Self-Presentational Goals, Self-Monitoring, and Nonverbal Behavior

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This study examined how particular interpersonal goals relate to the expression of emotions during social interaction for people particularly high and low in self-monitoring needs. Before interacting with a partner, participants were assigned a goal of either self-promotion (appearing competent), ingratiation (appearing likable), or were assigned no specific goal. Naive judges viewed 15-sec segments of these interactions and rated participants regarding the emotions displayed. Results indicate that displays of positive and negative emotion are differentially affected by an individual’s self-monitoring status, self-presentational goal, and gender. Overall, high self-monitors and women expressed less negative emotion and more positive emotion than low self-monitors and men. Furthermore, although women showed little variability in their displays of negative emotion due to goal, men’s displays of negative emotion were affected by self-presentational goals.

The desire to present oneself in a strategic manner, one that is appropriate to a particular social situation, is a central aspect of social interaction. According to Jones and Pittman (1982), the process of self-presentation involves regulating one’s own behavior to create a specific impression for an audience. As our audience changes throughout the day, our self-presentational goals are likely to change as well. For instance, we may wish to appear competent to our peers and likable to our friends.

The particular strategies we use to present ourselves as likable or competent can take many forms. For instance, we may mimic the way others dress or attempt to steer the topic of conversation to an area of our expertise. It also seems reasonable that nonverbal behavior would play an important role in an individual’s self-pre-
sentational efforts. Researchers have demonstrated that facial expressions tend not only to indicate the specific affect being experienced by an individual, but may also represent the intensity of the affect (Cacioppo, Petty, Losch, & Kim, 1986; Cacioppo & Tassinary, 1990). Although people are not always successful at controlling their nonverbal behaviors (e.g., DePaulo, 1992; DePaulo & Kirkendol, 1989; DePaulo, Kirkendol, Tang, & O’Brien, 1988; Vrij, 1995), numerous studies have shown that, when motivated, people can express emotions through their expressive behaviors so that others can accurately recognize the emotions intended (e.g., DePaulo, Stone, & Lassiter, 1985; Josephs, 1994). In fact, a long-established line of research shows that nonverbal emotional displays not only are used strategically, but that others place great emphasis on nonverbal behavioral cues, assuming that they provide important information about an individual’s true emotional state (DePaulo, 1991; Feldman & Rimé, 1991).

A number of studies have demonstrated that verbal and nonverbal behaviors are affected by self-presentation motivation (e.g., Aloise-Young, 1993; Pellegrini, Hicks, & Gordon, 1970; Reiss & Rosenfeld, 1980). When participants are asked to ingratiate themselves, they tend to use more reactive verbal and nonverbal behaviors with their partners—leaning forward, creating eye contact, nodding and smiling—whereas participants asked to self-promote display more proactive behaviors—attempting to impress their partners with their achievements (Godfrey, Jones, & Lord, 1986). When given a goal of gaining their partners’ approval versus avoiding that approval, participants smile, nod, and gesture to a greater degree (Rosenfeld, 1966a, 1966b). These studies demonstrate that not only are people capable of using nonverbal behaviors, but that they actually spontaneously employ these behaviors in their attempts to achieve specific interpersonal goals.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN SELF-PRESENTATION

Although it is clear that people use nonverbal behaviors in attempts to reach interpersonal goals, there are substantial individual differences in terms of people’s abilities to control and manipulate their nonverbal behavior. One central difference factor is gender. Research on facial expressions demonstrates that infant girls produce more facial expressions that look like expressions of interest than do infant boys (Malatesta & Haviland, 1982), and women are more spontaneously expressive than men (Hall, 1984). Women are also better at posing emotions than are men (Hall, 1984). This skill, in particular, might be expected to lend itself well to women’s use of nonverbal behaviors for self-presentationational purposes.

