

SOCIAL SKILLS AT FIRST ACQUAINTANCE: MODERATORS OF THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN SELF-AND OTHER-RATINGS OF SOCIALS SKILLS

by

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ABSTRACT

E. NICOLE VOSS. Social skills at first acquaintance: Moderators of the relationship between self-and other-ratings of social skills. (Under the direction of DR. ERIC HEGGESTAD)

Social skills are an important aspect of interpersonal interaction in the workplace. While much of the current research focuses on self-reports of social skills, how others view social skills is also important. I explored the relationship between self-ratings and other-ratings of social skills using the context of a mock employment interview. Additionally, I tested the moderation effects of social desirability, extraversion, narcissism, state anxiety, and impression management. I believed these variables would change the relationship between self-reported and other-reported social skills by affecting either the ability of participants to a) execute social behaviors or b) accurately rate their own skills. Results from the sample did show a correlation between self-and other-ratings of social skills ($r = .42$), but failed to support evidence of moderation effects. Potential explanations for the null results are explored, focusing on an under powered sample and the strength of the situation creating little opportunity for participants to perform socially. The results encourage further exploration of the relationship between how one views their own social skills and how others perceive them.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Social skills have long been important to individuals in the workplace. Both academics and practitioners recognize social skills as important for interpersonal relationships and teamwork (Deming, 2017; Templer, 2018; Riggio, 2020). Social skills can help facilitate positive interactions among colleagues and peers through their impact on leadership, conflict management, and more (Hochwarter et al., 2006; Morgeson et al., 2005).

In general, social skills can be summarized as “interpersonal perceptiveness and the capacity to adjust one's behavior to different situational demands to effectively influence and control the responses of others” (Ferris et al., 2001, p. 1076). Essentially, socially skilled individuals are able to behave in a way that matches social norms as the situation demands. Social norms stem from repeated observations of interactions and influence expectations in social interactions. These social norms form “rules” or guidelines for what behaviors are reinforced and thus repeated (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). When interacting with someone it’s important to be perceived as acting in accordance with social norms, especially when first encountering someone, in order to be perceived as socially skilled (Riggio, 1986).

While most research has examined social skills from the perspective of self-reports by the actor, the interaction partner is also likely to make some evaluation of those skills, which can, in turn, lead to important organizational outcomes, such as being perceived as a leader or as someone to trust with a difficult task. Being perceived as socially skilled can provide advantages in the workplace, such as increased social capital (Munyon et al., 2021), better performance evaluations (Blickle et al, 2011; Zingoni,

2015), entrepreneurial opportunities (Baron & Markman, 2003), and even increase liking and trust (Belkin & Rothman, 2017). Reputation is built by repeatedly displaying characteristics about oneself. This reputation influences the salience of information available to attend to by others (e.g., supervisors, interviewers). That information is then used to make determinations, such as job performance or promotions (Hirschi & Spurk, 2021; Hogan & Holland, 2003).

This study looks at the relationship between general self-ratings of social skills and other-ratings of social skills to explore if our own general self-perception of social skills matches how others view us. I also consider personal factors that may be leading to differences in the way that a person sees their own social skills compared to how others see them. As shown in Figure 1, I propose several moderating variables that may restrict with this relationship by affecting either the ability of participants to a) execute social behaviors or b) the accurately rate their own skills.

1.1 Self-Perceptions of Social Skills

We all have a general schema of our own social skills based on how successfully we are able to behave in ways that fit social norms and that have been advantageous in past social situations. This self-perception of our own social skills can be self-reported with some degree of accuracy (Cordier et al., 2015; Ferris et al., 2001), but aspects of our personality may interfere with our self-awareness (Bergner et al., 2016). Self-awareness stems from being cognizant of how one is perceived by others, which can impact how accurate we can self-evaluate our social skills (Duval & Wicklund, 1972). Additionally, these social skills are not immediately observable to interaction partners, and thus need to be signaled to others through behaviors (Connelly et al., 2011).

1.2 Effectiveness of Social Skills

Social skills are inherently social, requiring both an actor and an interaction partner. Social skills enable the actor to behave in a way that is socially advantageous in order to achieve a social goal (i.e., securing employment, gaining a favor, being liked, etc.). Because of their orientation to achieve a social goal, others play an important role in determining social effectiveness. The effectiveness of behaviors is a result of both the appropriateness and execution of those behaviors. Behaviors meant to increase social status need to be delivered with the correct tact in order to appear genuine and not manipulative (Treadway et al., 2007). Perhaps without realizing it, we are typically making evaluations of others' social skills based on how well they are able to behave in accordance with our expectations of social norms. Accordingly, previous research has shown a moderate correlation between self-and other-ratings of social skills, ranging from .21 to .30 (Nowack, 1992; Meurs et al., 2010).

Given the importance of others in determining social effectiveness, it's important to consider other-ratings of social skills. When interaction partners have no previous information about one another, perceptions of social skills are made based on the social behavior of an individual and any stereotypes held towards that person. One such situation would be a job interview. Social skills have long been considered an important skill to demonstrate in an employment interview and are frequently directly assessed by interviewers (Huffcutt et al., 2011; Morgeson et al., 2005). Interviews having social goals (i.e., being liked, getting hired) and being zero-acquaintance (i.e., no prior social

interaction) allows us to assess differences in self-other perceptions in a more controlled environment.

We believe the relationship between self-and other-ratings of social skills would also be present in a zero-acquaintance setting when interaction partners have limited knowledge about one another. Although not social skills, per se, research has found correlations between self-and other reports of personality traits in zero-acquaintance contexts. For example, Beer and Watson (2008) reported a correlation of .37 between self-and other ratings of extraversion among people that had simply spent time in a room together without any interaction.

We propose that general self-ratings of social skills should predict other-ratings of context-specific social skills. That is, when in a context that involves social interactions, how we see our own general social skills should be positively related to how someone we interact with views our social skills. The perceptions of social skills in others should, ultimately, be a function of how socially skilled a person is.

Hypothesis 1: Self-ratings of social skills will have a positive correlation with observer-ratings of social skills.

