More Than One Way to Make an Impression: Exploring Profiles of Impression Management

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This research explores the use of impression management tactics in combination. Two studies were conducted to identify three profiles of impression management use and to examine how three individual difference variables are related to these patterns. The results suggest that women are less aggressive than men in using impression management, that high self-monitors favor positive impression management strategies, and that high Machs use impression management tactics rather indiscriminately. The findings also suggest that individuals who either avoid using impression management or who use only positive tactics are seen more favorably than those who use relatively high levels of all types of impression management. Some implications and directions for future research are discussed as well.

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A growing body of research indicates that individuals in organizations often engage in impression management behaviors that are designed to influence the way in which they are perceived by others (e.g., Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld, Giacalone & Riordan, 1995). To date, most empirical work on impression management has focused either on how situational or individual factors affect the use of specific impression management behaviors or how certain impression management tactics influence outcomes such as promotions, performance appraisal ratings, and career success. For example, Wayne and Ferris (1990) found that the use of ingratiation by employees was positively associated with supervisor liking and performance ratings. Also, Judge and Bretz (1994) found that...
individuals using ingratiation achieved higher levels of career success, while individuals using self-promotion experienced lower levels of career success.

A similar, but conceptually distinct, stream of research investigates the use of influence tactics in organizations. While impression management refers to behaviors that individuals use to control the images that others have of them (Rosenfeld et al., 1995), the term influence tactics is used to describe the ways in which individuals use bargaining, reasoning, friendliness, assertiveness, coalitions, and other strategies to influence the decisions or behaviors of their colleagues, superiors, or subordinates (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988). In comparison to the research on impression management behavior, though, research examining influence tactics has more often focused on the ways that such tactics are used in combination (e.g., Farmer & Maslyn, 1999; Farmer, Maslyn, Fedor & Goodman, 1997; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1983, 1988). For example, Kipnis and Schmidt (1983) identified three styles of influence: a shotgun approach, in which individuals use relatively high levels of influence and emphasize the tactics of assertiveness and bargaining; a tactician approach, in which individuals use only an average amount of influence and emphasize the tactic of reason; and a bystander approach, in which individuals use relatively low levels of influence tactics. Furthermore, Farmer and Maslyn’s (1999) study supported the validity of these three distinct influence styles.

Thus, while the use of various patterns of influence tactics has received significant research attention, comparable work with regard to the use of differing patterns of impression management is lacking. Likewise, research has not examined the impact that different combinations of impression management might have on others’ impressions. This research, then, seeks to further our understanding of impression management by exploring the use of impression management tactics in combination. In doing so, this study has three goals.

First, the research seeks to identify clusters (or groups) of individuals who use different impression management tactics in similar ways. Specifically, cluster analysis is used to examine how students working in teams tend to use various combinations of five impression management tactics—namely, ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, supplication, and intimidation (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Then, the research seeks to replicate the patterns of impression management use found in the first sample of participants in a second, independent sample of participants. Second, the research explores the ways in which three individual difference variables—gender, self-monitoring, and Machiavellianism—are related to these patterns or styles of impression management. Third and finally, the research explores the relationship between different patterns or styles of impression management and how individuals are perceived by their peers.

A Profile Model of Impression Management

Researchers have proposed several different theoretical frameworks of impression management (e.g., Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Empirically-derived models of impression management have been introduced as well (e.g., Wayne & Ferris, 1990). In this paper, we use the Jones and Pittman (1982) model to examine the use of impression management tactics in combination. Their framework is especially well suited to this research for three reasons. First, while several theoretical
and empirical frameworks have been proposed, the Jones and Pittman (1982) taxonomy is the only theoretical model that has been validated empirically (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). Second, this framework proposes five different tactics that encompass a wide variety of behaviors that are likely to occur in the context of work groups, making it ideal for studying the use of impression management behaviors in combination. Third, Bolino and Turnley (1999) have already developed items to measure these five tactics in organizational settings. Their existing scales, then, could be used to develop measures of these behaviors in a sample of student work groups.

According to Jones and Pittman (1982), individuals typically use five impression management tactics: (1) 
Ingratiation, whereby individuals seek to be viewed as likable by flattering others or doing favors for them; (2) Self-promotion, whereby individuals seek to be viewed as competent by touting their abilities and accomplishments; (3) Exemplification, whereby individuals seek to be viewed as dedicated by going above and beyond the call of duty; (4) Supplication, whereby individuals seek to be viewed as needy by showing their weaknesses or broadcasting their limitations; and (5) Intimidation, whereby individuals seek to be viewed as intimidating by threatening or bullying others.

Clearly, Jones and Pittman (1982) and other researchers (e.g., Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984; Wayne & Ferris, 1990) posit that impression management is a multidimensional construct. However, as Law, Wong and Mobley (1998) point out, there are many multidimensional constructs in which the overall construct’s relations with its specific dimensions are not explicitly detailed. Such is the case with the construct of impression management.

