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Journal of Economic Psychology 25 (2004) 279–292

JOURNAL OF
**Economic
Psychology**

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Affluence cues and first impressions: The moderating impact of the Protestant work ethic

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Received 3 August 2001; accepted 20 November 2002

Abstract

This experiment examined how a target person's affluence cues and the perceiver's endorsement of the Protestant work ethic (PWE) influence interpersonal perceptions about others. Participants ($N = 136$) read scenarios that described a man or woman in either an affluent or less affluent home setting. They then evaluated the target person on 20 personal qualities and indicated their desire to have the target's lifestyle. A positive relationship was found between affluence level and perceptions of personal abilities, sophistication, and the desire to have the target's lifestyle. A negative relationship was found between affluence level and perceptions of considerateness. The perceiver's endorsement of the PWE moderated two of these four relationships. High PWEs ascribed greater considerateness to an affluent target person than low PWEs. Low PWEs did not differ in their evaluation of a less affluent target person's considerateness. Further, low PWEs, unlike high PWEs, displayed clear preference for the affluent over the less affluent target's lifestyle. Results are discussed with respect to the information processing tendencies associated with PWE endorsement. Future research directions are also discussed.

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PsycINFO classification: 3000; 3040; 3120; 3920

JEL classification: D12; M30

Keywords: Protestant work ethic; Affluence; Personality; Social cognition

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1. Introduction

In almost all societies, people differ in the quantity and quality of material possessions that they own. Until only recently, little was known about the impressions people form of individuals in different socioeconomic classes. A burgeoning literature (e.g., Christopher & Schlenker, 2000; Dittmar, 1992a; Dittmar & Pepper, 1994) is articulating the impressions that perceivers form of a target person based on the target person's material circumstances. Less clear is the role that individual difference factors of the perceiver play in the impressions formed from a target's material circumstances. The purpose of the current study is to learn how an observer's endorsement of the Protestant work ethic moderates the relationship between a target person's perceived affluence level and the impressions formed of that target person.

1.1. Material possessions and person perception

Early research on the effects of material possessions on the impression formation process tended to focus on the effects of particular possessions (e.g., Argyle & McHenry, 1971; Belk, 1980; Cherulnik & Wilderman, 1986; Pliner & Chaiken, 1990). Because focusing on a single possession tends to delimit the person perception process by neglecting the broader social context (Dittmar, 1992a), subsequent research has begun to emphasise an individual's array of material possessions in the impression formation process. Using videos of targets in affluent and less affluent settings, Dittmar found that British adolescents considered persons in a more affluent setting to possess greater personal abilities, be more educated, and be more in control of their life than when portrayed in a less affluent setting. However, such impressions were not globally positive, as the less affluent target was perceived as interpersonally warmer and friendlier, traits indicative of a person who is considerate of others. Using scenarios instead of video clips, Dittmar and Pepper (1994) conceptually replicated these findings with a slightly younger sample. Further, they found that the sample was more desirous of the affluent lifestyle relative to the less affluent lifestyle. Christopher and Schlenker (2000) found theoretically similar results to those of Dittmar and Pepper using an American sample of traditional college-aged students. Further, Christopher and Schlenker found that a relatively affluent target was perceived as more sophisticated than a less affluent target. In sum, previous research on the effects of material wealth on the impression formation process has consistently found that perceivers form more positive impressions of affluent individuals on certain dimensions (e.g., as possessing greater personal abilities, sophistication), but more positive impressions of less affluent individuals on other dimensions (e.g., interpersonal characteristics).

1.2. Perceiver personality and affluence cues

Throughout much of the research reviewed, the perceiver's personal characteristics have been demonstrated to have minimal influence on the person perception pro-

cess. For instance, although Dittmar and Pepper (1994) found that the extent to which one is materialistic was directly ($r = 0.17$) related to the perceptions of a target's personal abilities and resources, they concluded that "... the impact of individually held materialistic values on person perception is comparatively minor when contrasted with the effect of the relative wealth cues given..." (p. 245). Further, Christopher and Schlenker (2000) found that, in comparison to a target's affluence cues, the perceiver personality traits of materialism, self-monitoring, and social and personal identity each exerted minimal or no influence on the impressions formed of the target.

