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JUDGING ASSERTIVENESS

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Abstract. *In the present study we investigated whether the personality trait of assertiveness can be judged accurately, which cues are used to judge assertiveness, and how cue utilization is related to accuracy. We additionally assessed whether perceiver and/or target gender moderate any of these relationships. Participants (72 females and 36 males) watched 33 short videoclips each featuring a female and a male target interacting. After watching each clip, participants indicated how assertive they judged each target to be. Since the self-reported assertiveness measure of the targets was known, accuracy of judging assertiveness could be calculated. Each target was coded on an array of behavioral cues. Results showed that assertiveness could be judged at better than chance level and that female targets were assessed more accurately than male targets. To find out how much perceivers relied on each specific cue to judge assertiveness (cue utilization), perceived assertiveness was correlated with each of the behavioral cues across targets. We found that perceivers used different cues to judge assertiveness in female as compared to male targets. Also, accuracy of judging assertiveness was achieved by using somewhat different cues for male and female targets.*

Key words: *person, perception, interpersonal sensitivity, judgment accuracy, assertiveness, gender.*

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JUDGING ASSERTIVENESS IN FEMALE AND MALE TARGETS

While observing or being involved in social interactions we constantly assess other people with regard to different characteristics. When we meet strangers, we have minimal information to base our judgment on. Nevertheless, we instantly form impressions that guide our behavior in such so-called zero-acquaintance situations (Albright, Kenny, & Malloy, 1988; Ambady, Hallahan, & Rosenthal, 1995; Kenny, Horner, Kashy, & Chu, 1992). Drawing inferences about people's personality traits based on the observation of a brief interaction seems daunting because traits are not necessarily exhibited in every interaction and inferences drawn can have important implications when they are used to predict future behavior.

Previous research has shown that perceivers are able judge others accurately on personality characteristics (Albright et al., 1988; Ambady et al., 1995; Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992; Borkenau & Liebler, 1992; Funder & Colvin, 1988; Funder & Colvin, 1997; Watson, 1989), emotional states (Ekman, 1982; Hall & Bernieri, 2001; Nowicki & Duke, 1994; Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers, & Archer, 1979), behavioral tendencies (Costanzo & Archer, 1989; Rosenthal et al., 1979), intelligence (Borkenau & Liebler, 1995; Murphy, Hall, & Colvin, in press; Zebrowitz, Hall, Murphy, & Rhodes, 2002), and on the nature of their interpersonal relationships (e.g., rapport, Bernieri, Gillis, Davis, & Grahe, 1996). Although we know that people can assess others accurately even with minimal information available (30 s of a videoclip: Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992; photographs: Sternberg & Smith, 1985; Zebrowitz et al. 2002), we do not know much about *how* people form impressions of others. The main goal of the present study was to shed light on the mechanisms underlying judgment of a personality characteristic relevant in many social interactions - assertiveness. Assertiveness refers to the realization of one's goals and to taking over leadership duties and responsibility. Assertiveness is an important characteristic because it describes how we relate to other people in terms of dominance which has been suggested to be one of the most important dimension in social interactions (Foa, 1961; Gifford, 1994; Kiesler, 1983; Wiggins, 1979).

When judging strangers, a perceiver has access to the emitted verbal and nonverbal cues of the target and – when the target is involved in a social interaction – the reactions of the social interaction partner to the target's behavior. This can be a wealth of information and it is most likely that perceivers rely on certain cues more than on others. The degree to which a perceiver relies on a specific cue to assess, for instance, assertiveness in a target, is called cue utilization (Brunswik, 1956). Because nonverbal cues, in particular, can have different meanings depending on context, perceivers most likely entertain subjective theories about which cues to rely on when judging assertiveness. However, some of the cues perceivers use might not be diagnostic of assertiveness in the specific situation. It therefore becomes important to investigate to what extent the utilization of a certain cue contributes to accuracy.