The relationship between self and other perceptions can, however, be impacted by characteristics or traits of the actor, characteristics or traits of the observer, or characteristics of the context. In this study, I examine how certain characteristics of the actor may moderate the relationship between self-and other-ratings of social skills. In particular, I consider the trait concepts of social desirability, extraversion, and narcissism and the state concepts of state anxiety and impression management. These characteristics are expected to moderate the relationship between self-perception and other perceptions

by interfering with either how the actor evaluates their own social skills or how social behaviors are able to be effectively executed.

1.3 Social Desirability

Social desirability is defined as “the need for social approval and acceptance and the belief that it can be attained by means of culturally acceptable and appropriate behaviors” (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960, p. 109). Here, measured as a trait (Kurtz et al., 2008), social desirability ultimately affects how an individual manages their image. As such, this trait may manifest in inflated ratings of positive traits, as the respondent seeks to ensure that others will see them in a good light (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Perinelli & Gremigni, 2016). Social skills are seen as favorable and thus participants who are high in social desirability are likely to respond to the items on a social skills measure in a way that suggests that they have higher levels of social skills than they actually possess.

Consequently, there should be a weaker relationship between participant ratings on a social skills assessment and others’ evaluations of the participant’s social skills when the participant has a high level of social desirability. Due to their high social desirability, participants will rate their social skills highly. However, in the context of the interview, they will not be able to perform at a level that matches their self-rating. In contrast, individuals with lower levels of social desirability are likely to provide responses to the social skills measure that more accurately reflect their social skills. This will, in turn, lead to more similar ratings in social skills by others. Thus, it can be expected that there will be a stronger relationship between participant self-report social skills scores and interviewer perceptions of the participant’s social skills when social desirability is low.

Hypothesis 2: Social desirability will moderate the relationship between the general self-report of social skills and other-reports of contextual social skills such that the relationship is stronger when social desirability is low.

1.4 Extraversion

Extraversion is the tendency to behave in ways that attract social attention (Ashton et al., 2002) and is closely tied to social performance (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Those high in extraversion tend to be outgoing, sociable, and oriented toward outside stimulation, while more introverted individuals tend to be more withdrawn, reserved, and oriented away from outside stimulation. Due to its effects on social behavior, I believe that extraversion will moderate the relationship between self-and other-ratings of social skills. I expect that extraversion will have a stronger influence on other-ratings of social skills when extraversion is low.

Specifically, those low in extraversion are likely to be uncomfortable in the interview context where they need to interact with someone that they don't know well. Their shyness is likely to manifest as a lack of confidence in themselves and may lead to shorter responses to the interview questions. This will have a negative effect on those both low and high in social skills. Those low in social skills will be rated lowest in social skills as they suffer the effects from both being low in extraversion and social skills. This may also slightly hurt how socially skilled people are perceived by others as they will not be able to behave in a way that displays their social strengths which sends weak signals about their social skills.

Alternatively, I expect that self-ratings of social skill will have less influence on other-ratings of social skills when participants are high in extraversion compared to those

who are introverted. This is because extraversion may buffer the effects of low social skills by showing a sense of confidence, excitement, smiling, and eye contact which are related to perceptions of social skills (Higgins & Judge, 2004; Jiang & Pell, 2015). These individuals are also likely to feel comfortable in the interview situation, be more comfortable sharing positive things about themselves and their past accomplishments (Ashton & Lee, 2007), and appear more likable (Szczygiel & Mikolajczak, 2018). As a result of their greater activation of social behavior and other positive characteristics, those with high levels of extraversion are likely to be perceived as having higher social skills than someone with similar social skills but low extraversion. Thus, I expect a weaker relationship between self- and other-ratings of social skills when extraversion is high.

Hypothesis 3: Extraversion will moderate the relationship between self-ratings of social skills and other-ratings of social skills, such that the relationship is stronger when follower extraversion is lower.

1.5 Narcissism

Narcissism is considered to be a stable trait characterized by a sense of grandiosity, self-love, and inflated self-view (Campbell et al., 2011). This inflated self-view can result in a sense of entitlement or a desire for power. In order to achieve what is thought to be deserved, those high in narcissism tend to engage in manipulative or charming behaviors (Back et al., 2010). As proposed by Zingoni (2015), narcissism may also impact how these individuals view both their own and others' social skills. I propose that narcissism will moderate the relationship between self and other ratings of social skills.

While there is evidence to suggest that those high in narcissism experience positive interpersonal benefits, these effects tend to be short-term (Giacomin & Jordan, 2019; Grapsas et al., 2020). Research has related these benefits to higher self-esteem, use of humor, and charm (Back et al., 2010) which are effectively executed when social skills are high (Bitterly et al., 2017; Yip & Martin, 2006). Thus, I argue that the benefits of narcissism are only present when social skills are also high which allows narcissistic individuals to select the appropriate behaviors needed to get along. In turn, those high in social skills and high in narcissism will be rated high in social skills by others. Without social skills to facilitate appropriate behaviors, low socially skilled narcissists may behave in ways that are socially undesirable (Grapsas et al., 2020) and appear apathetic or untrustworthy (Delič et al., 2011; Hamstra et al., 2021). This would in turn hurt other ratings of social skills as these behaviors do not fit within the social norms in an interview. They will not be able to tap into the positive traits associated with narcissism at a first impression and be rated low in social skills by others than they rated themselves. As a result, I would expect to see a weaker relationship between self and other ratings of social skills among those high in narcissism.

Alternatively, I predict a stronger relationship among those low in narcissism. Low narcissism will have little to no effect on the relationship between self-and other-ratings. Those low in narcissism and low in social skills will not display an arrogance that could hurt social skills ratings leading to better ratings by others in social skills compared to those high in narcissism when social skills are low. While those high in social skills and low in narcissism will be accurately evaluated by others without the interference of narcissism.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between general self-ratings of social skills and other ratings of social skills in an interview context will be moderated by narcissism, such that the relationships will be stronger when narcissism is low.

1.6 State Anxiety

Employment interviews, even in the context of a mock interview, can induce a state of anxiety (Powell et al., 2018). State anxiety is a temporary emotional state in which feelings of tension and apprehension occur in coordination with the arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Gaudry et al., 1975; Spielberger et al., 1986). State anxiety has been shown to affect social behavior by reducing eye contact, causing focus to be more on the self than others, social disengagement, and can hurt the ability to process information (Heerey & Kring, 2007; Constantin et al., 2021).