In fact, research employing the disappointing gift paradigm, in which children’s reactions are observed upon their receipt of a disappointing gift, demonstrates that girls are much more likely to maintain their positive expressions in social situations as compared to boys (Cole, 1986; Saarni, 1984). Women also tend to be more aware of interpersonal interactions (Exline, 1972) and more accurate at reading facial cues than men (Boyatzis, Chazan, & Ting, 1993; Hall, 1984). This increased interper-
sonal awareness can be useful for gauging one’s interpersonal “performance” and adapting it to create the specific image one wishes to project.

Further, in childhood as well as adulthood, men and women differ in the nature of their social interactions; men tend to interact in large groups organized around competition and conflict, whereas women tend to form smaller, more affiliative groups (Barth & Kinder, 1988; Erwin, 1993; Hall, 1987; Johnson & Leslie, 1982; Paley, 1984). These differing social networks may promote the use of different emotional displays for men and women. Whereas the competitive and hierarchical nature of men’s relationships may encourage the expression of such negative emotions as anger, the more supportive and affiliative nature of women’s relationships may encourage the expression of such positive emotions as happiness.

For instance, Coats and Feldman (1996) have found evidence to suggest that the appropriate emotional display for men and women attempting to achieve high sociometric status among their same-sex peers is different; men are most effective when displaying negative emotion, whereas women are most effective when displaying positive emotion. Additional findings by Coats (1996) support these results, indicating that women clearly displaying happiness and men displaying anger are perceived by naive judges as having higher sociometric status, compared to women displaying anger or sadness and men displaying happiness or sadness.

It thus appears that displays of the same emotion by men and women may have differential effects. Displays of anger by men are related to ratings of high sociometric status, whereas displays of anger by women are related to lower ratings of sociometric status. Thus, we might expect differences between men and women in their expressions of emotion depending on the social goal they wish to attain, with men more likely to vary in terms of their negative emotion and women more likely to vary in terms of their positive emotion.

Another important individual difference in the expression of nonverbal behavior is level of self-monitoring. Self-monitoring relates to the regulation of one’s behavior to the demands of a given situation to effectively monitor the image projected to others (Snyder, 1987). People high in self-monitoring endorse items such as “I would probably make a good actor/actress” and “I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them.” Indeed, past research has shown that individuals high in self-monitoring are not only more highly skilled at controlling their expressive behaviors to suit a given situation (Friedman & Miller-Herringer, 1991), but are also more skilled at posing emotions than those individuals low in self-monitoring (Snyder, 1974).

For example, Friedman and Miller-Herringer (1991) revealed that high self-monitoring participants, upon learning that they had just defeated a competitor, displayed victory gestures only when alone; when in the presence of their fellow competitors, they suppressed their overt displays of happiness. Low self-monitors, on the other hand, did not conceal their emotions, showing much more consistency across the social and nonsocial conditions. It is reasonable to expect, then, that individuals scoring high on self-monitoring will be more likely to regulate their
outward expressions of emotion to others when interpersonal goals such as ingra-
tiation or self-promotion are made salient than will individuals scoring low on self-monitoring.

GOALS OF THIS STUDY

Although past research indicates that the expression of positive and negative emotion can have a powerful impact on social interactions (e.g., Gurtman, Martin, & Hintzman, 1990; Strack & Coyne, 1983), it is unclear as to whether individuals actually do alter their emotional displays to achieve interpersonal goals. Is the expression of emotion actually used as a strategy in impression management? Although a number of studies have examined people’s uses of specific behaviors such as head nods or hand gestures during efforts to present themselves effectively to others (e.g., Godfrey, et al., 1986), little research has examined people’s uses of broad emotional presentations to achieve specific interpersonal goals (Clark, 1994).

