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Citation: Scopelliti, I., Loewenstein, G. & Vosgerau, J. (2015). You call it 'Self-Exuberance,' I call it 'Bragging.' Miscalibrated Predictions of Emotional Responses to Self-Promotion. Psychological Science, 26(6), pp. 903-914. doi: 10.1177/0956797615573516

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RUNNING HEAD: Miscalibrated Predictions of Emotional Responses to Self-Promotion

You call it 'Self-Exuberance,' I call it 'Bragging.'

Miscalibrated Predictions of Emotional Responses to Self-Promotion

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Psychological Science, in press

ABSTRACT

People engage in self-promotional behavior because they want others to hold favorable images of them. Self-promotion, however, entails a tradeoff between conveying one's positive attributes and being seen as bragging. We propose that people get this tradeoff wrong because they erroneously project their own feelings onto their interaction partners. As a consequence, people overestimate the extent to which recipients of their self-promotion will feel proud of and happy for them, and underestimate the extent to which recipients will feel annoyed (Experiment 1 and 2). Because people tend to self-promote excessively when trying to make a favorable impression on others, such efforts often backfire, causing targets of the self-promotion to view the self-promoter as less likeable and as a braggart (Experiment 3).

People want others to hold favorable images of them (Baumeister, 1982; Frey, 1978; Goffman, 1967; Jones & Wortman, 1973; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, Weigold, & Hallam, 1990; Sedikides, 1993), and often engage in self-promotion to achieve this end, for example by enumerating their strengths and positive traits, highlighting their accomplishments, and making internal attributions for success and achievements (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Rudman, 1998). Self-promotion can, however, backfire (Godfrey, Jones, & Lord,1986). Favorable impressions may be better accomplished by modest self-presentation, or even self-denigration, than by outright bragging about one's positive qualities (Ben-Ze'ev, 1993; Feather, 1993; Powers & Zuroff, 1988; Schlenker, 1980; Schlenker & Leary, 1982; Stires & Jones, 1969; Tice, 1991; Tice & Baumeister, 1990; Tice, Butler, Muraven, & Stillwell, 1995; Wosinska, Dabul, Whetstone-Dion, & Cialdini, 1996).

People are not oblivious to the negative consequences of excessive self-promotion, especially when anticipating public evaluation (Baumeister, 1982; Schlenker, 1975) or interacting with friends (Tice et al., 1995). Yet, self-promotion is a commonly used impression-management strategy (cf., Leary et al., 1994), and most of us have at times been on the receiving end of others' out-of-control self-praise. Why do so many people so often seem to get the tradeoff between self-promotion and modesty wrong, ultimately (metaphorically) shooting themselves in the foot? We propose that excessive self-promotion results from limitations in people's emotional perspective taking when they are trying to instill a positive image in others.

Emotional perspective taking requires predicting how somebody else would emotionally respond to a situation that is different from the situation that the perspective-taker is currently experiencing (Van Boven & Loewenstein, 2005). Emotional perspective taking entails two judgments along two dimensions of psychological distance (Van Boven & Loewenstein, 2005;

Van Boven, Loewenstein, Dunning, & Nordgren, 2013). The first is an estimate of how one would react to an emotional situation different from one's own current situation. The second consists of adjusting one's own emotional reaction for differences between oneself and others.

Failures of emotional perspective taking can result from systematic errors in either judgment. First, people have difficulties predicting how they themselves would emotionally react to situations that are different from the one they are currently in — the so-called empathy-gap (Loewenstein, 2000). For example, people underestimate how much they (and others) are impacted by social anxiety in public performances, and expect to be more willing to perform at the "moment of truth" than they end up being (Van Boven, Loewenstein, & Dunning, 2005; Van Boven, Loewenstein, Welch, & Dunning, 2012). Second, people tend to underestimate differences between their own and others' emotional reactions, and use the former as anchors to estimate the latter. Because people believe their worldview to be objective and unbiased, they project their perceptions, feelings, and judgments onto others (cf., Griffin & Ross, 1991; Krueger, 2003; Krueger & Clement, 1997; Ross & Ward, 1995, 1996). Such social projection — and the fact that people insufficiently adjust for differences between themselves and others (Epley & Gilovich, 2004; Epley, Keysar, Van Boven, & Gilovich, 2004) — leads to social projection bias. Social projection bias — the difficulty in imagining how others would feel — and empathy gaps — difficulties in imagining how one would feel in a different situation — make emotional perspective taking a challenging task.

We argue that self-promoters err not only in mispredicting the extent to which their behavior elicits specific emotional responses, but even, often, in the valence of the elicited response. People may talk openly about their successes and achievements to others because they are guided by a genuine belief that others will be happy for them, or proud of them, or by the

intention to appear enviable, while insufficiently adjusting for any awareness that recipients may be annoyed by their claims. We predict, therefore, that self-promoters will overestimate the extent to which their behavior elicits positive emotional reactions in others, and underestimate the extent to which their behavior elicits negative emotional reactions. As a consequence, self-promotion may have unanticipated and unintended negative social repercussions.

We test these predictions in three experiments. Experiments 1 and 2 document the predicted miscalibration; they examine whether people overestimate positive, and underestimate negative emotions that their self-promotion elicits in others. Experiment 3 examines the consequences of such miscalibration, testing the prediction that individuals who seek to elicit as favorable an image as possible in others will engage in excessive self-promotion.

EXPERIMENT 1

Method

Experiment 1 was designed to test whether self-promoters overestimate the extent to which their behavior elicits positive emotional reactions, and underestimate the extent to which it elicits negative emotional reactions, in others. The experiment employed a 2 (reporter: self-promoter vs. recipient of self-promotion; between-sbj.) x 2 (own emotions experienced vs. predicted emotions experienced by counterpart, within-sbj.) mixed design. Sample size was set to a minimum of 50 participants per experimental condition, and the data were analyzed only after data collection had been completed. One hundred and thirty-one Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) workers (M_{age} = 34.1, *SD* = 13.52; 62.7% female, 5 participants did not indicate their gender) accessed and completed a short study on personality and received $.50 as compensation.