For those low in state anxiety, I expect a strong, positive relationship between self and other ratings of social skills. Specifically, those low in state anxiety are likely to be comfortable and calm in the interview context. Those who are high in social skills should engage in behaviors that signal their social skills to the interviewer. Those who are less socially skilled, even though they are able to remain calm and composed, are still likely to be seen by others as lower in social skills as still will not know how to properly engage in the social interaction

In contrast, I expect a weaker relationship among those higher in state anxiety. Behaviors associated with anxiety (e.g., reduced eye contact, more focus on self than others, social disengagement) are likely to be perceived by others as signals that the participant lacks social skills. Even when a participant is socially skilled, the presence of state anxiety is expected to interfere with the expression of social skills and not allow

participants to effectively execute appropriate social behaviors. Thus, individuals with high state anxiety are likely to be perceived as having low social skills regardless of their actual level of social skills.

Hypothesis 5: State anxiety will moderate the relationship between self-ratings of social skills and other ratings of social skills such that the relationship will be weaker when anxiety is high.

1.7 Impression Management

Impression management is the act of expressing a filtered version of ourselves relevant to a specific situation in order to control the image that is projected to others (Bolino & Turnley, 1999; Schlenker, 1980). This self-presentation tactic, or behavior, is often used in interviews (Barrick et al., 2010; Peck & Levashina, 2017) and is typically measured as either other-focused (directed towards the organization or interviewer) or self-focused (focused on one's own characteristics). Here, I focus on self-focused behaviors of the participant that represent attempts to describe themselves in an attractive way or present themselves as having positive traits (e.g., smiling, nodding) (Tsai et al., 2015). I believe the use of impression management tactics will moderate the relationship between self-ratings of social skills and other-ratings of social skills.

For those who report high levels of impression management, I expect a strong positive relationship between self- and other-ratings of social skills. Previous research has established that social skills are needed to properly execute impression management behaviors (Harris et al., 2007; Amaral et al., 2019) and for those behaviors to have positive organizational outcomes (Brouer et al., 2015; Treadway et al., 2007). As such, I believe those high in social skills will be able to effectively use the impression

management tactics, resulting in a high social skills ratings by others as those impression management behaviors will signal positive characteristics about the participant.

Alternatively, those low in social skills will not be able to effectively use impression management tactics, which can make a negative impression on the targets of those behaviors (Harris et al., 2007) resulting in even lower evaluations of social skills by others. Thus, impression management will only help those high in social skills.

For those who report low use of impression management tactics, I expect a weaker relationship between self-and other-ratings of social skills. For those high in social skills, when they do not use impression management tactics they will be rated lower in social skills by others. This is due to the impression management behaviors being an opportunity to show social skills and express positive characteristics about themselves. Without these attempts, others may rate participants less positively overall (Amaral et al., 2019; Crawford et al., 2019) which I believe will also apply to ratings of social skills.

Hypothesis 6: The relationship between general self-ratings of social skills and other-ratings of social skills in interview contexts will be moderated by impression management, such that the relationships will be stronger when impression management is higher.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

2.1 Participants and procedure

The sample (N= 130) consisted of upper-level undergraduates, business students, and staff from a large university who completed a two-part study where Part 1 involved a pre-assessment testing session and Part 2 was a virtual mock interview. Recruitment emails were sent to eligible university students and university staff explaining that the study includes a virtual mock interview that can help prepare those entering the job market (see Appendix A). Participants were told they were taking part in a research study looking at applicant experiences in job interviews; they were not told they were being rated on their social skills. Two days prior to the scheduled interview, participants received an email prompting them to complete a set of assessments using an online survey. In this survey, I obtained informed consent, as well as measures of social skills, the Big Five personality traits, social desirability, and narcissism. I also collected information to be used as control variables, including sex, race, status as a student or staff, GPA, and interview experience. Completion of the testing session was required to participate in the mock interview.

The mock interview sessions were conducted via Zoom video conferencing. At the scheduled time of the interview session, a lab assistant greeted the participant and instructed them to a Qualtrics survey link in the chat function of Zoom that contained the informed consent and assessments to be used in the larger study. The lab assistant then went through the informed consent with the participant and then instructed them to begin the assessment survey. After the survey, the interviewer (a trained lab assistant) joined the video conference, and the lab assistant exited the call for the job interview session.

Participants were asked four structured interview questions (see Table 1). Once the participant had responded to the fourth question, the lab assistant rejoined the video conference and the interviewer exited. The lab assistant then instructed the participant to complete a set of measures via a Qualtrics survey link, including state anxiety and impression management. During this time the interviewer rated the participant's social skills. Participants who completed both the testing session and interview session were given a \$15 Amazon gift card.

Of the 130 participants, 73% were female, 24% were male, and 3% self-described or preferred not to identify. Of the participants, 19% self-reported as Black/African American, 24% selected Asian, 34% selected White or Caucasian, 6% were Hispanic or Latino, and 17% rated some combination of multiple races or ethnicities. Of the sample, 83% were students and 17% were staff of the University.

2.2 Measures

Other Perceptions of Social Skills. Immediately after completing the interview questions, the interviewer left the video conference and rated the participant's social skills. Interviewers were instructed to consider the participant's behavior during the entire interview when responding to the items. Specifically, participants were rated on social skills using an adapted version of the Ferris et al. (2001) social skills measure (e.g., "I believe the participant is keenly aware of how they are perceived by others"). The scale was adapted in two ways. First, I modified the instructions to fit the situation ("During the interview, what were your perceptions of the participant?"). Second, the items were modified to fit the situation. Specifically, the referent was changed from the "self" to the "participant" and the wording of the items was altered or rearranged to better fit the

situation. For example, the item “In social situations, it is always clear to me exactly what to say and do” was changed to “I feel that it is always clear to the participant exactly what to say and do in social situations”. Interviewers responded to each of the seven items using a seven point-Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Appendix B includes the original Ferris et al. (2001) items and my adaptation of each. Cronbach’s alpha (using just the responses from the interviewers) was .90.