Accuracy of Judging Assertiveness

Studies investigating accuracy in personality assessment have mostly focused on accuracy over several trait dimensions ("person-centered" approach, Colvin, 1993) rather than on accuracy in the assessment of one specific trait. In general, this person-centered approach has shown that perceivers are accurate in their judgment (Albright et al., 1988;

Ambady et al., 1995; Funder & Colvin, 1988; Funder & Colvin, 1997; Watson, 1989). There is evidence, however, that accuracy can depend on the trait under investigation (e.g., Ambady et al., 1995; Funder & Dobroth, 1987). In the present study, we focused on investigating one trait only, assertiveness. Related research has looked at accuracy of judging dominance and found mixed results. Gifford (1994) found that observers could not judge accurately how dominant-ambitious targets were. Moskowitz (1990) reported convergence of self-reported dominance (assessed in two different ways) with dominance judgments of observers only for male targets but not for female targets. This latter finding suggests that target gender might influence accuracy.

Gender Differences in Accuracy

In contrast to the wealth of studies showing a female advantage for perceiver and target accuracy in judging affective states (Hall, 1978; Hall, 1984; Hall, Carter, & Horgan, 2000) not many studies have looked at gender differences in judgment accuracy for personality traits and no clear-cut conclusions from these few studies can be drawn. In terms of perceiver accuracy, Vogt and Colvin (in press), for instance, found women to be more accurate judges of personality than men while assessing different personality traits among strangers. In contrast, Watson (1989) found no gender differences in accuracy of judging other people's traits. Ambady et al. (1995) found women to be more accurate perceivers than men only for the dimensions of extraversion and positive affect whereas agreeableness was judged marginally better by men than by women. No gender difference was found for conscientiousness. And, although women were more accurate in judging neuroticism, no gender difference in assessing extraversion and masculinity-femininity emerged in a study by Lippa and Dietz (2000). Thus, whether perceiver gender affects accuracy may depend on the specific personality characteristic under investigation and it is unclear whether perceiver gender affects accuracy of judging assertiveness.

There exist even fewer results with regard to accuracy of judging the personalities of male versus female targets. Ambady et al. (1995), for instance, found male and female targets to be judged with equal accuracy in the above mentioned study. As stated earlier, Moskowitz (1990) found male targets to be judged more accurately on dominance than female targets. In the present research we included target and perceiver gender as potential moderators of accuracy of judging assertiveness.

Mechanisms: How Do People Judge Others

Although accuracy in person perception has been studied abundantly, few studies have looked at the behavioral cues perceivers base their impression on (e.g., Borkenau & Liebler, 1992; Gifford, 1994). In zero-acquaintance assessments, the only basis for impression formation is the expressive behavior of the target (together with reactions of the target partner/s to this behavior if available). Mostly, behavioral cues are very subtle and not in the focus of conscious awareness (neither of the sender nor of the perceiver) so that person perception seems to be of rather intuitive nature (Christensen & Rosenthal, 1982). We therefore chose an approach which takes into account the potentially unconscious nature of how perceivers judge assertiveness. For an array of different conversational and behavioral cues, we wanted to know how much perceivers relied on each of them when judging assertiveness (cue utilization, Brunswik, 1956). Cue utilization is the correlation

between perceived assertiveness ratings and a specific actual behavior across targets (described in more detail in the Method section). It is assumed that if the perception varies in accordance with the behavioral cue across targets (signifying that the correlation is high), the cue was used to judge assertiveness.

In judging assertiveness, perceivers most likely project their own beliefs about behavioral correlates of assertiveness onto the targets. Such beliefs are influenced by stereotypical gender expectations as shown in a study by Buss and Craik (1980) in which participants named somewhat different acts as being prototypically dominant for women and for men. We therefore were careful to look at cue utilization for female and male targets separately in the present study (and also to test whether perceiver gender affected cue utilization).