The taxonomy proposed by Law et al. (1998) suggests three ways in which multidimensional constructs can be conceptualized. First, the label latent model describes multidimensional constructs that exist at deeper levels than their individual dimensions. Second, the label aggregate model denotes multidimensional constructs that are formed based on algebraic functions of their dimensions. Third, the label profile model designates multidimensional constructs formed as different profiles of their dimensions.

Law et al. (1998) suggest that the interrelations between a construct and its dimensions can be defined under all three models of multidimensional constructs. For example, using the latent model, individuals would have to engage in relatively high levels of all five impression management tactics in order to be described as actively managing impressions. Under the aggregate model, impression management would be defined as the simple sum (or an alternative mathematical combination) of an individual’s impression management behaviors across the five tactics. Finally, using the profile model, one’s impression management style can be examined by looking at patterns comprised of varying levels of the five impression management strategies or dimensions. Most of the extant research on impression management, however, has not addressed the relationships between specific impression management dimensions. Rather, in prior research, individuals have been considered to be managing impressions when they engage in one or more of the specific impression management tactics. Thus, in order to advance our understanding of this construct, it might be useful to examine the relationships that exist among various impression management tactics more thoroughly.

Using the Law et al. (1998) taxonomy, the latent model seems relatively inappropriate for defining impression management behavior. That is, it appears somewhat tenuous to assert that individuals do not engage in impression management unless they utilize each
and every form of impression management proposed by any given multidimensional conceptualization. Likewise, the aggregate model does not seem very well suited for defining impression management behavior. Although there may be a tendency for individuals to generally manage impressions (or to generally avoid such behavior), certain forms of impression management are likely to be moderately correlated (such as self-promotion and exemplification) while others are likely to be much less correlated (such as self-promotion and supplication). By simply aggregating scores across tactics, then, we may be oversimplifying the use of impression management by combining scores across tactics that are distinct in meaningful ways.

Examining impression management using the profile method, though, could potentially help clarify some of the fundamental characteristics of this construct. For example, some individuals may not use any of the impression management strategies, while others may use all of them. Likewise, other individuals may use high levels of particular tactics like ingratiation and supplication and low levels of other tactics such as self-promotion, exemplification, and intimidation. The first goal of this study, then, is to use cluster analysis to identify different patterns, or profiles, of impression management use.

**Study 1**

Although previous theory indicates that individuals are likely to use different types of impression management (Jones, 1990; Jones & Pittman, 1982), there has been little theoretical work outlining the various ways in which these tactics might be employed together as a set. Based on previous research on influence styles, though, we expect at least three different patterns of impression management to emerge. As described earlier, one of the principal findings of the literature on the use of influence tactics in combination has been that some individuals seem to have an all or nothing approach to using these tactics (Farmer & Maslyn, 1999; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988). In other words, some individuals use relatively high levels of multiple influence tactics (i.e., the shotgun approach), while others use relatively low levels of influence tactics (i.e., the bystander). It is expected that two similar patterns will emerge here. That is, it is anticipated that some individuals will tend to engage in relatively high levels of all types of impression management. In contrast, it is expected that others will engage in relatively low levels of impression management across the five different tactics.

In addition, prior research suggests that some impression management tactics seem to have more in common than others (Turnley & Bolino, 2001). Specifically, ingratiation, self-promotion, and exemplification are all tactics utilized by individuals attempting to make a positive impression on others. However, supplication and intimidation are tactics for which even the “desired” images (i.e., of being seen as “needy” and “intimidating”) are likely to have negative repercussions. Thus, although employees may gain assistance from others by appearing needy or achieve their own ends through intimidation, they may also be seen less favorably as a result of this kind of behavior. The third pattern of impression management that is expected, then, is one in which individuals use relatively high levels of ingratiation, self-promotion, and exemplification, coupled with relatively low levels of supplication and intimidation.
It is possible that a pattern could also emerge in which individuals use relatively high levels of supplication and intimidation in conjunction with relatively low levels of ingratiating, self-promotion, and exemplification. However, previous research suggests that this combination is somewhat improbable because supplication and intimidation tactics are used very infrequently (Becker & Martin, 1995; Bolino & Turnley, 1999). Thus, while such a pattern is theoretically plausible, it seems unlikely to occur in practice.

Method

Sample. Participants in this study were junior and senior level students in organizational behavior courses at a university in the Midwestern United States. The students were assigned to work in mixed-gender, four- or five-person groups on a semester-long research project. The students were assigned to groups in such a way as to ensure that each group had at least two members of each gender. However, within each gender, students were assigned randomly to the groups. For the project, the students had to do background research on a topic, identify an organization in which to study this topic, collect data from members of the organization, analyze the data, and provide both a written and oral report of their findings. While participation in the class project was mandatory, participation in this study was voluntary. Eighty-six of 89 students participated in this research, providing a response rate of 97%. Fifty-six percent of the participants were male.