Social Skills (Self-Report). Participants completed a brief, seven-item measure of their social skills (Ferris et al., 2001) at the beginning of the interview session. Sample items include, “In social situations, it is always clear to me exactly what to say and do” and “I am keenly aware of how I am perceived by others”. Participants responded to each item using a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). This scale was chosen as a previously validated measure (Hochwarter et al., 2006; Witt & Ferris, 2003) that captures a broad evaluation of social effectiveness. Cronbach’s alpha was .88.

Extraversion. Extraversion was measured as part of the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI, Johns & Srivastava, 1999) during the pre-assessment phase. Sample items for extraversion include “Is talkative” and “Is full of energy.” Participants responded to eight Extraversion items using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The mean of these items was taken to represent extraversion. Prior research has provided evidence to support the validity of the measure (Hahn et al., 2012; Thalmayer et al., 2011). In this sample, the estimate of Cronbach’s alpha was .89.

Narcissism. During the pre-assessment phase, participants completed the 16-item Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Amer et al., 2005). Participants were presented with two statements and asked to select the statement that describes them best. For example, participants would choose either A) “I am not better or worse than most people” or B) “I think I am a special person.” Items that reflect high narcissism were scored with a 1, and items that reflect low narcissism were scored with a 0. Final scores are the proportion of high and low narcissism items represented as the mean between 0 and 1. In this sample, an estimate of Cronbach's alpha was .78.

Social Desirability. Social desirability was measured in the pre-test session using the 13-item short-form of Crowne and Marlowe’s (1960) social desirability scale developed by Reynolds (1982). The scale presents respondents with a series of statements (e.g., “I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable”) and asked to rate them as “true” or “false.” Responses indicating social desirability were scored as 1. An average score was taken between 0 and 1, with 1 indicating the highest social desirability. In this sample, an estimate of Cronbach's alpha was .66.

Impression Management. Impression management was measured using a combination of items, similar to Tsai et al. (2005). This included four items adopted from Kristof-Brown et al. (2002) (i.e., “During the interview, I demonstrated my knowledge and expertise,” “I described my skills and abilities in an attractive way,” “I described my skills and experience,” and “I used friendly nonverbal cues like smiling and nodding”); two items adapted from Wayne and Ferris (1990) (i.e., “I tried to draw the interviewer’s attention to my records of accomplishment” and “I emphasized the qualities that I possessed.”); and one from Kacmar et al. (1992) (i.e., “I tried to convince the

interviewer that my behavior is good enough to use as a model for others.”). Participants rated the degree to which they employed these seven impression management tactics during the interview on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree). The mean of these items was taken to represent Impression Management. In this sample, an estimate of Cronbach’s alpha was .91.

State Anxiety. State anxiety was measured both immediately before and immediately after the interview. There was a small but significant difference between the pre-and post-interview ratings of state anxiety, $t = -3.4577$, $df = 249.99$, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$, $d = .43$. While meta-analysis has shown no significant differences in pre-and post-measures of state anxiety’s effect on interview performance outcomes (Powell et al., 2018), I elected to use post-interview ratings to better represent the state during the interview. State anxiety was measured using the state section of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1983). This 20-item inventory included prompts such as “I feel at ease” and “I feel upset.” Participants responded to each item using a four-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all, 4 = very much so). In the sample, an estimate of Cronbach’s alpha was .94.

Control Variables. Participant sex, race, status as a student or staff, GPA, and interview experience were collected in the pre-screening process as control variables. I control for sex given that past research has shown that men tend to receive higher social skill ratings than women (Baron et al., 2006; Shahani-Denning et al., 2010) and because men and women have been shown to use impression management tactics differently (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Race was included as a control variable given that social skills tend to be rated more highly in same-race pairs (Ouazad, 2014) and because stereotyping

can impact observer ratings of attributes (Bergsieker et al., 2012). Student or staff was included as a proxy of age and GPA was included as a self-report of general competency. Finally, I considered past interview experience (recorded as an estimate of the number of past interviewers), as more experience in a situation could influence knowledge of social norms for that context.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all variables collected for this study. A test of hypothesis one is shown in the table as self-ratings of social skills and other-ratings of social skills are moderately correlated $r = .37$ ($p < .01$; $r = .41$ after correcting for attenuation). The magnitude of this correlation is consistent with past research of self-other ratings of social skills ranging from .30 to .21 (Nowack, 1992; Meurs et al., 2010). This correlation provides support for hypothesis one and allows further testing of the moderation effects of the remaining hypotheses.

To further explore this relationship, I sought to explore which of my variables best predicted how others evaluated social skills. First, I regressed the main study variables (i.e., self-ratings of social skill, social desirability, extraversion, state anxiety, narcissism, and impression management) along with the control variables (i.e., sex, GPA, interview experience, student/staff status, and ethnicity) onto other-ratings of social skills. Second, I conducted a relative weights analysis in order to partition the explained variance among the predictors to better understand the role they played in the regression equation (Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2011). The results of this analysis revealed that, of the variance explained by the model ($R^2 = .26$), 26% of the variance was due to self-ratings of social skills (95% CI [0.01, 0.17]), 21% of the variance was due to sex (95% CI [0.004, 0.14], and 19% of the variance was due to extraversion (95% CI [-0.07, 0.08].) This shows that how one viewed their own social skills was the biggest contributor to how others view our social skills, but that the participant's sex and level of extroversion were also meaningfully related to ratings of social skills.

To examine hypotheses two through six, I conducted five separate moderation analyses. Following (Aiken et al., 1991; Irwin & McClelland, 2001), predictor variables were mean-centered. In each of these five analyses, other-ratings of social skills was the dependent variable. Participant rating of their own social skills, the moderator variable, and the interaction term were all entered at the same time. The results for all five regressions are shown in Table 3. As shown, none of the interaction terms were statistically significant. Thus, there was no evidence to support any of the five moderation hypotheses.

Despite the fact that none of the moderation hypotheses were supported, I chose to plot and evaluate the interaction of social desirability and self-ratings of social skills for demonstration purposes. As shown in Figure 2, the moderation analysis indicated that the interaction between other ratings and social desirability was negative but non-significant ($\beta = -.41, p = .172$). Figure 2 presents the nature of this interaction. Tests of simple slopes show the relationship between self-and other-ratings of social skills does not change between low social desirability ($B = .38, SE = .09, t = 4.06, p < .01$) and high social desirability ($B = .21, SE = .08, t = 2.45, p < .002$).