Yet, since the time of Kurt Lewin's (1936) famous dictum that behaviour is a function of the characteristics of both the person and the environment, it has been widely accepted in social psychology that individual differences moderate reactions to situational stimuli by increasing, attenuating, or even reversing the effects that are found when situational characteristics are studied in isolation (e.g., Snyder & Ickes, 1985). Although existent research has not reliably demonstrated that the perceiver's personality exerts more than a minor influence on the person perception process relative to affluence cues (e.g., Christopher & Schlenker, 2000; Dittmar & Pepper, 1994), there is reason to believe that one personality variable, the perceiver's endorsement of the Protestant work ethic, may exert an influence in conjunction with affluence cues on the person perception process.

1.3. *The Protestant work ethic*

The Protestant work ethic (PWE) is one personality variable that has been found to relate specifically to an individual's perceptions of economic phenomena. Weber's (1958) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* provided moral and religious justification for the accumulation of wealth and rise of capitalism. Although Weber's original thesis emphasised elements of Protestantism, the concept of the Protestant work ethic is now used without religious connotations to describe people who place work at or near the centre of their lives (Furnham, 1990). The PWE is "an orientation towards work which emphasises dedication to hard work, deferment of immediate rewards, conservation of resources... and the avoidance of idleness and waste in any form" (Beit-Hallahmi, 1979, p. 263).

Several studies have investigated the relationship between PWE endorsement and perceptions of various economic phenomena. In one such study, Furnham (1982a) found that people who endorsed the PWE tended to blame the unemployed themselves for their situation more than did people not endorsing the PWE (see also Furnham, 1982b). Further, Heaven (1990) found that endorsement of the Protestant work ethic was positively related to supporting tough-minded measures to alleviate unemployment (e.g., reduce unemployment benefits), and MacDonald (1972) found that those endorsing the PWE tended to be more negative in their attitudes toward the poor.

Taken together, this body of research suggests that perceivers who endorse the PWE tend to infer more strongly that a person's behaviour or behavioural outcome corresponds to some underlying personal trait(s). Indeed, Furnham (1987) found

that the PWE was directly related to valuing ambition and responsibility, and Feather (1984) found that the PWE is linked to an emphasis on accomplishment. Further, people who endorse the PWE tend to hold others responsible for their outcomes in achievement-oriented situations (Christopher & Schlenker, 2001).

In reviewing these and related studies, Furnham (1990) argued that such findings were not simply a product of neutral information processing, but were linked to peoples' cognitive-affective systems. As he stated, "PWE values influence the way people explain a widely different range of events. . . Thus, the PWE can be seen as an organising cognitive system through which the social world is perceived and 'explained'" (p. 182).

With respect to a target person's level of affluence, high PWEs more than low PWEs may credit affluent targets with achieving such an end state by forming more positive impressions of them. Further, high PWEs more than low PWEs might form less positive impressions of a less affluent target. We thus offer the following hypotheses about how the PWE might moderate the relationship between a target person's affluence cues and the impressions formed of that person.

Hypothesis 1: On dimensions associated with high affluence (i.e., personal abilities and sophistication), high PWEs will be more sensitive than low PWEs to variations in affluence cues displayed by a target person; that is, their evaluations of the target will be more strongly affected by the target's affluence than will the evaluations of low PWEs.

Hypothesis 2: On dimensions associated with less affluence (i.e., considerateness), high PWEs will form more positive impressions of an affluent target, but less positive impressions of a less affluent target, than will low PWEs.

Although our primary interest was in the interaction between the target's affluence level and the perceiver's endorsement of the PWE, we were also interested in how the target's sex may relate to impressions formed. Previous studies (e.g., Belk, Bahn, & Mayer, 1982; Christopher & Schlenker, 2000; Dittmar, 1992a; Dittmar & Pepper, 1994) have yielded inconclusive results regarding how a target's sex influences the impression formation process. Thus, we were unable to hypothesise about how target sex may influence the impression formation process, either in isolation or in combination with affluence cues and PWE.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Our participants were 136 people (81 females and 55 males) visiting the Greenville/Spartanburg (South Carolina) International Airport. These people were either waiting to board their flights for departure or for the arrival of passengers on incom-

ing flights. Participants ranged in age from 15 years, 0 months to 70 years, 10 months, with an average age of 35 years, 2 months ($SD = 13$ years, 2 months).

