

ALTERCASTING, INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE, AND GENDER STEREOTYPES:
STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE REALTOR-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

A Thesis

By

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Abstract

This study sought to connect two literatures, status characteristic theory and altercasting, to an applied experiment examining the relationship between Realtors and their clients. A 2x2 experimental survey was conducted looking at the effect of a client's perceived gender and their institutional knowledge of the real estate industry.

Subsequent analysis shows partial support for the predictions made showing the importance of *Institutional Knowledge* in the interaction space and the importance of *Gender* when evaluating specific altercasting strategies. Finally, this study seems to support the existing theory of SCES as it predominantly reflects how the status of *Gender* is overshadowed by perceptions of *Institutional Knowledge*.

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INTRODUCTION

The ability to define the situation is critical to developing or maintaining an identity. Altercasting is a type of definition of the situation (through influencing others); it is the process of casting others into an identity that suits the current goal. Successful altercasting demonstrates the power of one person vis-a-vis another as it is employed to constrain the options of another. As such, successful altercasting is most often accomplished by those with greater resources. Altercasting is common such as when parents try to shape their child's identities, professors try to shape their students' identities, or when prison guards attempt to shape prisoners' identities. However, it is not the case that only one of the interaction partners is involved in the process. Children, students, and prisoners shape identities of parents, professors, and guards through acceptance, resistance, or deflection. However, large differences in power among interactants facilitates the ability of the most powerful to shape the situation and the identities of others. In this way, altercasting can be used to explain the continuation of both unethical and ethical behaviors, over the long-term, as those successful at altercasting are less likely to have their identities challenged.

For this study, I highlight the differential power relationship within the Realtor-client relationship. Due to their position as real estate "experts," Realtors are given heightened power affording them greater potential to define the situation and reproduce their power and identity as knowledgeable. Part of this altercasting process allows the realtor to control the situation by *redefining* their interaction partner.

I develop and then test predictions addressing how Realtors try to altercast their clients and how altercasting changes based upon the characteristics of the client. In

particular, I consider how the gender of the client and their experience with real estate changes the strategies and perceptions of Realtors. To do so, I consider several different literatures: identity theory, expectations states, altercasting, and professionalization.

BACKGROUND

Identity

Identity is a way of understanding the self as constructed within the social context. It provides individuals with internal definitions and meaning to be used interactively in maintenance and development of the self (Mead 1934; Stryker, Owens, and White 2000). In essence, identity provides the foundation of interaction as it projects internalized views of the self into action and behavior. To avoid stress invoked due to incompatible identities, individuals organize their identities along a stable salience hierarchy (Stryker et al. 2000). This hierarchy allows individuals to transition social contexts and interaction spaces without disrupting their sense of self. Yet, as Stets and Burke (2000) points out, the identity process is ongoing and ever present. Identity theory, in particular, assumes that people seek to verify or confirm their identities, one they are stable. As such, verification is a critical component of the identity process wherein individuals adjust their behaviors in accordance with the appraisals of others. People look to those around them in order to confirm their own sense of self (Stets and Burke 2014; Davis, Love, and Fares 2019). Based on this, identity must have congruence both within the individual and from the perceived opinion of others. Studies have found instances of non-verification to be associated with negative emotions and internal instability (Swann 1987; Stets and Burke 2000; Burke, Stets, and Cerven 2007).

Therefore, it becomes vital for individuals to use the resources at their disposal to control interactional definitions in order to verify their sense of self.

This conception of verifying one's own identity through controlling interaction can manifest in three ways for individuals: 1) adjustment of their own behaviors to bring their identity definition in line with the definition of the situation, 2) influencing others to provide appraisals consistent with self-identities, or 3) controlling situational definitions (Cast 2003). Importantly, these mechanisms of verification are associated with the relative power of the individual within the interaction. As such, individuals' hierarchical positions within society influence the ease with which they can achieve identity verification. In other words, those with higher status and more power are more likely to verify their identity meanings than those with lower status and less power (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; Burke et al. 2007; Davis and Love 2014).

SCES

Those with higher status receive higher performance expectations and in turn, greater deference than their lower status counterparts (Berger et al. 1977). Status is conveyed by one's position within the social structure and pertains to the possession of valued characteristics that are diffuse such as race, class, and gender, as well as position or rank within a task group, such as leader or boss. When people are interacting on a task, the burden of proof assumption from SCES states that the effects from status will be reproduced in new task settings unless proven inconsequential for the completion of the given task (Berger et al. 1972; Berger et al. 1977; Sell et al. 2000; Davis and Love 2014). Actors' hierarchical positions affect the ease (or difficulty) with which they can achieve identity verification.

Two types of status characteristics are most discussed within the SCES framework: specific and diffuse. Specific status characteristics are made salient in situations where specific expertise is expected. For instance, hiring a professional invokes specific status characteristics as the expectations required of the situation are associated with that professional status. Diffuse status characteristics, such as race, gender, or SES, are connected with more general impressions of competency as they relate to the characteristic. (Berger et al. 1977; Burke et al. 2007; Fine 2010; Ridgeway 2011). Gender, for instance, is a diffuse characteristic as males are generally perceived as more mathematically minded and instrumentally competent across a wide range of situations, while women are perceived as having greater empathetic skill and interpersonal sensitivity (Berger et al. 1977; Correll 2001; Ridgeway 2011). As such, when people are evaluating the need for analytical competency, they are likely to differentially evaluate men as being more competent and women as less competent. Because these diffuse characteristics allow for the development of gendered stereotypes, legitimizing one's position is critical especially for those in atypical positions (Ridgeway and Berger 1986). As Burke et al. (2007) remark, "women professionals will leverage institutional legitimacy to overcome stereotypes predicated on diffuse status characteristics." In other words, the diffuse status of being perceived as a woman works counter to the specific status of being a professional. Because this is the case, if women are to acquire influence in a professional setting, the burden-of-proof process requires women to provide cues as to the inapplicability of the stereotype (Berger and Zelditch 1998; Lucas 2003). This results in women working harder and using more resources to be perceived in the same manner as their men counterparts (Burke et al. 2007). Berger

and Zelditch (1998) point out that task cues, if they are deemed relevant to the task, will have a greater effect on behavior in the task setting than diffuse cues. As such, those in lower positions will utilize more resources to verify their identities (Burke et al. 2007).

Gender

Predicated on cultural beliefs, gender roles are applied across social situations allowing for both the creation and maintenance of gendered meanings (Burke and Reitzes 1991, 2006; Correll 2004; Sell and Kuipers 2009). Because gender is part of a broad cultural framework it regularly operates as a diffuse background identity (Ridgeway 2007, 2011). It augments and imparts identity meaning, operates in combination with other identities, and creates bias in the interaction space; importantly, gender bias becomes stronger as gender becomes more salient in meeting the interaction goal (Ridgeway 2011). When behaviors align with gender stereotypes, a confirmation takes place wherein these stereotypes are reinforced by the "correct" behavior taking place for both the actor and the audience (Gerber 2009; Sell and Kuipers 2009). Over time, these behaviors become entangled with perceptions of self thereby establishing behavioral norms that reinforce gender stereotypes (Gerber 2009). For those in positions of institutional power, then, it might serve them to control the definitions of the situation to verify these stereotypes. The reason for this is twofold: 1) it allows for verification of the self thereby providing internal stability and 2) it reduces the myriad of behavioral options available to the other actor by strictly defining the parameters of interaction. Because gender stereotypes are formed from the cultural framework, working to maintain gender stereotypes would assist those in power in limiting the identities their interaction partners might take, thereby reducing potential

conflict and lessening the opportunity for unknowns that could disrupt the interaction goal.

When operating within a task situation, gender typically operates as a diffuse status characteristic by providing general performance expectations about an individual's perceived general competence. Performance expectations relate to both the given task and the individual themselves determining how resources, such as status, power, and legitimacy, are distributed within the interaction (Fişek, Berger, and Norman 1991; Webster and Walker 2017). Correll (2004) showcased how in "male advantaged" tasks, men used more lenient standards and assessed their own competence as higher than that of women; however, when gender was made irrelevant to the task, these differences no longer obtained. Additionally, experimental results showed that while men assessed their own mathematical capability as higher than women, this did not hold true for verbal skills because "verbal skills are not associated with masculinity" (Correll 2004). These self-assessments are indicative of the general perceptions of competency typically associated with gender becoming salient within task-oriented interaction unless otherwise proven to be irrelevant to the task.