As a final step for each model, I also explored how a series of control variables might change the overall fit of the model in order to rule out the possibility of any meaningful changes in the interactions caused by demographic variables. I re-estimated the regression models to include sex, GPA, interview experience, and whether or not participants were students or staff. The interaction terms did not achieve statistical significance when the control variables were included.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Research has long focused on self-report ratings of social skills, while also acknowledging the importance of other-ratings (Meurs et al., 2010; Zingoni, 2015). This research sought to explore how self-ratings relate to other-ratings of social skills. Because of the importance that “others” play in the enactment of social skills this relationship is especially pertinent. While previous research has found zero-acquaintance ratings of strangers’ traits to be relatively accurate (Beer & Watson, 2008; Vazire & Carlson, 2011), they are not close to perfect. This study attempted to understand the relationship between how we view our own social skills and how strangers view them. I also sought to explore factors that might influence the strength of the relationships between self-and other-ratings.

As expected (Hypothesis 1), I found a moderate relationship between participant self-reports of social skills and others’ ratings of the interviewee’s social skills. This relationship was present despite the fact that participants rated their social skills “in general” during the pre-assessment and interviewers rated participants' social skills after a brief, structured interaction. Uncovering the evidence for this relationship at zero acquaintance is encouraging for future research as we seek to better understand the role of other-perceptions of social skills as well as the outcomes associated of those perceptions.

The interview context allowed us to create a situation where participants were motivated to display social skills. But it also created a situation that could lead to a mismatch between self-ratings of social skills (how a person expresses social skills in

general), and how they express them in this strong situation. These factors could have served to reduce the magnitude of the correlation observed.

Unfortunately, none of the moderation hypotheses were supported by the data. There are, in general, two explanations for why the moderation hypotheses were not supported: the theory presented was incorrect or the data did not allow for a fair test of the theory (i.e., specific hypotheses). Below, I consider each of these possibilities.

3.1 Considering Theory

While limited research exists exploring the moderating relationship between self- and other-ratings of social skills, I believe the theoretical rationale for the moderation hypotheses I offered are sound. The literature surrounding social skills emphasizes the importance of effectively utilizing behaviors in order to be successful in social situations (Ferris et al., 2007; Higgins et al., 2003). Social behaviors are successful when they are effectively executed to fit social norms. This is the basis for many of my hypotheses, as extraversion, state anxiety, narcissism, and impression management all have an impact on how we choose and execute behaviors. Even when social skills are high, if these variables impede the participant's ability to perform, this can hurt how others view them. Further, social desirability can interfere with self-awareness which can artificially inflate self-ratings of desirable traits (Grapsas et al., 2020; Kurtz et al., 2008; Perinelli & Gremigni, 2016). This, in turn, can hurt the relationships between ratings when the one's performance does not match the high social skills rating they gave themselves. Given my belief in the strength of my theory, and that it is well-grounded in the literature, I am not prepared to give up on my theory and thus turn my attention to potential methodological issues.

3.2 Considering Methodological Issues

There are a number of methodological/sample factors that could have led to the lack of support for the moderation hypotheses. I consider the measures that I used, the power I had to detect effects, and the context in which my research was conducted.

Measures. In looking at potential methodological explanations for the non-significant moderation results I first look at the way in which I chose to measure the constructs in the study. If the measures were poor representations of the constructs, this could make for a poor test of the moderation effects. However, each of the chosen measures have previously demonstrated evidence of validity. Additionally, each measure demonstrated evidence of reliability in this data. One place of concern could be the adaptation of Ferris et al.'s (2007) measure of social skills. I adapted the self-report measure in order to capture others' evaluations of the general social skills of the participant. The measure used may not be robust enough to fully capture all facets of the intended construct, as proposed in the theory. This would result in low construct validity and make it difficult to appropriately test my theory. Given the limited nature of the interaction between the participant and the other interaction partner, the raters may not have been able to make reliable ratings. However, in support of this measure, I was able to show evidence of a moderate correlation between self-and other-ratings of social skills. The strength of the correlation, particularly given the short interaction between the participant and the other interaction partner, does provide some evidence for the construct validity of the adapted other-report measure.

Additionally, all moderating variables were measured with self-report, meaning that they rely on the participants accurately rating their own traits. These self-report

measures may be biased (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002), and, as such, I may not have been accurately measuring the variables in my theory. However, research generally supports the use of self-ratings (Oishi & Roth, 2009; Paunonen & O’Neill, 2010). Based on these arguments, I do believe the measures allowed for a fair test of my theory.

Power. A second possible explanation for the unsupported hypothesis is a lack of power needed to test for moderated regression effects as a result of the small sample. This could lead to a potential type II error. A post-hoc power analysis was conducted using G*Power to determine the power of the study given the sample size. While there is no previous research available to inform estimated effect sizes for these moderations, I suspect a small effect size for these interactions using Cohen's (1988) criteria. Given a standard power of .80, my alpha of .05, and my sample of 130, my estimated power is .36, indicating that the study was underpowered. In order to detect a significant effect, it is estimated that I would need a much larger sample size – almost 400 participants - to detect a small interaction effect (Shieh, 2009).

Context. A third potential issue is the virtual interview context. The interview context involved a constrained environment in which the participants and raters had limited control over the interaction. The raters (who acted as interviewers) were instructed to provide no verbal or nonverbal feedback to the participant outside of the scripted interview questions. The virtual nature of the videos provides the applicants with less “chances to perform” (Sears et al., 2013) and acted to further reduce the richness of the interaction (Ishii et al., 2019). This resulted in what Caspi and Moffitt (1993) would label a “strong situation.”

According to situational strength theory, situation strength represents the degree to which rules, structures, and cues are present to provide clear guidance as to the expected behavior in a given situation (Caspi & Moffitt, 1993; Judge & Zapata, 2015). When a situation is strong, individual differences, such as personality, are not accentuated. This results in weaker signals being sent from the actor to the observer. While designed as a strength to reduce contextual variability between participants, the structured interview utilized in the current study may have made it difficult for participants to signal accurate and relevant information about themselves.