We restricted participation to respondents located in the United States, and only permitted an individual to participate in one of the three studies reported in this paper. Participants in the self-promotion condition were asked, "*Can you describe a situation in which you have bragged to someone else about something? Please be as detailed as possible".* Respondents were then asked to describe which emotions they had experienced, and which emotions they believed their counterpart (the recipient of their self-promotion) had experienced. Participants in the recipient of self-promotion condition were asked, "*Can you describe a situation in which someone has bragged to you about something? Please be as detailed as possible*," and were then asked to describe which emotions they had experienced, and which emotions they believed their counterpart (the self-promoter) had experienced. We predicted that self-promoters would be more likely to report experiencing positive emotions than recipients. Because of projection bias, however, self-promoters would believe that recipients were more likely to experience positive emotions than they actually were. Likewise, we predicted that recipients would be more likely to report experiencing negative emotions than self-promoters would anticipate.

Results

Two research assistants independently content-analyzed participants' answers. Responses from two participants (both in the self-promotion condition) were excluded. One participant claimed that s/he had never bragged in her/his life, and the other described a self-promotion instance that the coders did not identify as such — a shopping episode in which a shop owner got angry at her/him. Coders were instructed to indicate whether each participant's response denoted the experience of positive and negative emotions using two separate dummy variables (one for each emotion), and to also indicate whether these emotions were experienced by the self-promoter or by the recipient of self-promotion. Coders also categorized the topics of the self-

promotion and the discrete emotions mentioned by participants. Overall inter-rater agreement was 91%, and Cohen's Kappa, an inter-rater reliability measure that corrects for chance agreement, was .77, a value that indicates excellent reliability (Fleiss, 1981). Disagreements were resolved through discussion. Topics were categorized into one of the following: i) achievements; ii) individual traits and skills; iii) money, possessions, power, and status; iv) family and relationships; and v) luck. For examples of participants' responses, see table 1.

TABLE 1. Examples of participants' responses for each self-promotion topic.

Topic	**Example**
Achievements	When a coworker was promoted to a new position he was bragging but didn't seem to realize it. His other coworkers found it annoying. I don't think he meant any harm, but I was kind of annoyed. I felt like he was rubbing it in my face.
Individual Traits and Skills	I have bragged about my willingness to dance with new dancers. I was in a good mood. The other person probably felt empathy towards me because she also commented about her willingness to dance with new dancers.
Family and Relationships	I have bragged about my children's accomplishments, something I am more prone to do than to brag of my own accomplishments. Like with my oldest child, I have talked with other of how proud I am of her academic accomplishments so far in 7th grade, as well as her organization and willingness to work hard to accomplish things earlier than others might. I am also proud of her reading skills, which rival my own, and I brag about how quickly and often she reads book, at a level that is near and some times surpasses my own. I felt very proud of my child, happy and excited to see one of my children pursuing and excelling at something I also was good at. I think the other person senses my pride and rejoiced with me.

Money, Possessions, Power, and Status	A person I had just met bragged about their new car. He boasted about all its features and specifications even though neither I nor the other people with me cared about the car. He wanted us to all come look at the car, but we declined, since he was an obnoxious person. I was annoyed with the person very much, and felt exasperated that I had to listen to him brag about his car. I thought he was an obnoxious person and not someone that I would like to interact or be friends with.
Luck	I brag when something good happens to me. I feel happy.

Self-promoters and recipients recalled different self-promotion topics (see table 2). Bragging about achievements was more likely to be recalled by self-promoters than by recipients, whereas bragging about material possessions, money, power, and status was more frequent in the recollection of recipients than in those of self-promoters.

TABLE 2. Topics of the self-promotion in the two conditions

	Condition		
	Participant was self-promoter (*N* = 64)	**Participant was recipient of self-promotion (*N* = 65)**	
Achievements	46.9%	29.2%	$\chi^2 = 4.26$ $p = .039$
Individual traits and skills	21.9%	15.4%	$\chi^2 = .90$ $p > .250$
Money, possessions, power, and status	7.8%	43.1%	$\chi^2 = 21.07$ $p < .001$
Family and relationships	20.3%	12.3%	$\chi^2 = 1.52$ $p = .218$
Luck	3.1%	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 2.06$ $p = .151$

Our hypotheses pertain to three of the four experimental conditions. For the likelihood of positive emotions being mentioned, the following rank-ordering was predicted: self-promoters' experienced emotion > recipients' emotions predicted by self-promoter > recipients' experienced emotions. For the likelihood of negative emotions being mentioned the opposite rank-ordering was predicted: self-promoters' experienced emotions < recipients' emotions predicted by self-promoter < recipients' experienced emotions. We estimated two logit models with robust errors clustered by participant, each predicting the likelihood of experiencing (1) vs. not experiencing (0) either positive or negative emotions. The three conditions were included as predictors, and represented by means of two dummy-coded variables: 'emotions experienced by self-promoter' (1 = yes vs. 0 = no), and 'recipients' emotions predicted by self-promoter' (1 = yes vs. 0 = no), with 'emotions experienced by the recipient' as baseline condition. The effect of the two dummy variables was thus estimated relative to the likelihood of recipients experiencing either emotion. Furthermore, we included the topics of the self-promotion as control variables (topic 'luck' was chosen as baseline). The results are summarized in table 3.