Different intervention strategies have looked at the ways in which diffuse status characteristics, such as gender, can be mitigated. Manago, Sell, and Goar (2019) found that in defining a complex task as requiring a "diversity of opinions," groups were less likely to maintain a strong hierarchy allowing a greater chance for synergy among group members. Recent work on rewards has shown that, when women possess a valued reward, the status conveyed by the reward is enough to transmit new status characteristics resulting in greater perceptions of competency and an adjustment in

performance expectations (Harkness 2017, 2020). Other studies have explored the impact that additional task information, typically inverting traditional status hierarchies and interactive frequency, has in reducing gendered effects (see: Berger et al. 1992; Markovsky, Roy, and Berger 1984; Lucas 2003; Walker, Doerer, and Webster 2014).

Altercasting

Defined as the ability to project an identity onto another, congruent with own's own goals, altercasting is a form of interpersonal control aimed at eliciting an identity response from the interaction partner [Alter] that assists the originating actor [Ego] in attaining their goal (Weinstein and Deutschberger 1963). The ability to altercast is relative to the different people within the situation. To highlight this point, Stets and Harrod (2004) found that "actors in higher-status positions have interactional resources allowing them to sustain their identity meanings within the situations and avoid negative emotions that come with lack of identity maintenance" Those with greater resources are in a privileged position to sustain their existing identity.

There are times when altercasting is unsuccessful. Stryker et al. (2000) mention that altercasting techniques can involve both positive and negative identities, but that negative attributions are more likely to be resisted. Cast (2003) expands this noting that individuals can retain interactional power by resisting these altercasting strategies by others. Through resistance, one-person (Alter) resists another's (Ego) attempts at controlling the situation. This has two effects: it might bolster Alter, and prevents Ego's stability of self; however, Ego may respond by adjusting their strategy instead utilizing alternative resources to restrict Alter's options. There are different sources of power an

individual might hold, sources of power might include monetary wealth, time, expertise, and institutional knowledge.

Prior research has examined differential power within marital relationships in exploring the impact of power on the ability to maintain consistent identities (Cast 2003). Kieren and Tallman (1972) studied how adaptability, broken into empathetic, flexible, and motivation strategies, affected couples' ability to problem-solve; findings indicate that couples operating more adaptably were more likely to succeed in their marriages. I suggest that we can use these general strategies to study the phenomenon of altercasting in professional or task-oriented settings.

Building of Profession

A significant way people develop differential power is through their occupation; more specifically one's occupation can invoke greater power through the legitimizing process of professionalization. While professionalization occurs in many occupations, I focus on realtors and the realtor-client relationship.

The basic components that build into a profession include systematic theory, authority, community sanction, ethical codes, and a culture (Greenwood 1957). Systemic theory refers to the idea of a body of knowledge that validates and confirms behaviors. Authority typically refers to the power that professionals hold within their industry with specific emphasis on educational differences between the professional and the layperson; this serves as the basis of power for the professional. This is built through community sanctions, either formal or informal, and it is through this public approval that greater power is granted to any professional. Ethical codes are the publicly recognizable standards for the profession. These codes outline expected

interactions between professional-client, professional-professional, and colleague-colleague and are typically overseen by an internal tribunal within the profession itself (Greenwood 1957; Hornstein 2005; Young 2011). Finally, culture refers to the social networks created within the profession reinforcing the normative behaviors, symbols, and values of the profession.

Educational requirements and ongoing professional training are important in maintaining a higher status position within the field. Professionals have specialized knowledge in their respective field. This differential in knowledge is important in separating the professional from the client. Directly intertwined in these formal education requirements is credentialization and how this process is leveraged by professionals to shift their occupation out from subordinate status positions (Collins 2019).

Closely related to this focus on educational standards is the professionalization of authority. Power is allotted to professionals through public sanctioning and acceptance of differential power present in those relationships (Greenwood 1957).

Ethical codes are dynamic and utilized by professional organization as a way of publicly acknowledging their commitment to the general public's welfare; but the reality is that they feed more into professional culture as there are often codes that specifically outline the agreed-upon behaviors when interacting with the public, colleagues, or other professionals (Greenwood 1957; Van Maanen and Barley 1984).

Professional culture will adapt and change to maintain structural power and occupational exclusiveness. Heavy emphasis is placed upon social networks and the formal and informal groups that comprise them (Van Maanen and Barley 1984).

Understanding that value is created through social networks, and that the initial interaction can have influences beyond the primary interaction is key in this process of being perceived as professional (Van der Walt and Ingley 2003).

The professionalization process is multifaceted and, importantly, it establishes institutionalized structures which define professional identities. It provides a system through which altercasting can be developed. Specifically, the professional has expertise the client does not. The client's lack of knowledge (institutional knowledge) legitimates the professional and their power.

Realtors as a Profession

Realtors are unique as they are the only occupation that has trademarked their professional title. This distinction furthers the legitimation of the occupation and affords realtors the opportunity to make themselves distinct from their non-realtor counterparts. To market oneself as a realtor individuals must become members of the National Association of Realtors (NAR). Membership provides greater resources through legal advice, marketing materials, and demographic data. In many regions, the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) is only available to those who have membership with both the local association of realtors and the NAR. As such, the NAR and its 1.3 million members are able to maintain control of the most powerful negotiation tool available to the real estate industry (Anon 2020). This is especially true for those states that are "non-disclosure" states, meaning that the sales data associated with the sale of real estate are not public record. Such nondisclosure exponentially increases the power of those who have access. Realtors are an ideal example of the legitimizing process of professionalization: they have educational requirements and continuing education

supporting systemic theory; their specialization as real estate experts and subsequent acceptance by the general public supports authority and community sanctions; both the licensing state and the NAR have established codes of ethics; and their culture is maintained nationally by NAR and locally by the association, sponsoring brokerage, and fellow agents.

Interaction, Cooperation, & Goals

All interactions involve individual histories, and usually, many different identities. Some of these identities are usually immediately observable, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and age. These diffuse status characteristics weave into identity and structure interactions through the activation of stereotypes (Berger et al. 1972; Berger and Webster 2006, 2018). Other inputs, such as occupation and knowledge or expertise, work in tandem with diffuse status characteristics integrating themselves into individuals' sense of self. These initial perceptions can lead to coordination problems, even if small, which must be resolved so that further cooperation can occur (Tallman and Hsiao 2004). This study will examine strategies individuals might employ to coordinate and define the situation to achieve goals.

Initial interactions are pivotal in establishing the course of the relationship and ongoing interaction between actors. Ego's resistance to altercasting attempts can make coordination difficult and lead to a dissolution of the relationship should the goal not be met (Mattessich and Hill 1987; Tallman 2003). Previous scholarship, (McDonald and Cornille 1988; Kollock 1993; Pruitt 1998; Lawler, Ford, and Large 1999), found this to be the case for intimate relationships, but this is also the case with many different types of interaction. While professional-client interactions are not always deemed "intimate,"

professionals often have information about their clients that is often unknown by others around them such as the severity of financial issues, legal troubles, or medical history.

Adaptability

Tallman's (1961) concept of adaptability is defined as an “ability to deal effectively with problematic situations by changing roles, attitudes, and actions in terms of new or modified understandings for the situation in which they are confronted.”

Adaptability also shifts along an axis of “cognitively guided behavior” wherein individuals low on this continuum maintain their current behavior regardless of the situation and those high on this continuum are consciously employing specific behavior in order to draw out certain effects or maintain interaction toward a long-term goal (Tallman 1961; Kieren and Tallman 1972). With adaptability there are three components; empathy, flexibility, and motivation, studies have found that those scoring higher on these three components were more likely to cooperate in ways that increased the survivability of the relationship and enhanced cooperative strategies (Tallman 1961, 1965; Kieren and Tallman 1972). Furthermore, the use of these components in the early stages of a relationship precipitate trust, respect, and commitment (Tallman 2003; Tallman and Hsiao 2004). While Tallman’s work primarily looked at cooperation between newlyweds and familial structures, I believe it can be incorporated into altercasting in different domains and thereby extend the breadth of its explanatory power. I rely on Tallman's conceptualization of cooperation strategies developed for intimate relations. The realtor-client interaction contains many elements of intimacy, albeit, framed in a financial relationship.