Future studies should explore these moderation hypotheses in a situation that is characterized as more of a “weak” situation. Social skills are complex and largely influenced by context (Ferris et al., 2002). Situations that are less structured and allow for greater variability in the expression of personality in social interactions may elicit more opportunities to signal information about social skills. Even in a zero-acquaintance setting, providing a more socially complex situation might allow participants to better express themselves and present an opportunity to utilize social skills to navigate social situations.

4.3 Conclusion

The current research offered moderation hypotheses that sought to understand the relationship between our self-perception of social skills and the perceptions others have about our social skills. These hypotheses were not supported. Reflecting on my theoretical derivations, I am confident that my theory supports my predicted relationships. Research should continue to look at the relationship between self and other ratings of social skills as well as moderators of these relationships; specifically, social

desirability extraversion, state anxiety, narcissism, and impression management. How interaction partners view the social skills of others will continue to be important to understanding the outcomes of possessing good social skills. The results of this study provide evidence that how one views their own social skills in general relates to how others view their social skills, but more research is needed to understand the nuances of this relationship. I believe further exploration of these variables in different contexts and with a larger and more diverse sample could prove fruitful.

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Table 1*Interview Questions/Prompts Given to Participants*

1. Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a decision or recommendation. Please describe the situation in detail.
 2. Tell me about a time when the ability to communicate effectively was critical to the success of a task or project.
 3. Imagine the two of us are co-workers and I have been having problems getting along. You feel that I am unnecessarily competitive, and I feel that you are misinterpreting my actions and behaviors. What would you say to me?
 4. Tell me about a time when you made a mistake at work that had an impact on others' work. What did you do about it? What would you have done differently?
-

Table 2

Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Sex	0.24	0.43										
2. GPA	3.58	0.57	.06									
3. Interview experience	11.75	21.38	.01	.08								
4. Student/staff	0.83	0.38	.07	--	-.25**							
5. Social skills (self-report)	4.96	1.04	.10	.12	.05	.01						
6. Social skills (other-report)	3.72	0.79	-.12	.06	.19*	-.13	.37**					
7. Social desirability	0.48	0.21	.03	.14	.15	-.06	.11	.06				
8. Extraversion	3.36	0.79	-.00	.05	-.01	.04	.56**	.31**	.23**			
9. Social anxiety (after interview)	2.06	0.63	-.21*	-.17	-.26**	.09	-.40**	-.15	-.34**	-.26**		
10. Narcissism	0.32	0.26	.05	.02	-.07	.09	.43**	.04	-.00	.50**	-.18*	
11. Impression management	4.05	1.09	.12	.15	.08	-.01	.49**	.27**	.18*	.39**	-.62**	.28**

Note. M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Sex is coded female = 0, male = 1. Student/staff is coded staff = 0, student = 1. * Indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

Table 3

Beta and R² coefficients for predictor variables and moderation interactions.

	Social Desirability	Extraversion	Narcissism	State Anxiety	Impression Management
Self β	0.29**	0.21**	0.32**	0.28**	0.24**
Moderator β	0.03	0.15	-0.44	-0.01	0.08
Interaction β	-0.41	-0.04	0.06	0.03	0.02
R^2	0.15**	0.15**	0.15**	0.14**	0.15*
Adjusted R^2	0.13**	0.13**	0.13**	0.12**	0.13**

Note: * $p < 0.5$, ** $p < .01$.

