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Impact of positive and negative affectivity on performance appraisal ratings

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**IMPACT OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECTIVITY ON PERFORMANCE
APPRAISAL RATINGS**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Industrial/Organizational Psychology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Science

By

Michelle Suzanne Deneau

December 1999

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ABSTRACT

IMPACT OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECTIVITY ON PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL RATINGS

by Michelle Suzanne Deneau

The purpose of this thesis was to assess the impact that rater and ratee affectivity would have on performance appraisal ratings. It examines how positive and negative affectivity could bias performance ratings, considering both rater affectivity, ratee affectivity, and the interaction of the two. One hundred and sixty seven undergraduate students completed two questionnaires. The first was the Positive and Negative Affectivity Scale, which assessed rater affectivity. Following that, participants read one of six scenarios describing job performance, varying on ratee affectivity and gender. Participants were then asked to complete a performance appraisal form, which rated nine performance dimensions. Analysis of Variance were run on all nine dimensions. Significant results were found for the performance dimension, Quantity regarding rater affectivity.

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Impact of Positive and Negative Affectivity on Performance Appraisal Ratings

Many factors influence organizational behavior and there have been many attempts to understand it. Traditionally, research has focused on environmental or situational factors when it comes to attempting to understand an individual's behavior within an organization (George, 1992). For example, job stress has been related to environmental stressors such as high levels of ambiguity, heavy workload, or a demanding or unreasonable supervisor (Brief, Burke, George, Robinson & Webster, 1988). Research has also related environmental factors to issues such as job satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover rates.

During the 1980's (Spector & O'Connell, 1994), research began to break away from focusing solely on environmental factors to looking at personality's potential impact on organizational behavior. Researchers began looking at personality dimensions in relation to organizational topics. These organizational topics include motivation, or "the internal processes that activate, guide, and maintain behavior (especially goal-directed behavior)..." (Baron, 1991, p.1). Researchers have also examined work stress, which is defined by Luthans (1995) as an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological, and/or behavioral deviations for organizational participants, (p.1) and how this impacts organizational behavior (Burke, Brief & George, 1993). Other research (Krzystofiak, Cardy & Newman, 1988) has looked at job performance, which is "those outcomes that are produced or behaviors that are exhibited in order to perform certain job activities over a specific period of time." (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984). Also included in the research on personality and organizational topics is job satisfaction which is a very complex and frequently studied topic (Krzystofiak, et al., 1988). Luthans (1995) defines job satisfaction as "...a result of employee's perception of how well their job provides those things which are viewed as important." (p.124)

The personality studies in the job satisfaction research included dimensions such as Type A (Spector & O'Connell, 1994), the extent to which a person typically behaves in a driving, time urgent manner (Burger, 1993); locus of control (Smith, Dugan & Trompenaars, 1997), the extent to which people generally perceive that they have control over events in their lives (Burger, 1993); and the five factors of personality (Luthans, 1995). The Big Five are the five basic dimensions of personality. They include Extraversion, or one's general level of activity and sociability. The second is Agreeableness or how trusting and helpful a person is. The third factor is Conscientiousness or how controlled and self disciplined a person is. The fourth factor is Neuroticism or how insecure or nervous a person is. Finally, Openness is the degree to which a person is imaginative and open to new experiences (Burger, 1993).

The research focusing on the relationship between personality and organizational issues found that although situational variables are not unimportant, personality adds a great deal to the understanding of organizational issues (George, 1992). Although many studies focusing on personality traits and organizational issues have been conducted, researchers have by no means exhausted personality traits as a topic in the organizational literature. Due to the wide variety of personality dimensions and organizational topics, many combinations have not yet been investigated. The personality traits, positive and negative affectivity, have been examined in relation to some organizational topics and have been found to have significant impact on these issues.

Positive and Negative Affectivity

Positive and negative affectivity seem to have the ability to color one's perceptions of the surrounding environment, people in that environment as well as the interactions between people and the environment. As described by Watson, Clark, & Tellegen (1988), those high on positive affectivity tend to have an overall sense of well being and feel

enthusiastic, active and alert. Also these individuals are high energy, have full concentration and are pleurably engaged. These individuals tend to perceive stimuli more positively, think and behave more positively and experience more positive affective states across time and situations than individuals low on positive affectivity. Those low in positive affectivity are characterized by sadness and lethargy, have lower self-efficacy, and a weaker overall sense of well being.

Watson et al. (1988) describe negative affectivity as a dimension of subjective distress and unpleasurable engagement that can include a variety of mood states such as anger, contempt, guilt, fear and nervousness. These individuals tend to think and act in ways that support negative affective states over time and across situations. Generally, these individuals have negative tendencies towards themselves and the world around them. Those low on negative affectivity tend not to view themselves and their environment as upsetting and stressful and are less likely to think and act in ways to promote and support such negative affective states and report feeling more calm and contented.

Research suggests positive affectivity and negative affectivity are not opposite ends of the same dimension, but instead they are distinct, independent dimensions. An individual can be high on both, low on both, or high on one and low on the other (George, 1992). How one can be high on both may be difficult to conceive since these two dimensions are apparently at odds with each other. George (1992) states that "certain affective states are primarily driven by one of these traits (e.g., excitement is influenced by positive affectivity and distress is influenced by negative affectivity) whereas other states reflect the combined influence of both traits (e.g., depression is associated predominantly with low positive affectivity, but also with high negative affectivity" (p. 188). Therefore, a person high on both positive and negative affectivity would tend to be very emotional. According to Cropanzano, James and Konovsky (1993), an individual high on both traits

would experience fluctuating moods in response to environmental events. Conversely, those individuals low on both positive and negative affectivity would exhibit a “flat affect” or seem relatively unemotional. While research indicates the possibility of being high or low on both traits, it’s more often found that individuals are higher on one or the other and most research works under that assumption. Positive and negative affectivity also correspond to the Big Five model of personality where positive affectivity corresponds to extraversion and negative affectivity to neuroticism (George, 1992).

Personality traits are considered “relatively enduring characteristics of people;...” (George, 1992, p. 187); indicating that positive and negative affectivity will have enduring effects upon an individual and thereby impact the organization for whom they work. Positive affectivity and/or negative affectivity have been shown to influence a broad range of organizational topics including work stress (Elliott, Chartrand & Harkins, 1994), coping (Chang & D’Zurilla, 1996), job satisfaction (Brief, Butcher & Roberson, 1995), and job performance (Cropanzano, et al., 1993).