Empathy refers to the ability of an individual to recognize and interpret the feelings and behaviors of others within the context of the situation. It can be thought of as what Mead (1934) refers to as one's ability to take the role of the other. High-empathy responses involve numerous cues and the ability to relate those cues to the situation at hand. Assuming that an individual is able to contextualize the feelings and motivations of another within the interaction, then one can reasonably infer that they are capable using highly empathetic strategies (Tallman 1961). Conversely, a low-empathy response would be one in which the individual is unable to integrate the situational information with their interaction partner's thoughts and feelings. It is important to note that the correctness of an individual's assessment does not affect the level of empathy displayed; integration of situational and interaction stimuli is how empathy is displayed.

Flexible strategies "evaluate the interaction partner within the context of the situation as opposed to stereotyping. It involves changing one's roles, actions, or behaviors to meet the situation as opposed to remaining rigid in response" (Tallman 1961:654). Two components build flexible strategies, attitude and ability. Attitude is the recognition that you are interacting with a unique individual and are able to contextualize both the individual and the situation rather than stereotyping. Reconciling attitude with alternative actions is what is meant by ability as opposed to remaining rigid in one's actions. Evaluation of alternative actions, and associated attitudes, with the interaction partner is critical for a high flexible response. Low flexibility involves an "intolerance of ambiguity" leveraging rationalization of action or lack of action taken. In the case of a client and professional, different strategies might be used in different ways. Clients and professionals are a special relationship in several ways. First, clients

seek out professionals based on their perceived expertise. This, of course, places the professional's expertise as a power advantage. However, the client has options. They can go to other professionals, and they also are in charge of payment. Realtors have perceived knowledge of the market, expertise in procedures to be followed, and bargaining experience. However, clients know that they can go to other agents, or even sell a house by themselves. So, the realtor is faced with the problem of determining the kinds of strategies that can be used to altercast the client to trust and employ the realtor. Highly flexible strategies might look at an understanding of a client's financial concerns and consider reducing one's commission or even contributing to closing costs. Conversely, low-flexibility strategies wouldn't change or alter the situation in their evaluation of the client, furthering potential problems and jeopardizing the goal. This could be indicated by a Realtor saying, "well sometimes clients are just difficult. Nothing you can do about that."

Finally, the strategy that represents the basic requisite for interaction is motivation. Though, even if an individual is highly motivated, they must be able to utilize some level of empathy or flexibility or risk taking as appropriate action. To expand on that point, Tallman (1961) points to involvement as an underlying aspect of motivation. Involvement represents the degree that an individual contributes energy and time. However, motivation furthers this by incorporating affectual involvement into the definition. Therefore, we can define motivation as "an affectual investment characterized by involvement in effecting certain anticipated goals" (Tallman 1961:656). Yet, motivation can be dissipated when met with greater resistance. When ego begins to sense that they might be losing control of alter, they begin to devote more of their

energy to motivation strategies and less with the invested strategies of empathy or flexibility. For instance, low motivation might look like a Realtor that believes “you just can’t help some clients.” This response displays an unwillingness to take responsibility for the other individual or the situation. Alternatively, a high motivation response could be a Realtor leveraging other resources, such as network connections, detailed data from the multiple listing service, or simply devoting more time to open communication with the client. This type of response involves evidence of increased effort and an openness to continuing that behavior in the long run.

Research demonstrates these three components are each necessary in building adaptability and are also related to perceptions of competency (Tallman 1961, 1965; Kieren and Tallman 1972). As discussed above, diffuse status characteristics play a critical role in perceptions of competency. This competency is enhanced for professionals who are perceived as men, with the diffuse status coinciding with perceptions of competency, while professionals perceived as women must leverage additional resources to combat perceptions of low competency. I suggest that this leads to a gendered difference in strategies employed by those attempting to altercast.

Competency is also related to the specific status of the client. A first-time home buyer will have lower status due to their low level of institutional knowledge. Low institutional knowledge positions the client in a disadvantageous position; heightening perceptions of incompetence and lessening their interactional power. Conversely a client framed as a seasoned investor implies higher levels of institutional knowledge affording them greater power within the relationship and increasing their perceived competence.

Successful altercasting typically involves a power differential favoring Alter. This power can stem from diffuse status characteristics, such as gender, race, or age, or institutionalized structures, such as occupation, credentialism, or specialized knowledge. These sources of power are enhanced in intimate relationships as greater information is available about the interaction partner. When leveraged early in an interaction, successful altercasting can reduce the potential interaction problems and enhance cooperative efforts thereby establishing “proper” behaviors and expectations for future interaction.

Theoretical Framework

Framed in identity theory I posit two things: 1) that individuals organize the identities they hold in a hierarchical manner and 2) that individuals self-verify their identities. Identity is relatively stable in the short-term, but it is capable of change (Burke 2006). 3) That identities are developed, maintained, and changed through interaction. Relative stability of identities allows individuals to transition from social contexts without creating internal discord. Through this lens, altercasting can be seen as less disruptive since it is less about radically redefining Ego's identity and more about prioritizing existing identities. In essence the identity being "cast" or "forced" onto Ego is more likely to be an identity that they already hold, to some degree, within their individual hierarchy. For instance, a Realtor might comment on how a *smart* buyer would see the opportunity their listing represents. The buyer, who wants to verify that they're a smart buyer, might reconsider passing on the home since now the home has become a prerequisite for holding the *smart* buyer identity. The purpose of altercasting then is to make salient an

identity that Ego already holds in order to achieve situation control. Once established, Alter can then operate freely with Ego willingly complying.

Furthermore, this study connects identity theory with expectation states theory specifically emphasizing the importance of status characteristics. Expectation states has five core assumptions: 1) status becomes salient when initially defined as pertinent to the task, 2) status information tends to become generalized by individuals across situations, 3) the interactive structure will be restructured if new individuals or information become pertinent to the situation, 4) all salient information is combined, typically unconsciously, to create performance expectations, and 5) observable power and prestige relate an actor's expectation advantage over another (Berger and Webster 2018). Status legitimation theory expands upon this explaining how legitimized expectations become normative wherein generalized deference and support is expected to be given to high-status individuals and not low-status individuals (Berger and Webster 2018). Prior studies have shown how relationships verifying existing status structures result in more compliant interaction partners than those where an individual who has a status disadvantage occupies a high-status position, such as instances of women leaders (Ridgeway, Johnson, and Diekema 1994; Ritter and Yoder 2004). However, what has received less attention are the strategies used by those in positions of power to altercast their interaction partners across diffuse and specific status characteristics.

In defining different methods of altercasting, I draw from the conception of adaptability. I remain true to the original concept with the exception of adding the category: "analytic." I define analytic as the use of data, numbers, or figures to explain

the contextual situation of the interaction. Those high in analytic strategies will leverage information from multiple resources, verify the authenticity of the data, and engage in conversation with their interaction partners in order to bring about a level of mutual understanding. High analytic strategies will, theoretically, build greater levels of trust through a perception of transparency. Information is freely given in an effort to build trust and cooperative behavior with Ego. Those low in analytical strategies will utilize limited data resources in contextualizing the situation. Much of their argument might involve "just what they know." Data will be shallow and generic, for instance, "now's a great time to sell because it's a seller's market." Those in the low analytic category will cloud the details of their data either because they themselves are uncomfortable using analytic strategies or because the data, if examined, would refute claims made to Ego. Recall that professionals will typically have greater ability to utilize high analytical strategies due to their privileged access to nonpublic information and specialized education (Greenwood 1957; Hornstein 2005). Systemically utilizing low analytic strategies may be indicative of greater issues within the industry rather than isolated cases of incompetence or negligence.

This study focuses on the process and content of altercasting, and in doing so elaborates and combines altercasting with status characteristics and expectation states formulations. It allows the examination of the implementation of altercasting, as a mechanism of interactive control, rather than restricting focus just to the information about the characteristics of the interactants.

