behaviors they would expect to observe based on varying levels of social power. Each of these methods, while providing a

means for observation and evaluation, has the flaw that they consider both trait and status to merely be components of power.

Using the definition by Carney et al. (2005), the issue of power encompasses both status and dominance within a broader concept. According to Ellyson and Dovidio (1985), power, status, and dominance are three separate concepts that often accompany one another but must be viewed and measured independently. Power, according to their definition, is the “ability, which is based on superior resources, to control interactions with others” (p. 7). In simpler terms, power is the potential a person has to persuade. Unlike the definition provided by Carney et al., power is based on resources, whether material or personal, that people have at their disposal and choose to use in order to persuade others. Status, unlike power, refers to a “socially valued quality that is readily recognized by appearance or labels” (Ellyson & Dovidio, 1985, p. 6). Status, or role, exists as a separate construct in that an individual may have a title that carries with it recognition without necessarily possessing the ability to persuade others. The subtle distinctions between the constructs necessitate the separation of the definitions.

## **2.5 Rationale**

**2.5.1 Affiliation.** Different emotional states are linked to affiliation. Happiness has been shown to relate positively to ratings of affiliation (Knutson, 1996). Previous studies also revealed a negative relationship between anger and affiliation (e.g. Burgoon & LePoire, 1999) Because of these results:

H1: Targets displaying happiness will be rated as more affiliative than will targets displaying anger.

The status and sex of the individual have also been shown to affect ratings of affiliation. Algoe et al. (2000) found that low-status individuals, in their scenario employees as opposed to

supervisors, are viewed as more affiliative. Conway et al. (1999) found the reverse in that employees rate lower on perceptions of affiliation. Because of these mixed findings in previous research, the question is posed:

RQ1: How, if at all, will status relate to perceptions of affiliation?

There was agreement that women are viewed as more affiliative (e.g. Edwards, 2000). These findings support the idea that when a target is female, she will be viewed as more affiliative, but they do not address the effects of the sex of the participant. Therefore:

H2: Women will be perceived as more affiliative than men.

RQ2: How will sex of the participant affect ratings of affiliation?

**2.5.2 Dominance.** Just as there is evidence to support the relationship between emotional display and ratings of affiliation, the literature also supports a relationship between emotional display and ratings of dominance. The literature on the relationship of happiness to dominance is conflicting. Several studies have linked happiness to dominance (e.g. Burgoon & LePoire, 1999; Knutson, 1996). Others have found happiness to be negatively associated with perceptions of dominance (e.g. Keating, 1985; Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003). These contradictory findings could possibly be due to differences in research design or differences in the conceptualization of the term *dominance*, but regardless, the current results in the literature leave this as an area in need of clarification. The research on anger, though, finds direct links between anger and perceptions of dominance (e.g. Knutson, 1996). In order to verify previous findings, the current study hopes to replicate previous findings. Therefore:

H3: Targets displaying anger will be viewed as more dominant than will targets displaying happiness.



Researchers agree that status and sex have an effect on perceptions of dominance. Algoe et al. (2000) found that supervisors rate higher on anger, a dominant emotion. Conway et al. (1999) found that employees rate higher on perceptions of anger, a dominant emotion. Because the results are mixed and clarification is needed, the question is posed:

RQ3: How, if at all, will status relate to perceptions of dominance?

The effects of sex on perceptions of dominance also had mixed results, with several studies reporting higher levels of dominance for men (e.g. Alexander & Wood, 2000; Briton & Hall, 1995b; Weinberg & Weinberg, 1980) and several others reporting no difference in perceptions of dominance as a result of sex (e.g. Algoe et al., 2000; Carney et al., 2005; Molm & Hedley, 1993). Like the studies dealing with affiliation, the sex of the participant is rarely, if ever, taken into consideration. Because of the current confusion within the literature, this study hopes to find more concrete links between sex of the participant and ratings of dominance. Therefore:

RQ4: How, if at all, will sex, either of the participant or of the source, relate to perceptions of dominance?

RQ5: What other interaction affects are present for the variables of status, emotional display, and biological sex?

## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed the literature related to the indicators of dominance and affiliation, specifically emotional display, status, and biological sex. Following the literature review, the rationale for the specific hypotheses and research questions posed were addressed. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the current study and addresses various measurement and collection issues.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Participants**

Participants (N=401) were enrolled in an undergraduate communication course at Louisiana State University. Representative of the population of the university (“Enrollment summaries”, 2006), the ethnic breakdown was as follows: 343 Caucasian (85.5%), 32 African American (8%), and 20 other (5%) with 6 not reporting ethnicity. Representative of the population of the university (“A History of Women”, 2003), there were 197 females and 198 males (49.1% and 49.4%, respectively) with 6 subjects reporting not reporting sex. Their ages ranged from 18 to 43 (M=20.30, SD=2.37) with all subjects reporting age. The professional makeup was as follows: 133 unemployed (33.2%), 238 part-time (59.4%), 12 entry-level (3%), 12 middle-management (3%), and 4 management (1%) with 2 subjects not reporting current level of employment.

#### **3.2 Procedures**

Participants were enrolled in large-lecture sections of undergraduate communication courses. The surveys were distributed and collected by the instructors in charge of those sections without the aid of the researcher. Students were informed that all information collected from their responses would be kept anonymous and would be used for academic purposes. They were informed to refrain from putting any identifying information such as name, course number, or social security number on the survey. In exchange for their participation in the study, participants received a small amount of extra credit in the course through which the surveys were collected. Students completed the surveys in the classroom and handed them in the same day.

### 3.3 Instrumentation

**3.3.1 Demographics.** The first section of the questionnaire asked participants to answer questions regarding demographic information. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate age, race/ethnicity, sex, classification, and current job level. The levels presented for current employment were: none, part-time, entry-level, middle-management, and management. These variables were included in order to later code for any possible interaction effects; however, a lack of sufficient variability for the categories of employment level and race made any analysis of interaction effects irrelevant.

**3.3.2 Scenarios.** For the current study, the independent variables of interest were sex of the source, status of the source, and expressed emotion of the source. Although previous research primarily uses photographs of subjects for study, the possible differences in facial configuration may significantly affect results. For example, in the pictures shown by Keating and Bai (1986), subjects were both male with dark features. One, however, had more defined features, which may have affected the results. To avoid the complications present when using photographs, the questionnaire asked participants to rate an individual based on a given scenario. Each participant was asked to rate a co-worker who they observed in the lunchroom at work, but with whom they had no previous involvement. In order to introduce a relational dimension to the interaction, participants were told that they had a meeting scheduled later in the day with the source. The sex, organizational level, and emotional display of the source were manipulated in order to create eight different test conditions testing all possible combinations of sex, status of source (either an administrative assistant or a director), and emotional display (either angry or happy). The scenario was developed under the advisement of researchers within the field of communication, examined all scenarios for face validity. A copy of a sample questionnaire can be found in

who Appendix A. The first scenario established the target as a female administrative assistant displaying happiness. The second scenario established the target as a female administrative assistant displaying anger. The third scenario established the target as a female director displaying happiness. The fourth scenario established the target as a female director displaying anger. The fifth scenario established the target as a male administrative assistant displaying happiness. The sixth scenario established the target as a male administrative assistant displaying anger. The seventh scenario established the target as a male director displaying happiness. The eighth scenario established the target as a male director displaying anger. Scenarios were evenly and randomly distributed throughout the sample. In order to establish which emotion was being displayed, participants were told that the target either looked happy or angry.

**3.3.3 Relational Communication.** The participants were asked to rate the scenario using a shortened version of the scale developed by Burgoon and Hale (1987) (See Appendix A for a sample survey including all items used). While this scale contains other dimensions than those of dominance and affiliation, Burgoon and Hale (1987) found that the topoi could be divided along the two dimensions. Because of the nature of the current study, items were pulled from the dimensions of immediacy/affection and receptivity/trust for the affiliative variable. Both scales used in this study were first tested to determine reliability. The scale used to determine affiliation had an alpha of .92 ( $M= 4.27$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ). The scale included 11 items addressing, given the information provided, the target was to act in a certain way. For example, how likely was a female assistant displaying anger to “show enthusiasm while talking” or “be open to your ideas?” The dominance variable was assessed using the dimensions of dominance and equality proposed Burgoon and Hale, with the items relating to perceived equality being reverse coded. The scale

used to determine dominance had an alpha of .70 ( $M= 4.27$ ,  $SD=.94$ ).<sup>1</sup> The scale included by six items before removing the item with poor reliability and asked, given the information provided, how likely a target was to respond in a certain way. For example, how likely was a male director displaying happiness to “attempt to persuade you” or “treat you as an equal?” Participants were asked to address how likely the person described would be to display each of the items listed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This method is similar to those used in previous studies (see Burgoon & LePoire, 1999).