Stress and Coping

A great deal of research conducted on positive and negative affectivity has focused on occupational stress and coping strategies. More recent research looks at positive and/or negative affectivity’s relationship to stress as well as how affectivity seems to be a confounding variable in some occupational stress research. Research indicates that positive affectivity and negative affectivity influence work related stress and the coping strategies used to combat stress. One conclusion was that those individuals high on negative affectivity may have higher scores on self reported measures of stress. “Because [these] individuals who have a tendency toward aversive mood states interpret stimuli more negatively, their reports of stressors and stress outcomes reflect a systematic negative bias” (Schauboeck, Ganster & Fox, 1992, p. 322). If one does not take into consideration

negative affectivity on a self reported measure of stress; those high on negative affectivity tend to inflate the scores due to their negative view of themselves and the world around them. Those high on negative affectivity tend to focus more on the negative aspects and even seek out the negative aspects in a situation. George (1992) suggests that those high on negative affectivity may even be instrumental in creating stressful conditions themselves as well as being more susceptible to those stressors found in the workplace.

Although work stress research has primarily focused on negative affectivity, positive affectivity also seems to relate to occupational stress and coping strategies. Since those high on positive affectivity are predisposed to positive emotional states, and interpret themselves and their environment positively. This is also true of their reaction to potential stressors. "It is possible that trait positive affectivity may also mediate cognitive appraisals of stressful situations to effect more optimistic perceptions of the self and the environment" (Elliot, et al., 1994, p.189). This suggests that those high on positive affectivity tend not to perceive potential stressors as stressful. In addition to this, when those high on positive affectivity perceive a situation or event as stressful they tend to have a more positive appraisal of their abilities and higher self-confidence in dealing with stress. Positive affectivity is also strongly related to positive problem orientation which is a cognitive problem solving orientation in which individuals tend to appraise problems as challenges, believe in one's own problem solving abilities, expect positive problem solving outcomes, and commit time and effort to solving problems rather than avoiding them (Chang & D'Zurilla, 1996). Generally, it seems that those high on positive affectivity are less likely to perceive stimuli as stressful, and when they do, they are more positive about being able to successfully deal with stress. In summary, both positive and negative affectivity have an influence on an individual's perception of stress and what types of coping strategies he/she selects.

Job Satisfaction

Another topic that has received a great deal of attention in positive and negative affectivity literature is job satisfaction. Many researchers have studied job satisfaction and its relationship to absenteeism, turnover and commitment, but most of this research has focused on situational variables and has not taken into consideration the effect of personality variables like affectivity. Generally researchers do not claim that situational variables are unimportant, but they point out that positive and negative affectivity are relatively stable personality traits that can influence job satisfaction across time (George, 1992). For example, individuals high on negative affectivity tend to view themselves and the world through a more negative lens. They report more distress and dissatisfaction across time and situations, are more introspective and dwell more on their failures and shortcomings, and tend to interpret ambiguous stimuli more negatively. This indicates a general tendency towards negative functioning incorporating both affective and cognitive dimensions (Necowitz & Roznowski, 1994). This tendency has a great deal of potential impact on job satisfaction.

There are several suggestions for how negative affectivity influences job satisfaction. One of the more emphasized beliefs is that those high on negative affectivity are more sensitive to negative stimuli, therefore, those high on negative affectivity would experience greater frequency and degree of negative events in the workplace, causing them to experience low job satisfaction. Another suggestion is that those high on negative affectivity have a lower sensitivity to positive stimuli, again causing them to focus on the negative and have lower job satisfaction (George, 1992). Another possible interpretation is that those high on negative affectivity may react less to positive mood inducing events (Agho, Price & Mueller, 1992). It is also suggested that people high on negative affectivity create negative situations and interactions with coworkers, which may lower

satisfaction (Cropanzano, et al., 1993). Necowitz and Roznowski (1994) also suggest that those high on negative affectivity are more susceptible to minor frustrations and irritations that occur in even the most pleasant work settings. They suggest that individuals low on negative affectivity do not allow these minor nuisances to distress themselves, whereas those high on negative affectivity have the propensity to dwell upon them. Those high on negative affectivity also perceive tasks more negatively compared to those lower on negative affectivity and tend to recall more negative aspects of task whereas, those lower on negative affectivity recall more descriptive features of tasks. Individuals high on negative affectivity also report engaging in more withdrawal behaviors which could lead to more negative interpersonal interactions and affect satisfaction negatively. All of these possibilities could contribute to decreasing job satisfaction.

Much research concerning affectivity and job satisfaction focuses on negative affectivity while very little research looks at positive affectivity in relation to job satisfaction. Research also shows that positive affectivity is related to job satisfaction (Cropanzano et al., 1993). Those high in positive affectivity have happier dispositions, tend to be happy across time and situations, and view themselves and the world more positively. It is logical that those who are high on positive affectivity are more satisfied with their job, and research does support this belief. Although the limited research conducted supports the relationship, it does not discuss how this relationship might work. Perhaps the relationship works in the reciprocal manner that negative affectivity functions. Those high on positive affectivity may be more sensitive to positive stimuli or less sensitive to negative stimuli. Those high on positive affectivity may also create a more positive work environment for themselves. They might be more outgoing and potentially engage in more positive social interaction, which could be rewarding. All of these could potentially contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction. Overall, positive and negative

affectivity influence job satisfaction in the long term since being high on one or the other can strongly color one's perceptions of his or her work environment and how these perceptions are interpreted either in a more positive or negative light.