The current study examined how particular interpersonal goals relate to the expression of emotions during social interactions for men and women particularly high and low in self-monitoring needs. Participants met with a partner during a short, 10 min interaction that had as its goal either self-promotion (appearing competent), ingratiation (appearing likable), or had no specific interaction goal. Based on Jones and Pittman’s theory of strategic self-presentation (1982), which suggests that ingratigators seek to arouse feelings of affection in others whereas self-promoters seek to arouse feelings of respect and deference, it was expected that individuals in the ingratiation condition would display lower levels of negative emotion and higher levels of positive emotion than individuals in the self-promotion condition. In addition, it was expected that men and women would differ in their expressed emotion across condition, with men more likely to vary in terms of negative emotion and women in terms of positive emotion displayed. Finally, it was expected that individuals high in self-monitoring would show more variation in positive and negative emotional displays than those individuals with low self-monitoring scores.

METHOD

Overview

Pairs of unacquainted same-sex undergraduates participated in a 10 min conver-
sation that was videotaped. Upon entering the laboratory, pairs were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (self-promotion, ingratiation, or control). In a method similar to that employed by Godfrey, Jones, and Lord (1986), one of the participants in each pair was randomly selected as the self-presenter and was either told to get their partner to think they were competent, get their partner to like them, or were given no specific goal for the conversation. After the conversation, both partners rated each other on several scales including competence, likability, happi-
ness, and a number of negative emotions. Judges blind to condition were later shown segments of the videotapes and made ratings on similar scales.

Participants

A total of 127 pairs of same-sex undergraduates (60 male pairs and 67 female pairs) enrolled in psychology classes initially participated in this study for experimental credit. For screening purposes, all participants completed the Self-Monitoring scale (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). Only those scoring in the upper third (receiving a score above 12) or lower third (receiving a score below eight) of the distribution of self-monitoring scores were used in the study (36 male pairs and 47 female pairs).

Procedure

Same-sex pairs of unacquainted participants were scheduled to arrive in separate rooms at the start of the study. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to examine how people interact when they meet someone new. They were told that various types of data might be collected during the course of the study including paper and pencil, audio, and/or videotape data. Pairs of participants were randomly assigned to one of three different conditions. In the first condition, one of the partners was selected as a self-promoter, receiving instructions to “get your partner to think you are extremely competent.” In the second condition, one partner was designated as an ingratiator and told to “get your partner to like you as much as possible.” Both the ingratitators and self-promoters were told not to reveal their goals to their partners during the interaction. Participants in the control condition and partners of the ingratitators and self-promoters were not given specific self-presentational goals, but instead were simply told to “act as you normally would” and to “carry on this conversation as you would any conversation.” Following receipt of these instructions, partners were introduced to each other and asked to engage in conversation for a period of 10 min. All participants were secretly videotaped.

Following their conversation, partners were separated. All participants completed questionnaires concerning their partner’s performance during the conversation. Participants rated the extent to which they and their partner displayed competence, likability, happiness, fear, anger, and disgust on Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very). In addition, participants specified the goal that they had been asked to achieve during their conversation and the extent to which they were familiar with their partner before the experimental session. Participants also completed a number of other scales not germane to the current report; they are not discussed further. During debriefing, all participants were asked for their written permission for further use of the videotapes.

Judging. Judges were 110 University of Massachusetts undergraduates, native to self-presentation condition (22 men and 88 women). Segments of videotape
of the self-presenters lasting 15 sec, taken just after the first minute of conversation between each pair, were placed on one of five master tapes. Self-presenters consisted of those participants told to self-promote or ingratiate, and one randomly selected participant from each of the control pairs. Each tape, containing 40 to 41 video clips edited in a random order, was shown without sound to groups of one to six judges who were asked to rate the degree to which participants in each segment showed various qualities. Each tape was viewed twice by the same judges, rated each time on three of the six individual 7-point Likert-type scales. One set of scales included ratings of happiness, competence, and anger, whereas a second set of scales included ratings of likability, fear, and disgust. The order in which these ratings were completed was randomized.