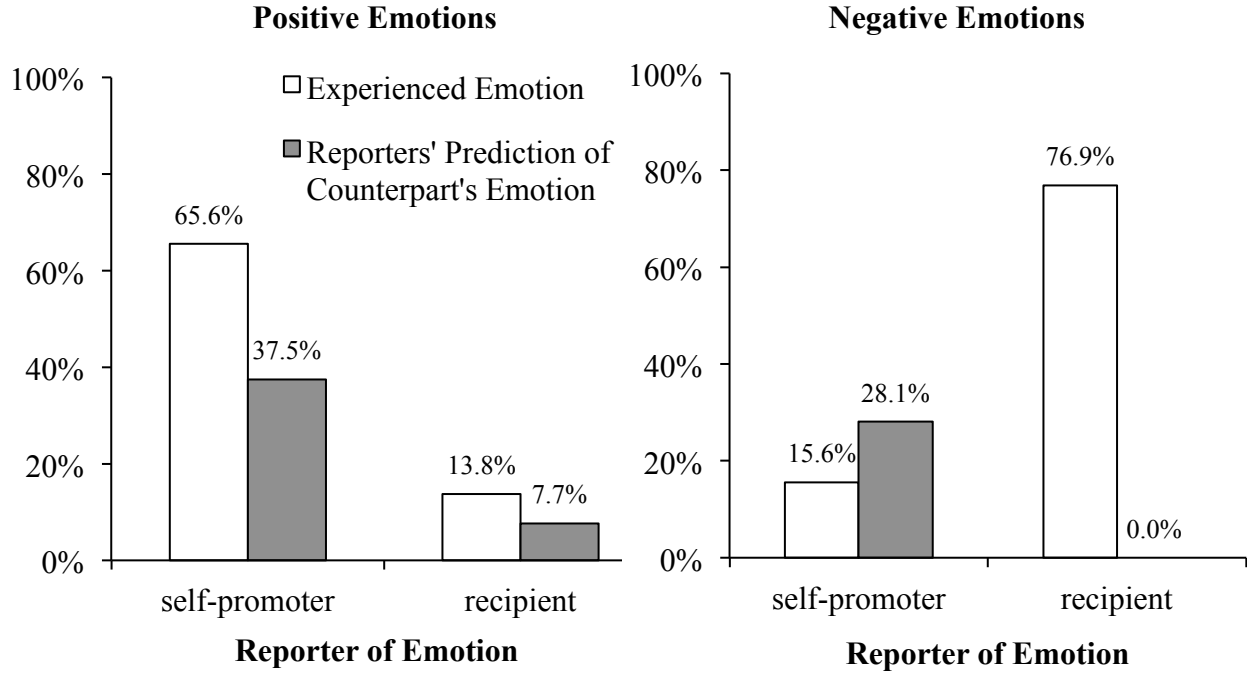
TABLE 3. Logit model results for the probability of self-promoters and recipients experiencing positive and negative emotions, and self-promoters' predictions of recipients' experienced emotions

	Likelihood of experiencing positive emotions			
Variable	**B**	**SE**	***z***	***p***
Constant	-2.613	.798	-3.28	.001
Emotions experienced by self-promoter	2.458	.476	5.17	< .001
Recipients' emotions predicted by self-promoter	1.260	.463	2.72	.007
Topic Achievements	1.276	.734	1.74	.082
Topic Individual Traits and Skills	.296	.803	.37	> .250
Topic Money, Possessions, Power, and Status	.610	.746	.82	> .250
Topic Family and Relationships	.446	.783	.57	> .250
	Likelihood of experiencing negative emotions			
	B	**SE**	***z***	***p***
Constant	1.131	1.092	1.04	> .250
Emotions experienced by self-promoter	-3.161	.520	-6.08	< .001
Recipients' emotions predicted by self-promoter	-2.413	.462	-5.22	< .001
Topic Achievements	.375	1.055	.36	> .250
Topic Individual Traits and Skills	.461	1.063	.43	> .250
Topic Money, Possessions, Power, and Status	-.272	1.137	-.24	> .250
Topic Family and Relationships	.308	1.064	.29	> .250

The results of the model predicting the likelihood of mentioning positive emotions show that, as predicted, self-promoters were more likely to report having experienced positive emotions than recipients (65.6% vs. 13.8%, $B = 2.458$ (.476), $p < .001$). Self-promoters were also significantly more likely to believe that recipients had experienced positive emotions than recipients reported actually having done so (37.5% vs. 13.8%, $B = 1.260$ (.463), $p = .007$; see

figure 1 left panel). The analogous but opposite pattern was observed in the model predicting the likelihood of mentioning negative emotions. Self-promoters were less likely to report having experienced negative emotions than recipients (15.6% vs. 71.9%, B = -3.161 (.520), $p < .001$), and self-promoters were significantly less likely to believe recipients had experienced negative emotions than recipients reported actually having done so (28.1% vs. 71.9%, B = -2.413 (.462), $p < .001$; see figure 1 right panel). Sign, size, and significance of the experimental variables do not change when the topic control variables are not included. With respect to the condition not included in the analysis because we made no specific prediction about it — i.e., the recipients' prediction of self-promoters' emotions — recipients underestimated the extent to which self-promoters experienced both positive and negative emotions.

FIGURE 1. Likelihood of self-promoters and recipients experiencing positive/negative emotions, and their predictions of counterparts' positive/negative emotions



Discussion

The results of Experiment 1 support our prediction that self-promoters will overestimate the extent to which their actions elicit positive, and underestimate the extent to which they elicit negative, emotions. In accordance with egocentric judgments and insufficient adjustment, self-promoters predicted that recipients would experience fewer positive and more negative emotions than themselves, however their adjustments fell well short of reaching the actual levels of recipients' experienced emotions.