Performance Appraisals

It has been suggested that due to the long term influence of personality characteristics, positive and negative affectivity could impact several other areas of organizational behavior (George, 1992). One such area is performance as measured through appraisals. Performance appraisals are defined by Bernardin and Beatty (1984) as "the interpretation of a performance measurement in terms of relative or absolute levels of effectiveness and/or the standards of performance met." (p.13) As is fitting, performance appraisals have a wide range of influence in an organization. They provide information that is used to make a variety of decisions, including training and development, distribution of organizational rewards, and decisions associated with promotions, transfers, demotions and terminations (Krzystofiak, et al., 1988). It is easy to understand why, with its broad influence, it is important to have an accurate performance appraisal system. A great deal of research has been conducted on various aspects of performance appraisals. When it became obvious that there were issues concerning performance appraisal accuracy, researchers first focused on improving the performance appraisal instrumentation (Krzystofiak et al., 1988). Later it became clear that the instrumentation was not the only source of inaccuracy. Hence researchers began to look at other aspects of the performance appraisal process such as the rater, the ratee, and the performance rating context (Padgett & Ilgen, 1989).

Performance Appraisals and Affectivity

Little research has focused on how positive and negative affectivity may be related to performance appraisals. Themes in the literature suggest that positive and negative

affectivity could influence performance appraisals in several ways. Affectivity could bias the performance review process from the perspective of the rater or the ratee as well as an interaction between the affectivity of the two.

Rater Affectivity

Researchers identified several types of bias as well as validity and reliability issues with the methods of performance appraisals (Krzystofiak et al., 1988). A great deal of this research has focused on the rater's influence on the performance appraisal process. Ratings assigned by the rater may be influenced by many potential forms of bias including leniency effect, similar to me effects, attributional errors, memory distortions, and liking or disliking the ratee (Baron, 1991). Krzystofiak et al., (1988), also concerned with personality influences of the rater, suggested that personality traits could also influence performance evaluations. "The fundamental source of error and bias in this model results from the operation of implicit personality theories that influence what is attended to, how it is encoded and stored, as well as what is recalled and how it is evaluated," (Krzystofiak et al., 1988). Krzystofiak et al. (1988) was concerned with the bias that could potentially be introduced by personality traits which have such a strong influence on how individuals perceive information in their environment, store information in memory, recall information and evaluate that information.

In the same vein as "liking or disliking the ratee," Varma, DeNisi & Peters (1996) found that interpersonal affect, or one's "like-dislike" reaction, was significantly related to performance appraisal ratings. This study also found that the more "ambiguous" the evaluation condition, the greater the influence of interpersonal affect on the rater's evaluation of performance. These results support the recommendation that appraisals should focus strongly on task related measures of performance whenever possible. Robbins and DeNisi (1998) took this issue one step further by looking to see if

interpersonal affect could influence recall. Although they found that interpersonal affect influenced performance appraisal ratings, they were not able to show that it influenced information recalled during the performance appraisal process. With the great deal of importance organizations place upon performance appraisal ratings, it is clear that one must be aware of the potential biasing influences that both situations and personalities could have on the process.

Affectivity literature suggests that it is very likely for rater positive and negative affectivity to impact the performance appraisal process. The actual performance appraisal rating an employee receives could be strongly influenced by the rater's affectivity. For instance, if the rater is high on negative affectivity, this individual might tend to rate a subordinate less favorably than actual performance merits simply because they focus on more negative events and interpret the subordinate's actions more negatively. Similarly, if the rater is high on positive affectivity, they might rate the subordinate more favorably than actual performance merits because the rater is focusing more on the positive events and interpreting events more positively.

Ratee Affectivity

Positive and negative affectivity could also impact the performance appraisal process from the ratee's side as well. Ratees' affectivity could also influence performance appraisal ratings by how his/her affectivity impacts his/her performance and interactions with others at work. A study by Chen, Dai, Spector, and Jex (1997) found that positive affectivity traits were rated as more socially desirable than negative affectivity traits. Chen et al. (1997) also found that participants high on the need for social desirability endorsed more positive affectivity items than negative affectivity items. If being high on negative affectivity is socially undesirable, this could impact the rater's performance appraisal rating in a negative manner. Conversely, if one is high on positive affectivity and that is more

socially desirable, one's performance appraisal rating could be positively biased.

Interaction of Rater and Ratee Affectivity

Naturally neither rater or ratee affectivity impact performance appraisals in a vacuum. Rater and ratee affectivity combine to produce an interaction effect. It is important to consider the interaction of the rater's affectivity and the ratee's affectivity and how this could impact the performance ratings. For example, if both the rater and the ratee are high on the same dimension, it would be likely that would enhance the biasing impact of affectivity. If both rater and ratee are high on positive affectivity, one would expect the rater to rate performance higher, due to his/her own focus on the positive and tendency to perceive the world more positively as well as the ratee's affectivity being more socially desirable. In the case where the rater (ratee) is high on positive or negative affectivity and the ratee (rater) is low, one would expect to see some bias in the ratings, but not to the extreme in the above case. If the interaction is such that both rater and ratee are low on positive or negative affectivity, affectivity would have a minimal impact on the performance ratings.

Present Study

The present study proposed to look further into the potential sources of performance appraisal bias, in relationship to positive affectivity and negative affectivity. More specifically, this study hopes to discover if the social desirability of the positive affectivity or the social undesirability of the negative affectivity personality traits carries over into the performance appraisal arena. In line with what researchers have found so far, one would expect that those high on positive affectivity would tend to give higher ratings than raters high on negative affectivity. This possibly could be due to the manner in which these individuals perceive their environment. Those higher on the positive affectivity scale would tend to rate more positive and for the reciprocal reason those high on negative

affectivity would tend to focus on the negative and therefore rate more negatively. Those who rank lower on the positive and negative affectivity scales would focus more equally on both the positive and negative aspects of performance.

Also important to consider would be a ratee is high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity, a rater could potentially be biased by the social desirability of these characteristics and give the employee a more favorable evaluation than they might have otherwise. The reciprocal could also be true. If the ratee is high on negativity affectivity and low on positive affectivity, the social undesirability of these characteristics could bias the rater in giving the employee less favorable ratings. Specifically the hypotheses of the present study are:

H1. Rater affectivity will impact the rater's evaluation of performance.

Specifically, raters high on positive affectivity will rate performance higher and rater's high on negative affectivity will rate performance lower than a rater who is moderate on either scale.

H2. Ratee affectivity will impact the rater's evaluation of performance.

Specifically, the rater will give higher performance ratings to the ratee who is high on positive affectivity than the ratee who is not high on either positive or negative affectivity. Furthermore, the raters will give the lowest ratings to the ratee who is high on negative affectivity, compared to ratees who are high on positive affectivity or neutral.