Research Questions

We asked whether people are accurate at judging assertiveness, whether perceiver and/or target gender moderate accuracy, which cues perceivers rely on when judging assertiveness (cue utilization), whether perceiver and/or target gender moderate cue utilization, and how cue utilization is related to accuracy.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 108 (72 female and 36 male) undergraduates from Northeastern University, Boston, recruited from the university subject pool, participated in this study. Participants received partial course credit for their participation. The average age of the perceivers was 19 years and 87% were European Americans, 5% Asian Americans, 4% African Americans, 3% Latino Americans, and 1% others.

Procedure

In groups of 5 to 12, participants watched 33 short videoclips each featuring two people interacting and rated each target person in the dyad on assertiveness. The videoclips stemmed from a study designed to investigate the relationship between personality characteristics and behavioral cues (Vogt & Colvin, in press). Targets were 88 undergraduates (44 females and 44 males) recruited from the same university subject pool (for a detailed description of targets, see Vogt & Colvin, in press). Each clip featured an unacquainted woman and man (targets) sitting next to each other discussing whatever they chose.

Four videotapes with eleven 1-min interactions (44 videoclips total) each were used (88 targets total). Each group of participants watched only 3 of the 4 tapes in random order (33 videoclips, 66 targets). After each 1-min interaction, the experimenter stopped the tape and perceivers were asked to rate both targets on assertiveness, each on a scale from 1 (not very assertive) to 7 (very assertive). A very assertive person was defined as "a dominant, forceful person; a person that is rather a leader of groups she/he belongs to; other people often look to him/her to make decisions." A not very assertive person was defined as "not a dominant and not a forceful person; a person that would rather go his/her own way than be a leader of others; a person that doesn't find it easy to take charge

of a situation" (phrased according to the NEO-PI-R assertiveness facet items, Costa & McCrae, 1992). After assessing assertiveness for the 66 targets (33 female and 33 male targets), participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Coding of Behavior

A total of 44 interactions consisting of 88 targets were coded (all 4 tapes). Eight research assistants, as well as the third author (female coder N = 8; male coder N = 1), served as independent, reliable raters and coded targets on 16 behaviors. For a detailed description of the coded behaviors refer to Murphy, Hall, and Colvin (in press). Each target's behavior was coded independently of the interaction partner. While coding, only the specified target was visible; the interaction partner was concealed by covering one half of the video screen during coding sessions. For any given behavior, two coders independently coded interaction sessions and each coder rated 44 targets (50% of total targets; except for smiling for which 3 coders coded all 88 targets). Each coder rated the specified characteristic for all the targets before proceeding to the next characteristic or behavior. Verbatim transcripts were generated for each of the 1-min interactions between two individual targets. The transcripts included nonfluencies (speech errors) and fillers (e.g., "um," "ah," "uh"). These transcripts were used to calculate the occurrence of several speech-related behaviors.

Average reliability between coders was acceptable (mean Pearson correlation r = .81; range = .62 - .98). For a list of coded behaviors, coding categories, and reliability between coders, see Table 1.

Table 1. Coded Behavioral Cues and Interjudge Reliabilities

Behavioral cue	Coding type	Coding scale	Reliability
Fidgeting	Rating	1 – 9	.62
Gazing	Measured sec		.95
Nonfluencies[a]	Frequency		.85
Looking while listening[b]	Measured sec		.96
Responsive[c]	Rating	1 – 9	.74
Clear communicator	Rating	1 – 9	.73
Pleasant speech	Rating	1 – 9	.72
Erect posture	Rating	1 – 9	.77
Hesitations	Rating	1 – 9	.62
Interesting [a]	Rating	1 – 9	.76
Looking while speaking[d]	Measured sec		.96
Fillers	Rating	1 – 9	.68
Speaking time	Measured sec		.98
Smiling[e]	Frequency		.84
Talk with hands	Rating	1 – 9	.94
Questions[a]	Frequency		.88

Note. Reliabilities (all between 2 people) based on Pearson *r* for 10 individual targets, unless otherwise noted. [a] Reliability calculated from transcripts of interactions and based on 22 individual targets. [b] Reliability based on 26 individual targets. [c] Two coders rated responsiveness for all targets, reliability was calculated as an alpha coefficient. [d] Reliability based on 34 individual targets. [e] Three coders coded smiling for all targets, reliability was calculated as an alpha coefficient.