### **3.4 Method of Analysis**

To address the research questions regarding indicators of dominance and affiliation, two four-way ANOVAs ( $\alpha = .05$ ) were conducted. Specifically, one four-way ANOVA was conducted regarding the impact of emotional display, biological sex, and status on ratings of affiliation. The second four-way ANOVA was conducted regarding the impact of emotional display, biological sex, and status on ratings of dominance.

As a result of the findings of the ANOVAs conducted in the current study, Pearson Correlation ( $\alpha = .05$ ) was conducted to determine the relationship between the ratings of dominance and the ratings of affiliation.

### **3.5 Summary**

The current section established first established the sample population included within the study. Second, the instrumentation used to test the hypotheses and research questions were addressed. Finally, the method of analysis was addressed. Chapter 4 addresses the results of the analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> One item (“Try to gain approval”) was deleted due to poor reliability.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Several hypotheses were proposed regarding the effects of sex, status, and emotional display on ratings of dominance and affiliation. Analysis revealed several significant findings regarding affiliation, and dominance. Extraneous findings also revealed correlations between ratings of affiliation and ratings of dominance.

#### 4.1 Affiliation

An ANOVA tested for the effects of emotional display, status, and sex of the source and the participant on ratings of affiliation. Results revealed two significant main effects, one main effect that approached significance, and two significant interaction effects. The first hypothesis predicted that individuals displaying happiness would be rated as more affiliative than individuals displaying anger. This hypothesis was supported in that emotion displayed has a strong effect on perceptions of affiliation,  $F(1, 395) = 526.84, p < .001, \eta^2 = .582$ . Individuals displaying happiness are rated as more affiliative than were individuals displaying anger ( $M$  for happiness = 5.11,  $SE = .65$ ;  $M$  for anger = 3.43,  $SE = .81$ ). The first research question asked what effect, if any, status of the source had on ratings of affiliation. There was no significant difference in ratings of affiliation as a result of status of the source,  $F(1, 395) = .431, p = .512$ . The second hypothesis predicted that females would be rated higher on affiliation than would males. This hypothesis was supported in that sex of source has a small effect on perceptions of affiliation,  $F(1, 395) = 4.90, p = .027, \eta^2 = .013$ . Females are judged to be higher in affiliation than are males ( $M$  for females = 4.37,  $SE = 1.09$ ;  $M$  for males = 4.19,  $SE = 1.19$ ). The second research question asked what, if any, effects sex of the participant had on ratings of affiliation. Approaching significance, sex of the participant may affect ratings of affiliation,  $F(1, 395) =$

3.45,  $p=.062$ ,  $\eta^2=.009$ . Females may be more likely to rate the target as more affiliative than males ( $M=4.32$ ,  $SE=1.21$ ;  $M=4.23$ ,  $SE=1.02$ ). The findings for sex of the participant, sex of the target, and status were mediated by interaction effects.

Although these effects had a significant impact on ratings of affiliation, they were moderated by interaction effects. The first interaction effect,  $F(1, 395)= 6.83$ ,  $p=.009$ ,  $\eta^2=.018$ , was a two-way effect that revealed that the effect of emotion on ratings of affiliation is such that female participants rated those displaying happiness as more affiliative than did males ( $M$  for female participants= 5.28,  $SE= .59$ ;  $M$  for male participants = 4.95,  $SE= .67$ ) whereas male participants rated those displaying anger as more affiliative than did females ( $M$  for males= 3.47,  $SE= .73$ ;  $M$  for females = 3.39,  $SE= .88$ ).

The second interaction effect,  $F(1, 395)= 8.14$ ,  $p=.005$ ,  $\eta^2=.021$ , found that the combined effects of sex of source, sex of participant, emotion displayed, and status moderate ratings of affiliation such that ratings of affiliation differ as a result of changes of each level of the four variables examined: emotional display, status, sex of the participant, and sex of the source. An analysis of the means revealed three specific effects of the interaction. Overall, the main effect for emotional display such that targets displaying happiness were rated as higher in affiliation was upheld despite the interaction effect. Specifically, the findings regarding status, sex of the participant, and sex of the target were mediated by interaction effects (See Table 1 for a complete listing of means). One of the effects dealt with the different ratings of high-status targets displaying happiness. Female participants rated high-status females displaying happiness as more affiliative than high-status males displaying happiness ( $M$  for female targets= 5.46,  $SE= .58$ ;  $M$  for male targets= 5.01,  $SE= .71$ ). Male participants, though, rated high-status females displaying happiness as less affiliative than high-status males displaying happiness ( $M$  for female