H3. The interaction of rater and ratee affectivity will impact the evaluation of performance as well. When both the rater and ratee are high on positive or negative affectivity or both are low on positive and negative affectivity, the impact on performance ratings will likely be very minimal, due to the fact that one of the affectivity traits is not dominant since they are both the

same. However, when either the rater or ratee are high on either positive or negative affectivity and the other is low on positive or negative affectivity, affectivity could still influence performance ratings. Whichever trait is high would be the dominant and therefore more influential trait.

If the present study supports this prediction it would be important to bring to the attention of those responsible for performance appraisals systems. Positive and negative affectivity are, once again, personality traits and therefore have relatively enduring and lasting effects on individuals. In this case, this lasting impact could also influence an individual's career.

As noted earlier, performance appraisals have a wide reaching effect within organizations. They influence a variety of organizational issues, including the distribution of rewards, decisions behind promotions, transfers and promotions. It is therefore important to identify factors that could unfairly distort the performance appraisal ratings that could impact career progress or lack thereof. Hopefully, the present study will help to prove whether or not positive and negative affectivity of the rater and the ratee can impact performance appraisal ratings. This has particular importance considering all of the weight organizations place on performance appraisal ratings. Also, a recent trend has been for organizations to implement multi-rater performance appraisal systems, in which more than one individual is responsible for evaluating employee performance. This system attempts to gain ratings from multiple perspectives and hopefully a more accurate picture of performance. In the case of positive and negative affectivity, this attempt at reducing bias could fail since the bias may not solely stem from one trait of one of the raters, but instead from a personality trait of the ratee which would remain constant across raters. This bias could therefore influence all the raters and cause this attempt to increase accuracy to fail.

It is also important to determine if positive affectivity and/or negative affectivity is

a necessary component of job performance in a given job. For instance, if an employee is high on negative affectivity, but this is not a hindrance in the particular job they hold, and as a result of his/her negative affectivity the supervisor gives a lower performance appraisal rating, this could limit career progress. Not to mention, an organization may be limiting their internal applicant pool unnecessarily and risking turnover of qualified employees by assigning lower performance ratings. On the flip side, if an individual high on positive affectivity is given higher performance appraisal ratings and as a result is given a promotion or added job responsibilities that he/she is not ready for, this could set back both the organization and the employee. As indicated, performance appraisals have such a wide spread and powerful impact on both organizations and individuals, it is extremely important that one takes the time to be sure what performance appraisals are actually measuring is performance and not other biasing factors.

Method

Participants

One hundred and sixty seven undergraduate students at San Jose State University participated in the present study. Thirty-seven of those participated as part of the research participation requirement for the undergraduate psychology courses. The remainder of the participants were in one of two undergraduate organizational behavior courses in the business school. Age of participants ranged from 18 to 53 years with a majority of the subjects falling into the 18 to 26 years range. Seventy-four (44.3%) of the participants were male and 93 (55.7%) were female.

Materials

The Positive and Negative Affectivity Schedule (PANAS) (Watson et al., 1988) was used, $\alpha=.86$. This measure is designed to measure positive and negative affectivity. The PANAS consists of a list of words that are characteristic of either positive

or negative affectivity, such as interested and distressed. There is a total of twenty items; ten measuring positive affectivity and ten measuring negative affectivity. Directions ask participants to rate to what extent they feel each item describes them at that moment. The rating system was a five point Likert scale. The anchors for this scale, beginning with "1" are "very slightly or not at all," "a little," "moderately," "quite a bit," "extremely." Overall affectivity scores are the average of all ten items for each dimension. Added to this measure were several demographic questions. They asked participants about age, gender, had the participants ever been responsible for evaluating another employee's job performance, are they currently employed, if yes, how many hours per week, who is the employer and what is the position?

Also used were six different scenarios describing job performance. The scenarios were created using Knowledge Point's Performance Now! Software. Each scenario contains the same description of performance, which describes performance that "meets expectations." Of the six scenarios, half described a male employee, Jason, and the other half described a female employee, Jennifer. Also, the scenarios varied in terms of the information about the ratee's affectivity. Two of the scenarios gave a description of an employee who is high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity. Two others described an employee high on negative affectivity and low on positive affectivity. The third set of scenarios did not include a description of affectivity, but just describes the performance.

Also developed using the Performance Now! Software, was a performance review form, $\alpha=.87$. This form asked participants to rate the employee's performance on nine dimensions; quantity of work, quality of work, job knowledge, problem solving, initiative, adaptability, planning and organization, judgement, and dependability. Participants were asked to rate performance on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. The anchors of the this scale,

beginning with “1” were “Unsatisfactory,” “Needs Improvement,” “Meets Expectations,” “Exceeds Job Requirements,” and “Outstanding.”

Procedures

Six packets were assembled by the researcher. Each one contained two Agreements to Participate in Research, one for the participant and one for the researcher, the PANAS with added demographic information, one of the six scenarios, and a performance review form. Participants were given one of the packets and asked to read the agreement, sign both copies and keep one for themselves and then complete the first questionnaire (PANAS). After completing the PANAS, participants were then asked to then read the scenario and evaluate the performance of the employee in the scenario.

Frequencies were run on the average scores for positive and negative affectivity to determine the median split for each variable. Positive affectivity split at 3.00 and negative affectivity split at 1.5. Following that, the data were recoded to create the variable Rater Affectivity (high positive/high negative, high positive/low negative, low positive/high negative, and low positive/low negative). Rater Affectivity assessed the subject’s positive and negative affectivity level as either high or low.

Results

Means and standard deviations were calculated for each performance variable by rater affectivity and ratee affectivity. Then ANOVA’s were run for each performance variable looking at the main effect for Rater affectivity (high positive/high negative, high positive/low negative, low positive/high negative, low positive/low negative), the main effect for Ratee affectivity (positive, neutral, and negative) and the effect of the interaction. Although only one of the effect was significant, several patterns of results were found.

Rater Affectivity

Rater affectivity had the only performance variable, Quantity, which resulted in significant results. (Table 1) These results had partial support for the hypothesis. Participants high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity gave higher performance ratings than those participants who were high on both traits or low on both traits. However, the highest ratings were given by participants low on positive affectivity and high on negative affectivity. A similar, although non-significant pattern, was found for Quality and Planning/Organization. (Tables 2 and 7) Both of these variables had the same results for the highest and lowest performance ratings, but differed on the middle groups.