Figure 1

Proposed moderation effects between self-and other-ratings of social skills

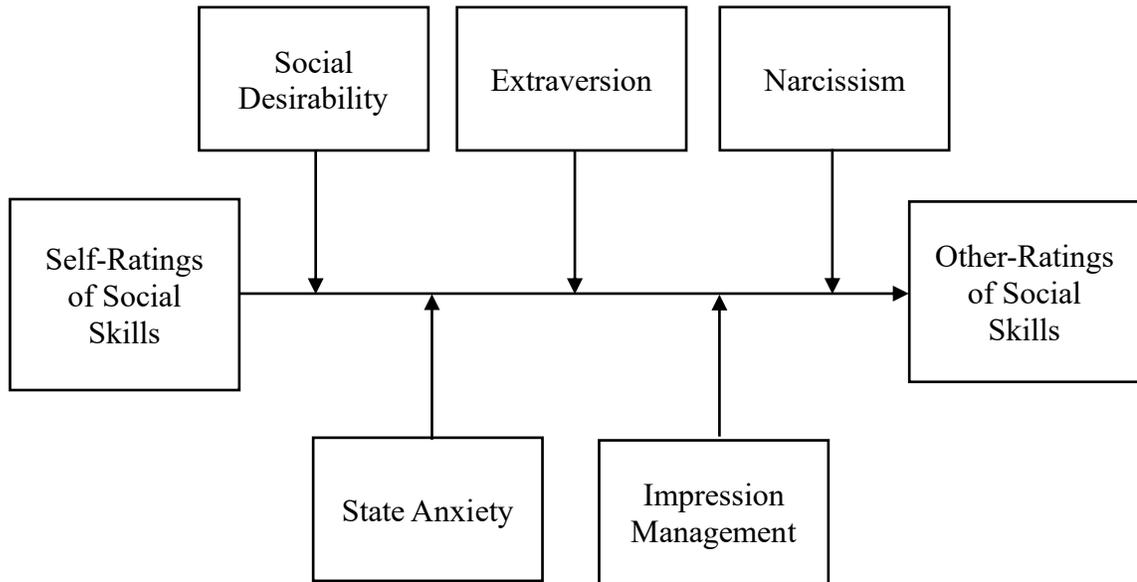
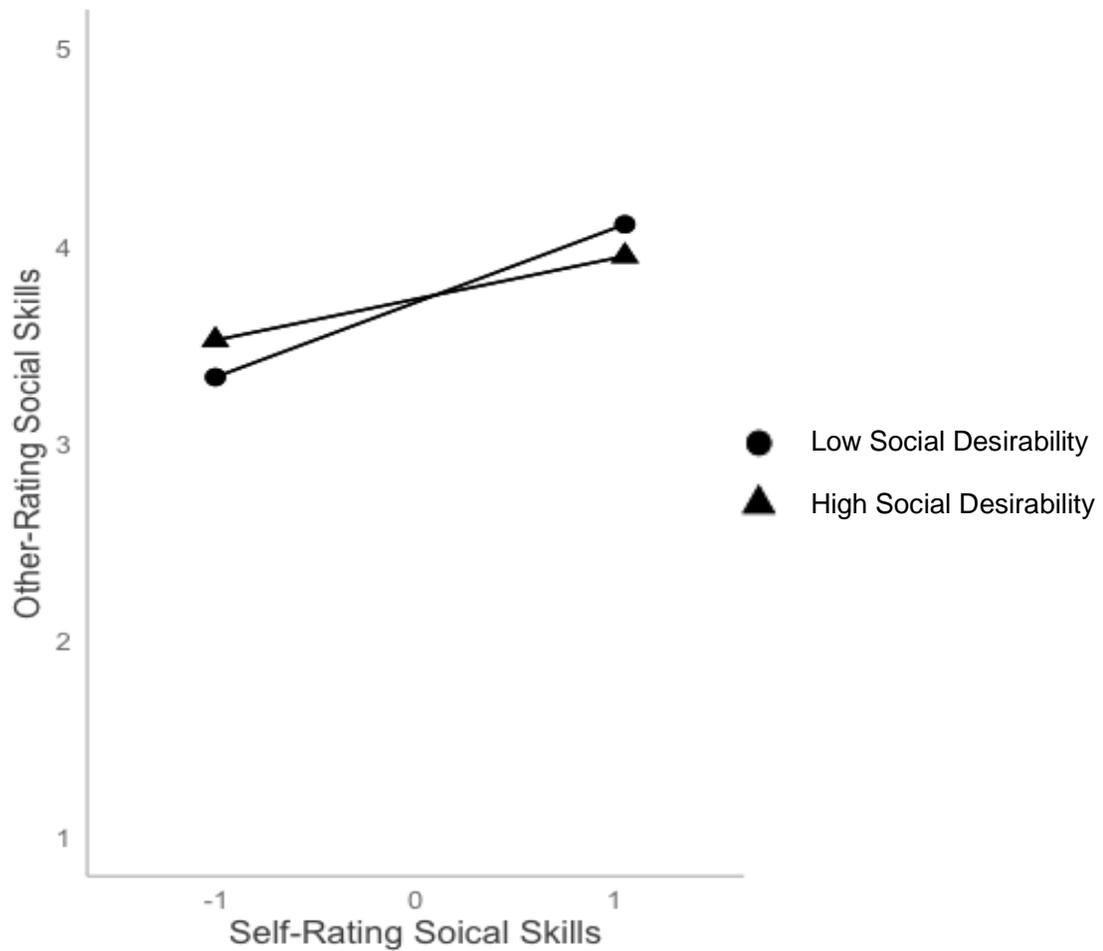


Figure 2

Interaction between self-ratings of social skills and social desirability on other-ratings of social skills.



APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

The following is the email being used to recruit participants:

Subject: Practice Online Interviewing and Earn a \$15 Amazon Gift Card

Do you want online interview experience?

Do you want to earn \$15 to practice your interviewing skills?

Our lab is looking for students and staff that want to practice their interviewing skills to help with a research study.

Online interviews are becoming increasingly more relevant due to the current times. This study offers an opportunity to gain experience with online interviews.

This study will take place in two virtual sessions, requiring about 2 hours total of your time. For the first session, you will complete a 60-minute online pre-interview questionnaire that will ask questions about your personality, thoughts, feelings, social skills and job interview experience.

Approximately 2 days after the first session, in a separate 60-minute Zoom session, you will participate in a mock job interview and complete additional survey questions before and after the interview. The mock job interview will be video recorded.

At the end of the study, you will receive a **\$15 Amazon gift card** for your participation.

If you are interested in participating, please fill out this quick pre-screening survey:

http://uncc.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0kTZBYxJd9T9y6N

This will determine if you are eligible to participate. Slots will be filled on a first come, first serve basis. Please feel free to share this opportunity with other UNC Charlotte students.

If you are eligible to participate, a member of our research team will email you to schedule your interview.

Sincerely,

Austin Valvo

Doctoral Student | Organizational Science
University of North Carolina at Charlotte | Colvard 3074

Nicole Voss

Doctoral Student | Organizational Science
University of North Carolina at Charlotte | Colvard 3074

Amy Canevello

Associate Professor

University of North Carolina, Charlotte
Department of Psychological Science
Organizational Science PhD Program
Health Psychology PhD Program
acanevel@uncc.edu

This study has been approved by the UNC Charlotte IRB (Protocol # 21-0138)

APPENDIX B: ADAPATED SOCIAL SKILLS INVENTORY

Original and adapted items from the Social Skills Inventory (Ferris, Witt, & Hochwarter, 2001)

Each item from both scales were rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Original: Self-Rating	Adapted: Observer-Rating
<i>Instructions: In general, please rate how well the following describes you.</i>	<i>Instructions: During the interview, what were your perceptions of the participant?</i>
1. I find it easy to put myself in the position of others	I feel that it is easy for the participants to put themselves in the position of others
2. I am keenly aware of how I am perceived by others	I feel the participant is keenly aware of how they are perceived by others
3. In social situations, it is always clear to me exactly what to say and do	I feel that it is always clear to the participant exactly what to say and do in social situations
4. I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others	I feel that the participant is good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others
5. I am good at making myself visible with influential people in my organization	I feel that the participant is good at making themselves visible with influential people in their organization
6. I am good at reading others' body language	I feel the participant appears to be good at reading others' body language
7. I am able to adjust my behavior and become the type of person dictated by any situation	I feel that the participants is able to adjust their behavior and become the type of person dictated by any situation

APPENDIX C: ADDITIONAL MEASURES

Social Desirability

Reynolds, W. M. (1982). From **Crowne, D., & Marlowe, D. (1964)**.

Scoring: Mean of all responses.