targets= 4.86, SE= .75; *M* for male targets= 5.00, SE= .68). The second effect dealt with ratings of participants displaying anger. Although as a main effect female targets were rated as more affiliative, this is mediated by status, emotion, and sex of the participant. Specifically, male participants rated low-status females displaying anger as less affiliative than low-status males displaying anger (*M* for females= 3.49, SE= .71; *M* for males= 3.55, SE= .94). Female participants rated high-status females displaying anger as less affiliative than high-status males displaying anger (*M* for females= 3.40, SE= .84; *M* for males= 3.50, SE= 1.00). So although as a main effect sex of the source affected ratings of affiliation such that females were viewed as more affiliative and status of the target had no significant effect, the variables interacted in such a way as to create interesting interaction effects.

Table 1: Reported means for the interaction effect for sex of target, sex of participant, status, and emotion displayed

Target sex	Status	Emotion	Partic Sex	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Male	High	Happ	Male	5.00	.69	25
			Female	5.01	.71	25
		Anger	Male	3.34	.59	22
			Female	3.50	1.00	30
	Low	Happ	Male	4.90	.64	23
			Female	5.28	.48	26
		Anger	Male	3.55	.94	21
			Female	3.04	.79	28
Female	High	Happ	Male	4.86	.75	31
			Female	5.46	.58	19
		Anger	Male	3.51	.72	23
			Female	3.40	.84	23
	Low	Happ	Male	5.08	.60	23
			Female	5.40	.53	27
		Anger	Male	3.49	.71	30
			Female	3.73	.71	19



## 4.2 Dominance

An ANOVA tested for the effects of sex of source, sex of participant, emotion displayed, and status on ratings of dominance. Results revealed two significant main effects. The third hypothesis predicted that individuals displaying anger would be rated as more dominant than individuals displaying happiness. This hypothesis was supported,  $F(1, 395) = 123.13, p < .001, \eta^2 = .245$ . Individuals who displayed happiness were viewed as less dominant than were individuals displaying anger ( $M$  for happiness = 3.80,  $SE = .75$ ;  $M$  for anger = 4.73,  $SE = .88$ ). The third research question asked what effect, if any, status of the source had on ratings of dominance. No significant result was revealed,  $F(1, 395) = 1.885, p = .171$ . The fourth research question asked what effect, if any, sex of the source or sex of the participant had on ratings of dominance. Sex of the source had a small effect on perceptions of dominance,  $F(1, 395) = 6.70, p = .010, \eta^2 = .017$ . Males were viewed as being more dominant than were females ( $M$  for males = 4.37,  $SE = .92$ ;  $M$  for females = 4.15,  $SE = .95$ ). No significant results were revealed regarding sex of the participant,  $F(1, 395) = .003, p = .954$ . No other interaction effects were revealed for dominance.

## 4.3 Extraneous Findings

Because the variables that seem to be positively related to affiliation are negatively related to dominance whereas the variables that are positively related to dominance are negatively related to affiliation, a correlation was conducted to determine if there was a possible relationship between ratings of dominance and affiliation. The results of the correlation revealed a significant negative correlation between ratings of dominance and ratings of affiliation,  $r(391) = -.639, p < .001$ .

#### 4.4 Summary

The current section addressed the findings regarding affiliation and dominance. (See Table 2 below for a complete summary of findings). Chapter 5 includes a discussion of findings and their relations to existing literature as well as the limitations to the current study and an overall conclusion.

Table 2: Summary of findings

Hypothesis or research question	Findings
H1: Targets displaying happiness will be rated as more affiliative than targets displaying anger.	Supported. Happy individuals are viewed as more affiliative than angry individuals.
RQ1: What effect, if any, will status have on ratings of affiliation?	No significant difference on the basis of status.
H2: Women will be viewed as more affiliative than men.	Supported. Women are considered to be more affiliative than men.
RQ2: What effect, if any, will sex of the participant have on ratings of affiliation?	Approaching significance. Women may judge others as more affiliative than do men.
H3: Targets displaying anger will be rated as more dominant than targets displaying happiness.	Supportive. Angry individuals are considered more dominant than happy individuals.
RQ3: What effect, if any, will status have on perceptions of dominance?	No significant difference was found for status.
RQ4: How, if at all, will sex, either of the participant or of the source, relate to perceptions of dominance?	Significant difference for target sex. Males are viewed as more dominant than females. No significant difference was found for sex of the participant.
RQ5: What other interaction affects are present for the variables of status, emotional display, and biological sex?	Two-way interaction between sex of participant and emotion for ratings of affiliation. Four-way interaction between participant sex, target sex, status, and emotion.
Any extraneous findings:	There was a significant negative correlation between affiliation and dominance ratings.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine what effects, if any, emotional display, status, and sex have on ratings of dominance and affiliation. In order to examine the findings from the current study and their relationship with existing literature, each of the variables was addressed. Following a discussion of the individual findings, the interactions between variables were examined. Next, extraneous findings were examined and discussed. Finally, limitations to the current study and directions for future research were discussed in order to clarify the results.