Method of Analysis

A 3 × 2 × 2 (condition of self-presenter: self-promoting, ingratiation, or control) × (level of self-monitoring of self-presenter: high or low) × (gender of self-presenter: male or female) between-subject design was used to analyze participants’ nonverbal behaviors. Analyses focused on the nonverbal behaviors of the self-presenter within each conversational pair—those participants told to get their partners to like them (self-promoters), to think they were competent (ingratiators), and a randomly selected participant from each pair of participants in the control condition, in which participants were told to act as they normally would. Twenty-three pairs were removed from analyses either because of participants’ previous familiarity with their partners (n = 3), problems with the video equipment (n = 6), participants’ requests to have videotapes erased (n = 2), or the incorrect identification of the interaction goal following their conversation (n = 12). A chi-square indicated that failure to correctly identify the interaction goal did not differ significantly by condition (self-promotion n = 6, ingratiation n = 5, control n = 1). Analyses were conducted on 21 male pairs and 39 female pairs of participants.

Judges and partners rated the self-presenter on levels of happiness, fear, anger, disgust, likability, and competence. Correlations between the negative emotional variables averaged .41 for partners’ ratings and .71 for judges’ ratings. All correlations were significant at p < .01, and therefore composite partner and judge negative emotion variables were created by separately combining judges’ and partners’ ratings of fear, anger, and disgust.

RESULTS

Judges’ Ratings

Negative emotion and happiness. Although the overall mean of self-presenters’ displays of negative emotion (M = 2.62) indicates that extremely high negative emotion was not part of anyone’s self-presentation, clear differences in
the display of lower levels of negative emotion do emerge upon comparison of the experimental groups. As expected, the negative emotion expressed by self-presenters differed according to self-presentational goal (see Table 1); the main effect of condition was significant, $F(2, 48) = 3.13, p < .05$. Examination of the means indicated that controls and self-promoters displayed similar, and relatively high, levels of negative emotion ($M = 2.71$ and $M = 2.73$, respectively), whereas ingratiators showed lower levels of negative emotion ($M = 2.37$). Expected main effects of self-monitoring, $F(1, 48) = 11.71, p < .002$, and gender, $F(1, 48) = 3.94, p < .05$, were also found. High self-monitors displayed less negative emotion, in general, than low self-monitors ($M = 2.43$ vs. $M = 2.82$), and men expressed higher levels of negative emotion than women ($M = 2.77$ vs. $M = 2.53$).

In addition to these main effects, a marginal interaction between gender and self-monitoring was found, $F(1, 48) = 3.78, p < .06$. Planned comparisons revealed that low self-monitoring men and women differed in the amount of negative emotion displayed, with men displaying more negative emotion than women ($M = 3.33$ vs. $M = 2.63$; $t(9) = 2.26, p < .05$). In contrast, high self-monitors showed no difference according to gender (men $M = 2.43$; women $M = 2.43$).

There was also a marginal interaction between experimental condition and gender, $F(2, 48) = 2.56, p < .09$. The means involved in the interaction suggest that women showed little variability in their displays of negative emotion due to condition (self-promotion $M = 2.62$; ingratiating $M = 2.42$; control $M = 2.55$), whereas men expressed significantly more negative emotion in the self-promotion and control conditions than in the ingratiating condition ($M = 2.96$ and $M = 2.92$ vs. $M = 2.25$).

An analysis of self-presenters’ level of happiness as rated by judges produced convergent results with those obtained in the analysis of negative emotion (see Table 1). As expected, a significant main effect of self-monitoring was found, $F(1, 48) = 10.86, p < .002$, in which low self-monitors displayed less happiness than high self-monitors ($M = 4.07$ vs. $M = 4.82$). There was also a marginal main effect for gender, $F(1, 48) = 3.80, p < .06$, such that women appeared happier than men ($M = 4.60$ vs. $M = 4.20$).

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judges’ Ratings of Self-Presenters’ Negative and Positive Emotion</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Negative Emotion</strong></td>
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*Note.* Higher scores indicate greater negative or positive emotion. Cells contain unequal $n$.  

