

## IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

### COURSE OUTLINE – Fall, 2006

SOP 6409 – Seminar: Impression Management

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"When an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey."  
Erving Goffman

Illustrations of the times:

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

"Never let them see you sweat."

We live in the Age of Information, so it is not surprising that the use and control of information plays a central role in each of our lives. *Impression management* is the goal-directed activity of controlling or regulating information in order to influence the impressions formed by an audience. Through impression management, people try to shape an audience's impressions of a person (e.g., self, friends, enemies), object (e.g., a business organization, a gift, a consumer product), event (e.g., a transgression, a task performance), or idea (e.g., pro-life versus pro-choice policies, capitalism versus socialism). When people are trying to control impressions of themselves, as opposed to other people or entities, the activity is called *self-presentation*.

This seminar will explore the social psychology of impression management. We will focus on theory and research dealing with the nature and implications of the regulation of information. Much of the social psychology literature deals with strategic self-presentation designed to advance the self-interests of the actor. At one level, this literature provides insights into the "gamesmanship" of interpersonal behavior, looking at how people use and conceal information to accomplish their objectives. Many of the best selling self-help books in the psychology and business sections of bookstores similarly deal with how to exert social influence by making the right impression on others (e.g., Dale Carnegie's *How to win friends and influence people*; David Lewis' *The secret language of success: Using body language to get what you want*; Michael Korda's *Success: How every man and woman can achieve it*; Roger Fisher's *Getting to Yes*). Such books tell us how to look and dress; what to say and how to say it; how to move, sit, and gesture; when to smile or raise an eyebrow; and all manner of information that seems vital if we are to do well at the game of life, winning and keeping lovers, money, power, friends, etc. Advertising is simply the art of influence through the control of information. The political arena provides a stage for the conscious and systematic application of ideas about how to sell people and ideas. The common thread through all of this is the notion that, to survive and prosper, we must get people to form the "right" impression, about us and the things about which we care.

At another level, though, impression management involves more than gamesmanship. I have argued that impression management is not simply a type of behavior that occurs only under limited circumstances, such as during a job interview or on a date, or that is evidenced only by certain types of people, such as those high in self-monitoring or Machiavellianism. Instead, impression management is a fundamental feature or characteristic of interpersonal experience. It is inconceivable to discuss human

social behavior without employing the concept. People do not deal with information randomly or dispassionately. Our opinions about what constitutes the "truth" are affected by our personal agendas. To help us to accomplish our objectives in life, we "package" information to help audiences draw the "right" conclusion. This packaging is a pervasive feature of interpersonal behavior.

Packaging is not necessarily deceptive or immoral, although it certainly can be used for illicit ends. In order to communicate information accurately (as we see it) and without misunderstanding involves being able to gauge how an audience is responding and to package one's presentations accordingly, fitting the message to the beliefs, values, and competencies of the audience so that they will draw the "proper" conclusion. Impression management is like presenting an edited work designed to convey key information effectively to others. Just as a textbook author must pick and choose information so that a reader gets the point without getting overwhelmed or confused, so must we all pick and choose information to make our points in everyday life. We simply cannot reveal everything about ourselves to a particular audience; it is impossible. We must edit the information to make it germane to the occasion. It may take just as much social skill to create an accurate impression as to create a misleading one. In fact, research has shown that people who have better acting skills also are more successful at presenting themselves accurately to others (e.g., who have the smallest discrepancies between their own self-evaluations and the evaluations of them by their friends).

Impression management also can be used for beneficial ends. Although people act in ways that advance their own self-interests, they also seem to regulate information in order to support and protect the identities of others, to make others feel good, to help others cope, and to inspire them to seek new challenges. An example of such beneficial impression management is the father who helps his child interpret a failure in a way that preserves the child's self-confidence and promotes effective coping, even if the father is privately unsure about the real causes of the failure. Impression management activities can involve altruistic goals and prosocial conduct.

During the semester we will explore the topic of impression management in its many facets. We will consider the history of the topic, examine theoretical approaches, and discuss content areas in which impression management approaches have been applied. The focus will be on relevant theory and research. Yet, throughout I hope we will also have time to discuss some of the popular applied classics in impression management.

### **Course Objectives**

1. Learn the key concepts, principles, findings, and methodological techniques relevant to the study of impression management and self-presentation.
2. Learn how to analyze social psychological phenomena in terms of impression management.
3. Learn how everyday social events can be better understood through the understanding of impression management.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Each week we will discuss a new set of readings dealing with impression management. The requirements for the course are straightforward and involve two facets: (a) active class participation and serving as a discussion leader with presentations, and (b) a final term paper.