2.2. Design

Using a 2×2 factorial between-subjects design, we altered information in scenarios in order to vary character affluence (affluent or less affluent) and character sex. Our analysis included PWE score as a quasi-independent variable. Participants' PWE scores were centred prior to creating interaction terms (Aitken & West, 1991).

2.3. Materials

Scenarios. We designed four scenarios to portray a man or a woman in an affluent or less affluent home environment. Affluence was manipulated via consumer goods, such as cars, furniture, kitchen appliances, and foods. This manipulation has proven successful in prior investigations (e.g., Christopher, Marek, & May, in press; Christopher & Schlenker, 2000; Dittmar & Pepper, 1994). Appendix A contains our scenarios.

Dependent variables. After reading one scenario, participants rated the character on 20 traits designed to tap Dittmar's (1992a,b) six identity dimensions that have been used in subsequent research (Christopher & Schlenker, 2000). These six identity dimensions were autonomy, abilities and resources, direct control, forcefulness, warmth, and individuality. In addition, participants were asked how much they desired to have the lifestyle portrayed in the scenario. These judgements were made on 1 (*low*) to 7 (*high*) continuums. In addition, we assessed affluence level portrayed in the scenario via two measures used in previous experiments (e.g., Christopher and Schlenker; Dittmar & Pepper, 1994): the target's annual income and number of expensive possessions owned. Both of these manipulation checks were open-ended.

Protestant work ethic. Participants completed the 19-item Mirels and Garrett (1971) PWE scale using the original 1 (*I strongly disagree with the statement*) to 7 (*I strongly agree with the statement*) range. An example item is "Most people spend too much time in unprofitable amusements". This scale is the most-widely used measure of PWE beliefs (Furnham, 1990) and has demonstrated excellent psychometric properties (e.g., Christopher et al., in press; Christopher & Schlenker, 2001; Feather, 1984; Furnham, 1987; Jones, Christopher, Marek, & Reinhart, 2001). In the present study, PWE scores ranged from 52 to 114, with $M = 89.3$, $SD = 10.1$, and $\alpha = 0.73$.

Demographic information. We collected demographic data pertaining to sex, age, and political preference. In addition, we assessed socioeconomic status (SES) via two measures: type of dwelling in which a participant lived and perceived comparative wealth in the home environment in which a participant lived. Previous research (e.g., Christopher, Marek, Carroll, & Jones, 2002; Rindfleisch, Burroughs, & Denton, 1997) suggests that subjective measures of SES predict economic phenomena at least as effectively as do objective measures. To obtain a composite measure of SES, we averaged participants' standardised scores on these two variables (Ghiselli, 1964).

2.4. Procedure

The experimenter approached people in the Greenville/Spartanburg (South Carolina) International Airport and asked if they would like to participate in a study of first impression formation. If they agreed, they were given an informed consent to read and sign, and were provided with a copy for their records. The informed consent contained contact information (phone number and email) that could be used to contact the primary investigator should they have any subsequent questions about the study or want to learn its results.

All participants first read a scenario and completed the dependent measures, after which they filled out the PWE scale. Lastly, they provided demographic information. We chose to have all participants read a scenario prior to completing the PWE scale because prior research has demonstrated that priming people to think about their PWE beliefs (e.g., Biernat, Vescio, & Theno, 1996) may lead them to process information differently than people not so primed.

3. Results

The data were analysed via simultaneous-entry multiple regression. We dummy coded both affluence level and sex of character, and centred PWE scores prior to creating interaction terms (Aitken & West, 1991). In all, we had seven predictor variables. To simplify visualising interactions involving PWE, we performed a median split on PWE scores and generated means corresponding to the significant interaction effects.¹