#### **5.1 Emotional Display**

When addressing issues of dominance and affiliation, emotional display is often one of the fields researched. The first hypothesis predicted that individuals displaying happiness will have higher ratings of affiliation than individuals displaying anger. This hypothesis was supported through the current study which found that individuals who display happiness are rated high in affiliation. These findings agree with studies by Keating (1985), Knutson (1996), and Montepare and Dobish (2003) who found that happier individuals are viewed as more affiliative than individuals who are not portrayed as happy. A possible reason for these consistent findings is that individuals who display happiness are seen as more socially warm and inviting than are those who are not displaying happiness. Because of the consistency of the findings, the current assumption that displays of happiness are result in higher ratings of affiliation is supported.

In addition to ratings of affiliation, displays of happiness have also been linked to dominance displays throughout the literature. Unfortunately, as examined in the literature review, the findings in previous research have resulted in confusion regarding the role that

display of happiness has with regards to dominance. Knutson (1996) found that happiness is associated with higher levels of dominance (see also Montpare & Dobish, 2003). Keating (1985) and Carney et al. (2005) found that while happiness is related to ratings of affiliation, no link could be made between levels of happiness and levels of dominance. Henley (1975) actually found that those displaying happiness are considered to be more submissive. Consistent with the findings of Keating (1985) and Carney et al. (2005), the current study found that those displaying happiness are not rated as higher in dominance.

One possible reason for the lack of relationship between displays of happiness and ratings of dominance is that while those in positions of power are often allowed to display more emotion than those in lower positions of power, those in lower positions of power are often expected to display more positive emotions (Hess et al., 2000). This position is the basis for standpoint theory which states that those in lower positions of power are more attuned to those in higher positions of power (Wood, 2005). Because of the potential threat conveyed through the act of being in a one-up position, those in lower positions may display more positive emotions in order to be viewed as more affiliative by those in higher positions of power. Those in higher positions of power, though, are allowed to display more emotion, both positive and negative, because they do not have to worry about pleasing those in a lower position of power.

Another possible difference between the current findings and those presented in other research could be attributed to design. In the studies by Knutson (1996) and Montpare and Dobish (2003), participants were asked to rate photographs. In the current study and a study conducted by Carney et al. (2005), subjects were asked to evaluate scenarios without being given a picture of the subject. Although they will be discussed in greater detail in further sections, the current study addressed the possibility that interaction effects may have mediated the results.

Regardless, the findings here support the connection between happiness and affiliation but not between happiness and dominance.

The second emotion examined was anger. The first hypothesis stated that individuals who displayed happiness would be rated as more affiliative than individuals displaying anger. The third hypothesis stated that individuals displaying anger would be rated as more dominant than would individuals displaying happiness. Both hypotheses were supported in the study such that individuals displaying anger are rated as higher in dominance and lower in affiliation than individuals displaying happiness. These findings are consistent with the current literature (see Algoe et al., 2000; Knutson, 1996; Montpare & Dobish, 2003). While anger caused people to be viewed as more likely to influence, the emotion also removes the appearance of warmth and friendliness.

## **5.2 Status**

Another area of interest in the current study was the effect of status on ratings of dominance and affiliation. In this area of research, the existing literature displayed contradictory findings. While Algoe et al. (2000) found that supervisors rate higher on dominance and employees rate higher on affiliation, Conway et al. (1999) found that employees rate higher on indicators of dominance and lower on indicators of affiliation. These findings led to two research questions. The first question asked how status affected ratings of dominance while the second question asked how status affected ratings of affiliation. The current study found there to be no significant difference for ratings of either dominance or affiliation based on status alone. Basically, as an indicator of either trait, status makes no significant difference.