Experiment 1, however, is limited in two ways. First, the open ended questions — leaving participants free to report whatever came to mind — may have biased the results, as participants may have focused on emotions that were salient, easier to remember, or stronger but not necessarily more frequent. We address this issue in Experiment 2 by asking participants to rate the extent to which they experienced a pre-defined set of emotions. Second, self-promoters and recipients of self-promotion recalled different self-promotion instances (which we sought to control for by including the topics of the self-promotion as control dummies); we address this issue more directly in Experiment 3 by asking participants to rate the same set of self-presentation instances.

EXPERIMENT 2

Method

In Experiment 2 (a 2-cell, reporter: self-promoter vs. recipient of self-promotion; btw-sbj. design), participants were asked to rate the extent to which their counterparts — in the self-promoter condition — or they — in the recipient of self-promotion condition — had experienced

a series of discrete emotions. Sample size was set to 75 participants per condition, and data were analyzed only after data collection had been completed. One hundred and fifty-four Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) workers (M_{age} = 30.86, *SD* = 11.19; 37.3% female) accessed and completed a short study on personality and received $.50 as compensation. We restricted participation to respondents located in the United States. After describing an instance of themselves engaging in self-promotion or having been the recipient of someone else's self-promotion (same as in Experiment 1), participants in the self-promotion condition were asked to indicate to what extent their counterpart felt happy for, proud of, annoyed by, jealous of, angry at, upset by, and inferior to them, whereas participants in the recipient of self-promotion condition were asked to rate their own level of these experienced feelings. These emotions were the seven most frequently mentioned emotions in Experiment 1 (see table 4 for a complete list of emotions mentioned in Experiment 1). All emotions were measured on 7-point scales with endpoints, *not at all* (1) and *very much* (7). The topics of self-promotion were categorized as in Experiment 1.

TABLE 4. Discrete emotions experienced by recipients of self-promotion in Experiment 1

Positive Valence		**Negative Valence**	
Pride	22.3%	Annoyance	15.4%
Happiness	17.7%	Feeling inferior	7.7%
		Jealousy	7.7%
		Upset	5.4%
		Anger	3.1%
		Discomfort	2.3%
		Sorrow	2.3%
		Disappointment	1.5%

Embarrassment	1.5%
Disgust	.8%
Shame	.8%
Boredom	.8%

Results

Responses from three participants (two in the self-promoter and one in the recipient condition) were excluded because two participants claimed that they had never bragged in their life, and the other participant did not describe a self-promotion instance but only indicated s/he used to have a friend who was a braggart. We conducted a two-way mixed ANOVA on the seven emotional reactions with the reporter (self-promoter vs. recipient) condition as between subject factor, the emotions as within subject factors, and the topic dummies as covariates (the topic 'luck' served as baseline). The interaction of reporter (self-promoter vs. recipient) and emotions was significant ($F(6, 870) = 7.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$; see table 5), indicating that self-promoters and recipients differed on the emotions reported. As predicted, self-promoters overestimated the extent to which recipients felt happy for them ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.78$ vs. $M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.91$, $F(1, 145) = 10.85$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$) and proud of them ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.81$ vs. $M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.77$; $F(1, 145) = 12.12$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$). However, contrary to our predictions, although lower in magnitude and significance, self-promoters also overestimated the extent to which recipients felt jealous of them ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 2.01$ vs. $M = 2.82$, $SD = 2.07$; $F(1, 145) = 3.76$, $p = .054$, $\eta^2 = .03$) and, marginally, inferior to them ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.82$ vs. $M = 2.43$, $SD = 1.69$; $F(1, 145) = 2.75$, $p = .10$, $\eta^2 = .02$). Consistent with predictions, self-promoters underestimated the extent to which recipients were annoyed ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.94$ vs. $M = 4.82$, $SD = 2.15$; $F(1, 145) = 11.56$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$). No significant differences were observed in upset ($M = 2.58$,

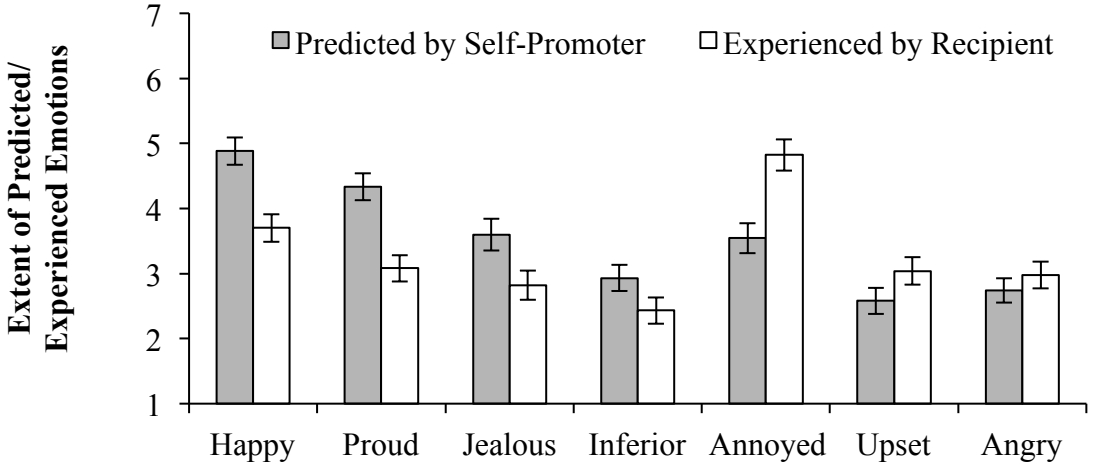
SD = 1.71 vs. *M* = 3.04, *SD* = 1.86; *F*(1, 145) = 1.15, *p* = > .250, η^2 = .01) and anger ratings (*M* = 2.74, *SD* = 1.61 vs. *M* = 2.97, *SD* = 1.80; *F*(1, 145) = .25, *p* = > .250, η^2 = .002). None of the control variables (topics) were significant (see table 5), and the estimates of the experimental variables did not change when the control variables were not included in the model. Means of the dependent variables are displayed in Figure 2.