General Predictions

This study looks at how perception of a client's gender and the institutional knowledge of a client affect Realtors' initial altercasting strategies and assessments of client competence. Generally speaking, I expect there to be a gender effect, predicated on cultural stereotypes, wherein Realtors will use empathetic altercasting strategies for women initially and will perceive women as less competent than men clients. Additionally, I expect variation across institutional knowledge such that Realtors will initially employ analytic strategies for clients with high institutional knowledge. Additionally, they will perceive those with high institutional knowledge as more competent than those with low institutional knowledge. However, even in situations in which clients have high institutional knowledge, gender will still make a difference. Women will be viewed as less competent than men generally. I make no predictions about motivation because of the volatile nature of the concept when employed as a strategy. Motivation "is seen as the basic prerequisite" in the interactive space (Tallman 1961). The vignettes and study structure do not induce a powerful enough narrative to make Realtors consider a dissolution of the professional relationship. Additionally, as motivation is a fundamental piece of the altercasting process (i.e. you have to be motivated to make the interaction work) there is a disincentive to leverage it as a strategy due to the assumed goal of fostering a successful and cooperative relationship.

Methods

Overview

To test my predictions, I use an online vignette experiment. Participants were recruited through emails drawn from the Texas Real Estate Commission's publicly

available high value data sets. Potential participants were included if they had a real estate license address within the study's geographical area. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (described below). Because this is not a laboratory environment, I worked to control external variables that could affect the study's outcome. I restricted the study's analysis to Realtors that fit the following criteria: 1) they have or had a real estate salesperson license listed with The Texas Real Estate Commission, 2) they acquired their license prior to 2021, and 3) that they operate within the greater Houston marketplace. Restriction to the Houston area constrained potential differences in metropolitan markets while simultaneously allowing the study to analyze a diverse city with varying levels of economic and social stratification.

Independent Variables

To test the predictions, the vignettes are designed to manipulate only the two variables of interest: perceived gender and institutional knowledge of the client. Institutional knowledge was based on experience in the real estate sector and clients were either described as being first time home buyers (*Low Institutional Knowledge*) or as an investor that has purchased 20 properties in the area (*High Institutional Knowledge*). Additionally, the term "investor" is a ubiquitous term within the industry frequently associated with an individual who has experience evaluating potential properties for profit, cash flow, and ROI. Because this specific status exists, Realtors should interact and evaluate an investor differently than a first-time buyer. See figure A in the appendix for the vignettes.

Pre-testing

Because we are testing only gender and not race/ethnicity, age, and attractiveness, we first conducted a pretest to ensure that the images used to invoke gender were perceived as either a man or women. Additional pre-testing was used to control for perceived ethnicity, age, and attractiveness of the image. Perceived gender was transmitted via images from the Chicago Face Database (Ma, Correll, and Wittenbrink 2015). Images were pretested with 91 randomly selected Realtors. In this pretest, respondents were asked their perceptions of gender, age, race/ethnicity, and attractiveness of each headshot. It has been noted by others that images present potential confounding factors as they can convey multiple variables; however, images make the hypothetical person more “real” while avoiding drawing too much attention to gender as the target research interest (Rashotte and Webster 2005). Aside from the images needing to be perceived as similar in attractiveness and race, age was an especially important factor as these individuals would need to be perceived as old enough to be purchasing a house without the need for a significant other. We also wanted, as much as possible, for the facial expressions to be similar. (For example, if one image had a slight smile, the other image should also have a slight smile). As indicated in the appendix under figure E, an image of a slightly smiling woman and a slightly smiling man were chosen. See figure B, in the appendix, for an example of pre-test questions. The woman's image had means of 4.12 for age and 4.76 for attractiveness while the man's image had means of 3.88 for age and 4.27 for attractiveness.¹ Using a two-sample t-test, and an alpha of 0.05, the two images chosen

¹ A note on pre-test attractiveness: in the pre-tests, women were generally judged as more attractive than men.

had no significant difference in their perceived age (p-value of 0.26) and attractiveness (p-value of 0.15).

In addition to the above, I pretested various altercasting strategies to confirm they were perceived as representing the defined categories established in this study. Appendix C provides examples of both the defined categories and the final iteration of drafted altercasting strategies. Participants of the pre-test totaled 129 with 28 participants being graduate students or faculty and 91 being real estate professionals. Initial drafts were constructed using marketing materials from national brokerages, educational coursework, and in-person discussions with various Realtors. The strategies themselves went through four revisions during the pre-test as *flexible* altercasting strategies remained the most difficult to gather a consensus. The following section will explain these altercasting strategies, and their application to the study, in greater depth.

Dependent Variables

Based on Tallman's works, I would expect altercasting strategies will follow the specific pattern of empathy, analytic, flexible, and motivation. Kieren and Tallman (1972) specifically mention that flexibility is informed by empathy in that a limited understanding of an interaction partner can render even the most flexible strategies moot in practicality. Therefore, all things being equal, I would expect these strategies to inform each other in this specific pattern. Without empathy, or at least a rudimentary comprehension of Alter, then flexible strategies will fail. Furthermore, none of these strategies will be effective without proper *motivation* as the drive to devote resources toward other strategies will be insufficient (Kieren and Tallman 1972). The specific

content of the altercasting strategies were drawn from informal consultations with subject experts, publicly available media associated with agent-client interaction², and real estate license education. To measure participants' altercasting strategy a selection of eight behaviors, reflective of the four different strategies, were provided asking participants to rank them in the likelihood that they would employ said strategy with their clients and an additional question asking them to rate likelihood they would use said strategy on a 6-point scale. Each type of strategy was oriented to showcase a "middle" response in an effort to extend Tallman's concept of adaptability. Additionally, participants were given a free response section to elaborate on strategies they use. (For the response options provided to participants, see appendix figure C).

To measure Realtors' perception of client status, competency, and considerateness I adopted semantic differential questions asking them their personal perceptions of the client and then asking them to answer how they believe "most people" would perceive them (see Osgood, May, and Miron 1975; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 1992; Ridgeway et al. 2009). This measure was chosen to further examine the direct effect institutional knowledge can have on perceptions of gender and, by extension, individual competency (Measures of status, competence, and considerateness provided in appendix figure D). For the purposes of this manuscript, I only consider the issue of Realtors' personal estimates of competence. I expect to see a direct gender effect where women clients are perceived as less competent than men and a direct effect of institutional knowledge where those with limited institutional knowledge are considered less competent than their more experienced counterparts.

² Examples of two real estate brokerage articles published by [Keller Williams](#) and [Re/max](#)

Realtors

In considering the applicability of the theoretical mechanisms to the Realtor-client relationship there are four scope conditions to consider: 1) transition period of the relationship, 2) intimacy of the relationship, 3) existence of a power differential, and 4) goal orientation of the interaction. The Realtor-client relationship is naturally one of transition where it is imperative both parties be aware of the needs and expectations of the other. This transitory period is important as it is during this time that interactional roles and dynamics will come into effect (Tallman and Hsiao 2004). Because this is a time where situational definitions are being established, altercasting becomes a practical tool to utilize. If successful, altercasting will lay the groundwork for ongoing interaction. Second, intimacy is assumed based on two factors: 1) Realtors are privileged to access private information about their clients and 2) the home buying process involves some level of emotional intimacy, especially for those looking to purchase a primary residence. Third, interactive power favors the Realtor as they have access to the MLS, promulgated contracts, and localized social networks through the professionalization process and institutionalized power. The nature of professionalization establishes the initial power differential within these interactions; however, lower levels of institutional knowledge, on the part of the client, enhance this difference. Another important source of power previously mentioned is resources. The position of power maintained by Ego, even if not expressly used, leaves Alter at a significant bargaining disadvantage and it is this disadvantage that allows for the heightened potential of exploitation (Emerson 1976; Cook and Emerson 1978; Molm 1988, 1994; Tallman and Hsiao 2004). In effect, clients are dependent on their Realtors

to provide them accurate data and information about the real estate industry; a situation that leaves clients at a consequential disadvantage. Finally, the interaction must be goal oriented which, in this instance, is the purchase of a house. Importantly, while the interaction must be goal oriented, it is not required that the purchase of a house be the only goal present in the interaction. For instance, Realtors also have an inherent goal in successful transactions because their income is predicated upon a sales commission. In this way Realtors have ancillary goals that operate in tandem with the agreed upon interaction goal.