Measures. Students reported the extent to which they engaged in impression management behaviors during the course of the project. Respondents were informed that their anonymity was guaranteed with respect to the instructor. Jones and Pittman’s (1982) five impression management tactics were measured using a modified version of Bolino and Turnley’s (1999) impression management scale. This measure taps the extent to which individuals in organizational settings engage in ingratiating, self-promotion, exemplification, supplication, and intimidation. In this study, some of the items were reworded and a few additional items were added to each of the subscales in order to better capture the nature of impression management in the context of student workgroups. The measure asked how accurate each of 32 statements was in describing the individual’s behavior during the group project. Responses were made on a scale ranging from (1) Very Inaccurate to (5) Very Accurate.

A sample item from the ingratiation subscale is: “Do personal favors for members of the group to show them that you are friendly.” A sample item from the self-promotion subscale is: “Make other group members aware of your unique skills and abilities.” A sample item from the exemplification subscale is: “Let others know that you have been putting in a lot of time on the project.” A sample item from the supplication subscale is: “Act like you need assistance on your part of the project so that other group members will help you.” A sample item from the intimidation subscale is: “Be intimidating with other group members when it is necessary for the good of the project.”

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using maximum likelihood estimation and randomly created item parcels (as outlined by Floyd and Widaman (1995)) supported the 5-factor structure ($\chi^2 = 79.97, df = 67$). The key fit indices for the 5-factor model were as follows: GFI = .88, AGFI = .82, RMSEA = .048, CFI = .97, and TLI = .96. The fit of this 5-factor model was also compared with the fit of six alternative models (i.e., a 1-factor...
model, a 2-factor model, and four different 4-factor models). In every instance, the fit of the 5-factor model was significantly better than the fit of any alternative model. Finally, an unparcelled CFA model indicated that each of the impression management items loaded significantly on its specified factor. Cronbach’s alpha for the five impression management dimensions were as follows: Ingratiation (.82), Self-Promotion (.82), Exemplification (.76), Supplication (.88), and Intimidation (.82).

**Results**

The goal of Study 1 was to examine the various ways in which individuals utilize the five impression management strategies proposed by Jones and Pittman (1982). Cluster analysis was employed to identify specific patterns of impression management used by the participants in the study. Hierarchical clustering techniques do not require *a priori* knowledge of the number of clusters and, thus, are ideal for determining the number of clusters in a data set. In contrast, nonhierarchical clustering techniques require knowledge about the number of clusters, but typically yield better cluster solutions than hierarchical methods. Therefore, as recommended by Sharma (1996), hierarchical cluster analysis (using the centroid method) was used first to determine the appropriate number of clusters. We plotted the root-mean-square standard deviation versus the distance between the clusters, as well as the semi-partial $R$-squared versus the $R$-squared, in order to evaluate possible cluster solutions. Both plots indicated that a three-cluster solution was most appropriate. That is, these analyses suggested three patterns (or clusters) of ways in which individuals employ the five impression management tactics. Then, as outlined by Sharma (1996), nonhierarchical clustering (i.e., $k$-means cluster analysis) was used to obtain the final, three-cluster solution.

Cluster 1 consisted of 38 individuals who had the highest use of those impression management tactics aimed at achieving positive-only images (i.e., ingratiation, self-promotion, and exemplification); these individuals used supplication and intimidation relatively less frequently. For this reason, the individuals comprising this cluster were labeled the “positives.” The second cluster was made up of 38 individuals who used relatively high levels of all five impression management tactics. Thus, the individuals in Cluster 2 were described as the “aggressives.” Finally, Cluster 3 consisted of 10 individuals who used relatively low levels of all five impression management tactics. The individuals in this cluster were labeled the “passives.” The results of the cluster analyses are displayed in Figure 1.

The results of Study 1 suggest that the individuals in this study used combinations of impression management tactics in three different ways. While some individuals tended to use only the positive tactics (i.e., the positives), others tended to use either all of the tactics (i.e., the aggressives) or relatively few of the tactics (i.e., the passives). However, in order to demonstrate the validity of a cluster solution it must be replicated in another sample and be shown to relate in logical ways to other variables within its nomological network (Sharma, 1996). Moreover, the sample size used in Study 1 was rather small. Thus, one could have more confidence in the cluster solution that emerged if data had been collected from a larger number of respondents. For these reasons, then, a second study was conducted in which additional data were collected from a larger sample in order to confirm the impression management profiles identified in Study 1 and to determine whether these patterns are useful for further understanding the antecedents and consequences of impression management.
As described above, for the profiles generated in Study 1 to be of practical value, it is necessary to link the patterns of impression management with other variables within the relevant nomological network (i.e., variables which are thought to predict or be an outcome of impression management). Thus, Study 2 has three objectives: (1) to replicate the profiles of impression management identified in Study 1 using another group of participants; (2) to examine some potential antecedents of these profiles of impression management by looking at variables that have been linked with impression management behavior in previous research; and (3) to relate these patterns of impression management to the focal outcome of impression management—namely, the image or perception that others have of the person using impression management tactics.

