

The phenomenon of impression management flashcard



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Sociologist Erving Goffman was most responsible for the original development of impression management theory. Goffman (1959) argued that even seemingly harmless actions might be designed to show a person in a favorable manner. He claimed that people performers whose main task is to construct identity (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989). The impression management framework employs a “life as theater” or dramatic comparison to describe social and organizational behavior. People are actors, taking many roles, and are keenly aware of audience reactions in their behaviors. Thus, some actors’ behavior is an attempt to control or modify the image that relevant audiences have of them and win audiences’ support.

The impression management framework assumes that a basic human motive is to be viewed by others in a favorable manner and to avoid being seen negatively. Individuals act as amateur publicity agents using enhancing impression management tactics (e. g. flattery, self-promotion) to look good and protective or defensive impression management (e. g. excuses, apologies) to minimize deficiencies and avoid looking bad (Cooper & Argyris, 1998).

Stimulated by Goffman’s ideas, researchers from social psychological and organizational viewpoint have conducted numerous practical tests of the types of impression management behaviors that people use and the various identities they attempt to establish. For example, the impression management perspective has been applied to such diverse areas such as assessment centers, organizational failure, business ethics, career strategies, personal space invasions, and leadership (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989). Is impression management devious? Given that it involves controlling

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the information that is presented to audiences, it is sometimes regarded as dealing with matters of appearance rather than substance. In fact, some analyses of impression management have equated it with illicit, deceitful conduct. However, it is more accurate to say that impression management can involve behavior that falls all along the line of sincerity versus deceitful conduct. People who want to communicate an accurate, sincere portrait of self to another person must distill and edit vast amounts of personal information, such that it is presented as a comprehensible package that leads the other to draw the desired conclusion, it takes just as much interpersonal skill to create a desired, sincere impression as a desired, false one (Manstead & Hewstone, 1995).

Impression management for many became synonymous with unscrupulous, sinful, insincere, and deceptive actions. People who practiced impression management did not necessarily believe in the impressions they were claiming, but were saying and doing things to gain favor in the eyes of significant audiences as part of a general motive of manipulative social influence. What role do audiences actually play in the impression management process? By definition, impression management involves trying to create a particular impression on an audience. As such, the audience and its perceived reactions are presumed to play a central role in regulating the actor's behavior. Most studies have emphasized the role of immediate audiences in influencing behavior.

Audiences have greater impact in the actor's behavior if they are more powerful, more attractive, more expert, or higher in status. Recent work also has begun to explore other audiences for impression management, including <https://assignbuster.com/the-phenomenon-of-impression-management-flashcard/>

imagined audiences who are not actually present but who are significant to the actor (e. g. parents, friends), and even the self-as-audience for one's own behavior (Manstead & Hewstone, 1995).

One simple example is when a guy courts me; he gives his best foot forward, for me to give a good impression of him immediately. However, sometimes people are not even aware that they are engaged in impression management because they are simply behaving in ways they regard as natural. Women engage in impression management when they remove hair from their faces, legs, armpits and other areas of their bodies and present themselves hairless in these areas. I myself do these too, to be presentable and to feel good as well. From Goffman's perspective, even if people are aware that they are engaged in impression management, it can nevertheless be a constructive and normal feature of social interaction because smooth interactions depend on everyone's behaving in socially expected and appropriate ways. If people spoke and behaved entirely as they pleased, civilization would break down.

Goffman (1959) also recognized the dark side of impression management, which occurs when people manipulate their audience in deliberately deceitful and harmful ways (Ferrante & Ferrante-Wallace, 2005). Impression management often presents us with a dilemma. If we reveal inappropriate, unacceptable or unpleasant information, we risk offending or losing our audience. If we conceal the same information, we may feel that we're being deceitful, insincere, or dishonest. How could cultural factors affect impression management? Many meanings are merely implied and not explicitly stated.

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Because of social norms, and for reasons of impression management, for instance, many negative things about minorities may not state explicitly and thus are conveyed 'between the lines.' For instance in a sentence like "the rising crime in the inner city worried the politicians." It is presupposed, and not explicitly stated, but there is fielding crime in the inner city, as this was a known fact (Holliday, Kullman, & Hyde, 2004). Another cultural factor that could affect impression management is the issue on race. Let's focus briefly in the impact of racism and discrimination on black people's presentation of self to others and impression management. We must not underestimate the impact of discrimination and racism on the 'way in which Black people relate to other to the outside world.

Skin color is a badge of difference. The process of discrimination is evident at all levels of society, theories about genetic inferiority, and cultural pathology' (Robinson, 1995). We need not only to understand how black people react to and express distrust towards white people but also to have an understanding of nonverbal behaviors among blacks. Black people's anger and distrust towards white people could be viewed as appropriate, adaptive behavior.