3.1. Manipulation checks on affluence level

We first analysed the manipulation checks on affluence level. For estimated annual income, the model was significant, $F(7, 124) = 5.39$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.233$, adj. $R^2 = 0.190$. Specifically, we found that the affluence manipulation was indeed successful in producing higher annual income estimate for an affluent ($M = \$73,824$) than for a less affluent character ($M = \$31,810$), $t(124) = 4.41$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.47$. Further, an affluence \times PWE interaction, $t(124) = -2.90$, $p < 0.004$, $\beta = -0.53$, revealed that high PWEs believed the affluent character earned a higher annual income ($M = \$77,609$) than low PWEs ($M = \$71,118$). No such difference emerged between high and low PWEs when evaluating a less affluent character ($M_s = \$31,269$ and $\$32,250$, respectively). These two effects were qualified by a three-way interaction, $t(124) = 2.23$, $p < 0.03$, $\beta = 0.55$. As can be seen in the top

¹ We conducted initial analyses that entered participant's sex, age, political preference, and SES into separate simultaneous-entry multiple regressions on the two manipulation checks and the four primary criterion variables. No effects of any of these four predictors, alone or in interaction with affluence level and PWE, were obtained in these analyses. We therefore deleted these variables from the analyses reported in the text.

portion of Table 1, this interaction was driven by participants reading about an affluent character. High PWEs believed the male character earned a higher income than low PWEs, who in turn believed that the female character earned a high income than high PWEs.

We found that for estimated number of expensive possessions owned, the model was significant, $F(7, 117) = 4.39$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.208$, adj. $R^2 = 0.161$. Specifically, we found that the affluence manipulation was indeed successful in producing estimates of more expensive possessions owned for an affluent ($M = 16.9$) than for a less affluent target person ($M = 6.0$), $t(117) = 3.23$, $p < 0.002$, $\beta = 0.36$. No further effects emerged.

In conclusion, participants were sensitive to the two different affluence levels portrayed in the scenarios. However, endorsement of the PWE was associated with differential judgements of the affluent target's income. High PWEs tended to perceive the affluent target as more affluent than low PWEs, and this was particularly true when the affluent target was a male. Perhaps high PWEs expect affluence to be associated with males more than with females, a stereotype contained in beliefs about "traditional" American values.

3.2. Factor analysis of trait ratings

To replicate Christopher and Schlenker's (2000) three dimensions of person perception, we performed a principle components analysis, orthogonal varimax rotation on the 20 trait ratings of the scenario character. Based on the scree plot and conceptual interpretability of the factors, we identified three factors that accounted for 62.24% of the variance. Table 2 contains the factor loadings of each trait on each dimension. The three factors identified, sophistication, considerateness, and personal abilities, were comprised of traits nearly identical to the ones found by Christopher and Schlenker (2000, p. 10).

Table 1
Means for three-way interactions on estimated annual income, sophistication, and considerateness

	Affluent		Less affluent	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
<i>Income</i>				
High PWE	\$58,679	\$88,478	\$31,571	\$30,703
Low PWE	\$106,576	\$58,929	\$29,722	\$33,336
<i>Sophistication^a</i>				
High PWE	48.8	52.9	39.5	42.0
Low PWE	44.7	44.1	40.0	30.8
<i>Considerateness^b</i>				
High PWE	39.1	42.2	43.5	47.0
Low PWE	32.6	39.9	45.4	38.7

Note: High and low PWE based on median split of participant's scores and are intended only to illustrate the nature of the interaction.

^a Sophistication measured on a 9–63 scale, with higher numbers indicating greater sophistication.

^b Considerateness measured on an 8–56 scale, with higher numbers indicating greater considerateness.

Table 2

Three dimensions of person perception

Item	Factor			Eigenvalue	Variance (%)
	Sophistication	Considerateness	Personal abilities		
<i>Factor: Sophistication</i>				6.16	30.79
Has a desirable lifestyle	0.773	–0.131	0.361		
Extroverted	0.772	0.254	0.006		
Has a lot of friends	0.772	0.293	–0.032		
Competitive	0.747	–0.115	0.404		
Successful	0.714	–0.105	0.534		
Cultured	0.673	–0.122	0.265		
Organized	0.616	0.093	0.073		
Potential friend	0.616	0.450	0.049		
Happy	0.499	0.203	0.157		
<i>Factor: Considerateness</i>				4.40	21.98
Kind	0.030	0.886	0.198		
Likable	0.170	0.846	0.178		
Respectful of others	–0.216	0.822	–0.026		
Cares for other people	0.145	0.741	–0.019		
Honest	0.033	0.736	–0.281		
Relaxed	0.179	0.629	–0.075		
Individualistic	0.154	0.471	–0.265		
Potential friend	0.616	0.450	0.049		
<i>Factor: Personal abilities</i>				1.89	9.47
Self-disciplined	0.131	–0.039	0.854		
Intelligent	0.279	0.033	0.851		
Hard-working	0.183	0.106	0.851		
Thrifty	–0.184	0.154	–0.588		
Successful	0.714	–0.105	0.534		
Competitive	0.747	–0.115	0.404		

