

DEPRESSED MOOD AND SOCIAL PERCEPTION: A CROSS-CULTURAL REPLICATION¹

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Summary.—For 49 Greek students *r*s of depression and accuracy of tracking the negative partner in a videotaped dyad replicated U.S. results.

The influence of depression on perception, information processing, and judgment is receiving increasing attention (3). On a complex social perception task, i.e., judging rapport in videotaped dyadic interactions, depressed persons preferentially tracked the negative member of each pair, while nondepressed subjects attended to both (4). Present data came from a cross-cultural replication carried out in northern Greece.

Forty-nine undergraduates at the University of Thessaloniki were shown 1-min. videotaped excerpts from 50 different mixed-sex dyadic interactions involving American students (1). The video clips were taken from the debating phase of a complex interaction sequence of various activities. Rapport had been judged through extensive ratings made by the interactants themselves immediately after the debate. Subjects were asked to rate the rapport for each video clip on a scale of 1 to 8. Their perceptual accuracy was assessed by correlating their 50 judgments with the ratings made by the 50 pairs of target interactants. Since rapport ratings were available, which member of the pair was tracked could be assessed.

A consistent pattern of depressed mood on performance was noted. Scores on the Beck Depression Inventory were correlated with predictive accuracy ($r = .23, p = .11$). Accuracy, in fact, increased linearly with depression up to the "moderate" level, the mean correlations of accuracy for nondepressed ($n = 29$), borderline ($n = 10$) and mildly ($n = 8$) depressed subjects being .20, .22, and .28, respectively. Unlike American subjects, the entire Greek sample preferentially tracked the negative partner, yielding a significant main effect ($F = 22.2, p < .0001$). Individuals with Beck Inventory scores in the mild and moderately depressed range ($n = 10$) tracked the negative rather than the positive partner (mean *r*s being .26 and .19, respectively). Nondepressed subjects showed this same preference (*r*s of .21 and .17); groups did not differ significantly. Depression was significantly related to tracking only the female member of the dyads, the correlation between Beck scores and the accuracy of predicting the female interactants' rapport ratings being .29 ($p < .05$). Some evidence supported an adaptive strategy since females are better non-verbal communicators of affect (2). Results are generally consistent with earlier work, except this last provocative finding.

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