TABLE 5. Tests of within and between subjects effects

Source of variance	***F***	***df***	***p***
Reporter[1]	2.10	(1, 145)	.150
Emotions[2]	21.92	(6, 912)	< .001
Reporter x Emotions[2]	10.90	(6, 912)	< .001
Topic Achievements[1]	.24	(1, 145)	> .250
Topic Individual Traits and Skills[1]	.86	(1, 145)	> .250
Topic Money, Possessions, Power, and Status[1]	.27	(1, 145)	> .250
Topic Family and Relationships[1]	1.19	(1, 145)	> .250

[1] Between-subjects effect; [2] Within-subjects effect

FIGURE 2. Predicted and experienced emotions. Error bars represent +/-1 SEM.



Discussion

The results of Experiment 2 further support the prediction that self-promoters will overestimate the extent to which their counterparts experience positive emotions (feel happy for, and proud of them) and underestimate the extent to which they experience negative emotions (being annoyed by them). Unexpectedly, they also overestimated the extent to which their self-promotion would make others feel jealous of and inferior to them. A post-hoc explanation of this finding may be that self-promoters are not only motivated to instill favorable images in others, but may to some extent also be narcissistically motivated to appear enviable and superior (Buss & Chiodo, 1991).

As over- and underestimation were observed for the same set of emotions, it is unlikely that the self-promoter–recipient differences are due to self-promoters focusing on different emotions or interpreting the rating scales differently than recipients. However, self-promoters and recipients may have focused on different self-promotion instances. Although the effect of the reporter perspective was significant when controlling for the topic of the self-promotion, self-promoters may have been more likely to recall instances in which they self-promoted only moderately, whereas recipients may have been more likely to recall instances of excessive bragging. To address this concern, in Experiment 3 we asked one set of participants to engage in self-promotion (vs. control) by writing a personal profile and to forecast how readers would evaluate their profile. A different set of participants evaluated the same profiles. Since forecasted and actual evaluations refer to the same profiles (self-promotion instances), any differences in evaluations can then be exclusively attributed to differences between self-promoters' predictions and recipients' perspectives.

EXPERIMENT 3

Method

Experiment 3 tests whether the misprediction of the impact of self-promotion documented in the first two experiments has behavioral consequences. Specifically, it examines whether people who have the goal of making a positive impression on others tend to self-promote excessively, guided by the belief that such self-promotion will have a more positive effect on others' evaluations than it actually has.

Experiment 3, a 2 (instruction: control vs. maximize interest of others) x 2 (evaluation: predicted vs. actual) between subjects design, was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, ninety-nine Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) workers (M_{age} = 33.58, *SD* = 12.65, 55.6% female) participated and received $2.00 as compensation. Sample size was set to 50 participants per experimental condition, and the data were analyzed only after data collection had been completed (we estimated that about 100 profiles would be sufficient to obtain reliable estimates of predicted evaluations). We restricted participation to respondents located in the United States.

Participants were asked to create a personal profile by writing down five facts about themselves. Participants in the control condition read the following instructions:

> *In this study, we would like you to present yourself by creating a personal profile that describes five things about you. For example, you can write about your work or education, sports or hobbies, your look or personality, your family, your social life.*
>
> *Please write in the boxes below five facts about you to create your personal profile.*

Participants in the condition to maximize others' interest to meet them read the same instructions with the following addition:

Your profile will be evaluated by other people, and your goal is to write five things about you that will make other people most interested in meeting you.

We ensured that participants had understood the instructions by asking them to rewrite the instructions in their own words on the subsequent screen.

After creating their profile, both profile writer groups then predicted, responding on four scales, how others would evaluate their profile. Specifically, they were asked to indicate to what extent they thought that people reading their profile would like them, be interested in meeting them, think they were successful, and think they were braggarts. Finally, participants completed the modest responding scale (MRS, Cialdini et al., 1998), which measures the tendency to present oneself modestly. All scales had endpoints, *not at all* (1) and *very much* (7).

In the second stage, 456 different Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) workers located in the United States (M_{age} = 32.94, *SD* = 12.58, 51.8% female) served as judges and evaluated the profiles created by participants in the first stage (compensation was $1.00). Participants in this stage were randomly assigned to evaluate ten of the 99 profiles (randomly selected) on one of the four rating scales. Thus, a subset of respondents rated profiles on the dimension of liking, another subset rated the profiles on interest, a third subset rated them on success, and a fourth subset rated them on bragging. This procedure ensured that evaluations would not be contaminated by halo-effects. Each profile was rated on average 11.51 times on each of the four scales. The sample size of about 400 was chosen to ensure that enough respondents would evaluate each profile (each judge rated ten profiles), resulting in an average of 99 profiles x 11.51 judge's evaluations = 1139.5 actual evaluations for each of the four dimensions liking of the profile person, interest in meeting her/him, success, and extent to which judges thought profile writers were braggarts.

Results

Correlations of Predicted and Actual Evaluations

We first examined the correlations between predicted (profile writers') and actual (judges') evaluations, and the profile writers' modest responding scores (*MRS*, α = .96; see table 6). For each profile we averaged the actual ratings across judges, obtaining averaged judges' ratings for liking, interest, success, and bragging; the 99 profiles were thus the unit of analysis for the correlation analysis. Predicted bragging (by profile writers) and extent of bragging (by judges) correlated moderately ($r = .37$, $p < .01$), as did self-predictions and judgments of success ($r = .32$, $p < .01$). In contrast, predicted and actual liking and interest were uncorrelated ($r = .10$, $p = .35$; $r = .01$, $p = .90$, respectively). Finally, modest responding scores of profile writers were weakly correlated with profile writers' self-rated bragging ($r = -.23$, $p = .02$) and even less so with the judges' evaluations of the profile writers' bragging ($r = -.19$, $p = .07$). The small to non significant correlations show that, overall, profile writers were not well calibrated in predicting responses to their self-presentation.