Note: Decimal figures are factor loadings after rotation, which indicate the extent to which a trait is associated with the dimension as a whole. Traits in italics are those that loaded 0.40 or greater on a factor and were those used to define the factor conceptually. All traits except competitive, successful, and potential friend loaded 0.40 or greater on one and only one of the factors. In our regression analyses, we formed our criterion variables by summing together those traits used to define each factor.

3.3. Primary analyses

Our primary analyses concerned the moderating effects of the perceiver's endorsement of the PWE on impressions formed of a target person based on that target person's perceived level of affluence. We constructed three criterion variables (personal abilities, sophistication, and considerateness) by summing those traits that

comprised each dimension in our factor analysis. Our fourth criterion variable was the participant's desire to have the lifestyle portrayed in the vignette.

Sophistication. The regression of sophistication was significant, $F(7, 128) = 14.87$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.448$, adj. $R^2 = 0.418$. The main effect of affluence, $t(128) = 4.16$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.37$, indicated participants believed that affluent target to be more sophisticated than the less affluent target. A $PWE \times$ character sex interaction, $t(128) = 2.95$, $p < 0.005$, $\beta = 0.53$, revealed that high PWEs believed a male character was particularly sophisticated ($M = 51.0$), whereas low PWEs found a male character to be particularly unsophisticated ($M = 37.5$). Such differences between high and low PWEs were less extreme when evaluating a female character ($M_s = 44.4$ and 41.5 , respectively).

A marginal three-way interaction between PWE, affluence level, and character sex, $t(128) = -1.81$, $p < 0.08$, $\beta = -0.37$ qualified these two effects. As can be seen in the middle portion of Table 1, when reading about an affluent character, high PWEs tended to rate a female target as more sophisticated than low PWEs. When reading about a less affluent character, however, the differences between high and low PWEs were reversed, such that high PWEs tended to rate a male target as more sophisticated than low PWEs.

Considerateness. The regression of considerateness on the basic model was significant, $F(7, 128) = 8.21$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.310$, adj. $R^2 = 0.272$. The main effect of affluence, $t(128) = -5.92$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = -0.59$, revealed that the affluent target was perceived as less considerate than the less affluent target. Likewise, PWE was negatively associated with perceptions of considerateness, $t(128) = -2.36$, $p < 0.03$, $\beta = -0.29$. These two variables interacted, $t(128) = 4.28$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.73$, such that when reading about an affluent target, high PWEs, as expected, tended to ascribe more considerateness ($M = 40.5$) than low PWEs ($M = 37.0$). When reading about a less affluent character, however, no such difference emerged between high and low PWEs ($M_s = 52.5$ and 53.3 , respectively).

A $PWE \times$ character sex interaction, $t(128) = 4.12$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.84$, revealed that high PWEs believed a male character was particularly considerate ($M = 43.0$), whereas low PWEs found a male character to be particularly unsophisticated ($M = 39.3$). Such differences between high and low PWEs were less extreme when evaluating a female character ($M_s = 41.2$ and 41.1 , respectively).

A three-way interaction between PWE, affluence level, and character sex, $t(128) = -4.91$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = -1.12$ qualified these first four effects. The means in the bottom portion of Table 1 reveal that, when reading about an affluent target, high PWEs perceived a female to be more considerate than did low PWEs. However, when reading about a less affluent character, high PWEs perceived the male target as more considerate than did low PWEs.