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Analyses of judges’ ratings of competence and likability revealed strong main effects of self-monitoring for both variables (competence: $F(1, 48) = 7.24, p < .01$; likability: $F(1, 48) = 11.16, p < .002$), with high self-monitors being rated as more competent ($M = 4.64$ vs. $M = 4.31$) and more likable ($M = 4.84$ vs. $M = 4.38$) than low self-monitors (see Table 2). A main effect of gender, $F(1, 48) = 7.83, p < .007$, was also found for the likability of self-presenters, in which women were judged to be more likable than men ($M = 4.75$ vs. $M = 4.38$).

### Partners’ Ratings

The type of information available to judges regarding self-presenters was qualitatively different from the information available to self-presenters’ partners. Judges viewed 15-sec, silent video clips, while participants conversed freely with their partners for a period of 10 min. It is not surprising, therefore, that partners’ and judges’ ratings of self-presenters would differ. In fact, low correlations were found between partners’ and judges’ ratings of self-presenters for all variables (negative emotion, $r = .07$; positive emotion, $r = .14$; competence, $r = .19$; likability, $r = .22$). In light of these differences, the data from the partners were considered separately.

#### Negative emotion and happiness.

Analysis of happiness ratings made by the partners of self-presenters revealed a main effect of gender, $F(1, 48) = 4.03, p < .05$, wherein women were rated as expressing more happiness than men ($M = 4.90$ vs. $M = 4.19$). In contrast, analyses of self-presenters’ negative emotion ratings (anger, disgust, fear) produced no significant effects.

#### Competence and likability.

As self-promoters were told specifically to “get your partner to think you are competent” and ingratiators were told to “get your
partner to like you,” it seemed logical to expect main effects of condition for the dependent variables of competence and likability. In fact, analyses of ratings of competence and likability made by the partners of self-presenters did reveal a main effect of condition for competence, \( F(2, 47) = 4.41, p < .02 \), but not for likability (see Table 2). Surprisingly, though, ingratiators appeared the most competent \((M = 6.53)\) followed by controls \((M = 5.74)\) and self-promoters \((M = 5.68)\). Post hoc Tukey analyses indicated significant differences in competence ratings between ingratiators and controls, \( Q(33) = 3.99, p < .05 \), and between ingratiators and self-promoters, \( Q(31) = 4.29, p < .05 \).

Although a main effect of condition was not found for partners’ ratings of likability, the analysis did identify a main effect of gender, \( F(1, 47) = 4.17, p < .05 \), such that women were rated as more likable than men by their partners \((M = 6.37 \text{ vs. } M = 5.81)\). However, because all pairs were same gender, it is not possible to know whether the gender differences are due to the behavior of the self-presenter or of the rating partner.

Although self-presenters were not, for the most part, successful in attaining their specific self-presentation goals, separate analyses comparing the performances of those self-promoters and ingratiators receiving the highest competence \((M = 7.00)\) or likability \((M = 7.00)\) scores from their partners with those self-promoters and ingratiators who received relatively lower competence \((M = 5.48)\) and likability \((M = 5.64)\) scores from their partners were conducted. These analyses revealed a strong effect of ingratiation success in terms of the level of negative emotion reported by the partners of the ingratiators, \( F(1, 30) = 12.24, p < .001 \), such that unsuccessful ingratiators exhibited more negative emotion than successful ingratiators \((M = 1.74 \text{ vs. } M = 1.22)\). Conversely, no differences were revealed between more and less successful self-promoters. In short, a particular emotional display, in this case level of negative emotion, helped to differentiate successful ingratiators from unsuccessful ingratiators.

**DISCUSSION**

This study examined the manner in which individuals alter their emotional displays to achieve interpersonal goals. Based on Jones and Pittman’s theory of strategic self-presentation (1982), we expected that individuals with the interpersonal goal of ingratiation would display less negative emotion and more positive emotion than individuals in the self-promotion condition. In fact, examination of judges’ ratings of participants’ displays of emotion suggested that although ingratiators and self-promoters did not differ significantly in their displays of positive emotion, ingratiators did display lower levels of negative emotion than self-promoters.