Actual Assertiveness

Targets completed the NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992), which includes a measure of assertiveness in a subscale of the extraversion dimension (8 items), which served as the *actual assertiveness* measure. The self-reported assertiveness measure was based on N = 88 and showed a mean of 16.16 (SD = 5.81, range = 1 - 30). Female and male targets did not differ in their self-reported assertiveness, M = 15.99, M = 16.33, female and male targets respectively, $t(86) = 0.274$, p >.10.

Accuracy of Assessing Assertiveness

For each perceiver, we calculated the correlation between perceived assertiveness and actual assertiveness across the 33 targets judged by each perceiver. This correlation coefficient served as the indicator of accuracy of assessing assertiveness. If a perceiver randomly guessed targets' assertiveness, the correlation between perceived and actual assertiveness would be near 0. To test whether perceivers were able to assess assertiveness above chance level, we tested whether perceivers' accuracy coefficients were significantly larger than 0 with a single sample *t*-test.

Cue Utilization

Cue utilization refers to the extent to which a perceiver used a certain behavioral cue to judge assertiveness in targets. For each perceiver, we correlated perceived assertiveness with each of the behavioral cues across targets. This correlation indicated how much the perceiver used a specific cue to judge assertiveness. This was done for female and male perceivers separately and for female and male targets separately.

RESULTS

All reported *p*-values are two-tailed.

Accuracy of Judging Assertiveness

As stated above, accuracy of judging assertiveness was calculated for each perceiver by correlating the perceiver's assertiveness ratings of the targets with the targets' actual assertiveness. After transforming into Fisher's z for normalization (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991), this correlation coefficient was used as an indicator of accuracy. We then performed a *t*-test to see whether accuracy was above chance level (greater than 0) and found that perceivers can judge assertiveness of others accurately, $t(107) = 12.76$, $p < .0001$ (M = .14, SD = .12, range = –.11 - .47). [1]

Additionally, for each perceiver we calculated accuracy of assessing assertiveness for female and male targets separately (again transforming the correlation coefficient into Fisher's z). To test whether perceiver gender and/or target gender influenced accuracy, we performed a 2 (perceiver gender) by 2 (target gender) ANOVA with the latter as a re-

[1] Although the *t*-test was based on values subjected to a Fisher's z transformation, the reported mean and standard deviation reflect the non-transformed values.

peated measure factor and accuracy as the dependent variable. Results showed no significant perceiver gender main effect, $F(1, 106) = 0.13$, $p = .72$, and no significant interaction effect, $F(1, 106) = 0.74$, $p = .39$, but a significant target gender main effect, $F(1, 106) = 20.75$, $p = .0001$, showing that female targets' assertiveness ($M = .19$) was assessed more accurately than male targets' assertiveness ($M = .10$).[2]

Cue Utilization

For each perceiver, perceived assertiveness was correlated with each of the behavioral cues across targets, for female and male targets separately and for female and male perceivers separately. Table 2 (columns 3 and 4) shows the average cue utilization correlation coefficient for female and male perceivers as well as for female and male targets separately (the non-transformed values). To test whether perceivers used a certain behavioral cue above chance level, we performed *t*-tests (testing against 0) for each behavior separately (for female and male targets and female and male perceivers separately), after having transformed the correlation coefficients into Fischer's *z*. Perceivers relied significantly (all *p*'s < .0001) on most of the measured cues when assessing assertiveness in others. The exceptions are marked as "[a]" in Table 2: Pleasant speech style was not used as an indicator of assertiveness in male targets (neither female nor male perceivers), male perceivers did not rely on erect posture when assessing assertiveness in women, male perceivers did not rely on looking while speaking when assessing assertiveness in men, smiling was not used as an indicator of assertiveness in female targets (neither female nor male perceivers), and male perceivers did not rely on questions when assessing others' assertiveness (regardless of whether it was a male or female target).