Personal abilities. The regression of personal abilities was significant, $F(7, 128) = 10.82$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.372$, adj. $R^2 = 0.337$. A main effect for affluence, $t(128) = 3.81$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.37$, revealed that participants perceived the affluent target to possess greater ability than a less affluent target. Further, affluence level interacted with PWE, $t(128) = 2.20$, $p < 0.03$, $\beta = 0.43$. As expected, high PWEs believed an affluent character possessed more personal ability ($M = 36.9$) than did low PWEs

($M = 31.8$). However, no such difference occurred between high and low PWEs when reading about a less affluent target (M s = 31.4 and 30.8, respectively).

A two-way interaction between PWE and character sex, $t(128) = 3.62$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.66$, revealed that high PWEs believed a male character possessed more ability ($M = 33.0$) than did low PWEs ($M = 29.0$). No such difference occurred between high and low PWEs when reading about a female character (M s = 32.4 and 33.0, respectively).

Desire to have lifestyle. The regression of desire to have the lifestyle portrayed in the scenario on the basic model was significant, $F(7, 128) = 9.99$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.354$, adj. $R^2 = 0.318$. The main effect of affluence, $t(128) = 3.39$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.33$, revealed that participants desired to have the affluent lifestyle ($M = 4.7$) more than the less affluent lifestyle. The main effect of PWE, $t(128) = 4.32$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.51$, revealed a positive relationship between PWE and the desire to have the lifestyle portrayed in the scenario. The two-way interaction between these variables, $t(128) = -2.76$, $p < 0.007$, $\beta = -0.46$, revealed that high PWEs indicated no preference between the two lifestyles ($M = 4.8$ for affluent and $M = 4.7$ for less affluent). Low PWEs, however, clearly desired the affluent lifestyle ($M = 4.4$) to the less affluent lifestyle ($M = 2.3$). Thus, low PWEs may be more desirous than high PWEs of an extravagant lifestyle.

4. Discussion

Our purpose in conducting this study was to learn how a perceiver's endorsement of the PWE, in combination with a target person's affluence level, influences the impression formation process. This objective was accomplished using a more heterogeneous sample than has been used in previous experiments.

We expected that perceivers who strongly endorsed the PWE would form more positive impressions of the affluent target person, manifesting themselves statistically in crossover interactions with the target's affluence level. Two-way interactions did emerge on two of our four primary criterion variables; however, none were in the hypothesised manner. Although, as expected, high PWEs tended to ascribe greater considerateness to the affluent character than did low PWEs, high and low PWEs did not differ in their evaluation of a less affluent character. This interaction suggests that high PWEs are more positive in their evaluation of an affluent person, but not "harsher" in judging a less affluent individual. Given that high PWEs tend to value responsibility (Furnham, 1987) and accomplishment (Feather, 1984), they may be crediting the affluent person for achieving such an end state by forming more positive impressions of that person.

It is interesting that high and low PWEs did not differ in their perceptions of a less affluent character. Perhaps we did not detect our hypothesised interactions because our less affluent character was by no means destitute. Indeed, our manipulation checks revealed that she/he was, by American standards, of middle-class standing. If we had investigated a truly destitute target, high PWE's impressions may indeed have been more negative toward such a target.

Interestingly, three-way interactions emerged on sophistication and considerateness. Previous research (e.g., Belk et al., 1982; Christopher & Schlenker, 2000; Dittmar, 1992a; Dittmar & Pepper, 1994) has yielded mixed results with respect to how a target's sex influences the impression formation process. Our results suggest that this variable's impact may lie in combination with other variables, and in particular, PWE endorsement. High PWEs tended to form more favourable impressions of male targets than female targets, and this was particularly the case when the target appeared to be less affluent. It might have been expected, barring a display of affluence, that high PWEs would form impressions based on commonly held stereotypes of the sexes (i.e., females possessing greater considerateness; males possessing greater sophistication). Instead, high PWEs were more positive in their impressions of a male target. These findings indicate that, barring the presence of affluence cues, PWE endorsement might be associated with an evaluative bias against women. Indeed, our three significant PWE \times character sex interactions each indicated that high PWEs formed more favourable impressions of males targets than did low PWEs, and that high PWEs formed more favourable impressions of a male target than a female target. Previous research (e.g., Biernat et al., 1996) suggested that the PWE is an important variable in racial stereotyping and prejudice considerations. Our results imply that the PWE may be an important variable in an even wider arena of person perception processes, particularly those in which the sex of the target is of interest.