TABLE 6. Correlation matrix for predicted and actual evaluations in Experiment 3. Self-promoters predicted how external judges would evaluate their profiles.

	Interest (predicted)	Interest (actual)	Liking (predicted)	Liking (actual)	Bragging (predicted)	Bragging (actual)	Success (predicted)	Success (actual)
Interest (predicted)								
Interest (actual)	.01							
Liking (predicted)	.66**	.09						
Liking (actual)	-.01	.63**	.10					
Bragging (predicted)	.04	.01	.06	-.17				
Bragging (actual)	.23*	-.23*	.14	-.32**	.37**			
Success (predicted)	.59**	.11	.42**	-.09	.29**	.34**		
Success (actual)	.08	.31**	.04	.33**	.25*	.11	.32**	
MRS score (profile writers)	-.14	.01	-.14	.10	-.23*	-.19	-.10	-.05

* significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) ** significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Analysis of the Impact of Self-Promotion (vs. Control) on the Differences between Predicted and Actual Evaluations

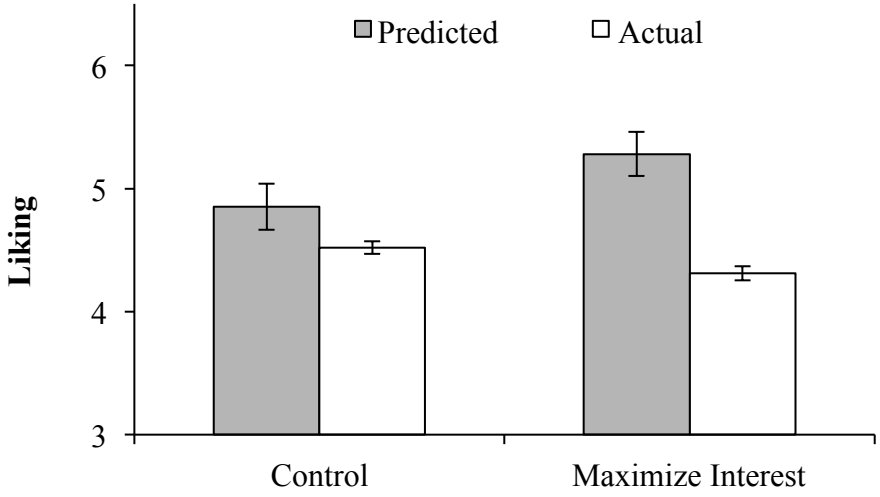
We combined profile writers' and judges' evaluations of profiles in one dataset. The resulting dataset contained 99 predicted (profile writers') evaluations for each of the four ratings liking, interest, success, and extent of bragging. In addition, there were on average 1,139.5 actual evaluations (99 profiles x 11.51 judges) for each of the four ratings. We regressed each rating on the two manipulated variables: instruction (1 = maximize interest of others, -1 = control), and evaluation (1 = predicted, -1 = actual), and their interaction. To account for the fact that each profile was evaluated by several judges (but only by one profile writer), we clustered robust errors by judges. Clustering standard errors by judges means that standard errors are no longer homogeneous across observations. Since effect size estimation assumes homogeneous errors, the below reported effect sizes (Cohen's *d*s) are only approximations (degrees of freedom were set to number of clusters).

Liking

The regression of liking ratings was significant; $F(3, 257) = 11.37$, $p < .001$. There was a significant main effect for evaluation ($B = 0.324$, *robust SE* = .071. $t = 4.56$, $p < .001$, $d = .57$); profile writers thought judges would like them more ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.30$) than judges actually did ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.54$). The main effect of instruction was not significant ($B = 0.055$, *robust SE* = .067. $t = 0.82$, $p = .414$, $d = .10$), but was qualified by a significant interaction ($B = 0.162$, *robust SE* = .067. $t = 2.42$, $p = .016$, $d = .30$). While profile writers believed they would be liked more when instructed to maximize interest ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.20$ vs. $M_{control} = 4.85$, $SD_{control} = 1.36$; $B = 0.434$, *robust SE* = .257. $t = 1.69$, $p = .093$, $d = .21$), judges actually liked profile

writers less in this condition (M = 4.31, SD = 1.57 vs. $M_{control}$ = 4.52, $SD_{control}$ = 1.51; B = -0.215, *robust SE* = .073. t = -2.94, p = .004, d = .37; see figure 3).

FIGURE 3. Predicted and actual liking as a function of the purpose of the creation of profiles (Experiment 3). Error bars represent +/-1 SEM.