Antecedents of Impression Management Profiles

Previous research suggests that a variety of situational factors and individual differences are related to the use of impression management behaviors (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). However, because the context for this study is student work teams, it seemed unlikely that the situational factors that have been examined in previous research would be relevant here. For example, because the parameters of the research project were well defined by the instructor, factors such as situational ambiguity or uncertainty were likely to be relatively constant across groups. In addition, due to the homogeneity of the sample in terms of age, race, and educational level, it was not possible to examine the effects of these variables on the use of impression management. However, the relationship between gender and patterns of impression management could be assessed in this study. Moreover, the relevance of the two dispositional variables that have received the most attention in previous studies of impression management—self-monitoring
and Machiavellianism—were examined, too. Thus, in this second study, we examine how gender, self-monitoring, and Machiavellianism are related to profiles of impression management.

**Gender.** Research on impression management suggests that men and women often seek to manage impressions in different ways (Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Judge & Bretz, 1994). Indeed, according to Eagly’s (1987) role theory of gender differences in social behavior, individuals tend to engage in behaviors that are consistent with their socially-prescribed gender roles. Since the female gender role typically discourages aggressive or assertive behavior (Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky, 1992), it is expected that women will be less likely than men to use an aggressive approach to managing impressions and will be more likely to use a passive approach. In contrast, the male gender role typically encourages and rewards assertiveness (Eagly et al., 1992). For this reason, it is expected that men will be more likely than women to actively manage impressions and to do so in an aggressive fashion. Therefore, relative to men, it is expected that women will be more likely to be passives and less likely to be aggressives.

Finally, although there is a theoretical basis for expecting gender-related differences with regard to the passives and aggressives clusters, it is unclear whether those using a positive strategy will be more likely to be men or to be women. That is, men and women alike may believe that the best means of creating a favorable image is to emphasize the more positive impression management strategies. It is expected, then, that men and women will be equally likely to use a positive strategy.

**Hypothesis 1:** Relative to men, women are more likely to be passives and less likely to be aggressives.

**Self-monitoring.** Another individual difference variable likely to influence how individuals utilize impression management behaviors is self-monitoring. Self-monitoring refers to one’s ability to control one’s expressive behavior (Snyder, 1974). High self-monitors are sensitive to the appropriateness of the image they are projecting and have the ability to change their behaviors to suit different situations. In prior research, self-monitoring has been positively associated with the extent of impression management use (Fandt & Ferris, 1990; Rosenfeld et al., 1995). However, Turnley and Bolino (2001) suggest that, relative to low self-monitors, high self-monitors may also be more selective in their use of impression management tactics. In particular, high self-monitors may be especially wary of using those tactics that are likely to lead to less favorable images (i.e., supplication and intimidation). Overall, then, while high self-monitors will tend to use impression management (i.e., they are unlikely to be passives), they should also tend to be more selective in their use of impression management compared with low self-monitors (i.e., high self-monitors are unlikely to be aggressives).

**Hypothesis 2:** Relative to low self-monitors, high self-monitors are more likely to be passives and less likely to be aggressives or passives.

**Machiavellianism.** Finally, an individual’s level of Machiavellianism is likely to affect how he or she uses different types of impression management. Machiavellianism describes
the extent to which individuals behave manipulatively, hold cynical views of human nature, and have a generally low regard for conventional standards of morality (Christie & Geis, 1970). Research suggests that Machiavellianism is likely to be positively correlated with the use of impression management (Christie & Geis, 1970). However, whereas high self-monitors often use impression management to please others, research suggests that Machiavellians may use impression management behaviors that more immediately benefit themselves (Ickes, Reidhead & Patterson, 1986). It is expected, then, that high Machs will be more likely to use a wide array of impression management tactics, including those which may be viewed as less socially acceptable (i.e., supplication and intimidation). Thus, high Machs will be more likely than low Machs to be either aggressives or positives. Low Machs, in contrast, should be less likely to use impression management altogether (i.e., low Machs are more likely than high Machs to be passives).

**Hypothesis 3:** Relative to low Machs, high Machs are more likely to be aggressives or positives and less likely to be passives.