As noted, other participant characteristics (i.e., sex, age, political preference, and SES) were unrelated, alone or in combination with affluence level and PWE, to any of the criterion variables. Although one must be cautious when drawing conclusions from null findings, these results do attest to the importance of a target person's affluence, the perceiver's endorsement of the PWE, and the combination of these two predictor variables on the first impression formation process.

The two-way interaction on the desire to have the lifestyle described in the scenario indicates that although PWE does moderate the impressions formed of an affluent and less affluent person, such impressions may not necessarily be akin to a greater desire to portray such characteristics, at least via a display of wealth. Our data suggest that high PWEs do not necessarily want an affluent lifestyle. In other words, high PWEs probably wish to attain a certain level of comfort in their lifestyle, but anything beyond that point may be superfluous. This finding parallels those of other research (Christopher & Schlenker, 2001) that found that high PWEs do not believe individuals should feel positively for doing well on a task. Taken together, these results suggest that PWE endorsement may be associated with what Higgins (1997); Higgins et al. (2001) called a "prevention focus" rather than a "promotion focus". That is, high PWEs may be more concerned with avoiding unpleasant end states (e.g., losing money) than with striving for pleasant end states (e.g., making money). Future research on the PWE may benefit from exploring these speculations.

Future research into the effects of affluence cues on first impressions may benefit methodologically by using video clips (e.g., Dittmar, 1992a) or pictures (e.g., Cherulnik & Wilderman, 1986) instead of scenarios to portray target people in different affluence settings. There are clearly difficulties inherent in making such stimulus materials scientifically valid (Helga Dittmar, personal communication, 23 September

1994). This consideration notwithstanding, such portrayals of affluence level might allow researchers to more cleanly manipulate this variable. In fact, such methodology might be necessary to create a truly destitute target person, rather than a middle-class target person as we studied in the current research.

Although impressions of a relatively affluent person have been reliably demonstrated across studies in England and the United States, one consideration that has yet to be investigated is the means by which affluent people acquire their wealth. Money can be acquired in various ways (e.g., inheritance, hard work, and gambling both legally as in day-trading and illegally as in sports betting). It might be interesting to learn if the manner in which affluence is acquired affects perceptions of the affluent individual. Further, given the current findings, such perceptions may well be a function of the perceiver's endorsement of the PWE. For instance, high PWEs might give more positive impressions of an affluent person who is a "rags to riches" case than to an affluent person who was born into such circumstances. The answers to such questions will further irrigate the still comparatively parched research landscape examining the effects of affluence on the person perception process.

Acknowledgements

We thank Barry R. Schlenker and Raymond Christopher for their statistical counsel on these data. Peter Lunt, Barry R. Schlenker, Pam Marek, and two anonymous reviewers contributed helpful suggestions on earlier drafts of this manuscript.

Appendix A

A.1. Sample scenario: Affluent man

Note. The less affluent scenario appears in parentheses. For the female character, the name *Lisa* was used and the pronouns changed accordingly. The names of our characters were chosen in accordance with guidelines for naming stimulus people (Kasof, 1993).

Mark Wilson works for a large technology company. He is quite tall with short black hair and blue eyes. He is 28-years-old, although he looks slightly younger than that. He now owns a condominium (rents an apartment) in Dallas, which is well furnished with comfortable furniture (furnished with second-hand furniture). Mark is particularly proud of his new dining room set that he bought at Ethan Allen Furniture Galleries (of a set of chairs that he bought at an unfinished furniture store and finished himself). He also has an avid interest in cars, and he currently drives a 2000 Ford Mustang (a 1990 Ford Escort).

Typically, Mark returns home from work, feeds his Afghan Hound (Beagle), and prepares a steak (some chicken) for himself. He may also select a vintage wine to enjoy with his meal (he may occasionally, on the way home from work, pick up a bottle of wine from the grocery store). Before eating, Mark selects several compact disks from

his extensive collection (a cassette) to enjoy with dinner. After eating, he puts the dishes in the dishwasher (washes up the dishes), and then relaxes in his Jacuzzi (takes a long hot bath). Later, he often goes out with friends or watches a video on his wide-screen TV set (or watches TV on his 14-in. color set) for the rest of the evening.

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