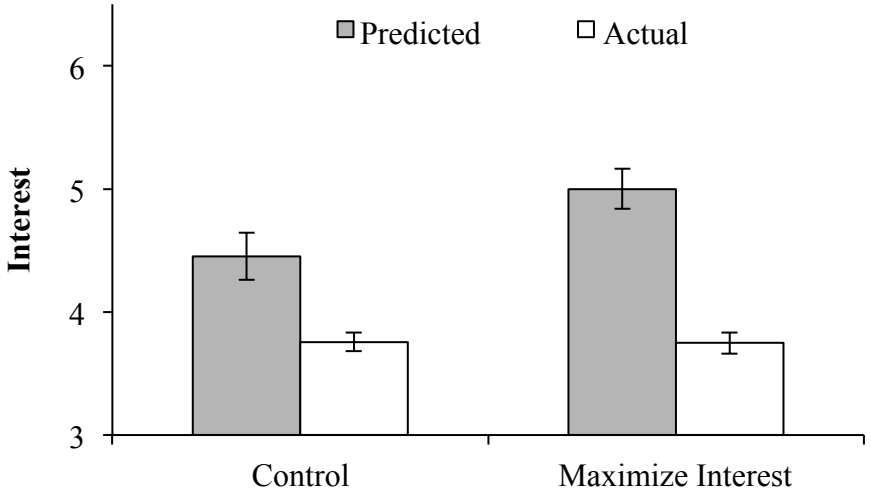


Interest

The regression of interest ratings was also significant overall; $F(3, 199) = 16.43$, $p < .001$. A main effect for evaluation was found (B = 0.487, *robust SE* = .077. t = 6.32, $p < .001$, d = .89); profile writers thought judges would be more interested in meeting them (M = 4.71, SD = 1.29) than judges actually were (M = 3.75, SD = 1.80). The main effect of instruction was marginally significant (B = 0.135, *robust SE* = .069. t = 1.94, p = .054, d = .27) and was qualified by a significant interaction (B = 0.139, *robust SE* = .069. t = 2.00, p = .047, d = .28). While profile writers believed judges would be more interested in meeting them when instructed to maximize interest (M = 5.00, SD = 1.10 vs. $M_{control}$ = 4.45, $SD_{control}$ = 1.39; B = 0.547, *robust SE*

= .253. t = 2.16, p = .032, d = .31), judges were equally interested in meeting profile writers in either condition (M = 3.75, SD = 1.85 vs. $M_{control}$ = 3.76, $SD_{control}$ = 1.76; B = -0.009, *robust SE* = .114. t = -0.08, p = .> .250, d = .01; see figure 4).

FIGURE 4. Predicted and actual interest in meeting profile writer as a function of the purpose of the creation of profiles (Experiment 3). Error bars represent +/-1 SEM.

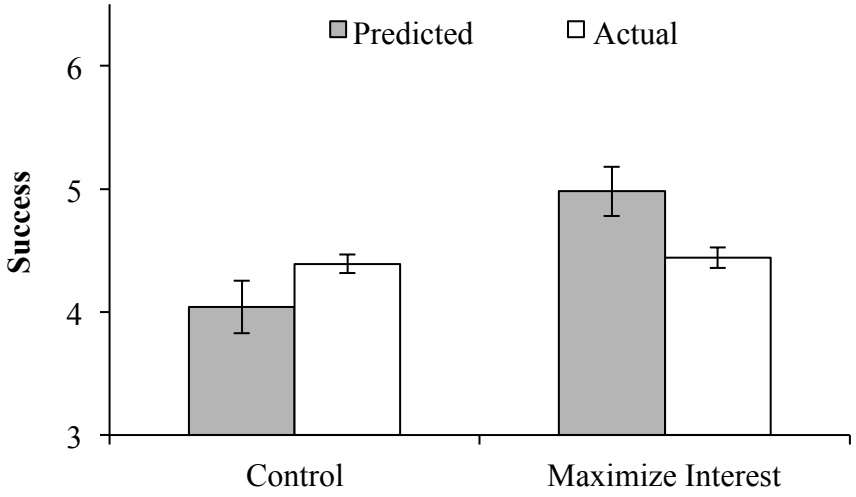


Success

The regression of success ratings was significant; F(3, 165) = 3.82, p = .011. No main effect for evaluation was found (B = 0.047, *robust SE* = .089. t = 0.52, p > .250, d = .08), but a main effect of instruction (B = 0.249, *robust SE* = .078. t = 3.20, p = .002, d = .50) which was qualified by a significant interaction (B = 0.221, *robust SE* = .078. t = 2.85, p = .005, d = .44); profile writers believed they would be perceived as more successful when they were instructed to maximize others' interest in meeting them (M = 4.98, SD = 1.36 vs. $M_{control}$ = 4.04, $SD_{control}$ =

1.56; $B = 0.941$, *robust SE* = .287. $t = 3.28$, $p < .001$, $d = .51$), but judges rated profile writers as equally successful in both conditions ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.49$ vs. $M_{control} = 4.39$, $SD_{control} = 1.44$; $B = 0.055$, *robust SE* = .119, $t = 0.46$, $p > .250$, $d = .07$; see figure 5).

FIGURE 5. Predicted and actual ratings of successfulness of profile writers as a function of the purpose of the creation of profiles (Experiment 3). Error bars represent +/-1 SEM.

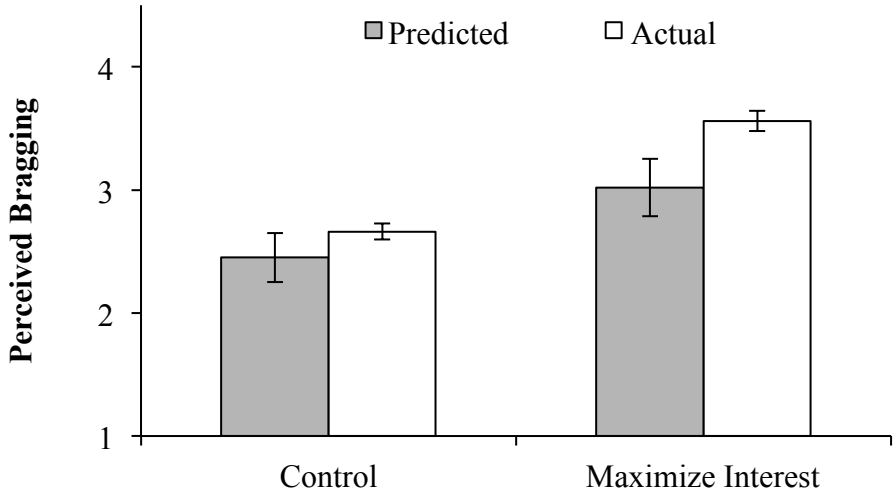


Bragging

Lastly, the regression of bragging ratings was significant; $F(3, 223) = 25.60$, $p < .001$. Unlike ratings of liking, interest, and success, profile writers correctly predicted that they would get higher bragging ratings by judges than profile writers gave themselves. However, profile writers again underestimated the extent to which judges would perceive them as braggarts. A main effect for evaluation was observed ($B = -0.187$, *robust SE* = .087. $t = -2.14$, $p = .033$, $d = .29$); profile writers believed they would be perceived less as braggarts ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.53$)