Judges and partners of self-presenters made ratings of participants’ negative emotion on scales measuring fear, anger, and disgust. It is possible that the measurement of other negative emotions, such as sadness or anxiety, would have
revealed greater levels of negative emotion, or, perhaps, even additional, unique patterns of negative emotion across self-presentational condition. Nevertheless, although an extremely high level of negative emotion was not part of anyone’s self-presentational display in the current study, differences in the level of negative emotion displayed did emerge across interpersonal goal conditions.

In addition to overall differences in emotional displays due to self-presentational goals, we also expected to find differences between men and women’s expressions of emotion, with men more likely to vary in terms of their negative emotion and women more likely to vary in terms of their positive emotion. Judges’ ratings of self-presenters’ emotional displays partially supported this hypothesis. Whereas women showed little variability in their expressions of positive and negative emotion across self-presentational goals, men in the ingratiation condition tended to show less negative emotion and more positive emotion as compared to men in the control and self-promotional conditions. Thus, men did seem to adjust their emotional displays in accordance to their interpersonal goals, whereas women seemed either unable to adjust their emotional displays based on their interpersonal goals or simply to choose to express similar levels of negative and positive emotion regardless of their particular interpersonal goal.

Another possible explanation for women’s lack of variability in their emotional displays is that women were less likely to accept the interpersonal goals assigned to them. Instead, one may hypothesize that getting others to like them (i.e., ingratiation) is always a primary goal for women, regardless of any other goal externally provided to them. Studies of children’s same-sex friendships suggest that women tend to form more supportive and affiliative friendships than men (Erwin, 1993; Hall, 1987; Paley, 1984). Even during their college years, women’s peer groups are characterized by greater affiliation and less conflict than men’s peer groups (Barth & Kinder, 1988; Johnson & Leslie, 1982). These friendships, with their emphasis on interpersonal intimacy, may predispose women to present themselves in a likable manner.

Although the women in the self-promotional condition did correctly identify the interaction goal they had been assigned—they were aware of the experimenters’ instructions—it is possible that, because they perceived no strong incentive to actually meet this goal, these women focused more on getting their partners to like them than on self-promoting. Although participants’ self-reports of their own likability and competence did not differ according to self-presentational goal or gender, women were rated as more likable than men by both the judges and their self-presentational partners regardless of their interpersonal goals.

When interpreting partner ratings, it is important to remember that all dyads were made up of same-sex partners; female self-presenters were rated by female partners, and male self-presenters were rated by male partners. Therefore, one possible explanation for the main effect of gender for likability is that women simply give higher ratings than men, regardless of the particular measure—a “pollyanna” effect (DePaulo, Epstein, & Wyer, 1993; DePaulo et al., 1985). But,
as a gender effect was also revealed through the analysis of male and female judges’ ratings, it seems more likely that women did, in fact, appear more likable than men.

Main effects of gender for judges’ ratings across condition provide some support for the idea that men and women differ in their displays of positive and negative emotion; overall, women showed more positive emotion than men, whereas men showed more negative emotion than women. These results are consistent with research examining gender norms and the expression of emotion (Coats, 1996; Coats & Feldman, 1996) which suggests that women’s same-sex friendships, because they are more supportive and affiliative than men’s friendships, encourage the encoding of happiness, whereas men’s same-sex friendships, organized more around conflict and competition, encourage the encoding and clear expression of anger.

In addition to examining gender effects, this study was designed to investigate differences in expression of emotion between individuals scoring high and low in self-monitoring. Dabbs, Evans, Hopper, and Purvis (1980) have suggested that high self-monitors are especially attuned to the role requirements of different situations, and therefore it was predicted that high self-monitors would show more variation in terms of their positive and negative emotional displays than low self-monitors when presented with different interpersonal goals.