Participants

A total of 181 individuals agreed to participate in this experiment. Of the 181, 19 participants did not complete the initial demographic portion of the survey, 35 completed the demographic section but did not continue forward with the study, and 3 participants were removed due to technical issues with the survey. This left 124 participants to analyze for the initial altercasting strategy selected. 5 participants stopped after the drag-and-drop section of the study, reducing the *N* for likelihood of use to 119 participants. 3 additional participants stopped at this point leaving 116 participants from which to analyze perceptions of competence.

Hypotheses

Initial Strategy

This study considers the diffuse status characteristic of perceived gender with the specific status characteristic of institutional knowledge. The diffuse status of gender will have an effect on initially employed altercasting strategies. Because gender stereotypes are so potent, Realtors will attempt to verify gender stereotypes and reproduce

estimates of competence within the interaction. These stereotypes will be transferred to their altercasting strategies. Women will be viewed as lower in competence and ability, more comfortable and competent with empathetic strategies, and incompetent with analytic strategies, while men will be perceived as competent with analytic strategies while remaining incompetent with empathetic strategies. Due to this, Realtors, when selecting their initial strategy, are likely to follow gender stereotypes ranking women as lower in competence and analytic skill than they will with men. It is clear from the literature that both those advantaged, and those disadvantaged by gender stereotypes understand the content of these stereotypes and can readily identify them (see discussion in: Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Ridgeway 2011; Koenig and Eagly 2014; Lamont, Beljean, and Clair 2014; Eagly and Wood 2016). Further, we know that individuals use these to predict how people will act because the stereotypes based on gender are pervasive in our culture.

Additionally, a client's institutional knowledge should affect the altercasting pattern. Knowledge and experience that connect directly to the task are powerful and at least in some instances, have been shown to decrease the stereotypes associated with gender (Pugh and Wahrman 1983; Wagner, Ford, and Ford 1986; Yoder 2001; Lucas 2003; Webster and Walker 2017; Manago, Sell, and Goar 2019). Clients with high levels of institutional knowledge will be perceived as more competent by the Realtor thereby reducing the likelihood that Realtors will use empathetic strategies and more likely that they will use analytical strategies. The hypotheses below concern the first strategies chosen:

Hypothesis 1: For the first strategy chosen: Realtors will choose empathetic strategies for women more than for men.

Hypothesis 2: For the first strategy chosen: Realtors will choose empathetic strategies for those with low levels of institutional knowledge more than those with high levels of institutional knowledge.

Continuing from these initial hypotheses, I argue that client *Gender* and level of *Institutional Knowledge* combine. Because of SCES's burden-of-proof process, the diffuse characteristic of *Gender* is deemed relevant unless proven irrelevant to the task at hand. Women with high institutional knowledge should experience a dilution of gender stereotyping due to being represented as low in diffuse status but high in specific status. Men with high institutional knowledge will be verified further due to the specific status characteristic supporting the existing gender stereotype. Consequently:

Hypothesis 3: For the first strategy chosen: Realtors will choose empathetic strategies more than other strategies for women low in institutional knowledge (combining hypothesis 1 and 2)

Hypothesis 4: For the first strategy chosen: Realtors will choose analytic strategies for men more than for women.

Hypothesis 5: For the first strategy chosen: Realtors will choose analytic strategies for those with high levels of institutional knowledge more than for those with low levels of institutional knowledge.

Flexible strategies are those in which Realtors emphasize mechanisms that accommodate the client's requests to achieve the goal of the interaction. These strategies inherently relinquish some interactive power back to the client and, as such, I argue they are used with less frequency. That said, it remains a powerful strategy as the short-term relinquishment of some interactive control could lead to a client experiencing heightened levels of trust thereby strengthening the Realtor's control over the long-term.

Hypothesis 6: For the first strategy chosen: Realtors will choose flexible strategies for men high in institutional knowledge more than for women and for men low in institutional knowledge.

The prediction that Realtors are more likely to use flexible strategies for men clients, with high institutional knowledge, is predicated on the idea that the diffuse characteristic of being perceived as a man will couple with the specific characteristic of *as investor* indicating to the Realtor that greater resources will be needed to successfully altercast this particular client. Flexible altercasting strategies inherently involve greater expenditure of individual resources due to its self-reflective nature. This additional effort will likely only be leveraged as an initial strategy in instances when the Realtor believes that the client will be resistant to empathetic or analytic strategies alone.

Likelihood of Use of Strategies

Another way to assess Realtors' choice of altercasting strategies is to consider how they might assess the probability of their use of any one particular strategy. To assess this, I included a question about the likelihood of using different strategies. I use the same logic I developed above about how the institutional knowledge and gender of the clients would affect Realtors' use of the strategies.

Empathetic Strategies:

Hypothesis 1a The likelihood of using empathetic strategies is higher for women than men.

Hypothesis 2a: The likelihood of using empathetic strategies is higher for those with low levels of institutional knowledge than those with high levels of institutional knowledge.

Hypothesis 3a: The likelihood of using empathetic strategies is higher for women with low institutional knowledge (combining hypothesis 1a and 2a)

Analytic Strategies:

Hypothesis 4a: The likelihood of using analytic strategies is higher for men than women.

Hypothesis 5a: The likelihood of using analytic strategies for those with high levels of institutional knowledge is higher than for those with low levels of institutional knowledge.

Flexible Strategies:

Hypothesis 6a: The likelihood of using flexible strategies for men is the highest for men with high levels of institutional knowledge.

Competence

Finally, I examine Realtors' perceptions of their client's competence. I argue that *Gender* and *Institutional Knowledge* will interact thereby affecting perceptions of competence. These perceptions of competence will theoretically aid in understanding differences in altercasting strategies selected. Synthesized, I argue that high levels of institutional knowledge will enhance the perceived competence of men while reducing perceptions of incompetence for women. In this way, institutional knowledge can be seen as having a direct effect on gender stereotypes; however, I am predicting that increased knowledge does not eliminate gender stereotyping. Instead, both gender and institutional knowledge affect estimations of client competence and it is these estimations of competence that will affect decisions about altercasting strategy.

Referring back to expectations states, this study follows the five core assumptions 1) institutional knowledge is pertinent to the task, 2) Realtors, in their time working in the industry, have generalized status information about their clients, 3) when new information is provided (i.e. low/high institutional knowledge) Realtors will restructure their approach to accommodate the new information, 4) Realtors will use all the information at their disposal to create performance expectations based upon the diffuse characteristic of gender and the specific characteristic of institutional knowledge, and 5)

Realtors are using observable power and prestige present to relate their own expectation advantage to their client.

When women have high institutional knowledge the “states” or values associated with diffuse and specific status characteristics come into conflict. Despite the burden-of-proof process invalidating the use of gender as the most relevant factor for the given task, it does not eliminate the effect of gender entirely. Whereas men are assumed to be competent, an assumption that is *verified* when men also have institutional knowledge, women are assumed incompetent until that incompetence is *falsified*.

Consequently:

Hypothesis 7: Women with low institutional knowledge will be perceived as the least competent.

Hypothesis 8: Women with high institutional knowledge will be perceived to be as competent as men with low institutional knowledge.

Hypothesis 9: Men with low institutional knowledge will be perceived to be as competent as women with high levels of institutional knowledge.

Hypothesis 10: Men with high institutional knowledge will be perceived as most competent.

A critical characteristic of this study is that the Realtors have institutional power over their clients. Realtors are not necessarily employing altercasting strategies to exploit their clients, but rather to impose an identity of compliance and trust within their clients in order to attain the goal toward which both parties are striving. The status characteristics of a given client affects the perceived power and performance expectations of Realtors within the interaction resulting in different strategies of altercasting being employed. Given that the Realtor-client relationship is a cooperative

one, even though the Realtor has more power than the client they must be careful not to jeopardize their client's trust.