## Active Participation

Everyone in the class will be expected to participate actively, not to sit back passively and let others do the talking. You must do the readings prior to class and be ready to discuss them. I know that some people are more talkative than others and find it easier to speak up in class. Remember, though, this is a seminar, not a lecture section. It is important to the class, and in professional activities generally, for you to be willing and able to discuss ideas. I want to establish an atmosphere in the class where everyone feels free to speak up, question, and communicate ideas.

It will help class discussions if you critically analyze what you are reading. Do not read the material in passive mode, akin to watching television with one's critical capabilities disengaged. What is the theme of the paper? What are the key points and conclusions? How do these differ from the contentions of other theorists or researchers? How do these differ from your own intuitions or experiences? What data support the points? What data are inconsistent? What alternative explanations exist for the findings? How would you test these alternatives? Will the effects occur all of the time or only under specific conditions? What are the boundary conditions for the effect (i.e., when will it not hold, or when might the reverse occur)? How would you test these boundaries? What processes might be responsible for the effects? How would you distinguish these processes from other possibilities? How could this information be applied in business, clinical, or other real world settings?

Arrive at each class with several questions you would like to discuss about the week's readings. You should do this regardless of whether you are a discussion leader that week.

Graduate seminars usually contain a mix of students with varying degrees of prior knowledge and experience in the area. The feeling of having little prior background in the area can be uncomfortable. Don't worry about it. Everyone can contribute according to his or her unique skills and knowledge. Everyone will be expected to *know the materials in the readings*, but you will not be expected to have identical background knowledge in which to fit the material. Diversity in a course is a strength, not a weakness.

Diverse prior experiences do raise the dilemma of how much background and detail to provide when covering the readings in class. These are always judgment calls. There will be times when I skip over material, unthinkingly assuming that everyone knows about (say) a particular theory, when this is not the case. Please feel free to ask questions or indicate that you would like to spend some time going over the basics of a particular theory that I may have skimmed over. We can then either use class time to cover the material or I can give a condensed interpretation and refer you to the appropriate materials for more in-depth coverage. The old cliché is applicable: Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you have a question, someone else in the class may, too.

## Term Paper

A term paper will be due by noon on **Friday, December 8**. The paper can be on any relevant, approved topic of your choice that involves impression management. Once you have selected a topic, check with me for final approval. I'll offer some suggested readings to get you started and let you know if you're on the right track. **CHECK THE TOPIC WITH ME FIRST**, before getting too far along.

The paper should be in APA format and examine theory and research on the topic. The paper can

take one of two general forms.

First, it can be a review of theory and research. An exemplar for such a paper would be an article in the *Psychological Bulletin* or *Psychological Review*. This form is the traditional term paper.

Second, it can be a research proposal. A proposal consists of an introductory section, containing your thesis or hypothesis and a review of relevant theory and research, and a method section, containing the description of how you plan to test your hypothesis. An exemplar for such a paper is a thesis or dissertation proposal. In other words, it is the type of paper that could result in a "do-able" research project.

Remember, the class deals with impression management, so theories and research in the area should be prominently featured in your paper. You can select any topic, issue, or question you want, and I'd recommend picking a theme from your own area that might help in your own research. However, do not focus just on your area with only passing references to impression management, as if your paper was a summary of a thesis proposal with a few mentions of impression management.

I will not set a recommended length because this will be governed by your topic and your motivation. I cannot imagine, however, how an acceptable paper could be done in less than ten pages of text. In an important sense, the paper is for YOU; it is an opportunity to explore an area that interests you and help in your own research.

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

### **Honesty Policy**

In course work and research, as in life generally, ethical principles are of paramount importance. Integrity and fidelity are vital to the scientific enterprise and are core components of APA's ethical code. Students are expected to exhibit exemplary ethical conduct in the course. The University's honesty policy regarding cheating and the use of copyrighted materials will be enforced. The University's honesty policy can be found at: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>

## **OUTLINE**

1. Historical Roots & Overview (August 29)
2. Impression Management and Strategic Control (September 5)
3. Impression Management Strategies & Tactics (September 12)
4. Individual Differences I (September 19)
5. Individual Differences II (September 26)
6. Audiences & Automaticity (October 3)
7. Internalizing Self-Presentations (October 10)
8. Nonverbal Behavior and Impression Management (October 17)
9. Predicaments I (October 24)
10. Predicaments II (October 31)

11. Aberrant Behavior (November 7)
  12. Prosocial & Anti-Social Behavior (November 14)
  13. Truth & Deception (November 21)
  14. Therapy, Self-Presentation, & Self-Disclosure (November 28)
  15. Wrap-up (December 5)
- Papers Due** (Friday, December 8)

## READINGS

### 1. Historical Roots and Overview

- Schlenker, B. R. (1985). Introduction: Foundations of the self in social life. In B. R. Schlenker (Ed.), *The self and social life* (pp. 1-28). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Schlenker, B. R. (2003). Self-presentation. In M. R. Leary and J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 492-518). New York: Guilford.