To address the question of whether female and male perceivers differed in how much they relied on each cue to assess assertiveness and/or whether perceivers used different cues to assess assertiveness in female and male targets we calculated 2 (perceiver gender) by 2 (target gender) ANOVAs with the latter as a repeated measure factor and each cue utilization coefficient as the dependent variable. For these calculations we used the Fisher-transformed data. Table 2 shows the means (non-transformed) as well as the *F*-values for the two main effects and the interaction effect. The strongest effects for most variables can be found between female and male targets. Perceivers used behavioral cues differently depending on whether they were assessing assertiveness in female or male targets. In female targets, a high level of fidgeting was used as a sign of assertiveness whereas in male targets, a low level of fidgeting was used as a sign of assertiveness. Perceivers relied more on gazing at the interaction partner, nonfluencies in the speech, being responsive, being a clear communicator, having a pleasant speech style, being interesting, looking at the partner while speaking, and using fillers (marginally so) as an indicator of assertiveness in female than in male targets. In male targets as compared to female targets, perceivers relied more on looking at the partner while listening, erect posture, and not using hesitations as an indicator of assertiveness. For speaking time, there was not only a significant target gender effect, indicating that speaking time was used more as an indicator of assertiveness in female than in male targets, but there was also a significant interaction effect showing that for opposite-gender perceptions, perceivers relied more on

[2] The reported means reflect the non-transformed values.

speaking time to judge assertiveness than in same-gender perceptions. Smiling was used as an indicator of assertiveness when assessing male targets but not when assessing female targets. Moreover, when female perceivers judged assertiveness in male targets, they relied more on smiling as an indicator of assertiveness then when they judged assertiveness in female targets. In opposite-gender perceptions, talking with hands was more used as an indicator of assertiveness than in same-gender perceptions. There were no main or interaction effects in the use of questions as an indicator of assertiveness.

Table 2. Effects of Perceiver Gender and Target Gender on Cue Utilization

Behavioral cue	Perceiver gender	*M* female targets	*M* male targets	Target gender main effect, *F*(1, 106)	Perceiver gender main effect, *F*(1, 106)	Interaction effect, *F*(1, 106)
Fidgeting	female	.18	-.21	353.67****	0.03	0.33
	male	.17	-.20			
Gazing	female	.39	.14	191.99***	0.68	0.00
	male	.41	.17			
Nonfluencies	female	.35	.10	117.88****	0.12	0.06
	male	.34	.10			
Looking while listening	female	.09	.23	54.50****	0.29	0.05
	male	.10	.25			
Responsive	female	.51	.40	40.02****	0.34	0.02
	male	.52	.42			
Clear communicator	female	.24	.10	39.97****	1.87	0.01
	male	.27	.14			
Pleasant speech	female	.15	.01[a]	20.77****	0.09	0.35
	male	.14	.04[a]			
Erect posture	female	.07	.14	17.49****	0.90	0.20
	male	.05[a]	.14			
Hesitations	female	-.17	-.23	10.68***	1.10	0.00
	male	-.19	-.27			
Interesting	female	.39	.35	8.03**	1.08	0.78
	male	.44	.37			
Looking while speaking	female	.07	.04	4.30*	0.19	0.11
	male	.09	.05[a]			
Fillers	female	.24	.22	2.99+	1.32	1.04
	male	.23	.17			
Speaking time	female	.43	.32	64.45****	0.40	4.36*
	male	.49	.30			
Smiling	female	.02[a]	.20	37.60****	4.39*	5.25*
	male	.02[a]	.10			
Talk with hands	female	.27	.30	1.40	0.84	4.95*
	male	.34	.27			
Questions	female	.08	.05	0.45	1.80	2.68
	male	.00[a]	.06[a]			

Note. Female perceivers $N = 72$, Male perceivers $N = 36$. Means are averaged (across perceivers) Pearson's correlation coefficients (correlation between behavioral cue and perceived assertiveness). + $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; **** $p < .0001$. [a] Not significantly different from chance level (*t*-test against 0).