One possible reason that status was not found to have a significant effect in the current literature was the introduction of other factors such as sex, which will be addressed in the

following section, or emotional display, which was discussed in the previous section. Another factor that could have affected the results for status of the source was the actual breakdown of employment level of the participants. Of the 401 participants, 371 reported being either unemployed or employed part-time. The lack of actual work experience may have affected the results such that perceptions of the status of an individual are different for those lacking in actual interactions with status differences.

### **5.3 Biological Sex**

Another factor that is often discussed in research regarding dominance and affiliation is biological sex. In the existing literature, agreement existed in that women are viewed as more affiliative than are men (e.g. Edwards, 2000). Therefore, it was hypothesized that, consistent with the existing findings, women would be viewed as more affiliative than men. This hypothesis was upheld through the current study such that women are, overall, rated as more affiliative than men. Hess et al. (2000) found that women were considered more likely to display happiness, an emotion that is considered to be highly affiliative, as seen both through previous research and the findings in the existing study. Algoe et al. (2000) and Edwards (2000) found that women are viewed as more affiliative than males. Although the participants in the current study were not asked to rate photographs of targets, one possible reason for the consistency of these findings is that females are believed to be more skilled at both encoding and decoding affiliative messages (Briton & Hall, 1995a; Saurer & Eisher, 1990). Regardless, the consistency in the findings further supports that women are viewed as more affiliative than are men.

While the findings on the relationship between sex of the target and ratings of affiliation were consistent throughout the previous literature, the previous findings regarding the relationship between sex of the target and ratings of dominance were inconsistent. Several

studies found that sex of the source has no impact on ratings of dominance (Algoe et al, 2000; Barbasis et al., 1983; Carney et al., 2005; Hess et al., 2000; Molm & Hedley, 1993). Others, though, found higher levels of dominance for men (Alexander & Wood, 2000; Briton & Hall, 1995b; Weinberg & Weinberg, 1980). Because of this confusion among the existing literature, the question was posed asking what, if any, relationship existed between ratings of dominance and sex of the target. Consistent with findings by Algoe et al. (2000), the current study revealed that males are viewed as more dominant than females (see also Barbasis et al., 1983; Carney et al., 2005; Hess et al., 2000; Molm & Hedley, 1993). A possible reason for this finding is that females are often associated with traits that are considered submissive or weak (see Weinberg & Weinberg, 1980 for a listing of traits often considered to be female traits). Because of this trait bias, the viewpoint may exist in society that dominance is a masculine trait, which would affect the ratings of dominance for females.

Although the findings in the current study were consistent with the previous findings within which the sex of the participant affected ratings of dominance and affiliation, they were inconsistent with the structural approach proposed by Johnson (1992). According to this approach, the effects of sex are mediated by formal position or status such that when placed in a high status position, women will be viewed through the tasks associated with the position rather than with their being women. The current findings, while ignoring the discussion of task competency, found that sex alters perceptions such that women and men are, when compared on traits of dominance and affiliation, viewed differently. A possible reason for this contradiction is that the study by Johnson (1992) dealt primarily with perceived task competency not perceived trait attribution. It is possible that people differentiate between ability and personality such that sex may have little effect on ability and still alter perceptions of personality.

Although sex of the target is often researched in accordance with ratings of dominance and affiliation, sex of the participant is often neglected. By cutting out the impact of the participant on the findings, one part of the communication process is omitted, the part through which the life experiences of the rater impact his or her views of a target. The current study found that the sex of the participant may impact on ratings of affiliation, such that females perceived others to be more affiliative than did males. One possible reason for females perceiving others as more affiliative than do males is that females are often viewed as more skilled at both encoding and decoding affiliative messages (Briton & Hall, 1995a). Because they are viewed as more affiliative, women may be more likely to attribute affiliative characteristics than are men.

#### **5.4 Interactions**

Despite the fact that researchers are often interested in a specific variable such as sex or status, those variables often interact with other variables in unique ways. Ecological theorists, for example, base their research in the idea that people form gestalt judgments of a source based on single, overriding factors (see McArthur & Baron, 1983). In the current study, the first interaction effect found that females displaying happiness are viewed as more affiliative than males displaying happiness whereas males displaying anger are viewed as more affiliative than females displaying anger. This corresponds to what was found by Hess et al. (2000) and Mignault and Chaudhuri (2003) who found that perceptions of emotional displays differ based on sex of the target. Specifically, raters found it less appropriate for females to display anger than for males to display anger (Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003). One possible reason for this finding is that, in general, women may be viewed as unlikely to display anger, making it an inappropriate emotion (Frodi et al., 1977). As discussed earlier in the section on status, standpoint theory



accounts for this difference by positing that women are in a position of lower power and therefore must be concerned about maintaining a more pleasant affect in order to be liked by those in power (Woods, 2005). The current study and the background literature point to the idea that harder emotions, such as anger, are considered more appropriate when displayed by men whereas softer emotions, such as happiness, are considered more appropriate when displayed by women.