### 2. Impression Management and Strategic Control

- Schlenker, B. R. (1985). Identity and self-identification. In B. R. Schlenker (Ed.), *The self and social life* (pp. 65-99). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Schlenker, B. R., & Pontari, B. A. (2000). The strategic control of information: Impression management and self-presentation in daily life. In A. Tesser, R. Felson, and J. Suls (Eds.), *Perspectives on self and identity* (pp. 199-232). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Tetlock, P. E., & Manstead, A. R. S. (1985). Impression management versus intrapsychic explanations in social psychology: A useful dichotomy? *Psychological Review*, 92, 59-77.

### 3. Impression Management Strategies and Tactics

- Schlenker, B. R. (1980). *Impression management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relationships*. Monterey: Brooks/Cole. Chapters 6-7 (pp. 168-233).
- Gordon, R. A. (1996). Impact of ingratiation on judgments and evaluations: A meta-analytic investigation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 54-70.
- Higgins, C. A., & Judge, T. A. (2004). The effect of applicant influence tactics on recruiter perceptions of fit and hiring recommendations: A field study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89, 622-632.

### 4. Individual Differences – Inner-Outer Metaphor

- Hogan, R., & Cheek, J. M. (1983). Identity, authenticity, and maturity. In T. R. Sarbin & K. E. Scheibe (Eds.), *Studies in Social Identity* (pp. 339-357). New York: Praeger.
- Buss, A. H., & Briggs, S. R. (1984). Drama and the self in social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, 1310-1324.
- Hogan, R., & Sloan, T. (1985). *Self-presentation and personality: A reply to Buss & Briggs*. Unpublished, University of Tulsa.
- Schlenker, B. R., & Weigold, M. F. (1990). Self-consciousness and self-presentation: Being autonomous versus appearing autonomous. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59, 820-828.

## 5. Individual Differences II

- Schlenker, B. R. (1980). *Impression management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Monterey: Brooks/Cole. (pp. 75-85)
- Baumeister, R. F., Tice, D. M., & Hutton, D. G. (1989). Self-presentational motivations and personality differences in self-esteem. *Journal of Personality*, 57, 547-579.
- Keating, C. F., & Heltman, K. R. (1994). Dominance and deception in children and adults: Are leaders the best
- Turnley, W. H., & Bolino, M. C. (2001). Achieving desired images while avoiding undesired images: Exploring the role of self-monitoring in impression management. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 351-360.

## 6. Audiences & Automaticity

- Pontari, B. A., & Schlenker, B. R. (2000). The influence of cognitive load on self-presentation: Can cognitive busyness help as well as harm social performance? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 1092-1108.
- Vohs, K. D., Baumeister, R. F., Ciarocco, N. J. (2005). Self-regulation and self-presentation: Regulatory resource depletion impairs impression management and effortful presentation depletes regulatory resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88, 632-667.
- Van Boven, L., Kruger, J., Savitsky, & Gilovich, T. (2000). When social worlds collide: Overconfidence in the multiple audience problem. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26, 619-628.

## 7. Internalizing Self-Presentations

- Jones, E.E., Rhodewalt, F., Berglas, S., & Skelton, J.A. (1981). Effects of strategic self-presentation on subsequent self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 41, 407-421.
- Schlenker, B. R., Dlugolecki, D. W., & Doherty, K. J. (1994). The impact of self-presentations on self-appraisals and behaviors: The power of public commitment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 20-33.
- Higgins, E. T., (1992). Achieving 'shared reality' in the communication game: A social action that creates meaning. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 11, 107-131.

## 8. Nonverbal Behavior and Impression Management

- Schlenker, B. R. (1980). *Impression management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Monterey: Brooks/Cole. Chapters 8-9.
- DePaulo, B. M. (1992). Nonverbal behavior and self-presentation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 111, 203-243.

## 9. Predicaments I: Accounting

- Snyder, C. R., & Higgins, R. L. (1988). Excuses: Their effective role in the negotiation of reality. *Psychological Bulletin*, 104, 23-35.
- Schlenker, B. R., Pontari, B. A., & Christopher, A. N. (2001). Excuses and character: Personal and social implications of excuses. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5, 15-32.
- Schlenker, B. R., Weigold, M.F., Doherty, K. (1991). Coping with accountability: Self-identification and evaluative reckonings. In C. R. Snyder & D. R. Forsyth (Eds.), *Handbook of Social and Clinical Psychology* (pp. 96-115). New York: Pergamon.