Relation Between Cue Utilization and Accuracy

How much did using a specific cue contribute to accuracy of judging assertiveness? Since perceivers used different cues when judging female as opposed to male targets, we performed a regression analysis with accuracy as the dependent variable and cue utilization of all the measured cues as the independent variables for female and male targets separately. We transformed the cue utilization coefficients and the accuracy of judging assertiveness coefficient into Fisher's *z* for calculating the regression analyses. Table 3 shows the unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients and their significance level. For female targets, using nonfluencies and erect posture and not using looking while speaking and not using speaking time contributed to accuracy of judging assertiveness. For male targets, using looking while listening, erect posture, and fillers and not using a pleasant speech style and not using talking with hands (both marginally so) contributed to accuracy of judging assertiveness. Overall, it seems as if we measured a fair amount of valid cues since using all the cues to judge assertiveness explained overall accuracy, $R = .53$, $R^2 = .28$, $p < .01$; $R = .60$, $R^2 = .36$, $p < .0001$; female and male targets respectively.

Table 3. Regression Analyses for Female and Male Targets Separately

	Female targets			Male targets		
Variable	B	SE B	ß	B	SE B	ß
Fidgeting	-.04	.17	-.04	-.16	.15	-.14
Gazing	.07	.13	.09	-.10	.24	-.09
Nonfluencies	.43	.11	.47****	-.02	.19	-.02
Looking while listening	.08	.17	.09	.42	.14	.39**
Responsive	-.11	.10	-.15	-.27	.20	-.24
Clear communicator	-.02	.19	-.02	.18	.19	.14
Pleasant speech	-.12	.14	-.15	-.37	.21	-.36+
Erect posture	.33	.14	.34*	.31	.16	.25*
Hesitations	-.10	.15	-.11	-.09	.14	-.09
Interesting	-.41	.28	-.43	.23	.22	.21
Looking while speaking	-.44	.17	-.46*	.06	.24	.05
Fillers	.18	.13	.17	.35	.13	.36**
Speaking time	-.51	.22	-.65*	-.09	.23	-.09
Smiling	-.06	.16	-.07	.05	.13	.04
Talk with hands	.24	.14	.27	-.35	.15	-.30+
Questions	.14	.15	.13	.19	.15	.19

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient, SE B = Standard error of the unstandardized regression coefficient, ß = Standardized regression coefficient. $R = .53$, $p < .0001$, $R = .60$, $p < .001$; female and male targets respectively. + p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001; **** p < .0001.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate (a) whether perceivers were able to judge assertiveness in others, (b) whether perceiver gender and/or target gender affected accuracy of judging assertiveness, (c) whether cue utilization differed for female and male perceivers and/or targets, and (d) how cue utilization was related to accuracy. Our results showed

that perceivers could judge assertiveness in others at better than chance level and that female targets were assessed more accurately than male targets. However, no perceiver gender difference in accuracy of judging assertiveness emerged. Perceivers used many of the cues differently when judging assertiveness in female or male targets. Perceiver gender, however, did not affect cue utilization. Additionally, only the utilization of a few cues contributed to accuracy and somewhat different cues contributed to accuracy when assessing female as opposed to male targets.

There is ample evidence in the research literature that people are accurate at judging others' personality characteristics (Ambady et al., 1999; Ambady et al., 1995; Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992; Borkenau & Liebler, 1992). It therefore comes as not much of a surprise that this is also true for the specific trait of assertiveness, as shown in the present study. Because assertiveness is related to dominance or status, high accuracy in judging assertiveness therefore parallels the finding by Schmid Mast and Hall (2003) who could show that people were able to judge status in others. It stands, however, in partial contrast to the finding reported by Moskowitz (1990) showing that self-reported dominance converged with dominance judgments of observers only for male targets but not for female targets.