Another pattern, although non-significant, appeared for two of the performance variables, Job Knowledge and Problem Solving. (Tables 3 and 4) Participants high on both traits gave the highest performance ratings, next were those low on positive affectivity and high on negative affectivity, followed by those low on both traits and last were those high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity. This pattern did not support the hypothesis.

The third pattern found for rater affectivity was for Initiative and Adaptability. (Tables 5 and 6) Participants high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity gave the highest performance ratings, followed by those high on both traits and those low on both traits, and then those who were low on positive affectivity and high on negative affectivity. Although this pattern was non-significant, it did support the hypothesis.

For Judgement, participants who were high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity gave the highest performance ratings, then those low on both traits, followed by those low on positive affectivity and high on negative affectivity, and those high on both traits gave the lowest ratings. See Table 8. This partially supported the hypothesis in that those high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity gave the highest performance ratings.

For Dependability, participants who gave the highest performance ratings were high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity, then those high on both traits, followed by those low on positive affectivity and high on negative affectivity, and those who gave the lowest performance ratings were those who were low on both traits. See Table 9. This partially supported the hypothesis in that those high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity gave the highest performance ratings.

Ratee Affectivity

Although none of the main effects for ratee affectivity were significant, two main patterns did emerge. The first was for the performance variables Problem Solving, Initiative, Adaptability, and Judgement. (Tables 4, 5, 6, and 8) Participants who read the neutral scenario gave the highest performance ratings, followed by those who read the positive scenario and the lowest ratings were given by those who read the negative scenario. This partially supported the hypothesis in that participants gave higher ratings after reading the positive scenario than those who read the negative scenario.

The second pattern found on ratee affectivity was for the performance variables Quantity, Quality, and Job Knowledge. (Tables 1, 2, and 3) The means for the effect of the ratee showed that those participants given the negative scenario gave the highest performance ratings, those with the neutral scenario gave the next highest ratings and those with the positive scenario gave the lowest performance scores. This pattern did not support the hypothesis.

Interaction of Rater and Ratee Affectivity

Several patterns appeared for the interaction between rater and ratee affectivity on Quantity and Job Knowledge, although there were no significant results. (Table 1 and 3) Some of these patterns supported the hypothesis. Participants who were high on both traits gave higher performance ratings to the employee in the negative scenario and the

lowest ratings to the employee in the positive scenario. These findings did not support the hypothesis. Participants high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity gave almost equal performance ratings for the employees described in the positive and negative scenario. This did not support the hypothesis. Participants low on positive affectivity and high on negative affectivity gave the highest ratings to the employee in the negative scenario and lower ratings to the employee in the positive scenario. These results supported the hypothesis. Participants that were low on both traits, they gave almost equal ratings for all three scenarios. This supported the hypothesis.

The interaction for the performance variables, Quality, Planning/Organization, Judgement, and Dependability also showed certain patterns in the means for the raters high on one affectivity and low on the other. (Tables 2, 7, 8, and 9) Participants high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity gave the highest performance ratings to the employee in the positive scenario and lower ratings to the employee in the negative scenario, although the employee from the neutral scenario received almost equal ratings. These findings, in part, supported the hypothesis. Those who were low on positive affectivity and high on negative affectivity gave the highest ratings to the employee in the negative scenario and the lowest performance ratings to the employee in the positive scenario. These results supported the hypothesis.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to determine if the personality traits, positive and negative affectivity, had a biasing influence on performance appraisal ratings. This study looked at this question from three different viewpoints and hence the three following hypotheses:

H1. Rater affectivity will impact the rater's evaluation of performance.

Specifically, raters high on positive affectivity will rate higher and rater's high on negative affectivity will rate lower than a rater who is moderate on either scale.

- H2. Ratee affectivity will impact the rater's evaluation of performance. Specifically, that positive affectivity traits are judged as more socially desirable and negative affectivity traits as socially undesirable. This could influence the rater to give the ratee a higher or lower performance appraisal rating based on the ratee's affectivity level.
- H3. The interaction of rater and ratee affectivity will impact the evaluation of performance as well. When both the rater and ratee are high on positive or negative affectivity this might have the most biasing impact on performance ratings. When either the rater or ratee are high on either positive or negative affectivity and the other is low on positive or negative affectivity, affectivity could still influence performance ratings but the impact probably will not be as extreme as in the case of both rater and ratee being high on positive or negative affectivity. If both rater and ratee are low on positive or negative affectivity, the impact on performance ratings will most likely be very minimal.

This section discusses the interpretations and implications of the statistical findings from the Results section.

Unfortunately, the only significant effect found was for rater affectivity effect for Quantity. It showed significant differences between the different combinations of rater affectivity. Participants gave highest performance ratings to those low on positive affectivity and high on negative affectivity, then those who were high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity, followed by those high on both traits and then

subject who were low on both traits gave the lowest ratings. It may have been the high low combination of affectivity that produced the higher ratings. The impact of the rater's affectivity would have been less for those who were high and low compared to those raters who were high on both traits. People high on both tend to be described as very emotional which could perhaps have caused them to focus more on the emotional aspects of the scenario rather than the actual performance content, thereby lowering performance ratings. People low on both traits tend to be described as having a "flat affect." Perhaps due to this lack on emotion, those low on both traits may have focused more on the actual performance and not at all on the emotional content, decreasing the performance ratings.

Although the rest of the results did not produce significant results, looking at the means did reveal certain patterns in the performance variables.

Rater Affectivity

For the performance variables Quality and Planning/Organization, the rater affectivity had a similar, although not identical, pattern. Those high on negative affectivity gave higher performance ratings than those high on positive affectivity. One possible explanation may be that the negative affectivity may be the dominant factor and more influential in determining performance ratings. Although it is difficult to interpret since the median split for negative affectivity was at 1.5 on a five point scale. Therefore those "high" on negative affectivity may actually be more moderate on the PANAS scale resulting in a more moderate influence on the performance ratings.

The performance variables, Job Knowledge and Problem Solving, had a pattern of means which did not support the hypothesis. There may be something inherent in the features of these variables that cause rater's to evaluate performance differently. Also it may be that the portions of the scenarios describing these variables impacted the performance ratings in this manner.

The performance variables, Initiative and Adaptability showed an interesting pattern for rater affectivity. Participants high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity gave higher performance ratings than those low on positive affectivity and high on negative affectivity, supporting the hypothesis. Participants may be giving higher performance ratings due to the influence of being high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity, which causes these individuals to view their environment in a more positive light. A similar pattern may be causing those low on positive affectivity and high on negative affectivity to give the lower performance ratings. Individuals high on negative affectivity tend to view their environment in a more negative manner, which could be the cause of the lower performance ratings.

Judgement's means for rater affectivity also had a pattern that partially supported the hypothesis. It suggests that participants who were high on negative affectivity gave lower performance ratings. Negative rater affectivity may be causing the lower performance ratings due to the rater's negative view of the world.

Dependability also had a pattern on rater affectivity that partially supported the hypothesis. Participants who were high on positive affectivity gave higher ratings than those low on positive affectivity. Being higher on the positive affectivity scale may impact the performance ratings in a positive way since the subjects tend to view the world more positively since they are high on positive affectivity.

In summary, rater affectivity seems to have a different impact on different performance variables. For Quantity, Quality and Planning/Organization, participants gave higher performance ratings if they were high on negative affectivity and lower ratings if they were high on positive affectivity. This finding is difficult to interpret. It could be that those subjects higher on negative affectivity do not view performance on Quantity, Quality, and Planning/Organization negatively due to some feature(s) of those variables.

Also the discrepancy could be due to the location of the median split on the PANAS which views all subjects over 1.5 to be “high on negative affectivity.” For the performance variables Initiative, Judgement, Adaptability and Dependability, the pattern indicates support for the hypothesis. Participants high on positive affectivity gave higher performance ratings and those high on negative affectivity gave lower ratings. This could reflect the impact of affectivity and how it influences the rater’s perceptions of his/her environment.

Ratee Affectivity

Two main, although non-significant, patterns were found for ratee affectivity. One of these was seen in the means for Quantity, Quality and Job Knowledge. Participants who read the negative scenario gave the highest performance ratings followed by those who read the neutral, and last by those who read the positive scenario. There are several possible explanations for this trend. It could be that negative affectivity may be seen as an asset concerning these performance variables. In other words, it may contribute to the employee’s abilities on these performance dimensions. Also, participants may not consider affectivity to be an important factor in the evaluation of Quantity, Quality or Job Knowledge. It is also possible that the participants did not think of the negative affectivity traits as negatively impacting performance.

The second pattern concerned the performance variables Problem Solving, Initiative, Adaptability and Judgement. Participants who read the neutral scenario gave the highest ratings followed by those who read the positive scenario and the lowest ratings were given by those who read the negative scenario. This pattern, although non-significant, supported the hypothesis that the positive scenario will elicit higher performance ratings than the negative scenario. It could be that for these particular performance variables, participants felt the “positive affectivity” traits were more essential

than on some of the other performance variables. Yet, participants who read the neutral scenario gave the highest ratings perhaps because of the lack of emotional content and focus on actual performance, which may have contributed to the higher performance ratings.

Planning/Organization's pattern for ratee affectivity did not support the hypothesis. Participants gave the highest ratings to the employee in the negative scenario. This may be because the participants did not view the negative affectivity traits as essential to this performance variable. It is also possible that participants did not view the description of these negative traits as negatively impacting performance. Possibly, participants interpreted the negative information in a more factual manner.

Dependability also had a pattern for Ratee affectivity that supported the hypothesis. Participants who read the positive scenario gave higher performance ratings than those who read the negative scenario. This could mean that participants who read the positive scenario were impacted by the "positive affectivity" traits found in that scenario which led to higher performance ratings. Also, those who read the negative scenario could have been impacted by the "negative affectivity" traits in that scenario causing the individuals to give lower performance ratings.

In summary, there were several different patterns found for ratee affectivity. Again, Quantity, Quality, and Job Knowledge saw higher performance ratings from those subjects who read the negative scenario than those who read the positive scenario. Problem Solving, Initiative, Adaptability, Dependability and Judgement had a different pattern. Those who read the positive scenario tended to give higher performance ratings and those who read the negative scenario tended to give lower ratings. The negative affectivity traits may in fact be viewed as assets to performance for these particular variables. Planning/Organization and Dependability seem to follow their own unique patterns. These

findings may indicate that participants evaluate different types of performance variables differently. Those performance variables, which supported the hypothesis, seemed to focus more on soft skills rather than technical skill. Affectivity may impact the evaluation of these variables more due to the more ambiguous nature of the definitions of these variables.

Interaction Effect

The patterns for the interaction effects had mixed results in terms of whether or not the results of each performance variables supported the hypothesis. One pattern appeared among the performance variables. This pattern was for Quantity and Job Knowledge. It showed support for the hypothesis when the raters were low on positive affectivity. This may indicate that negative affectivity has a stronger impact than positive affectivity on performance ratings. Another possibility is that positive affectivity interacts with performance ratings in a different manner than predicted.

Four of the other performance variables, Quality, Planning/Organization, Judgement, and Dependability had a pattern for those rater's who were high on one traits and low on the other. For all four variables, participant responses who were low on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity, supported the hypothesis. Participant responses who were high on positive affectivity and low on negative affectivity were found to partially support the hypothesis. This may provide additional support that negative affectivity may have a stronger impact on performance ratings or that positive affectivity may be impacting performance ratings in a manner different from the way predicted in the hypothesis. It is also possible the patterns could be due to difficulties with the methodology. As previously mentioned, the median split of negative affectivity was at 1.5. Therefore those participants who were categorized as "high on negative affectivity" in reality may not have been very high on the actual scale, which could impact the interaction

effect. Also the scenarios may not have been clear enough in the descriptions of positive and negative affectivity to impact performance ratings. Participants may not have viewed the affectivity descriptions as positively or negatively impacting performance.

Weaknesses and Considerations for Future Research

Unfortunately, the data was unable to provide significant results to support the hypotheses discussed in the introduction. The only significant finding was found for the rater affectivity on the performance dimension Quantity. There are several possibilities for the lack of significant findings. Concerning the PANAS, it is possible that the time frame selected for the questionnaire used in the experiment did not elicit the traits of positive and negative affectivity. This experiment gave the directions "Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is at this present moment." The PANAS gives several options in terms of the time frame. Perhaps using the "present moment" was not the most effective way to assess affectivity levels, instead maybe a longer time frame should be considered. Such as "Indicate to what extent you have felt this way in the past year" or even ask about how they "generally feel." This might better assess the positive and negative affectivity levels. Also regarding the PANAS, very few of the subjects rated themselves as very low on negative affectivity. As mentioned earlier, in order to recode the affectivity variables, negative affectivity was split at the median. The median was at 1.5, which is quite low considering the scale is from 1 to 5. Therefore, many of those classified, as being "high on negative affectivity" may not technically possess the traits that correspond with high negative affectivity. Perhaps future research should consider a different measure of positive and negative affectivity, since it seems; very few people were willing to rate themselves negatively.

Another possibility for the lack of significant findings may be related to the scenarios, specifically the descriptions of performance. The performance descriptions may

have been too detailed and specific. The descriptions may have lacked the ambiguity to elicit the biases that one might see in a “real world” setting. Varma et.al. (1996) found that as ambiguity of the situation increases the stronger the biasing effect of interpersonal affect. Future research might consider altering the performance scenarios to be more ambiguous. Another possible avenue researchers may wish to investigate may be to take a more “real world” approach to this experiment and attempt to assess actual managers and their subordinates. This could eliminate the problem of lack of ambiguity as well as assessing individuals who are more familiar and experienced with the performance appraisal process.

Also worth mentioning is the fact that most of the affectivity research focuses on either positive or negative affectivity, and rarely does one study attempt to look at both. In retrospect it is easy to understand why researchers have chosen to look at one trait. The added complication of examining both positive and negative affectivity’s impact, not to mention the interaction of the two, can turn a simple experiment into a very complex one. Yet, most of the literature acknowledges the fact that positive and negative affectivity are not different ends of the same dimension, but instead are separate, yet related personality traits. Perhaps future researchers should examine these two traits more carefully to get a better understanding of how positive and negative affectivity relate to each other before further investigating how they relate to other topics, such as performance appraisal ratings.

The present study may not have found significant findings for the proposed hypotheses, but it does provide a good starting place for studying the relationships between personality traits, such as affectivity, and performance appraisal ratings and other performance related topics.

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Table 1
Quantity by Ratee and Rater Affectivity

		Rater Affectivity (Positive/Negative)				Total
		High High	High Low	Low High	Low Low	
Ratee Affectivity	Positive mean	3.08	3.50	3.60	3.31	3.38
	SD	0.49	0.73	0.83	0.79	0.74
	(N)	13	16	15	16	60
	Neutral mean	3.46	3.39	3.56	3.38	3.43
	SD	0.97	0.70	0.73	0.51	0.72
	(N)	13	18	9	13	53
	Negative mean	3.65	3.56	4.25	3.31	3.67
	SD	0.70	0.73	0.75	0.70	0.78
	(N)	17	9	12	16	54
Total mean		3.42	3.47	3.81	3.33	3.49
SD		0.76	0.70	0.82	0.67	0.75
(N)		43	43	36	45	167

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Rater Affectivity	4.78	3	1.59	2.99*
Ratee Affectivity	2.96	2	1.48	2.78
Rater by Ratee	3.45	6	0.58	1.08
Error	82.56	155	0.53	
Total	93.74	166	0.56	* p< .05

Table 2
Quality by Ratee and Rater Affectivity

			Rater Affectivity (Positive/Negative)				
			High High	High Low	Low High	Low Low	Total
Ratee Affectivity	Positive	mean	3.46	3.75	3.53	3.75	3.63
		SD	0.66	0.77	0.99	0.93	0.84
		(N)	13	16	15	16	60
	Neutral	mean	3.85	3.61	3.89	3.38	3.66
		SD	0.8	0.61	0.6	0.51	0.65
		(N)	13	18	9	13	53
	Negative	mean	3.76	3.67	4.33	3.38	3.76
		SD	0.66	0.5	0.65	0.62	0.7
		(N)	17	9	12	16	54
Total	mean	3.7	3.67	3.89	3.51	3.68	
	SD	0.71	0.64	0.85	0.73	0.74	
	(N)	43	43	36	45	167	

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Rater Affectivity	3.36	3	1.12	2.16
Ratee Affectivity	0.72	2	0.36	0.69
Rater by Ratee	6.39	6	1.07	2.05
Error	80.38	155	0.52	
Total	90.18	166	0.54	* p< .05

Table 3
Job Knowledge by Rater and Ratee Affectivity

			Rater Affectivity (Positive/Negative)				
			High High	High Low	Low High	Low Low	Total
Ratee Affectivity	Positive	mean	3.54	3.50	3.50	3.69	3.56
		SD	0.78	0.52	0.63	1.01	0.74
		(N)	13	16	15	16	60
	Neutral	mean	3.69	3.61	3.44	3.62	3.60
		SD	0.85	0.85	1.33	0.51	0.86
		(N)	13	18	9	13	53
	Negative	mean	3.82	3.67	4.00	3.53	3.75
		SD	0.88	1.00	0.85	0.62	0.82
		(N)	17	9	12	16	54
Total	mean	3.70	3.58	3.65	3.61	3.63	
	SD	0.83	0.76	0.92	0.75	0.81	
	(N)	43	43	36	45	167	

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Rater Affectivity	0.21	3	0.07	0.1
Ratee Affectivity	1.19	2	0.6	0.88
Rater by Ratee	2.17	6	0.36	0.53
Error	104.72	155	0.68	
Total	108.22	166	0.65	* p<.05

Table 4
Problem Solving by Rater and Ratee Affectivity

			Rater Affectivity (Positive/Negative)				
			High High	High Low	Low High	Low Low	Total
Ratee Affectivity	Positive	mean	3.46	3.63	3.20	3.56	3.47
		SD	0.52	0.72	0.86	0.73	0.72
		(N)	13	16	15	16	60
	Neutral	mean	3.69	3.53	3.44	3.54	3.56
		SD	0.75	0.70	1.13	0.66	0.77
		(N)	13	18	9	13	53
	Negative	mean	3.53	3.44	3.75	3.13	3.44
		SD	0.87	1.01	0.75	0.62	0.82
		(N)	17	9	12	16	54
Total	mean	3.56	3.55	3.44	3.40	3.49	
	SD	0.73	0.76	0.91	0.69	0.77	
	(N)	43	43	36	45	167	

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Rater Affectivity	0.60	3	0.20	0.80
Ratee Affectivity	0.27	2	0.13	0.80
Rater by Ratee	4.16	6	0.69	0.33
Error	92.23	155	0.60	
Total	97.48	166	0.59	* p< .05

Table 5
Initiative by Rater and Ratee Affectivity

			Rater Affectivity (Positive/Negative)				
			High High	High Low	Low High	Low Low	Total
Ratee Affectivity	Positive	mean	3.46	3.81	3.23	3.81	3.59
		SD	1.05	0.83	1.08	0.54	0.90
		(N)	13	16	15	16	60
	Neutral	mean	3.77	3.72	3.89	3.54	3.72
		SD	0.73	0.67	0.93	0.88	0.77
		(N)	13	18	9	13	53
	Negative	mean	3.59	3.67	3.58	3.44	3.56
		SD	0.51	0.71	0.79	0.89	0.72
		(N)	17	9	12	16	54
Total	mean	3.60	3.74	3.51	3.60	3.62	
	SD	0.76	0.73	0.97	0.78	0.80	
	(N)	43	43	36	45	167	

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Rater Affectivity	0.63	3	0.21	0.81
Ratee Affectivity	0.83	2	0.41	0.53
Rater by Ratee	3.91	6	0.65	0.43
Error	101.55	155	0.66	
Total	107.10	166	0.65	* p< .05

Table 6
Adaptability by Rater and Ratee Affectivity

			Rater Affectivity (Positive/Negative)				
			High High	High Low	Low High	Low Low	Total
Ratee Affectivity	Positive	mean	3.54	3.81	3.33	3.63	3.58
		SD	0.88	0.75	0.62	0.89	0.79
		(N)	13	16	15	16	60
	Neutral	mean	3.54	3.61	3.44	3.77	3.60
		SD	0.97	0.78	0.88	0.73	0.82
		(N)	13	18	9	13	53
	Negative	mean	3.29	3.89	3.42	3.50	3.48
		SD	0.85	1.05	1.16	1.03	1.00
		(N)	17	9	12	16	54
Total							
	mean	3.44	3.74	3.39	3.62	3.56	
	SD	0.88	0.82	0.87	0.89	0.87	
	(N)	43	43	36	45	167	

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Rater Affectivity	3.16	3	1.05	1.35
Ratee Affectivity	0.14	2	0.07	0.09
Rater by Ratee	1.66	6	0.28	0.35
Error	119.81	154	0.78	
Total	124.90	165	0.76	* p< .05

Table 7
Planning and Organization by Rater and Ratee Affectivity

			Rater Affectivity (Positive/Negative)				
			High High	High Low	Low High	Low Low	Total
Ratee Affectivity	Positive	mean	3.58	3.56	3.33	3.75	3.56
		SD	0.67	0.73	0.72	0.86	0.75
		(N)	12	16	15	16	59
	Neutral	mean	3.62	3.50	3.78	3.38	3.55
		SD	0.77	0.79	0.67	0.65	0.53
		(N)	13	18	9	13	53
	Negative	mean	3.65	3.78	4.08	3.56	3.74
		SD	0.86	0.97	0.79	0.81	0.85
		(N)	17	9	12	16	54
Total	mean	3.62	3.58	3.69	3.58	3.61	
	SD	0.76	0.79	0.79	0.78	0.78	
	(N)	42	43	36	45	166	

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Rater Affectivity	0.56	3	0.19	0.82
Ratee Affectivity	1.45	2	0.73	0.31
Rater by Ratee	4.05	6	0.67	0.36
Error	93.69	154	0.61	
Total	99.33	165	0.6	* p< .05

Table 8
Judgement by Rater and Ratee Affectivity

			Rater Affectivity (Positive/Negative)				
			High High	High Low	Low High	Low Low	Total
Ratee Affectivity	Positive	mean	3.31	3.56	3.13	3.63	3.42
		SD	0.48	0.81	0.64	0.96	0.77
		(N)	13	16	15	16	60
	Neutral	mean	3.85	3.44	3.56	3.62	3.60
		SD	0.90	0.78	0.88	0.65	0.79
		(N)	13	18	9	13	53
	Negative	mean	3.12	3.44	3.75	3.19	3.33
		SD	0.78	0.88	0.97	0.75	0.85
		(N)	17	9	12	16	54
Total	mean	3.40	3.49	3.44	3.47	3.45	
	SD	0.79	0.80	0.84	0.81	0.80	
	(N)	43	43	36	45	167	

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Rater Affectivity	0.17	3	0.06	0.09
Ratee Affectivity	1.83	2	0.92	1.44
Rater by Ratee	6.94	6	1.16	1.82
Error	97.78	154	0.63	
Total	107.01	165	0.65	* p< .05

Table 9
Dependability by Rater and Ratee Affectivity

			Rater Affectivity (Positive/Negative)				
			High High	High Low	Low High	Low Low	Total
Ratee Affectivity	Positive	mean	3.69	3.88	3.37	3.69	3.66
		SD	0.63	0.81	0.81	0.87	0.79
		(N)	13	16	15	16	60
	Neutral	mean	3.54	3.50	3.44	3.31	3.45
		SD	0.88	0.86	1.01	0.85	0.87
		(N)	13	18	9	13	53
	Negative	mean	3.59	4.00	3.92	3.31	3.65
		SD	0.80	1.00	1.08	0.48	0.85
		(N)	17	9	12	16	54
Total	mean	3.60	3.74	3.57	3.44	3.59	
	SD	0.76	0.88	0.96	0.76	0.84	
	(N)	43	43	36	45	167	

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Rater Affectivity	2.69	3	0.90	0.28
Ratee Affectivity	1.97	2	0.99	0.25
Rater by Ratee	3.95	6	0.66	0.47
Error	107.86	154	0.70	
Total	115.80	165	0.70	* p< .05