Although condition-by-self-monitoring interactions were not found for judges’ or partners’ ratings, main effects of self-monitoring were found for judges’ ratings of negative emotion, happiness, competence, and likability. High self-monitors expressed less negative emotion and more happiness, and were rated as more competent and more likable by judges, than low self-monitors. No effects of self-monitoring were found for partners’ ratings.

It is not surprising that partners and judges made substantially different ratings of self-presenters—their experiences were entirely different. Partners and self-presenters interacted with each other for a period of 10 min, while judges viewed a 15 sec long, silent video clip of the self-presenters. These video clips were taken after the first minute of interaction between the partners and the self-presenters, and may more accurately reflect self-presenters’ attempts to meet their interpersonal goals than the full 10 min conversations. A number of self-presenters noted that, although they were actively focused on their interpersonal goals at the start of their conversations, by the time they had been talking for 10 min, they were “just being themselves.” Thus, it seemed most reasonable to use the initial section of the conversation in which participants were more fully focused on their interaction goals.

In addition to possible differences in self-presenter behavior, judges and partners were given different instructions regarding their tasks. Judges were aware of the ratings they were being asked to make at the time they were watching the video segments, while partners of the self-presenters were not asked to make judgments about the self-presenters until after their interactions. Also, because the partners of the self-presenters were busy carrying on conversations, they may have been distracted from the self-presenters’ displays by their own self-generated, self-presentational concerns.
The last major finding of this study concerns the effects of specific interpersonal goals on overall displays of emotion, competence, and likability. Although, overall, self-presenters did not seem to be very successful in attaining their self-presentational goals, they were perceived as making different emotional presentations by their partners and the judges. Ingratiators displaying lower levels of negative emotion were seen as more successful by their partners than those ingratators displaying higher levels of negative emotion. In addition, judges determined that ingratators, as a group, showed less negative emotion than controls and self-promoters. Finally, partners rated ingratators as most competent as compared to controls and self-promoters. The finding that ingratators were seen as more competent by their partners than self-promoters was unexpected. In a similar study by Godfrey, Jones, and Lord (1986), in which participants were asked to ingratiate or self-promote to a naive partner, partners of the self-presenters ultimately rated ingratators as more likable than self-promoters, and perceived no significant differences in competence between ingratators and self-promoters. Although these results differ from the results obtained in the present study, together they seem to suggest that ingratiation may be a more effective self-presentational strategy than self-promotion. Neither of these studies found benefits of self-promotion in partners’ competence or liking ratings, although both found benefits of ingratiation on partners’ ratings. It thus appears, based on these two studies, that the probability of successfully getting people you are unacquainted with to like you is higher than the probability of getting them to think you are competent.

Overall, this research shows that individuals do alter their emotional nonverbal behaviors in response to interpersonal goals. An important next step in this research is to examine in more depth the variability of emotional nonverbal behavior due to interaction goal found for men, but not for women in the present study. In particular, the question of why women were less variable in their production of positive and negative emotional nonverbal behavior than men needs to be addressed. By providing stronger incentives for participants to reach interpersonal goals, it may be possible to elicit variability of emotional displays for both men and women, allowing the opportunity to further examine individuals’ emotional self-presentational strategies.

In addition, this study implies that if people wish to be perceived in particularly positive terms by others, they should attempt to get others to like them rather than attempting to get others to think that they are competent. In this study, little was gained in the way of likability and competence ratings when participants attempted to present themselves in a competent manner, although ingratiation was related to higher ratings of competence. Perhaps the best recourse for those needing to be perceived as competent, then, is to go the route of ingratiation. The comparison of the more and less successful ingratators also indicated that to be most liked, one might well display particularly high levels of positive emotion. Of course, further research must be conducted to examine how the strategies of ingratiation and self-promotion are related to ratings made about self-presenters in different types
of settings, such as informal conversations with friends or job interviews. These types of settings may involve unique behavioral expectancies that could moderate the effectiveness of self-presentational displays.

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