Why were people accurate at assessing assertiveness? Dominance is seen as one of the most important dimensions in interpersonal interactions (Foa, 1961; Gifford, 1994; Kiesler, 1983; Wiggins, 1979). This suggests that almost everyone has had many opportunities to interact with people who differ in how assertive they are. Moreover, behavioral expressions of assertiveness might be particularly salient when compared to, for instance, shyness. As a result, exposure to different levels of assertiveness might increase knowledge of how the trait manifests in behavior which in turn can augment accuracy. In the same vein, accuracy in personality judgments is enhanced if the trait to be assessed has an interpersonal component (Kenrick & Funder, 1988). This is certainly the case for assertiveness. Assertiveness has the potential to be revealed in interpersonal interactions and becomes therefore an observable trait.

The interpersonal sensitivity literature shows that female targets are assessed more accurately than male targets (Ambady et al., 1995; Hall, 1984; Rosenthal et al., 1979), which is often attributed to women being more expressive and therefore more "legible." In accordance, we found perceivers to be more accurate when judging assertiveness in women than in men. Women might just be more expressive in general, regardless of what specific characteristic they convey. Alternatively, accuracy of judging assertiveness might have been lower in male targets than in female targets because of opposite-gender interactions. Assertiveness might be a characteristic that is more salient in interactions among men (Schmid Mast, 2001; 2002). This might explain why it was more difficult to accurately judge assertiveness when males interacted with females like in our study. For instance, men might have been flirting with the women and not trying to convey their levels of assertiveness. In general, it remains unclear what role the gender of the target's interaction partner plays for accuracy of judging assertiveness and future research might want to tackle that issue.

In general, there not only exists a gender difference in interpersonal accuracy for women targets but also for women perceivers. Numerous studies have shown that women do a better job at judging others than men do (Hall, 1984). Interestingly, we could not find such an effect in the present study. This can have different reasons. For instance, assertiveness is a rather male-stereotypical characteristic (Bem, 1974; Eagly, 1987) and,

therefore, we might expect men to be more interested in, more concerned with, and/or more exposed to assertiveness in their daily lives as compared to women. This might make them experts on assertiveness more so than women. Assuming that there is an existing gender difference favoring women when it comes to judging others in general, the very fact that in the present study perceivers had to judge a male-stereotypical characteristic might have given them an edge and/or might have penalized women. This might be the reason for no apparent gender difference in perceiver accuracy. In the same vein, there was no perceiver gender difference in accuracy in a study where perceivers had to judge the status of others (Schmid Mast & Hall, 2003). However, it is difficult to interpret a null result and more research is needed to address the question of the relationship between gender and accuracy of assessing gender-stereotypical characteristics.

Cue utilization indicates whether perceivers relied on a specific cue to judge assertiveness. With a few exceptions (Table 2), people used all the cues we measured to judge assertiveness. However, perceivers differentiated their cue utilization according to whether they were judging a female or a male target. For instance, perceivers relied more on verbal cues to assess female as compared to male targets (nonfluencies, being a clear communicator, having a pleasant speech style, using fillers). This was not due to women talking more than men in the interaction (as a matter of fact, there was no gender difference in how much women and men talked, $t(86) = -1.30$, $p = .20$. In general, talking and language seem to be a more important means to define interpersonal relationships for women than for men (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). If perceivers take this into account, it might explain why they rely more on verbal cues related to talking and language in female as opposed to male targets. Also, in the present study, perceivers relied more on cues indicating interpersonal orientation when judging female as opposed to judging male targets (gazing, being responsive, looking at partner while speaking). In general, women are seen as more interpersonally oriented than men (Bem, 1974; Eagly, 1987) and it might therefore be an effective strategy to rely on interpersonal cues when trying to assess women. For male targets as opposed to female targets, we found that perceivers relied more on bodily expressions like fidgeting (reversed) and erect posture. However, hesitations (reversed) and looking while listening were also relied on more when judging male as opposed to female targets. In sum, for male targets, perceivers most likely had a much less straightforward strategy when selecting the cues they would rely on when judging assertiveness. This might also explain why female targets were judged more accurately than male targets.