**Profiles of Impression Management and One’s Image**

The general goal of most impression management behavior is to be viewed by others in a desirable light and to avoid being viewed in an undesirable light (Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). In this context, it is reasonable to expect that most individuals would like their peers to consider them as desirable colleagues with whom to work. Clearly, there is evidence that some forms of impression management are effective in eliciting desirable images (e.g., Judge & Bretz, 1994; Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Logically, then, individuals who tend to be rather passive in their use of impression management (i.e., the passives) should be less likely to be seen favorably by others than those who use impression management to at least some degree. On the other hand, researchers also suggest that attempts to manage impressions sometimes backfire (e.g., Crant, 1996), thereby resulting in unfavorable images. Thus, individuals who are somewhat careless, or less judicious, in their use of impression management (i.e., the aggressives) may be seen more negatively, too. For these reasons, it seems reasonable to expect that the most favorable images will accrue to those individuals who are more selective in their use of impression management and tend to emphasize more positive impression management behaviors (i.e., the positives).

**Hypothesis 4:** Positives are more likely to be seen as a desirable workgroup colleague than aggressives or passives.

**Method**

**Sample.** The participants in Study 2 were completely independent of those participating in Study 1. However, as with the participants of the first study, they were also business students enrolled in organizational behavior courses at a university in the Midwestern United States. Like the participants in Study 1, all of students were at the junior or senior level in their undergraduate program and were assigned to work in mixed-gender, four- or five-person groups on a semester-long research project in such a way as to ensure that each group had
at least two members of each gender. Within each gender, though, students were assigned randomly to the groups. Again, participation in the class project was mandatory, but participation in the study was voluntary. One hundred seventy-three of 188 students participated in this research, providing a response rate of 92%. Fifty-five percent of the participants were male.

Procedure. Students used the first three letters of their mother’s name and the month of her birth to create a code name for themselves. The students shared their code name with the other members of their group, but it was not provided to the course instructor. Thus, the respondent’s anonymity could be maintained (with respect to the instructor). Participants completed the Machiavellianism and self-monitoring scales at the beginning of the project. At the conclusion of the project, participants indicated the extent to which they had engaged in each of the impression management tactics. Approximately 1 week later, participants provided their perceptions of each of their group members. All of this information was collected before students received their grade on the project.

Measures.

Self-monitoring. Self-monitoring was measured using the 18-item revised version of the Self-monitoring Scale (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). As recommended by Briggs and Cheek (1986), a 5-point scale, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree, was used rather than the True–False format. Sample items include: “I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people” (reverse scored) and “I am not always the person I appear to be.” Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .80.

Machiavellianism. Machiavellianism was measured with the 20-item scale developed by Christie and Geis (1970). Responses were made on a 6-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (6) Strongly Agree. Sample items include: “The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear” and “Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so.” Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .76.

Impression management tactics. The same 32-item scale used in Study 1 was used in this study. Again, a CFA using maximum likelihood estimation and randomly created item parcels (as outlined by Floyd & Widaman, 1995) supported the 5-factor structure ($\chi^2 = 107.71, df = 67$). The key fit indices for the 5-factor model were as follows: GFI = .92, AGFI = .88, RMSEA = .060, CFI = .96, and TLI = .95. As in the first study, the fit of this 5-factor model was also compared with the fit of six alternative models (i.e., a 1-factor model, a 2-factor model, and four different 4-factor models). In every instance, the fit of the 5-factor model was significantly better than the fit of any alternative model. Moreover, an unparcelled CFA model indicated that each of the impression management items loaded significantly on to its specified factor. Cronbach’s alpha for the five impression management dimensions were as follows: Ingratiation (.80), Self-Promotion (.84), Exemplification (.66), Supplication (.85), and Intimidation (.82).

Impression outcome. A scale was created to tap the general impression that individuals had of each of the other members of their group. Items assessed whether or not the person
Table 1
Correlation matrix of variables for Study 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-monitoring</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Machiavellianism</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ingratiation</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>−.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Self-promotion</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Exemplification</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.44***</td>
<td>.50***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Supplication</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Intimidation</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.37***</td>
<td>.38***</td>
<td>.50***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Impression</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>−.04</td>
<td>−.01</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>−.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>−.24**</td>
<td>−.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender was coded such that female = 0 and male = 1.

* p < .05.
** p < .01.
*** p < .001.
was generally perceived as a desirable group member. The scale was comprised of 12 adjectives (e.g., likable, cooperative, hard-working, conscientious, bossy (reverse scored), lazy (reverse scored)). Responses were made on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. Responses were averaged across the group members in order to determine each individual’s score on the impression outcome measure. Cronbach’s alpha for the impression outcome scale was .90.

A correlation matrix of all the variables used in this study is provided in Table 1. The means and standard deviations for the scales are also provided in Table 1.

Results

The first goal of Study 2 was to replicate the profiles of impression management identified in Study 1. Again, cluster analysis was used to identify the patterns of impression management tactics used by the respondents. Based on the results of Study 1, three clusters were expected. For this reason, nonhierarchical cluster analysis was used here. The results of the cluster analysis confirm the profiles of impression management found in the first study. In other words, the results obtained in Study 2 were very similar to those found in Study 1. Specifically, the first cluster consisted of 86 positives—individuals who used relatively high levels of ingratiation, self-promotion, and exemplification, but used supplication and intimidation relatively less frequently. The second cluster was comprised of 49 aggressives—individuals using relatively high levels of all five impression management tactics. Lastly, the third cluster consisted of 38 passives—individuals who used relatively low levels of each tactic. The results of the cluster analysis are depicted in Figure 2.

