

# Do You Still Want to Work Together? The Role of Task Competence and Interpersonal Affect in Predicting Peer Ratings

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## Abstract

Peer evaluations are common in workplaces as well as classrooms. These evaluations are often assumed to be based on a rational process in which raters observe, encode, categorize, and evaluate performance-related information (Landy & Farr, 1980; Robbins & DeNisi, 1994; Tsui & Barry, 1986). However, an alternative perspective argues that affective reactions (i.e., the extent to which an individual likes their teammate) may influence evaluations (DeCotiis & Petit, 1978; Diboye, 1985; Judge & Ferris, 1993). Supporting this notion, recent findings have demonstrated that ratings of liking and performance are highly correlated ( $\rho = .77$ ) (Sutton, Baldwin, Wood, & Hoffman, 2013).

The high degree of overlap among ratings of liking and performance raises a number of important issues, which we seek to address in the current study. First, it is unclear whether raters are able to differentiate between performance information and liking when completing ratings of their teammates. Second, the high degree of overlap suggests that performance information may contribute little in predicting important outcomes beyond what is accounted for by liking. Some have argued that liking is the primary factor in determining peer evaluations because affective responses are involuntary and effortless (Lefkowitz, 2000; Zajonc, 1980). In this study, we examine the extent to which a rater p to work with a teammate again in the future as our outcome variable because this is an important component of team effectiveness (Bell & Marentee, 2011; Hackman, 1987).

Data were collected using the CATME online teamwork evaluation system (see [www.catme.org](http://www.catme.org) for more information). Based on peer evaluations of over 82,000 students working in project teams, we conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses to test whether peers distinguish between ratings of liking (e.g., "I consider this person to be a friend") and performance (e.g., "Makes important contributions that improve the team's work"). Our results support a model in which raters treat these two constructs as distinct. We also regressed peer ratings of wanting to work with a teammate in the future onto their ratings of liking and performance and our findings suggest that both variables contribute to preferences for working

together in the future. Furthermore, performance contributed unique predictive information, above and beyond liking. Lastly, the relative contributions of performance and liking in predicting peers' ratings of working together in the future were equivalent. This suggests that both pieces of information contributed equally to raters' decisions.

Overall, our findings highlight the complexity of the performance evaluation process in teams. That is, raters do not rely solely on their affective responses, nor do they consider pure performance information. Thus, evaluations that emphasizes one piece of information over another (e.g., require raters to disregard whether they like their teammate or not) may remove important information and limit the effectiveness of the evaluation.

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