Reverse Items: SOCDES_19, SOCDES_10, SOCDES_15, SOCDES_28. SOCDES_3, SOCDES_12,, SOCDES_32, SOCDES_6

Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. For each question, circle the number that best reflects your feelings. It's best to go with your first judgment and not spend too long mulling over any one question.	Yes	No
1. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget	1	0
2. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.	1	0
3. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged	1	0
4. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.	1	0
5. On a few occasions, I have given something up because I thought too little of my ability	1	0
6. There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.	1	0
7. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.	1	0
8. I have never felt that I was punished without cause	1	0
9. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.	1	0
10. I have never been irked when people express ideas very different from my own	1	0
11. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way	1	0
12. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.	1	0
13. I sometimes think when people have a misfortune they only got what they deserved.	1	0

Personality

John & Srivastava (1999).

Extraversion: 1, 6R, 11, 16, 21R, 26, 31R, 36

Agreeableness: 2R, 7, 12R, 17, 22, 27R, 32, 37R, 42

Conscientiousness: 3, 8R, 13, 18R, 23R, 28, 33, 38, 43R

Neuroticism: 4, 9R, 14, 19, 24R, 29, 34R, 39

Openness: 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35R, 40, 41R, 44

Instructions: Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who likes to spend time with others? **Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.**

I see myself as someone who:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Is talkative	1	2	3	4	5
2. Tends to find fault with others	1	2	3	4	5
3. Does a thorough job	1	2	3	4	5
4. Is depressed, blue	1	2	3	4	5
5. Is original, comes up with new ideas	1	2	3	4	5
6. Is reserved	1	2	3	4	5
7. Is helpful and unselfish with others	1	2	3	4	5
8. Can be somewhat careless	1	2	3	4	5
9. Is relaxed, handles stress well	1	2	3	4	5
10. Is curious about many different things	1	2	3	4	5
11. Is full of energy	1	2	3	4	5
12. Starts quarrels with others	1	2	3	4	5
13. Is a reliable worker	1	2	3	4	5

14.	Can be tense	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Is ingenious, a deep thinker	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Generates a lot of enthusiasm	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Has a forgiving nature	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Tends to be disorganized	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Worries a lot	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Has an active imagination	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Tends to be quiet	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Is generally trusting	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Tends to be lazy	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Is emotionally stable, not easily upset	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Is inventive	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Has an assertive personality	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Can be cold and aloof	1	2	3	4	5
28.	Perseveres until the task is finished	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Can be moody	1	2	3	4	5
30.	Values artistic, aesthetic experiences	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Is sometimes shy, inhibited	1	2	3	4	5
32.	Is considerate and kind to almost everyone	1	2	3	4	5
33.	Does things efficiently	1	2	3	4	5

34.	Remains calm in tense situations	1	2	3	4	5
35.	Prefers work that is routine	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Is outgoing, sociable	1	2	3	4	5
37.	Is sometimes rude to others	1	2	3	4	5
38.	Makes plans and follows through with them	1	2	3	4	5
39.	Gets nervous easily	1	2	3	4	5
40.	Likes to reflect, play with ideas	1	2	3	4	5
41.	Has few artistic interests	1	2	3	4	5
42.	Likes to cooperate with others	1	2	3	4	5
43.	Is easily distracted	1	2	3	4	5
44.	Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature	1	2	3	4	5

Narcissistic Personality Inventory

Amer et al. (2005)

Scoring: narcissism indicated by 1a, 2b, 3a, 4b, 5b, 6a, 7b, 8a, 9a, 10b, 11a, 12b, 13b, 14a, 15b, 16a. Scoring is proportion of narcissism responses.

Below are a list of statements, one on Column A and the opposite in Column B. For each statement circle the item from Column A or B that best matches you (even if it's not perfect).

	A	B
1.	I really like to be the center of attention.	It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention.
2.	I am no better or nor worse than most people	I think I am a special person
3.	Everybody likes to hear my stories	Sometimes I tell good stories
4.	I usually get the respect that I deserve	I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me
5.	I don't mind following orders	I like having authority over people
6.	I am going to be a great person	I hope I am going to be successful
7.	People sometimes believe what I tell them	I can make anybody believe anything I want them to
8.	I expect a great deal from other people	I like to do things for other people
9.	I like to be the center of attention	I prefer to blend in with the crowd
10.	I am much like everybody else	I am an extraordinary person
11.	I always know what I am doing	Sometimes I am not sure of what I am doing
12.	I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people	I find it easy to manipulate people
13.	Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me	People always seem to recognize my authority
14.	I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so	When people compliment me, I sometimes get embarrassed
15.	I try not to be a show off	I am apt to show off if I get the chance
16.	I am more capable than other people	There is a lot that I can learn from other people

State Anxiety

Spielberger et al. (1983)

Scoring: Add the weighted scores for the twenty items, including reversed scores. Range: 20 to 80.

Reverse scoring: Items 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, and 20

Read each statement and choose the option to indicate how you feel right now, at this moment.	Not at All	Sometimes	Often	Very Much So
1. I feel calm	1	2	3	4
2. I feel secure	1	2	3	4
3. I am tense	1	2	3	4
4. I feel strained	1	2	3	4
5. I feel at ease	1	2	3	4
6. I feel upset	1	2	3	4
7. I am presently worried over possible misfortunes	1	2	3	4
8. I feel satisfied	1	2	3	4
9. I feel frightened	1	2	3	4
10. I feel comfortable	1	2	3	4
11. I feel self-confident	1	2	3	4
12. I feel nervous	1	2	3	4
13. I am jittery	1	2	3	4
14. I feel indecisive	1	2	3	4
15. I am relaxed	1	2	3	4
16. I feel content	1	2	3	4
17. I am worried	1	2	3	4
18. I feel confused	1	2	3	4
19. I feel steady	1	2	3	4
20. I feel pleasant	1	2	3	4

Impression Management Tactics

Tsai et al. (2005)

Scoring: Higher scores indicate more image management tactics.

Notes: 1-6 are aimed at verbal IM tactics; 7 captures nonverbal.

During the interview, I:	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1. Demonstrated my knowledge and expertise.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Described my skills and abilities in an attractive way.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Described my skills and experience.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Tried to draw the interviewer's attention to my records of accomplishment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Emphasized the qualities that I possessed.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Tried to convince the interviewer that my behavior is good enough to use as a model for others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Used friendly nonverbal cues like smiling and nodding.	1	2	3	4	5	6