The second goal of Study 2 was to determine how individual difference variables relate to the profiles of impression management identified in this research. Specifically, this study examined whether gender, self-monitoring, and Machiavellianism are associated with an

![Figure 2. Study 2: Profiles of impression management.](image-url)
 individual’s membership in the “positive,” “aggressive,” or “passive” cluster. Because cluster membership is a categorical dependent variable, logistic regression was used to test the first three hypotheses. The three independent variables included in the logistic regression model were gender, self-monitoring, and Machiavellianism; the dependent variable was cluster. The results of the logistic regression analysis appear in Table 2. As shown here, the overall model was significant (the likelihood-ratio test statistic had a $\chi^2$ value of 26.34, $df = 3$, $p < .001$). Moreover, there were also significant effects for gender ($p < .03$), self-monitoring ($p < .001$), and Machiavellianism ($p < .001$).

A frequency table was developed in order to determine the nature of the relationship between gender and impression management cluster. As expected, the most striking gender differences were with regard to the passive and aggressive clusters. Among women, 35% were passives and 21% were aggressives. In contrast, among men, only 11% were passives while 34% were aggressives. Thus, in comparison to men, women were more likely to report using low levels of all impression management tactics. Males, though, were more likely than their female counterparts to be aggressive. There were fewer gender differences with regard to the positive strategy (the most popular strategy overall, regardless of gender). Specifically, 55% of men tended to utilize this strategy, while 44% of women favored this approach. These results suggest that there are significant differences in the way men and women use impression management. In general, men in this sample tended to be more aggressive in their use of impression management than women. Compared to men, women were more passive and engaged in fewer impression management behaviors across the board. The differences between men and women with regard to the use of a positive strategy, though, were less dramatic. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

An examination of the relationship between self-monitoring and impression management cluster revealed a notable contrast in impression management styles among low and high self-monitors. (In order to develop a frequency table to further examine these results,
respondents were classified as either low self-monitors or high self-monitors using a median split. Specifically, high self-monitors were more likely to be positives (63% of high self-monitors were positives) than were low self-monitors (42% of low self-monitors were positives). That is, high self-monitors, who are sensitive to how they are seen by others, tend to emphasize the more positive strategies of impression management. In contrast, low self-monitors were more likely than high self-monitors to be either aggressives (low self-monitors made up 60% of the aggressives cluster) or passives (low self-monitors made up 60% of the passives cluster). Thus, high self-monitors did not necessarily engage in more impression management across the board; rather, they tended to emphasize those behaviors that sought to obtain favorable attributions. Hypothesis 2, then, was supported.

Finally, there were also manifest differences in the patterns of impression management tactics employed by high Machs and low Machs. (In order to further examine these results, a frequency table was developed by classifying individuals as either low Machs or high Machs using a median split.) As expected, the aggressive group tended to be made up largely of high Machs (55%). However, somewhat unexpectedly, high Machs also comprised the majority (54%) of the passives cluster. In contrast, low Machs made up 56% of the positives. Thus, compared to low Machs, high Machs tended to be either aggressive or passive in their use of the five impression management tactics whereas low Machs tended to emphasize the more positive impression management behaviors.

On the surface these findings may seem somewhat surprising. That is, it was expected that low Machs would engage in fewer impression management behaviors than high Machs (i.e., low Machs were expected to make up the majority of the passives cluster). In hindsight, though, this finding actually provides some support for the idea that Machiavellianism is not necessarily related to the amount of impression management used by individuals, but instead to individuals’ willingness to engage in more risky, and perhaps more deceptive, forms of impression management. That is, relative to low Machs, high Machs seem to have an all or nothing approach to managing impressions. Thus, in many ways, these results are consistent with other research on Machiavellianism which suggests that high Machs are not necessarily concerned with using their impression management to please others; rather, they tend to use impression management only in ways which satisfy their own ends (e.g., Ickes et al., 1986). Overall, then, Hypothesis 3 was only partially supported.

The final research question sought to determine whether passives, positives, and aggressives were viewed differently by their workgroup colleagues. Specifically, the study examined whether the patterns of impression management tactics differentially influenced whether the individuals were perceived as desirable workgroup colleagues. ANOVA was used to answer this final research question. The results of the ANOVA are displayed in Table 3.