than they were by judges (M = 3.08, SD = 1.88). The main effect for instruction was significant (B = 0.366, *robust SE* = .081. t = 4.53, $p < .001$, d = .61), indicating that bragging ratings were higher when profile writers were instructed to maximize others' interest in meeting them (M = 3.52, SD = 1.96 vs. $M_{control}$ = 2.65, $SD_{control}$ = 1.67). The interaction was not significant (B = -0.325, *robust SE* = .323, t = -1.01, $p > .250$, d = .13; see figure 6).

FIGURE 6. Predicted and actual level of perceived bragging of profile writers as a function of the purpose of the creation of profiles (Experiment 3). Error bars represent +/-1 SEM.



Discussion

When instructed to maximize the favorability of their impression on other people, profile writers engaged in more self-promotion. Although the goal they were given was to increase the likelihood that they would be liked, judged successful, and that others would be interested in meeting them, their efforts backfired. More self-promotion did not change others' perceptions of

success nor their interest in meeting the self-promoter, but decreased others' liking of them and increased others' perceptions of them as a braggart. Egocentrism and social projection lead individuals to self-promote in ways that have the opposite consequences of those they intend.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Three experiments show that self-promoters overestimate the extent to which their self-promotion elicits positive, and underestimate the extent to which it elicits negative emotions. As a consequence, when seeking to maximize the favorability of the opinion others have of them, people engage in excessive self-promotion that has the opposite of its intended effects, decreasing liking with no positive offsetting effect on perceived competence. In a related study, Godfrey et al. (1986) asked pairs of participants to engage in a casual conversation, in which one of the pair members was asked to either ingratiate (maximize others' interest in her) or self-promote (maximize perceived competence and others' interest in her). Self-promoters were, as in our Study 3, liked less, but, more surprisingly, were not perceived as more competent. This paper extends these findings by showing that a) even the goal of only maximizing others' interest in meeting one can backfire, b) self-promoters/ingratiators do not anticipate these effects, and c) the reason why they do not anticipate these effects is the difficulty in engaging in emotional perspective taking.

The notion of bragging is closely related to the concept of 'signaling' in economics. Benabou and Tirole (2006) have shown the dilemma of a potential donor to charity who worries that their donation will be interpreted as an indication not (only) of their generosity, but also of their desire to appear generous (cfr. Berman Levine Barasch, & Small, 2014). This paper complements theirs in the empirical focus and the concern with, not only the underlying activity

that one can potentially brag about, but also how much information to reveal to others. Benabou and Tirole (2006) also highlight that bragging may be just one element of a set of strategies that people can use to self-promote, as well as the observation that many activities, be it in the physical or professional or even sexual realm, can be motivated, in whole or in part, by the goal of bragging about them later. A recent study (Cooney, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2014) shows that extraordinary experiences undertaken with this intent spoiled subsequent social interactions, in line with our findings.

The choice of how much to self-promote confronts individuals with a trade-off between the goal of projecting a favorable image and the goal of avoiding being perceived as an arrogant braggart. The optimal point on this trade-off may vary depending on the audience, the history between the parties interacting, and the situation (Stires & Jones, 1969). Our results may be different under some conditions, i.e., if the recipient identifies with the claimer closely enough that a good thing happening to the claimer is a good thing also for the recipient, or if the recipient has a stake in or has contributed to whatever positive act or outcome the self-promoter touts (cfr. Mills, 2003). Finally, there are surely cross-cultural differences in the acceptance of bragging on both sides, the self-promoter's and the recipient's. The "Law of Jante" familiar to Scandinavians, for example, stipulates 10 rules, including "You're not to think you are good at anything or anything special." Needless to say, the ethos in the United States is quite different. Nevertheless, our results highlight that even in this cultural context recipients respond to self-promotion less positively than self-promoters would expect, and that the decision to brag may often be taken without an accurate consideration of recipients' reactions.

People are generally aware of the fact, and our research supports, that being the recipient of self-promotion may induce bad feelings. Undoubtedly some of these feelings may be due to

the fact that others' self- promotion makes people feel annoyed, so they may end up being resentful. In addition, recipients may also assume that the self-promoter has no compunction about bragging, which means she has probably disclosed all the possible positive information about herself. If someone has good qualities but does not mention them, in contrast, when some positive information eventually dribbles out, one may be more likely to assume they probably have several other positive qualities, skills, and traits that they are similarly reticent to share. A truly savvy self-promoter, therefore, will not brag, but may employ the services of a so-called 'wing man' or other advocate who can brag on their behalf.

Another source of such bad feelings that future research may shed light on could be the recipient's guilt, as she feels she should be happy for the other person, but is not. We tend to have hydraulic views of feelings and personality, so we assume that if we have a twinge of envy or disappointment when others self-promote to us, it must mean that we don't like it when others do well, which perhaps means that we take pleasure in others' failures (Smith et al., 1996). So, ultimately being bragged at makes us feel like bad people. We might feel less bad if we recognized that mixed feelings are possible. It is possible, for example, to both take pleasure in a friend's accomplishments and experience some envy about those same accomplishments.

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Implementation: IS
Analysis: IS, JV
Writing: IS, GL, JV

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