The second interaction effect found that the combined effects of sex of the source, sex of the participant, status, and emotional display all had a significant influence on ratings of affiliation. For example, a female rater who is judging the scenario with a female source who is high-status displaying happiness responds with higher affiliation ratings than does a male rater when given the same scenario. One possible reason for this effect is that the introduction of each of the different variables gives raters a more complete picture by which to judge the person. Although proponents of ecological theory would argue that raters often make judgments based on a single, gestalt feature (see Cooper, 1981; Feeley, 2002; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), the interactions between variables must be acknowledged as changing one portion of the scenario significantly impacts the perceptions by the rater.

The theoretical implications that can be drawn from these findings urge caution when basing studies in theories such as ecological theory (McArthur & Baron, 1983) which use single, gestalt traits for evaluation of targets. In reality, people are presented with several factors at one time to use for making judgments of a target. As the current study displayed, these individual factors can impact the outcome of a judgment such that the addition of a single factor creates a richer picture of the communication process. While a complete listing of factors is impossible,

these findings show that the process of judging others is more complex than can be revealed through the use of a single variable.

### **5.5 Extraneous Findings**

The current study revealed that there was a significant negative correlation between ratings of dominance and affiliation. Individuals who are rated as more dominant are rated as less affiliative. Despite framing the dominance scale through the items created by Burgoon and Hale (1987), raters still appear to view dominance as an attribute that takes away from perceptions of warmth or friendliness. Unlike the model used by Knutson (1996) wherein ratings of dominance and affiliation exist as separate axes of personality, this suggests that the two are inversely related. One possible reason for this finding is that the raters associated dominance with anger, a negative emotion. Participants also associated anger with lowered levels of affiliation, pointing to the viewpoint that dominance is a negative attribute. Another possible contributing factor to the difference between the current findings and the model proposed by Knutson (1996) may be due to his conversion of the scale by Wiggins et al. (1988) into dominance and affiliation axes. In the original scale developed by Wiggins et al., the dimensions on which sources were judged were not dominance and affiliation. Knutson (1996) took the four dimensions proposed by Wiggins et al. (1988), dominant-submissive, arrogant-unassuming, cold-warm, aloof-gregarious, and converted them into two single dimensions. This conversion may have affected his results such that he attributed dominance and/or affiliation to characteristics that may not be supported. Regardless of the reasons for the differences between the current findings and the findings by Knutson (1996), the current findings indicate that rather than being separate traits, dominance and affiliation are negatively related such that higher ratings of one trait result in lower ratings of the other trait.

## 5.6 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite the consistency with existing literature, some limitations to the existing study must be examined. First, the sample population reported being mostly either unemployed or employed only part-time. Thus, the conclusions drawn regarding the affects of status may reflect their lack of business involvement. However, the information can still be used to determine perceptions of status and how those perceptions affect perceptions of affiliation and dominance. Also, breaks with existing literature regarding status may, in actuality, reflect a change in generational views as many of the participants were of a different generation than those used in other studies. Much of the existing literature regarding dominance and affiliation displays is currently based on established studies conducted in the early to late 1980s. At the time, perhaps biological sex was both perceived and portrayed differently. The bases for the existing literature may have resulted in the contradictions.

Another limitation dealt with the actual questionnaire used. First, in order to avoid bias based on differences in physical attributes, participants were not given a photograph to analyze in order to determine the actual emotion being displayed. Thus, the emotion was given a very stringent label. An actual photograph, while creating other areas of possible contention, would give raters the opportunity to analyze the emotional expression as well to determine what emotion and to what degree was being displayed. The current study, while being very straightforward in labeling which specific emotion was being displayed, left the degree of the display for the participant to determine. Hess et al. (2000) found that the amount of a trait attributed to a given emotion is based on the level of the emotion displayed, and the current study did not give the level of emotion displayed. Second, the scales used were adapted from Burgoon and Hale's (1987) relational communication scale. While the scales were used to evaluate

scenarios involving organizational settings, the relational nature of the scale may have impacted the results. The relational communication scale was developed and used primarily in personal relationships. The findings in the current study may be affected by applying a scale developed to evaluate relational communication to a workplace setting in which the norms of behavior are moderated by different rules than those found in personal relationships.

Despite these limitations, the current study does open up several areas for future research. First, in the current study, participants were asked to answer questions regarding a person whom they had not met and with whom they were having a hypothetical future meeting. Future research might incorporate the current findings into a study involving actual interactions, either between existing relational dyads or created dyads. Incorporating actual interactions would allow the hypothetical findings displayed in the current study in which respondents were asked to rate an interaction that did not actually occur to be applied and tested within a real-world interaction. Second, the current findings place a significant role on the impact of emotional expression on ratings of affiliation, ratings of dominance, and the decision to become involved in a relationship. It would be interesting to see whether emotion plays such a significant role in actual interactions. Finally, the current study limited the scope to two emotions: anger and happiness. Future research should be geared to expanding the findings to other emotional displays.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

Emotional display, status, and biological sex have been areas of interest for communication scholars dealing with perceptions of affiliation and dominance. Despite the confusion in the existing literature, there are several concrete conclusions that can be drawn, both from the current study and the existing body of research. The emotion being displayed by a given source influences several areas of the interaction. Emotional display influences the target's

perceived traits of both dominance and affiliation such that targets who were happy were rated as more affiliative and less dominant than targets who were angry. Biological sex also impacts those traits, regardless of whether one is looking at the biological sex of the participant or of the source. Regardless, there are still several questions to be answered with regards to how people evaluate the traits of others. This study, while not answering all of those questions, does provide some interesting paths for future research in the area.

There are also several theoretical implications that can be drawn from the current study, particularly with regards to the approach/avoidance literature and dimensions of interpersonal trait attribution. This study affects dimensions of interpersonal trait attribution. While certain factors such as emotional display or sex of the participant may seem to stand out as factors for creating a profile of another's personality, as other factors are added, the relationships and likewise the profiles created become more complex. Within the field, the study of interpersonal trait attribution must be prepared to deal with the input of multiple variables. Another important theoretical implication that can be drawn from the current study deals with the traits of dominance and affiliation. While Knutson (1996) proposed that the traits were exclusive such that one did not directly affect the other, the current study shows that the two traits are negatively related. In the current findings, the variables that led participants to assess someone as more affiliative also led them to assess the target as less dominant. For future research, this implies that the two concepts cannot be treated as independent variables but rather must be treated in a manner reflecting their relationship.

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## APPENDIX (QUESTIONNAIRE)

### Questionnaire for Bernardi

Part 1: Answer the following questions regarding your background.

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Race/ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Sex: (circle one) M F  
 4. Classification: \_\_\_\_\_  
 5. Job level (circle one): none part-time entry middle management management

Part 2: Answer the following questions regarding the person described.

You are in the lunchroom at work when Karen Smith, a new administrative assistant for the accounting department, walks in, looking angry. Later in the day, you have a meeting scheduled with Karen, but this is the first time you've seen her. Based on first impressions, evaluate how likely Karen is to, on the following scale:

Strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), disagree somewhat (DS), Neutral (N), agree somewhat (AS), agree (A), strongly agree (SA)- circle your answer

- |   |    |   |    |   |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|
| 1. be intensely involved in a conversation with you | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 2. want a deeper relationship                       | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 3. communicate coldness rather than warmth          | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 4. create a sense of distance                       | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 5. show enthusiasm while talking                    | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 6. be sincere                                       | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 7. be interested in talking with you                | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 8. want you to trust her                            | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 9. be willing to listen                             | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 10. be open to your ideas                           | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 11. be honest in communicating with you             | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 12. attempt to persuade you                         | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 13. try to gain control of the interaction          | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 14. try to gain your approval <sup>1</sup>          | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 15. have the upper hand in the conversation         | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 16. treat you as an equal                           | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |
| 17. want to cooperate with you                      | SD | D | DS | N | AS | A | SA |

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<sup>1</sup>This item was removed due to poor reliability.

## VITA

Jennifer Bernardi was born on August 15, 1983, in Houston, Texas. She graduated with honors from Angleton High School in May of 2001. In May of 2004, she received a Bachelor of Arts in speech communication from Sam Houston State University in Hunstville, Texas. She graduated Summa Cum Laude with Highest Honors. Upon graduation in May, Jennifer plans to return to Houston, Texas, to pursue a career in human resources.