The ANOVA results indicate that there were significant differences in how passives, positives, and aggressives are viewed by their colleagues. A Tukey pair-wise comparison test revealed that aggressives were significantly less likely to be seen as desirable workgroup colleagues than either the passives or the positives. However, group members did not have significantly different perceptions of positives and passives. Thus, individuals in this sample responded more favorably when their group members used either a combination of positive impression management tactics or when they used fairly low levels of impression management across all types of tactics. When individuals used relatively high levels of all of the
Table 3
Analysis of variance results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable: IM cluster</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passives</td>
<td>4.19 (a)</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressives</td>
<td>3.93 (b)</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positives</td>
<td>4.19 (a)</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F = 4.96^*$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df = 2159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R$-square = .06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means with the same letter are not significantly different.

*p < .01.

impression management tactics, however, they were less likely to be seen as a desirable workgroup colleague. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was only partially supported.

Discussion

The present research examined how individuals attempt to influence the image others hold of them by using impression management tactics in combination. The results of the study support the idea that not only do individuals differ in how they use specific impression management tactics, but also in the ways they employ such strategies in combination. In these two studies, one group favored the use of the positive impression management tactics of ingratiation, self-promotion, and exemplification. A second group tended to engage in impression management aggressively, using the tactics somewhat indiscriminately. Finally, a third group was more reserved or passive in their use of all the impression management tactics.

Individual differences significantly predicted the patterns of impression management employed, with women tending to take a passive stance in their use of impression management relative to men and men opting for a more aggressive approach relative to women. Also, as expected, high self-monitors emphasized positive impression management tactics. However, high Machs tended to fall into either the aggressives or passives categories, while low Machs were more likely to be positives. Finally, the ways in which individuals used impression management tactics in combination significantly affected how they were perceived by their workgroup colleagues. Specifically, compared to the aggressives, positives and passives were more likely to be viewed as desirable workgroup colleagues.

Taken together, these studies provide some evidence for the argument advanced by Law et al. (1998). That is, using a profile model to examine the multidimensional construct of impression management helps to further our understanding of the construct and its dimensions. For example, the conclusions regarding the impact of self-monitoring on impression management are different when using a profile model than when using the more typical
approach of examining the specific impression management dimensions in isolation. An examination of the correlation matrix (cf. Table 1) suggests that self-monitors simply use more self-promotion and exemplification. However, the cluster analysis and logistic regression results reveal that high self-monitors are most likely to use high levels of ingratiation, self-promotion, and exemplification combined with relatively low levels of supplication and intimidation. Viewing impression management tactics in isolation, then, does not give a full picture regarding the use of impression management tactics in combination.

This research also provides some direction for future theoretical and empirical work on impression management. The results of the cluster analyses suggest that participants in both studies used the same three patterns of impression management. However, in other contexts, different impression management profiles might emerge. For example, in groups that are more hierarchical, supervisors may be more willing than subordinates to use combinations of impression management that include the tactic of intimidation. Likewise, a passive approach to impression management may be more evident in short-term groups than in groups that are established for longer-term projects. More theoretical work, then, is needed to develop taxonomies describing the ways individuals use impression management tactics together. In addition, more theoretical attention should be given to factors that might affect individuals’ use of impression management tactics in combination and the images that are likely to accrue to those individuals using particular patterns of impression management.

A logical starting point for research along these lines is to revisit the basic motives thought to underlie different impression management strategies. For example, ingratiation is used in an attempt to be seen as likable, while supplication is used in order to appear needy. Researchers could attempt to formulate theory that specifies the circumstances under which individuals in organizations might be more or less likely to engage in certain forms of impression management at relatively high, low, or equivalent levels. In this way, it may ultimately be possible to build theoretical models that explain when individuals will use relatively high levels of intimidation, self-promotion, and exemplification coupled with relatively low levels of ingratiation and supplication. While certain combinations of tactics seem rather improbable (something which could also be articulated using a theoretical model), future research may be able to make more informed predictions about which combinations are more or less likely to occur in certain situations or to be employed by certain individuals.

In addition to theory exploring the patterns themselves, more attention should also be given to the contextual factors that shape the use of combinations of impression management tactics, especially within team settings. Specifically, the relational demography of the team could influence the ways in which impression management tactics are utilized. For example, different patterns of impression management may be used within demographically heterogeneous and homogeneous groups. Moreover, individuals may seek to manage one impression with some group members and attempt to manage a different impression with other members. In other words, because there are multiple targets within group settings, individuals may be forced to manage multiple impressions at the same time. Achieving one’s image goals, then, may be more complicated in the context of work teams than it is in the context of dyadic relationships.

In this study, the impressions of group members were aggregated to form an overall impression outcome measure. However, even when the same impression management tactics
are targeted toward members of the same group, it is possible that some members may respond favorably to such behaviors while others respond less favorably. For example, an individual’s impression management tactics may lead him or her to be seen as highly competent by some members of the group and highly conceited by others. Accordingly, there may ultimately be some meaning or significance to the distribution of impressions within a group. In other words, there might be practical differences between someone who is seen as moderately likeable by everyone in the group, versus someone who is seen as very liked by some and very disliked by others. Thus, additional research is needed to better understand how the outcomes of impression management are best conceptualized and measured in the context of groups.