#### **10. Predicaments II: Accounting**

- Folkes, V. S. & Wang, Y. (2003). Account-giving for a corporate transgression influences moral judgment: When those who “spin” condone harm-doing. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 79-86.
- Scully, D., & Marolla, J. (1984). Convicted rapists’ vocabulary of motive: Excuses and justifications. *Social Problems*, 31, 530-544.
- Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Mechanisms of moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 364-374.
- Leary, M. R., Landel, J. L., & Patton, K. M. (1996). The motivated expression of embarrassment following a self-presentational predicament. *Journal of Personality*, 64, 619-636.

#### **11. Self-Presentational Aspects of Aberrant and Problematic Behavior**

- Schlenker, B. R. (1980). *Impression management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Monterey: Brooks/Cole. Chapter 10 - Aberrant Images (pp. 285-303).
- Leary, M. R. (1995). *Self-presentation: Impression management and interpersonal behavior*. Madison, WI: Brown & Benchmark. Chapters 7 & 9 (pp. 137-155, 179-201).
- Leary, M. R., Tchividjian, L. R., & Kraxberger, B. E. (1994). Self-presentation can be hazardous to your health: Impression management and health risk. *Health Psychology*, 13, 461-470.

#### **12. Pro-social & Anti-Social Impression Management Goals**

- Greenberg, J. (1990). Looking fair vs. being fair: Managing impressions of organizational justice. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 12, 111-158.
- Schlenker, B. R., & Britt, T. W. (1999). Beneficial impression management: Strategically controlling information to help friends. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 559-573.
- Hogan, R., & Jones, W. H. (1984). A role theoretical model of criminal conduct. In W. S. Laufer & J. M. Days (Ed.) *Personality theory, moral development, and criminal behavior*. Boston: Lexington Books.

#### **13. Truth & Deception**

- Bond, C. F., Jr., & DePaulo, B. M. (2006). Accuracy of deception judgments. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10, 214-234.
- Bond, C. F., Jr., Thomas, B. J., & Paulson, R. M. (2004). Maintaining lies: The multiple-audience problem. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 40, 29-40.
- Forrest, J. A., & Feldman, R. S. (2000). Detecting deception and judge’s involvement: Lower task involvement leads to better lie detection. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26, 118-125.

#### **14. Therapy, Self-Presentation, and Self-Disclosure**

- Kelly, A. E. (2000). Helping construct desirable identities: A self-presentational view of psychotherapy. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 475-494.
- Hill, C. E., Gelso, C. J., & Mohr, J. J. (2000). Client concealment and self-presentation in therapy: Comment on Kelly (2000). *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 495-500.
- Arkin, R. M., & Hermann, A. D. (2000). Constructing desirable identities – self-presentation in psychotherapy and daily life: Comment on Kelly (2000). *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 501-504.
- Kelly, A. E. (2000). A self-presentational view of psychotherapy: Reply to Hill, Gelso, and Mohr (2000) and to Arkin and Hermann (2000). *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 505-511.

Impression management is a process in which individuals try to influence the perceptions people have about something, a person, or an event. Impression management may be a conscious or subconscious process. If you are an impression management professional, you attempt to influence the observations and opinions that consumers have of your products. Put simply; effective impression management boosts sales. Impression management is a conscious or subconscious process in which people attempt to influence the perceptions of other people about a person, object or event. They do so by regulating and controlling information in social interaction.[1] It was first conceptualized by Erving Goffman in 1969, and then was expanded upon in 1967.ââ Impression management | Individuals and Society | MCAT | Khan Academy. ââ Social Psychology: Self Perception Theory and Impression Management. ââ Impression Management. Impression management (IM) is the process by which people attempt to influence the images that others have of them. That is, IM describes the many strategies that individuals use in an attempt to be seen in a certain way or to create a particular impression in othersâ minds. Related concepts include self-presentation, influence tactics, organizational politics, and the careerist orientation to work. In studying IM, researchers typically label those

Impression management is a process in which individuals try to influence the perceptions people have about something, a person, or an event. Impression management may be a conscious or subconscious process. If you are an impression management professional, you attempt to influence the observations and opinions that consumers have of your products. Put simply; effective impression management boosts sales. Impression management(also called self-presentation involves the processes by which people control how they are perceived by others. People are more motivated to control how others perceived them when they believe that their public images are relevant to the attainment of desired goals, the goals for which their impressions are relevant are valuable, and a discrepancy exists between how they want to be perceived and how other people perceive them. Impression Management is the conscious or unconscious process in which people try to influence the perception of others about a person or object.Â This article provides a practical explanation of Impression Management. After reading, youâ€™ll understand the basics of this powerful communication skills tool. What is Impression Management?