DATA ANALYSIS

Design

The experiment is a 2 (*Gender of Client, Man or Woman*) X 2 (*High Knowledge of Real Estate vs. Low Knowledge of Real Estate*) factorial. Vignettes were created such that the only difference between the vignettes was the information about the client's knowledge and the gender of the client. A *High Knowledge* client was characterized as "an investor, with 20+ real estate investments in the area, looking to purchase a personal house. They have indicated that they have a great understanding of real estate contracts, pricing, and the transaction process overall." A *Low Knowledge* client was characterized as "a first-time homebuyer looking for a personal house to purchase in the area. They have indicated that they have no understanding of real estate contracts, pricing, or the transaction process overall."³ Gender was manipulated by the pictures that were used. Participants [Realtors] were shown pictures of the client that showed either a white woman or a white man. As discussed above, these pictures were pretested to ensure that the vignette pictures were judged as the same ethnicity, age, and about the same attractiveness.

Recruitment

Participant recruitment was conducted using a publicly available dataset, maintained by The Texas Real Estate Commission, containing the contact information for past and present license holders. A large urban center was selected as a geographic

³ See Figure A in the appendix for additional information.

anchor that, in theory, might allow for generalizations to similarly developed areas. Even with this restriction, the number of potential participants remained in excess of 30,000 individuals. Approximately 8,433 emails were sent across 19 email waves. The emails informed people that they received this request in the following way: "You have been asked to participate in a research project studying interaction strategies. You were selected to be a possible participant because you are a member of the Texas Real Estate Commission (TREC) and a member of the Houston Association of Realtors (HAR)." Of those, 271 surveys were started with 190 providing at least one response. 109 participants completed the study in its entirety. Respondents' email was anonymized upon opting into the survey thereby disconnecting their responses from their contact information.

Any individual who selected "I agree" to the study's information sheet was entered into a drawing to win 1 of 3 \$100 Visa gift cards. The three participants selected were randomly selected from the 271 participants that, at minimum, began the survey. While a response rate of 3.21% appears low, this is in-line with prior studies where it has been noted how few realtors respond to outside studies (See: Larsen & Petrick 2007). It will be important, moving forward, to understand why this response rate is consistently low to explore potential issues of self-selection bias and strengthen future analyses in the industry.

Analysis

Analysis of the initial altercasting strategy chosen will be done using the chi-square test for frequencies to identify variations between the differing altercasting strategies across experimental conditions. Specifically, the predictions were that, for the

initial strategy, empathetic strategies would be used more frequently for women, analytic strategies for men, and flexible strategies for men with high institutional knowledge. In other words, high institutional knowledge should dampen the effect of gender stereotyping for women and enhance gender stereotyping for men. Additionally, the measures of respondents' expected use of strategies will demonstrate stronger preference for the predicted first strategies.

Analysis of the strategy rating question ("how likely are you to use this strategy"), and those concerning competence ("how competent is this client?") will use ANOVA, having perceived *gender* (man/woman) and institutional *knowledge* (low/high) as the independent variables with likelihood ratings as the dependent variable. The prediction is that for competency there will be a main effect of gender and institutional knowledge. Specifically, men will always be evaluated as more competent within each condition of institutional knowledge. ⁴

Initial Altercasting Strategy

To examine the hypotheses concerning the initial strategy chosen, I first look at the descriptive statistics for first choices.

⁴ The National Association of Realtors (NAR) regularly produces data on the demographics of Realtors. Data from 2020 indicates that the typical Realtor "was a 55-year-old white woman who attended college and was a homeowner" (Anon 2020).

Table 1: First altercasting strategy selected

Altercasting Strategy	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Flexible	35	28.23%
Analytic	31	25.00%
Empathetic	30	24.19%
Motivation	28	22.58%
Total	124	100%

Table 1, above, and 2, below, indicate very little differentiation by strategy, with an almost equal choice of any given strategy. To further examine the hypotheses offered, I conduct the analyses below.

Table 2: First altercasting selected by condition

Condition	Altercasting Strategy (<i>N</i>)				Total
	Flexible	Analytic	Empathetic	Motivation	
Low Knowledge Woman	9	5	7	6	27
Low Knowledge Man	7	10	5	6	28
High Knowledge Woman	8	10	10	8	36
High Knowledge Man	11	8	8	8	33
Total	35	30	30	28	124

To examine hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4, I compare Realtors' choice of first strategies for analytical and empathetic strategies. I use a chi-square test to determine whether Realtors select empathetic strategies for women and analytic strategies for men. Table 3, shown below, indicates that significant differences do not appear: I fail to

Table 3: Initial use of analytic and empathetic by client gender

Strategy	Perceived Sex of Client		Total
	Man	Woman	
Analytic	16	15	31
Empathetic	13	17	30
Total	29	32	61

Pearson chi2(3) = 0.4864 Pr = 0.922

reject the null that there is no significant difference in the initial altercasting strategy selected by the client's perceived gender (Hypothesis 1 and 2).

Next, I assess hypotheses 3 and 4 in which I expect Realtors to initially select Analytic strategies for clients with *High Knowledge* and Empathetic strategies for clients with *Low Knowledge*. As indicated by the comparison in table 4 below, Institutional

Table 4: Chi-squared analysis, initial use of analytic and empathetic strategies by knowledge

Strategy	Institutional Knowledge of Client		Total
	Low Knowledge	High Knowledge	
Analytic	15	16	31
Empathetic	12	18	30
Total	27	34	61

Chi2(1)=0.4347 | Pr=0.510

Knowledge does not appear to affect the selection of the initial altercasting strategy of empathy vs analysis. This finding does not support hypotheses 3 and 4.

Because there is no difference among the strategies for differing levels of Knowledge, Hypothesis 5 is also not supported. Hypotheses 6 addresses flexible strategies. Because these strategies put the Realtor in a more dependent position than the other strategies, I had predicted that they would be most likely to be used for *High Knowledge Men* (See table 5 below). Examination of Realtors' initial choice for flexible strategies found no significant difference across experimental conditions.

Table 5: Initial use of strategy by gender and knowledge

HKM*	First Altercasting Strategy Selected				Total
	Flexible	Analytic	Empathetic	Motivation	
No	24	25	22	20	91
Yes	11	6	8	8	33
Total	35	31	30	28	124

*High Knowledge Man | $\chi^2(3)=1.3068$ | $Pr=0.728$

Likelihood of Use

I next consider how likely Realtors are to say that they would use one strategy versus another. This question does not specifically ask about the order in which Realtors might use a strategy, only if it is likely that they would use a particular strategy. Likely was measured on a scale that varied from “not at all likely” (1) to “very likely (7).

The means for the likelihood of using each of the strategies is described in table 6 below:

Table 6: Mean comparison of strategy use likelihood

Condition	Mean	Std. err.	95% conf. Int
Empathetic	4.235	0.160	3.916-4.553
Analytical	5.319	0.117	5.087-5.552
Flexible	4.941	0.131	4.682-5.200
Motivation	4.042	0.165	3.176-4.368

N= 119 | Note: Competence was assessed on a 7-point scale with 1 = least competent and 7 being most competent.

To address the predictions concerning the likelihood of strategy use, I conducted an ANOVA on each altercasting strategy and examined the effects of *Gender* of Client, *Knowledge* of Client and the Interaction between *Gender and Knowledge*.⁵

Hypothesis 1a, 2a and 3a all predicted the relative likelihood of Realtors using empathetic strategies. I predicted that empathetic strategies would be used more often for those with lower institutional knowledge, especially for women. To analyze this, I conducted an Analysis of Variance that considers how *Knowledge* of the Client and *Gender* of the Client affects the likelihood of employing empathetic strategies. The use of empathetic strategies was found to be directly affected by *Knowledge* of the client, but not by the client's *Gender*. Table 7, provided below, highlights this finding.

⁵ ANOVA is relatively robust to violations of normality. However, I also replicated the analysis with ordered logit models. Substantive results match those reported for the ANOVA.

Table 7: Analysis of variance, likelihood of empathetic strategy use

Source	df	MS	F	Pr>f
Model	3	7.607	2.58	0.057
Gender	1	2.180	0.74	0.391
Knowledge	1	16.40	5.57	0.020
GenderxKnow	1	4.592	1.56	0.214
Total	118	3.062		

Table 7 and the means indicated in table 6, show that Client's *Knowledge* did affect their use of empathy. (The mean for *Low Knowledge* Clients is 4.63 and the mean for *High Knowledge* Clients is 3.89). The higher means for the *Low Knowledge* Client indicate that Realtors were more likely to use empathetic strategies for those with *Low Knowledge*. This supports my prediction that Empathetic strategies would be more likely to be used for those who had less knowledge and experience. However, the *Gender* of the client had no effect on the choice of Empathy. This is contrary to my predictions.