Similarly, impression formation is a cyclical and dynamic process (Jones, 1990). Unfortunately, though, most impression management research examines it as if it were a fairly static process. In particular, the members of a work team are not only managing impressions, but also forming impressions of their teammates at the same time. It is possible, then, that different norms about the ways in which impression management is utilized and interpreted may develop within different work groups. More studies that utilize longitudinal research designs and seek to explain the influence of contextual factors and group dynamics upon impression management processes would contribute to our understanding of this phenomenon.

Additional work is needed, too, that examines both the positive and negative outcomes associated with combinations of impression management tactics. For instance, previous research suggests that self-promotion can often be risky (e.g., Wayne & Ferris, 1990). This tactic may be especially hard to successfully pull off when it is coupled with other impression management tactics, such as intimidation; however, it may be more likely to succeed when coupled with tactics such as exemplification and ingratiation. Similarly, previous research suggests that observer attributions often play an important role in determining whether attempts to manage impressions ultimately succeed or fail (Jones & Pittman, 1982). In particular, if observers feel they are being manipulated, they typically react negatively to impression management behavior. Unfortunately, here, we do not have data concerning the attributions that observers made with regard to the impression management behavior of their peers. For this reason, more work is needed which explores the variables that might moderate the relationship between the use of combinations of impression management tactics and their associated outcomes.

Finally, future studies should also address how researchers can best conceptualize and study the multidimensional construct of impression management more generally. The theory proffered by Law et al. (1998) could serve as a useful starting point in this regard. For example, while it may make sense to use the profile model to examine some research questions, in other contexts the aggregate or latent approach might be more appropriate. Likewise, more work is needed to integrate the various taxonomies and typologies of impression management that have been developed in the literature. For example, Wayne and Ferris’ (1990) typology classifies impression management behaviors based on their focus—job, supervisor, or self. Thus, it is possible that (similar to the results obtained here) certain combinations of these tactics may be more effective than others. Also, there may be meaningful predictors of the ways in which individuals focus these different combinations of impression management behaviors as well.
Although this study improves our understanding of impression management, it is not without limitations. First, the research described here is somewhat exploratory. Additional studies that build upon the theoretical base provided in this research and in past studies would be especially useful. In addition, future studies that successfully replicate the profiles of impression management identified in these studies would strengthen the confidence that one can have in the results obtained here. Second, like many other studies of impression management, the sample used here consisted of undergraduate students. Moreover, the sample size for the first study was fairly small. While the sample size for Study 2 was larger, ideally, these profiles should be extended to an organizational setting. Accordingly, it is unclear how generalizable these results may be to other contexts. Indeed, there may be a different set of strategies used in corporate settings than the positives–aggressives–passives pattern that was found here. This point reinforces the idea that more theoretical work is needed to gain a better understanding of how individuals use combinations of impression management tactics in different settings. Third and finally, this research focused on only a relatively small set of predictor variables and a single criterion variable. Therefore, additional studies are also needed to examine other important antecedents and outcomes associated with the use of various impression management profiles. Furthermore, future research should also examine contextual factors and potential moderators so that a more complete picture of the impression management process can be developed.

Nevertheless, as a starting point for the investigation of impression management profiles, this research has some notable strengths. First, whereas previous studies have generally focused on one or two tactics of impression management, the present research examined five different impression management strategies based on Jones and Pittman’s (1982) taxonomy. Also, the results suggest real differences in how individuals utilize the various impression management behaviors in combination, and the patterns of impression management usage were consistent across two independent samples. Furthermore, although these samples were comprised of students working in project teams, it is reasonable to expect that many of the same impression management processes at work in these groups are likely to occur in organizational work teams. In particular, the groups used in these studies are similar to autonomous work teams in which group members have fairly equal status. (However, the use of student teams did preclude the examination of many contextual variables that might be relevant in organizational settings, such as team structures that are more hierarchical.) In addition, the findings suggest that individual differences predicted the different patterns of impression management use and that the different profiles of impression management use predicted how the individuals were viewed by their workgroup colleagues. Moreover, the data examined here were collected both longitudinally and using multiple sources.

Finally, there are potential practical implications of this research. In particular, prior research has sometimes offered guidelines on the best ways to use impression management (Jones, 1990; Judge & Bretz, 1994; Wayne & Ferris, 1990). By and large, this advice speaks mainly to the use of impression management tactics in isolation. Clearly, though, the results of this study demonstrate that individuals use a variety of tactics to shape the images that others have of them. Therefore, it is possible that some of the practical recommendations that have been made in the past may require reexamination in order to address instances in which impression management tactics are used together. In other words, this research suggests that using a variety of impression management tactics in combination may be substantively
different than using each of these tactics in isolation. Accordingly, practicing managers seeking to create favorable impressions at work should strive to find the combination of tactics that enable them to achieve their impression management goals.

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