One could argue that we might not have measured the right cues, meaning that perceivers relied on cues other than we assessed. The regression analyses, however, indicated that cue utilization of the measured cues did explain overall accuracy for both female and male targets. We can, of course, not rule out that perceivers used additional cues when judging assertiveness. It is noteworthy, however, that except for erect posture, accuracy for female targets was predicted by a different cue utilization policy than accuracy for male targets (Table 3). This means that to achieve high levels of accuracy, it is sufficient to know how to use a few cues but these few cues are different for female and male targets.

Assertiveness is always directed toward one or several social interaction partners and therefore plays an important role in many social interactions. It goes without saying that in some social interactions, assertiveness is a more important aspect than in others. There are

many instances in which we can profit from judging others accurately on assertiveness. Accurately judging if somebody is trying to overthrow my dominance position might help prevent a tedious power struggle. Also, accurately assessing who is the person in charge in a social gathering might prevent from social faux-pas and embarrassment and might result in a more effective communication style with fewer misunderstandings. On a more specific level, being able to judge others on assertiveness seems very important to some individuals. For instance, people working in human resources who are responsible for selecting others for specific hierarchical positions within an organization (e.g., evaluators in so-called assessment centers) need to be very accurate at judging assertiveness in job candidates to avoid costly miscasts.

Our study has shown that people vary in their accuracy of judging assertiveness; some are very good and some are not. Because those we assessed cue utilization for each perceiver individually, it is potentially possible to draft an individual learning program to increase accuracy. We think that looking at cue utilization for each perceiver individually has a lot of potential not only in the realm of judging assertiveness but for any sort of interpersonal judgment.

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PROCENJIVANJE ASERTIVNOSTI

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U ovom radu smo istraživali da li karakterna crta asertivnosti može precizno da se proceni, koji pokazatelji se koriste za procenjivanje asertivnosti i kakav je odnos izmedju upotrebe tih pokazatelja i preciznosti. Uz to smo utvrdjivali i da li pol posmatrača i/li posmatrane osobe utiče na neke od ovih odnosa. Ispitanici (72 žene i 36 muškaraca) gledali su 33 kratka video snimka u kojima su jedna ženska i jedna muška osoba komunicirale. Posle odgledanog video snimka, ispitanici su označavali koliko je, po njihovoj proceni, posmatrana osoba asertivna. Pošto je razmera asertivnosti posmatrane osobe po sopstvenoj proceni već bila poznata, mogla je da se izračuna preciznost procenjivanja asertivnosti. Svaka posmatrana osoba je bila šifrirana na spisku bihejvioralnih pokazatelja. Rezultati su pokazali da se asertivnost može procenjivati na nivou višem od slučajnog i da su posmatrane osobe ženskog pola preciznije procenjivane od osoba muškog pola. Da bi se utvrdilo u kojoj meri se posmatrači oslanjaju na odredjeni pokazatelj u procenjivanju asertivnosti (upotreba pokazatelja), uočena asertivnost dovodjena je u korelaciju sa svakim od bihejvioralnih pokazatelja kod posmatranih osoba. Utvrdili smo da posmatrači koriste različite pokazatelje prilikom procenjivanja asertivnosti kod posmatranih osoba ženskog u odnosu na muški pol. Takodje, preciznost pri procenjivanju asertivnosti postizana je upotrebom nešto drugačijih pokazatelja zavisno od pola posmatrane osobe.