



Development of a self-presentation tactics scale

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Abstract

Previous personality measures examining individuals' propensity to engage in self-presentation (e.g. self-monitoring, social desirability) often dealt only with positive forms of self-presentation and have not measured individuals' proclivity to use specific self-presentation tactics. In order to overcome these problems, 4 studies were carried out to (a) develop a self-presentation tactics scale (SPT) measuring individual differences in proclivity for using 12 self-presentation tactics, (b) examine the dimensions of self-presentation and (c) to examine gender differences in self-presentation behavior. The results of the 4 studies indicate that the SPT is internally consistent, consistent across time and that the SPT shows adequate discriminant validity. Confirmatory factor analyses demonstrate that self-presentation consists of two distinct components: defensive and assertive tactics, and that these two general types of tactics are significantly correlated. Additionally, males are more likely than females to use assertive self-presentation tactics. The potential utility of the self-presentation tactics scale for future research on self-presentational behavior is discussed. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Self-presentation consists of behaviors which are intended to manage the impressions that observers have of actors (Goffman, 1959). Self-presentation has sometimes been distinguished from impression management which has been defined as an attempt to control the images which are presented to others usually to increase the power of the individual. Self-presentation

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has been proposed to deal with more self-relevant or authentic presentations (see Schlenker, 1980 for a more detailed analysis of this distinction). However, as the tactics used to engage in both impression management and self-presentation are the same and it is the tactics we are concerned with here, we will use the terms interchangeably as others have done (see Leary and Kowalski, 1990). Self presentation has been used to explain many different interpersonal phenomena including aggression (Tedeschi and Felson, 1994), cognitive dissonance (Tedeschi and Rosenfeld, 1981), job interviewing behavior (Stevens and Kristof, 1995) and health related behaviors (Leary et al., 1994). Given self-presentation's possible explanatory value to so many areas of inquiry, an understanding of individuals' proclivity to engage in different types of self-presentational behaviors would be a useful tool in our understanding of social phenomena. The present research had the goals of: (a) developing scales to measure a person's proclivity to use certain self-presentation tactics, (b) assessing the reliability and validity of the scales, (c) empirically examining the dimensions which underlie self-presentational tactics and (d) examining gender differences in self-presentation behavior.

Tedeschi and Melburg (1984) classified self-presentational behaviors into 4 categories, based on distinctions between tactical and strategic self-presentation, and between defensive and assertive behaviors. A representative example for each of the 4 categories is as follows: excuses for tactical-defensive behaviors; entitlements for tactical-assertive behaviors; test anxiety for strategic-defensive behaviors; and attractiveness for strategic-assertive behaviors. Self-presentation tactics are behaviors used to manage impressions to achieve foreseeable short-term interpersonal objectives or goals, while strategic behaviors are directed toward the construction of long-term identities (see Baumeister, 1982 on self-construction). While tactical self-presentation focuses on specific behaviors, strategic self-presentation is focused on the identities a person is constructing and many different tactics may be employed in the construction of a single identity. Defensive self-presentations occur when an event is interpreted as endangering or spoiling a desired identity and are intended to mend the identity or mitigate the negative effects of the precipitating event. Assertive self-presentation refers to proactive behavior performed to establish particular identities (see Arkin, 1981 regarding protective and acquisitive self-presentation).

Several attempts have been made to develop paper-and-pencil scales measuring the proclivity of respondents to engage in self-presentational behavior including the self-monitoring scale (Snyder, 1974), the social desirability scale (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964), and the self-consciousness scale (Fenigstein et al., 1975). While each of these scales captures a person's motivation to manage impressions to some degree, they do not appear to directly measure specific types of self-presentational behavior.

Factor analyses of the self-monitoring scale indicate that one of the factors accounting for a significant amount of variance refers to "acting ability" (Briggs et al., 1980; Gabrenya and Arkin, 1980; Lennox and Wolfe, 1984). The second factor, other-directedness, deals with how in-tune a person is with an audience and the third factor, extroversion, is most likely not that closely related to self-presentation as both intraverbs and extroverts engage in self-presentational behavior. As two of the factors have to do with aspects of performing unauthentic behavior, the scale may underrepresent the construct of self-presentation. Self-presentation is not necessarily unauthentic behavior. Often the identities the person wishes to present are identities the person truly believes he or she possesses. Additionally, individuals

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