So, Hypothesis 1a and hypothesis 3a which predicted that *Gender* would affect the use of Empathetic strategies were not supported. However, Hypothesis 3b which predicted that Empathy would be more likely to be used for clients with *Low Knowledge* was supported.

Hypothesis 4a and 5a concerned Analytic strategies. Specifically, I predicted that the use of Analytic strategies would be higher for men than women (4a) and higher for those with *high Institutional Knowledge* (5a). As Table 8 indicates below, neither characteristic of the client made a difference in the use of Analytic strategies. Analytic

strategies were not found to vary by either *Gender* or *Knowledge*. Table 8, shown below, indicates that the likelihood of using Analytic strategies was not affected by either variable. Interestingly, Analytic was the highest ranked strategy in terms of its likelihood to be used across all conditions. So, while client *Gender* and *Knowledge* did not affect the likelihood of use, it remains a strategy that Realtors employ regardless of client context. In fact, the mean likelihood of using this strategy was quite high 5.3 (on a 7-point scale) regardless of experimental condition.

Table 8: Analysis of variance, likelihood of analytic strategy use

Source	df	MS	F	Pr>f
Model	3	0.895	.054	0.657
Gender	1	.0673	0.41	0.526
Knowledge	1	0.102	0.06	0.805
GenderxKnow	1	1.655	1.00	0.3205
Total	118	1.643		

Next, I examine Realtor’s estimation of their use of flexible strategies. My prediction for 6a was that Realtors will be more likely to employ Flexible strategies when their client is a man with *High Knowledge*. Support for this hypothesis would be illustrated by an interaction effect between *Gender* and *Knowledge* in the ANOVA. I do not find this to be the case (see table 9); however, there is a direct effect of *Gender*. An examination of means reveals that Realtors were less likely to use Flexible strategies for women than they were for men. The means were 5.2 for men and 4.7 for women.

Table 9: Likelihood of flexible strategy use

Source	df	MS	F	Pr>f
Model	3	3.749	1.88	0.1370
Gender	1	9.083	4.55	0.0350
Knowledge	1	0.662	0.33	0.5657
GenderxKnow	1	1.730	.087	0.3536
Total	118	2.039		

Competence Assessments

Finally, I examine how client Competence is perceived by Realtors. Competence perceptions were measured on a 7-point scale from Highly Competence to Incompetent. Using ANOVA, I evaluated hypotheses 7 (*Low Knowledge* women will be perceived as least *Competent*), 8 (*High Knowledge* women will be perceived as *Competent* as *Low Knowledge* men), 9 (*Low Knowledge* men will be perceived as *Competent* as *High Knowledge* women, and 10 (*High Knowledge* men will be perceived as most *Competent*). Initially, I assess if there are effects by *Knowledge* and *Gender*, I use an ANOVA which examines the independent and interaction effects of the variables. Table 10, shown below, demonstrates an independent effect of *Knowledge* of Client that is significant ($p < 0.0002$) in Realtor's assessment of their client's *Competence*. In addition to this, the client's perceived *Gender* remained non-significant, and the interaction of Client's *Gender* and *Knowledge* similarly was non-significant.

Table 10: Analysis of variance, assessment of client competence by gender and knowledge

Source	df	MS	F	Pr>f
Model	3	8.905	5.14	0.002
Gender	1	0.843	0.49	0.4866
Knowledge	1	25.27	14.6	0.0002
GenderxKnow	1	0.342	0.20	0.6574
Total	115	1.918		

Table 11 provides another view of these results through reported means of 2.83 and 3.12 for conditions 1 and 2 respectively and means of 2 and 2.06 for conditions 3 and 4 respectively. These means lend support to the position that perceptions of client competence are built upon their perceived institutional knowledge and not upon gender.

Table 11: Mean comparison of competence assessment

Condition	Mean	Std. err
Low Knowledge Woman	2.833	0.267
Low Knowledge Man	3.115	0.244
High Knowledge Woman	2.000	0.231
High Knowledge Man	2.063	0.237

N = 116

This indicates that hypotheses 7, 8, 9, and 10 are only partially supported as *Gender* had a negligible effect on Realtors' estimate of client *Competence*. In fact, only *Knowledge* made a difference in Realtors' assessments of client *Competence*.

Summary of Findings

My first predictions concerned the initial altercasting strategy chosen. I suggested that both the *Knowledge* and the *Gender* of the clients would affect which strategies were chosen first. However, the results do not support these predictions, instead indicating that neither *Gender* nor Institutional *Knowledge* affect the initial altercasting strategy chosen. In fact, the frequencies of responses indicated that there was an almost even distribution of responses about first responses.

I also examined Realtors' estimations of the likelihood of choosing each strategy. My predictions were that a client's *Knowledge* and *Gender* would affect how Realtors evaluated the likelihood of using a particular strategy. Partial support was found with empathetic strategies being employed more often for clients with low institutional *Knowledge* and Flexible altercasting strategies favoring men over women clients thereby showing a *Gender* effect. However, like the prior analysis, there was no interaction effect present between these two variables.

Finally, I examined Realtors' assessment of their client's *Competence* wherein I predicted that assessment of the vignette client would show low knowledge women as lowest in competence and high knowledge men as most competent. Again, *Gender* was not found to be significant; however, there was a direct effect of *Knowledge* with Realtors finding the "investor" client more competent than the "first-time homebuyer."

This, once more, provides partial support of the predictions made here by showing the effect of perceived client knowledge on Realtor behavior.

Although I had posited that *Gender* would be an important factor in most of the Realtor's decision making, it only appears when assessing a Realtor's likelihood of using Flexible altercasting strategies. SCES suggests that when knowledge of specific status is directly relevant to decision-making, it may overcome the effects of diffuse status characteristics (Berger et al., 1977). My results seem to support this in general, especially in terms of assessed *Competence*. However, there is an effect of diffuse status for some of the strategies, notably Flexible strategies where it was more likely that Realtors would use flexible strategies for men rather than women.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study combined two literatures that had been developed separately: Status Characteristics and Expectation States (SCES) and Altercasting. I then combined these literatures to address the Realtor-client relationship. I suggested that the power dynamics of the setting would provide a unique setting in which altercasting would be important. The Realtor is chosen by the client, presumably based upon their expertise. As such, the Realtor has more power than the client, but of course, the client still has the power to change Realtors or to reject the Realtors decisions.

I suggested that both the gender of the client and the expertise of the client would have effects in most settings. I examined the initial altercasting strategy chosen and found little difference among the strategies chosen. This suggests that Realtors may not think in terms of "first this strategy." Perhaps, instead, they think of using multiple strategies simultaneously. Such an interpretation seems supported by the

findings when Realtors were asked about the likelihood of using different strategies. In these cases, Realtors did distinguish some strategies from others. In particular, the knowledge of the client was a significant predictor for the use of empathetic strategies with it being used more for those with less knowledge. The tests of competence, support the idea that those less competent were more likely to be exposed to empathy, regardless of their gender. On the other hand, gender of the client is a significant factor for Realtor's use of flexible strategies: Realtors were more likely to choose flexible strategies for men, regardless of their background knowledge.

In general, this research supports some of the predictions of Expectation States models that suggest that, under some conditions, specific status characteristics (in this case institutional knowledge) can overcome the effects of diffuse status (in this case gender). *Gender* appears to have had negligible effect on most altercasting strategies, while their perception of a client's *institutional knowledge* had significant effects. This emphasis on the specific characteristic of institutional knowledge is underscored through Realtors' reported perceptions of client *competence* wherein greater competence was assigned to the hypothetical "investor."

The study has limitations of course and while the measure of institutional knowledge is especially strong there remain elements that elude this study. Future studies might disentangle the elements of institutional knowledge and that of social class. The title of investor, in and of itself, has certain class connotations that may have impacted Realtors' perceptions. Variation of career, for instance a chemical engineer and a long-haul trucker, coupled with their specific status of first-time homebuyer or

investor, would provide greater nuance in identifying the various ways these characteristics affect behaviors and attitudes.

