Replication Study Status Signaling (#217573)

Author(s)
This pre-registration is currently anonymous to enable blind peer-review.
It has 3 authors.

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1) Have any data been collected for this study already?
No, no data have been collected for this study yet.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?
Srna, Barasch and Small's (2022) research suggests that people are strategically modest depending on their social goals. In Study 5, they examined how individuals change what they post on a social network depending on the type of group they want to join. We aim to replicate Srna et al.'s study by using the same design and stimuli materials. If we find that participants avoid posting about conspicuous consumption when planning to join a group looking for a cooperative member as compared to an unspecified group, this will be in line with their finding.

In an extension, we will test the generalizability of Srna et al.'s finding by adding a third condition in which social evaluation is equally salient as in the cooperation condition but associated with a different social goal. Specifically, we will add a condition with a competitive social motive (joining a competitive group). In this context, unlike in the cooperative setting, conveying self-interest should be considered as acceptable. If we find that participants are more willing to post about conspicuous consumption in the competitive condition compared to the control, this will support Srna et al.'s finding.

It is unclear whether Srna et al.'s account of strategic modesty extends beyond conspicuous consumption. Instead of assuming that people are universally strategically modest-refraining from signaling status in the context of cooperation-we suggest that not only the social goal, but also the domain of the status signal matter. In an exploratory part, we will examine signals that convey prosocial status. If we find that, in contrast to conspicuous consumption, participants are more willing to post prosocial status signals when aiming to appear cooperative, this would demonstrate domain-dependent strategic signaling. We will also explore status signals that convey competence, which should be particularly relevant to the competitive condition, in order to demonstrate that people are more willing to post status signals when the signaling domain is aligned with their social goal.

Additionally, Srna et al. conceptualized status signaling and modesty as opposing ends of a continuum. In the exploratory part of this study, we aim to capture a more nuanced spectrum of status signaling behaviors. We will introduce a modest version of each status signal post, conveying the message indirectly, downplaying one's personal achievements, and/or shifting credit to others. If we find that participants are more willing to disclose status signals-especially those that are supposed to make them appear selfish-through modest status signals rather than overt status signals, this would challenge the claim that people are strategically forgoing status signaling opportunities in the context of cooperation.

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.
The dependent variable in this study is participant's choice of whether to post status signals or not. They will choose between 4 options: 1) to post nothing, 2) to post about conspicuous consumption, 3) to post about a neutral activity, or 4) to post both. We will code options 2 and 4 as posting about conspicuous consumption (coded as 1, and all else as 0).

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?
This study is a 3 (joining a cooperative group vs. unspecified group vs. competitive group) x 4 (conspicuous consumption category: attire, car, travel, and food) between-subject design.

For the exploratory part, we will add three within-subjects variations for each group:
- After participants made a choice to post about conspicuous consumption, they will be presented with two other status signaling domains (in random order): prosocial status signals and competence-based status signals. For each of those two domains, we will have four topics participants are randomly assigned to (prosocial domain: donation, volunteering, mentoring, and charity concert; competence domain: MBA, TedX, summit, and award). We will give participants the same four response options as described above. For neutral activities, we will use posts from the original study.
- After making their posting choices in each status signal domain, participants will be presented with another block of posts that includes a modest version of the status signal posts (i.e., in addition to the four main posting options). We will have a modest version for all four topics in each status signal domain and randomly select participants to a topic they have not yet been shown.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.
For replicating the main effect, we will only consider the cooperation and control condition. We will use a logistic regression where the dependent variable is participants' choice to post a status signal (status signal = 1, modesty = 0) and the independent variables are whether cooperation is emphasized (yes = 1, no = −1), topic of the post (attire, car, travel, or food), and their interaction. For topic, we will use three effects-coded variables (V1, V2, and V3). We will use this model to test whether emphasizing cooperation affects the choice to post a status signal, on average, across all topics.

For the extension, we will run the same analysis comparing the competition condition to the control. If we find that participants in the competition condition are more willing to post status signals than in the control condition, this would be in support of Srna et al.'s account-people use status signals to elevate their status in competitive settings where conveying self-interest is beneficial (i.e., inverse of cooperative settings).

EXPLORATORY: We will test the robustness of the above analyses by running linear regressions. If results differ, we will consider this as inconclusive support for Srna et al.'s finding.
We will also run the above logistic regression comparing the competition condition to the cooperative condition. Given their opposing social motives, we would expect to see a larger difference than to the control condition.

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.
Participants who fail the attention check in the beginning of the survey will not be allowed to continue. If people attempt to take the survey twice, we will keep only their first response. If people initially failed the attention check then tried to take it, we will exclude them. We will also exclude participants who did not complete the survey.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.
We will recruit 1000 participants through Prolific (prior to exclusion).

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)
EXPLORATORY DOMAINS: We will run the same logistic regression as for the main part. We expect that across topics participants will be more willing to post prosocial status signals in the cooperation condition (vs. control, and competition condition) and competence status signals in the competition condition (vs. control, and cooperation condition).
We will also run a logistic regression where the independent variables are conditions, status signal domains (collapsing for each domain across topics) and their interaction. If people were universally modest when cooperation is desirable, then we should find significant overall pooled effects (negative for the cooperation and positive for the competition condition), and non-significant interactions with status signal domains.

MODEST SIGNALING: For each status signal domain, we will run a multinomial logistic regression where the dependent variable is participants' choice to post a status signal with three levels: overt signaling (i.e., posting a standard status signal alone or together with a neutral post), modest signaling (i.e., posting a modest status signal or together with a neutral post) and silence (i.e., posting a neutral post or nothing at all) - with modest signaling being the reference level. The independent variables will be condition, topics of posts and their interaction.
Additionally, we will conduct the same analyses using binary logistic regression, where the dependent variable combines modest signaling and silence categories into one category (vs. bragging), and overt signaling and modest signaling into one category (vs. silence). This will allow us to explore when participants are willing (vs. not willing) to post overt status signals, and prefer to hide status signals altogether.
We will also explore how participants' posting preferences shift when the modest signaling option is introduced. Since we expect that it can increase participants' willingness to disclose status signals, we will classify modest signaling as status signal disclosure. For each status signal domain, we will compare proportions of those who disclosed status signals in the initial block versus the modest signaling block, and analyze switching patterns (i.e., participants maintaining overt disclosure, shifting from overt to modest disclosure, or newly choosing to disclose). We will do this for each condition.

OPEN RESPONSES: After each block, participants will have the option to explain their response in an optional text box. We will code responses and assess whether people naturally offered explanations are consistent with Srna et al.'s modesty account.

MANIPULATION CHECK: We will ask participants how important it was to the group they were trying to join to find (1) cooperative members, and (2) competitive members. We'll compare the average response to these items across conditions using a t-test.