Furthermore, no predictions were made regarding differences in Realtors' own characteristics. While most Realtors are women, we can separate out Realtors by their reported gender. It was found that women Realtors were significantly more likely to use empathetic strategies when compared to men. Additionally, of the four types of strategies, analytic strategies were scored as more likely to be used regardless of condition indicating a greater connection to language or behaviors Realtors have been taught are normative in the industry.

Despite the lack of support regarding initial altercasting strategies I believe there remains an uninvestigated element of behavioral order. An initial element of expansion would be a more open-ended variation of altercasting strategies. This study supplied predetermined strategies that may not best represent the average agent's lived experience or, perhaps the strategies themselves had too much overlap. Overlap of these strategies is a concern that Tallman himself indicated in his studies of marital cooperation and adaptation. An important finding was that the strategies selected for initial use were evenly distributed. It is possible that the concept of asking what a Realtors' "first" strategy would be is something foreign to agents as they could be utilizing many different strategies at the same time. Additionally, it could be argued that this study was an evaluation of "hard-scripted" Realtors who are predisposed to follow the script that has resulted in the greatest success for them. Coupled with the potential abstraction of an initial strategy, the vignettes themselves may not have presented a detailed enough situation to fully invoke agent's experiences.

Moving forward, greater nuance is needed to disentangle the various status indicators potentially affecting perceptions of others' institutional knowledge. Enhancement of this concept will allow for greater experimental control as specific status characteristics could be varied in ways that would pinpoint what social element is having the greatest effect on their behaviors. Furthermore, additional insight into potential differences between full-time and part-time Realtors would sharpen future analysis.

As seen with this study, the basic prediction of SCES investigations, that specific characteristics can, under some circumstances, override diffuse status characteristics, seems supported. Perceptions of a client's knowledge of the real estate industry greatly affected their estimations of client competence. In this vein, future research should aim to connect this social evaluation process to actual outcomes present within the industry. A shift in this direction would allow for *quasi-experimental* designs that might have greater application to real-world experiences without sacrificing experimental control in totality.

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Appendix

Figure A

Vignettes (Low & High) Institutional Knowledge

Client with Low Institutional Knowledge:

Your client is a first-time homebuyer looking for a personal house to purchase in the area. They have indicated that they have no understanding of real estate contracts, pricing, or the transaction process overall. At this point in the process, you and your client have been searching for a house for nearly three weeks. The last place you visited was the first time they have indicated interest in anything. You believe this house will move fast and without a competitive offer it will quickly go under contract. While they have not explicitly discussed any issues, you believe that they are hesitant for some reason. Drag and drop the responses below, in the order you would use, them to convince your client to make an offer.

Client with High Institutional Knowledge:

Your client is an investor, with 20+ real estate investments in the area, looking to purchase a personal house. They have indicated that they have a great understanding of real estate contracts, pricing, and the transaction process overall. At this point in the process, you and your client have been searching for a house for nearly three weeks. The last place you visited was the first time they have indicated interest in anything. You believe this house will move fast and without a competitive offer it will quickly go under contract. While they have not explicitly discussed any issues, you believe that they are hesitant for some reason. Drag and drop the responses below, in the order you would use them, to convince your client to make an offer.

Figure B

Pre-Test Questionnaire

Q9.1 In this final section you will be asked demographic questions regarding your previously mentioned client.

Q9.2 In your opinion, what is the age of the person above?

- 20 or below
 - 21 - 25
 - 26 - 30
 - 31 - 35
 - 36 - 40
 - 41 - 45
 - 46 -50
 - 51+
-

Q9.3 In your opinion, what is the race/ethnicity of the person above? Select all that apply.

- White
 - Black / African American
 - Hispanic / Latina / Latino
 - Asian / Asian American
 - Middle Eastern / North African
 - American Indian / Alaskan Native
 - Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
 - Other: Please specify
-

Q9.4 In your opinion, how attractive is the person above?

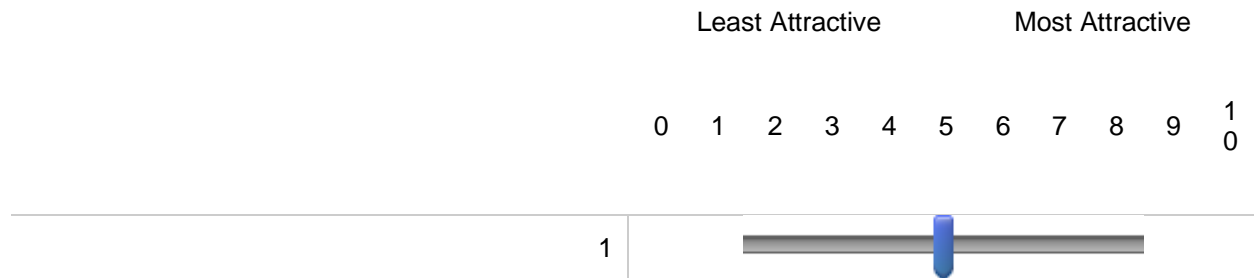


Figure C

Altercating Categories

Empathy: This is the ability of the Realtor to interpret their client's behavior in terms of thoughts, feelings, and motivation, and then to relate that understanding to the situation.

Analytic: This is where the Realtor uses numbers, data, and figures to explain the situation to their client in a way that promotes mutual understanding.

Flexible: This is when the Realtor evaluates alternative action or behavior they can use with a client and then integrates those evaluations with stated action.

Motivation: This is an affectual, or emotional, investment characterized by the Realtor's involvement in facilitating anticipated goals for their client.

Altercating Examples (Final Pre-Test Iteration)

Empathetic:

You recognize that you need to ward off the client's hesitation if you are ever going to get them to finalize a purchase. Remind your client that you will be available throughout the process.

Explain to your client that you understand how stressful the home buying process can be. Sometimes clients forget that we also understand how stressful this time can be.

Analytic:

You speak with the listing agent to find out additional information about the house. You decide that your next conversation with your client will be based upon the information you discover.

You perform a quick competitive market analysis (CMA) on the neighborhood. Point out to your client that the listing's price per square foot is actually lower than the average sold price per square foot in the area.

Flexible:

You decide to contact the client's lender, listing agent, and a vendor to get more information and feedback before you speak with your client again. More information will inform your next move.

Motivation:

Remind your client that your goal is to get them into a house no matter how long it takes. However, you make sure your client understands that an opportunity like this may not resurface for quite some time.

You reach out to the listing agent to see if you can gather any additional information that might aid your discussions. You relay to your client that the agent admitted to pricing the home under the market rate.

Flex/Mot

You recognize that time is of the essence in this situation. Explain that while you are willing to write up an offer in a way they would like but they will need to decide by the end of the day. (50/50 split on motivation or flexible)

Figure D

Status, Competence, and Considerateness

Q7.1 Based on what you know of your client, how would you rate them in the following areas?

	3 1	2 2	1 3	0 4	1 5	2 6	3 7	
Respecte d	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not Respecte d
High Status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Low Status
Leader	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Follower
Powerful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Powerles s

Q7.2 Based on what you know of your client, how would you rate them in the following areas?

	3 1	2 2	1 3	0 4	1 5	2 6	3 7	
Competent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Incompetent
Knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not Knowledgeable
Capable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Incapable

Q7.3 Based on what you know of your client, how would you rate them in the following areas?

	3 1	2 2	1 3	0 4	1 5	2 6	3 7	
Considerate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Inconsiderate
Cooperative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Uncooperative
Likeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unlikeable
Pleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unpleasant

Referential Structure Questions

Q8.1 Based on what you know of your client, how do you think other Realtors would perceive of them?

	3 1	2 2	1 3	0 4	1 5	2 6	3 7	
Respected	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not Respected
High Status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Low Status
Leader	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Follower
Powerful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Powerless

Q8.2 Based on what you know of your client, how do you think other Realtors would perceive of them?

	3 1	2 2	1 3	0 4	1 5	2 6	3 7	
Competent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Incompetent
Knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not Knowledgeable
Capable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Incapable

Q8.3 Based on what you know of your client, how do you think other Realtors would perceive of them?

	3 1	2 2	1 3	0 4	1 5	2 6	3 7	
Considerate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Inconsiderate
Cooperative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Uncooperative
Likeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unlikeable
Pleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unpleasant

Figure E

Images used

Woman Client:



Man Client:

