"I'M JUST SO BUSY": THE CREATION OF A BUSYNESS FAÇADE AS AN IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT TACTIC

by

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ABSTRACT

AMBER GREENWOOD. "I'm Just So Busy": The Creation of a Busyness Façade as an Impression Management Tactic. (Under the direction of DRS. ERIC HEGGESTAD AND AMY CANEVELLO)

Busyness, or how busy someone is, has increasingly become a topic of conversation in day-to-day life. Research has previously explored how people use their time and how people perceive their available time, or lack thereof, but there is no clear answer as to why people tell others that they are busy and what it is they are trying to accomplish by doing so. Drawing on impression management research, this paper proposes that people signal to others that they are busy so that the audience has a positive impression of them. The concept of the busyness facade is introduced, which includes behaviors and verbal statements that are intentionally enacted by individuals to signal to others that they have a lot to do or limited available time. Exactly how and why people engage in this busyness facade is explored in two studies using semi-structured interviews and an online, vignette survey. Overall, evidence is found for the existence of busyness facades and a better understanding of how people display busyness is gained, but the studies are unable to identify a clear motive for why busyness facades would be used as an impression management tactic. Additional findings and research directions are discussed.

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DEDICATION

For Team Greenwood

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INTRODUCTION

People frequently tell others how busy they are. A common response to the question- "How are you?" is some version of "Fine, I've just been so busy lately" (Burnison, 2020; Rogers, 2020). Despite a growing discussion around the experience of being busy (i.e. Dickinson, 2016; Pinsker, 2017; Racco, 2017) and perceiving ourselves as busy (i.e. Berry, 1979; Robinson & Godbey, 2005), there is little understanding of why people are so apt to tell others they are busy. That is, it is not clear what perception people seek to create, or if they are seeking to create an impression at all, when they say that they have been busy. This investigation focused on what image people hope to create when they signal to another that they are busy.

As part of this work, I defined the concept of a busyness façade, which includes behaviors and verbal statements that are intentionally enacted by individuals to signal to others that they have a lot to do or limited available time. A façade is an outward image that conceals a less pleasant truth. I used the term façade here to indicate that the busyness façade could be an accurate representation of the person's level of busyness or it could be an exaggerated expression of busyness. If it is an exaggerated expression of busyness, then the façade may be concealing some sort of disinterest or avoidance that a person wishes to keep private.

While the existing literature had begun to explore busyness (e.g. Bellezza, et al., 2016; Gershuny, 2005), many questions remained about the motivation to appear busy and, in turn, the outcomes associated with being perceived as busy. I will define and begin to explore the parameters of the busyness façade, including when, how, and to whom people present as busy.

I will anchor these busyness behaviors within the impression management literature. Impression management is the process by which people create, maintain, protect, or control the impressions others form of them (Bolino, et al., 2008; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). In this process, actors (i.e. an individual trying to impression manage) and the audience (i.e. people potentially having their impressions influenced) are using contextual cues from their surroundings, culture, and other people to understand and navigate situations (Gardner & Martinko, 1988). These contextual cues direct actors about which behaviors are best to engage in to bring about a desired impression from the audience in the specific moment (Gardner & Martinko, 1988). Applying the busyness façade phenomenon to this impression management process provides a method for how people can express busyness by using contextual cues to know when busy behaviors may be an appropriate tool to manage others' impressions. When people want to be perceived as busy, they can present a busyness façade through impression management.

The impression management literature has identified five tactics, or types of images that people seek to manage their impressions toward: self-promotion, exemplification, ingratiation, supplication, and intimidation (Bolino, 1999; Jones and Pittman, 1982). I argue that busyness façades are likely to be used by people as a way to create three of these impressions: self-promotion, ingratiation, and exemplification. I further argue that busyness façades can be used to successfully manage impressions because being busy is valued in American culture. When actors display values that are held by the audience, the actors can manage the audience's impressions of them more effectively. This application of impression management will expand the boundaries in

which impression management can operate as well as provide a theoretical framework that explains the motivations for and use of busyness façades.

In this dissertation I explore the topic of busyness and how busyness facades are used as a tool for impression management. I first present a qualitative study exploring how people discuss busyness and use the busyness facade in their day-to-day life. I then build on Study 1 by presenting an experimental study in which people were encouraged to engage in impression management to test if situations with a greater desire to impression manage invoked greater use of busyness than in situations with less desire to impression manage. Lastly, I discuss the combined findings regarding how and when people may use busyness facades and how this relates to impression management.

BUSYNESS LITERATURE

Scientific research on busyness has not considered why people might use busyness to manage impressions and create a busyness facade. However, other aspects of busyness have been investigated. In this section, I provide brief overviews of how busyness has been addressed in the scientific literature, specifically time use and feeling pressed for time. I will discuss how the literature has historically conceptualized busyness and then address how I am building on the literature.

Time Use

Time and perceptions of time have been topics of interest for decades. How people use time, how they orient themselves to time, and how time influences decision making have been topics of considerable interest across academic disciplines, including psychology (e.g. Gross, 1987; Macan, 1994), management (e.g. Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), sociology (e.g. Gross, 1987), communication studies (e.g. Ballard & Seibold, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2006), economics (e.g. Aguiar & Hurst, 2007; Becker, 1965), consumer research (e.g. Berry, 1979), and anthropology (e.g. Gross, 1987). For instance, economics has contributed research focusing on how people allocate their time and how those time allocation decisions relate to working hours, money, and production (Aguiar & Hurst, 2007). This discipline explores the point of diminishing returns (i.e., that, eventually, effort stops resulting in the desired outcome) and posits that employees have an ideal balance between income and hours worked (Becker, 1965). Psychology, in contrast, has often focused on an individual's subjective perspectives on time (i.e., how they feel time is passing as opposed to how it is actually passing) and how time affects decision making (Gross, 1987). For example, this line of research has shown that

people's subjective perspectives of how close they view a deadline and how quickly they feel it is approaching will influence their decision to start work on a project (Macan, 1994).

A main theme in time research is studying how people allocate the hours they have in a day and how this allocation can change over time. Research shows that, relative to previous decades, highly educated people work are working longer hours, men are beginning to contribute more to maintaining the home (i.e. non-paid work), and women's time at paid work has substantially increased (Aguiar & Hurst, 2007). However, both men and women have increased leisure time now compared to what they had a few decades ago (Aguiar & Hurst, 2007; Robinson & Godbey, 2005). The time use research stream has contributed to our understanding of how people actually use their time and how people believe they have used their time.

Feeling Pressed for Time

Beyond how people use their time, researchers have also looked at busyness from the perspective of how many tasks a person has to do and how much time they have to complete those tasks. For example, economic researchers have explored the busyness of board members by examining the number of boards on which they sit (e.g. Falato, et al., 2014) and the busyness of nurses by how quickly they must perform tasks and the number of tasks they need to perform (e.g. Govasli & Solvoll, 2020). Thus, from this perspective, busyness is related to the tension between things that have to be done and the time available to do them.

Wilcox et al., (2016) conceptualized being busy as a subjective state categorized by the number of tasks in which an individual is engaged. They found that being busy

minimizes the negative effects of missing a deadline and that busy people maintain motivation to finish tasks even after deadlines have passed. This continued motivation despite a passed deadline is attributed to busy people not internalizing the failing of a missed deadline in the same way as less busy people. This mentality occurs because people believe busyness is, in itself, an indicator of doing well and using time effectively (Gershuny, 2005; Wilcox, et al., 2016).

Despite evidence that people may have more leisure time than they had in the past (Aguiar & Hurst, 2007), feelings of time scarcity are often seen as a problem and affect individual's decision making (Berry, 1979; Hornick & Zakay, 1996; Strazdins, et al., 2011). The problem stems, not from a lack of discretionary time, but rather, a sense that the available time is not sufficient to allow people to accomplish everything they need and want to do (Berry, 1979). Robinson and Godbey (2005) report a similar phenomenon, but refer to it as a time pressure. They suggest that people are steadily feeling more pressed for time and that it is the perception, not the actual hours, that drives behavior. Since people make decisions based on their perceptions, this is the information to consider when examining outcomes. There is evidence to support the notion that feeling pressed for time has negative consequences (i.e. Jacobs & Gerson, 2001; Wressle & Samuelsson, 2014). Across rural, urban, and suburban demographics, 60% of American adults reported feeling too busy to enjoy life at least sometimes and 12% felt too busy to enjoy life all or most of the time (Parker, et al., 2018). The number of people reporting feeling too busy to enjoy life at least sometimes climbed to 74% among respondents with children under the age of 18 (Parker, et al., 2018).

Perceptions of busyness have also emerged as a topic of interest in consumer research. Feeling busy (or perceiving that one has a lack of time) influences where and how people spend their money. When people feel busy, they buy time-saving products and are more brand loyal so that they do not have to spend time making decisions (Berry, 1979). Further, when people perceive themselves as busy, they feel they must spend their leisure time productively to make the time off worth it, such as by collecting notable experiences like traveling to a new country or staying in extraordinary hotels (Keinan & Kivetz, 2011). A person's perception of time is powerful and this research provides a strong example of how feeling busy can alter behavior.

Busyness has been researched from several different perspectives, such as how many tasks people have to complete and how busy people feel they are, and is generally thought of as having much to do within a set period of time. I will be expanding on this view of busyness. Instead of focusing on actual busyness and the associated consequences, I am focusing on how people signal to others that they are busy so that those others will draw particular, positive impressions of them. I propose that people say they are busy, regardless of the extent to which they are actually busy, to create a desired image and perception from others.

BUSYNESS AS AN EXPRESSION OF CULTURAL VALUES

The United States has an extensive history of valuing long hours of hard work, dating back to the 1600s and the emergence of the Protestant work ethic among colonizers (Schor, 1992). The trend of valuing hard work continued into the early 1900s, during which time workers' rights discussions took place. There were campaigns against shortening the work week to forty hours because the "Devil finds work for idle hands," implying that working was respectable and excess leisure time would lead to inappropriate behaviors. Over time, productivity and hard work have become entrenched as admirable traits and revered values in the United States.

Productivity and hard work continue to be valued aspects of US culture. Work is seen as a value and a goal in and of itself (Du Bois, 1955; Furnham, 2021). The US is a capitalist country where organizations are competitive and market driven (Kasser, et al., 2007; Schneider, et al., 2013), meaning that employees are valued for being busy, productive, efficient, and helping to hit monetary goals. The degree to which people who enter a new culture adapt to the culture can range from resistance to integration, where integration is the process of internalizing the values of the external culture (Kim & Rousseau, 2019). Cross-cultural research suggests that integrating to the point of personally internalizing the culture, in this case capitalism and productivity, can lead to positive workplace outcomes, such as acquiring new skills and building supportive workplace relationships (Kim & Rousseau, 2019). Additional research supports the notion that internalizing the capitalism culture can lead to positive workplace outcomes, but to the detriment of personal outcomes, such as free time and interpersonal relationships (Kasser, et al., 2007). To elaborate, the cultural pressure to be busy can

carry over to personal time, and Americans often feel the need to make their leisure time productive, squeezing the most out of their time off (Du Bois, 1955; Keinan & Kivetz, 2011).

I argue that busyness is perceived to have value because busyness is an expression of a culture that idolizes work and productivity. This type of culture motivates people to have others view them as busy. I will discuss three theories that support the concept that busyness facades are influenced by cultural values. I will then use theory of impression management to understand the image people want to create and the outcomes individuals hope to achieve when they tell others that they are busy.

Busyness Façade Driven by Cultural Values

First, Hatch's (1993) model of dynamic organizational culture provides a lens to understand how a culture that focuses on busyness can be created and sustained. Although not specifically a busyness or national culture model, the model supports the conceptualization that being busy is representative of values held by US culture. The dynamic organizational culture model proposes that values are conveyed through symbols and artifacts, which are demonstrable outcomes of values, along with how these outcomes are created and used (Hatch, 1993). Applying this model to busyness, the societal value held is productivity and hard work. This concept is evidenced by the long history of the Protestant work ethic (Schor, 1992) and by the prevalence of a productivity-focused capitalist culture throughout organizations in the United States (Kasser, et al., 2007; Schneider, et al., 2013). This capitalist culture leads to individuals curating artifacts and symbols that reflect the values of productivity and hard work.

Busyness façades are these artifacts and symbols that express the overarching values of productivity and hard work.

People reflect societal values to demonstrate their own personal value. By working hard and producing, or by giving the impression of working hard and producing (i.e., being busy), people can demonstrate their personal value. Given that the impression of working hard and producing is a busyness facade, and these behaviors are rewarded for reflecting the desired values and the people are more respected, the value of busyness is steadily reinforced and able to influence more behaviors.

Second, support for the busyness façade as an expression of a cultural value and a contributing factor to personal value can be found in social identity theory. Social identity theory is rooted in perceived group status and the need for individuals to be included and respected within a group (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Stets & Burke, 2000). Individuals' self-esteem and identity are tied into the concept that they fit into their group (Trepte & Loy, 2017), and will therefore behave in such a way as to demonstrate that they belong. Busyness is known to be valued in American groups (Du Bois, 1955; Schneider, et al., 2013; Schor, 1992), thus individuals who want to show they belong may create a business façade in order to enhance the sense that they fit in. An individual's desire to strengthen their social identity by demonstrating busyness, and therefore showing the values that align with the group, has the potential to result in outcomes that reinforce the behavior. For instance, signaling the "right" values can help the individual rise in an informal hierarchy, increase their self-esteem, and foster feelings of belonging (Magee & Galinksy, 2008).

Third, empirical evidence supports my propositions that people create busyness facades to manage impressions and that these facades are effective because they express cultural values. Gershuny (2005) claims that busyness has morphed into a status symbol to be admired. Excess leisure time was once the symbol of the well-to-do, but now having a full calendar and working long hours indicates high status as it is "now a characteristic of the best-placed individuals in the society" (Gershuny, 2005, pp 312). Likewise, Bellezza et al., (2016), who had participants rate the perceived status and human capital of Facebook posts and letters describing the activities of imaginary people, found that those who were perceived as busy were also perceived to be more competent, ambitious, and in-demand than their less-busy counterparts.

These three research streams support the idea that busyness is an expression of American cultural values, which include productivity and hard work. People will engage in busyness facades to fit in because of its potential to foster inclusion and increase status.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Impression management is a process through which an individual attempts to create, maintain, protect, or control the impressions others form of them (Bolino, et al., 2008; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). An actor engages in impression management to a target audience using verbal and non-verbal cues to influence the audience. There are two components of impression management: the motivation driving the desire to manage the impression and the behaviors the individual uses in an attempt to create the desired impressions (Leary and Kowalski, 1990). The motives are often categorized into five tactics, or classifications, with specific behaviors supporting each classification of motive (Jones & Pittman, 1982).

Five Classifications of Motives

About 40 years ago, Jones and Pittman (1982), who focused on strategic self-presentation, introduced five tactics which they described as distinct forms of self-presentation behaviors. Since that time, these tactics have been incorporated into the impression management literature. However, there is some confusion about the precise nature of these tactics in the literature. That is, while Jones and Pittman initially described the tactics as forms of behavior, others have tended to conceptualize them as motives (e.g., Bolino & Turnley, 2003). I adopt the view that the tactics are best represented as motives. Defined in this way, the tactics include the desires to: be seen as competent (self-promotion), be seen as dedicated (exemplification), be liked (ingratiation), be seen as needy (supplication), and be seen as intimidating/threatening (intimidation) (Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Bolino et al., 2008; Jones & Pittman, 1982).

To be seen in the ways indicated by the motives, people enact signals that they hope will lead others to see them in desired ways. For example, a person who desires to be seen as competent will behave in ways that they believe will signal that they are competent, such as by talking about their recent accomplishments, insinuating that they know high-profile people, or drawing attention to the fact that they performed better than others. Thus, each motive is likely to have characteristic forms of behaviors and verbal statements that people enact in the hopes of creating desired impressions. While the motives are distinct, they are not mutually exclusive. For example, a person can desire to be seen as competent, likeable, and dedicated all at the same time, or can use one motive classification to accomplish another, such as engaging in more likable behaviors in order to later use intimidation behaviors more effectively (Jones & Pittman, 1982).

Many behaviors can be used as a tool to accomplish a motive, but in this paper I am focusing on busyness behaviors specifically. I argue that individuals use busyness to bring about their desired impression in others—what I call the busyness facade. While busyness is not a motive in its own right, presenting oneself as busy can be information that helps to achieve some of the five motives. Specifically, I believe that people use busyness to help achieve three of the five desired impressions: self-promotion, exemplification, and ingratiation. In the following section I am going to discuss these motives and how busyness can be a signal to others about the desired impression.

Self-promotion

Self-promotion is the motive to be seen as competent and successful. This image can be useful to gain status or be seen as a good worker (Jones & Pittman, 1982). The

behaviors people use to create this impression can include boasting about accomplishments or drawing attention to something in which one takes pride.

I argue that a busyness façade is a useful behavior for the self-promotion motive because busyness can be implied to stem from admirable internal qualities that make a person successful. An individual who claims to be busy is viewed as more competent than an individual who does not (Bellezza, et al, 2016). Bellezza et al. (2016) suggest that busyness was viewed more favorably than not being busy because busyness and a lack of leisure time are modern status symbols associated with perceived human capital characteristics, such as competence and ambition. For example, if an individual tells an acquaintance about all of the client meetings, board meetings, important tasks and responsibilities they have, then the acquaintance may think that the individual must be competent and capable to be able to balance so many responsibilities. Engaging in busyness façades can lead to perceptions of competence, which is the desired image.

Exemplification

Exemplification is the motive to be seen as dedicated. This motive can be achieved through actions that seemingly go above and beyond what is expected (Bolino, et al., 2008). Behaviors driven by this motive may include the demonstration of self-sacrifice, drawing attention to going out of one's way to help others, or volunteering for tasks even with a full schedule (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Long, 2017).

People may use the busyness façade to create the impression that they are dedicated. Displaying a sacrifice, such as sacrificing time or personal goals, to prioritize another task would exemplify the individual as dedicated. This behavior indicates busyness because it shows that out of a large number of tasks towards which one could

turn their attention, including personal ones, they are choosing to dedicate their time and attention to this task. In a work context, the exemplification motive would lead on to desire to be viewed as an ideal, dedicated employee. In the United States, workplaces are typically competitive and market driven (Schneider, et al., 2013) and an ideal worker would match and perpetuate that culture (Hatch, 1993). Therefore, engaging in a task for the good of the organization, despite having many other tasks to do and having to sacrifice personal time (i.e. being busy), could be expected to lead to perceptions of dedication.

Ingratiation

Ingratiation is the motive to be liked and viewed favorably (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Ingratiating behaviors can include conforming to other people's opinions or doing favors for others to arouse affection (Jones & Pittman, 1982). A more specific example of ingratiation may be buying a gift for a coworker to elicit their favorable view of the self.

I argue busyness facades can be driven by ingratiating motives. A common behavior used to accomplish ingratiating motives is opinion mimicking, where an individual seemingly adopts the values and opinions of the target to whom they wish to ingratiate themselves (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Opinion mimicking helps the individual seem relatable and similar to the target, and this relatability can make the individual agreeable to their target. Displaying busyness is a form of opinion mimicking when the target admires or displays busyness themselves. Admiring busyness is common in American culture, as hard work and productivity are well respected values and both values are supported and implied through busyness. Therefore, an individual can engage

in busyness façades to ingratiate themselves to a target that holds these values and opinions.

To summarize, I propose that signaling one's busyness to others meets three of the five fundamental impression management tactics: self-promotion, exemplification, and ingratiation. Next, I will introduce my specific research questions and the studies I used to address them.

STUDY 1

The goal of this set of investigations is to establish if busyness facades are being used to impression manage, and if so, how and why. In Study 1, I will use interviews to capture examples of busyness façades. I aim to find evidence that people are using busyness façades to impression manage and then to understand the context in which this occurs. There are multiple elements to the context surrounding busyness façades, such how frequently people use a busyness façade, how people create the façade, the conditions under which people use the façade, and the impressions people try to achieve with the façade. My first research question addresses whether people engage in busyness facades to manage impressions.

Research Question 1: Are individuals using busyness facades to impression manage to a target?

I was also interested in understanding how and in which situations people engage in these busyness façades. I analyzed the stories and information that emerge from the interviews to understand what actions form busyness façades. I examined the characteristics of the situations that elicit busyness facades, and the impressions people are trying to create when engaging in busyness façades.

Research Question 2: What words, actions, and/or behaviors are individuals using to create busyness facades?

Research Question 3: What are the characteristics of situations in which people are using busyness facades?

Research Question 4: What impressions are people trying to bring about with the busyness façade?

Methods

Participants and Data Collection

I recruited a convenience sample of 37 individuals who were at least 18 years old. Participants were 62.2% female and 37.8% male. Thirty-two participants reported their age; they ranged in age from 27 to 67 years old, with a mean of 36.8 (*SD*=11.06) and a median of 33. Most participants had a four-year degree or greater (86.5%), and 13.5% had a high school degree or some college. Participants were 75.7% White/Caucasian, 13.5% Black/African American, 2.7% Hispanic, 2.7% Asian, and 5.4% identified as other. The majority of participants were employed, with 75.7% reporting that they were employed full time, 10.8% reporting they were employed part time, 2.7% reporting that they were unemployed and looking for work, 8.1% reporting they had retired, and 2.7% reporting that they were students. Participants worked in a wide range of industries, including, for example, water treatment, education, healthcare, law, and the military.

Participants were recruited through social media. I posted a description of the study to my personal Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn pages. Others were allowed to share my post. To be eligible for the study, participants had to be born and raised in the United States, be a native English speaker, and have access to a smartphone, laptop, or desktop device to participate in a virtual interview. Individuals interested in participating followed a link to a Qualtrics survey. The Qualtrics survey provided informed consent, and if agreed to continue, requested basic demographic information. Individuals could voluntarily provide their email address to opt in to be eligible for an interview.[1] It cannot

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[1] The survey also asked participants to reflect on their schedule and self-report how many hours they spend on various tasks in a typical week. However, because I am focusing more specifically on how we display our busyness, not on how we use our time, those data are not reported here. The full survey can be found in appendix A.

be determined how many survey responses we received from real humans because the survey was overwhelmed by bots. Examples of a bot submission can include nonsense answers, answers that contain characters from another language, clearly randomized email addresses, or submitting the exact same line of data over and over again. Some bots can fake human answers better than others.

I tried to identify the potential real humans and I reached out to 111 email addresses provided; However, I believe many of these turned out to be bots as well. Of those 111 emails, 65 did not respond or I received a bounce back email saying it was not an active email address. I was able to schedule an interview with 46 people. Six people did not show up for the interview or canceled and never rescheduled. Forty people attended their interview, but three were dropped due to not meeting requirements to participate, such as being from a different country or not providing consent. This left me with 37 participants with completed interviews.

Procedure

I developed an interview guide through an iterative process. After drafting and heavily revising my interview guide, I conducted three pilot interviews to test how long the interview took to complete and to identify probing questions and questions that needed clarifying. The interview guide was designed to elicit stories about times when participants tried to manage the impression that others had formed of them, specifically by using busyness, and times when others tried to display busyness to the participant.

I began with a few demographic questions, such as age, level of education, and employment status, to build rapport and then moved into more personal stories. I asked participants to tell me about times they mentioned their busyness in conversation with

others (e.g., "Can you tell me about a time when you mentioned busyness, or being busy, to someone?"). I then steered the conversation toward instances when the participant may have created a busyness façade to elicit a desired impression (e.g., "Have you ever told someone, or implied, that you were busy so that they would have a particular opinion or image of you?"). I asked probing questions regarding how and why they may engage in these behaviors, such as what type of behaviors someone may engage in to create a busyness façade (e.g. "Did you say or do anything to demonstrate your busyness?") and why they would want to have the façade (e.g. "How did you want to be seen? Why did you want this person to have this impression?"). I also asked questions exploring if other people displayed busyness to the participant (e.g. "Have you ever felt that someone has used busyness so that you form a specific impression of them?") The final version of the interview protocol is provided in Appendix B.

Interviews were conducted on the videoconferencing platform Zoom. They were conducted one-on-one and in private to ensure the participants felt comfortable sharing their stories with me. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. I conducted 37 semi-structured interviews, which typically lasted between 15 to 30 minutes. After conducting 28 of the interviews, I began analyzing the demographic survey questions and interview responses to determine whether I was approaching saturation. Saturation occurs when the incorporation of new data does not provide any substantial insights to the topic (Aldiabat & Navenec, 2018; Glaser, Strauss, Strutzel, 1968). I decided to continue interviewing at this stage to capture a larger percentage of men, non-Caucasian participants, and participants with a wider range of education levels. With an additional nine interviews to boost these demographics, saturation was reached (Francis, et al., 2010). While the

specific instances of the way people used busyness differed from reviewing the interview

data, I believe the core information had been identified and no new situational contexts or

targets were emerging.

Results

Research Question 1. My first research question was whether individuals create busyness façades as an impression management strategy. To address this research question, I examined responses to Question 7 in the interview guide ("Have you ever told someone, or implied, that you were busy so that they would have a particular opinion or image of you?"). Out of the 37 participants, 64.86% (or 24 participants) indicated that they had used busyness façades to manage others' impressions. Thirteen participants (or 35.14%) reported they had not used busyness façades to manage others' impressions; however, 12 of those 13 participants provided examples of times they had still shown or displayed busyness in some way. For example, John (a pseudonym), when asked, "Have you ever exaggerated how busy you are?" said:

> "Probably for the sake of antisocialness. I'm a big home body and sometimes I just don't want to go do things, but you run out of excuses to tell people why you're so at home. So it's just like, oh, well, I've been so busy. I'm so sorry. Even though you might not have been that busy."

This statement shows John used busyness to manage the impressions others formed of him.

Similarly, other participants who had indicated that they did not use busyness to manage others' impressions stated that they had shown or mentioned their busyness in some way. When prompted to elaborate on why they engaged in a behavior to display busyness, some stated that they used the excuse of being busy to avoid a situation or to not hurt someone's feelings. Thus, in answer to our research question one, many

individuals are using busyness facades to manage impressions, even though they may not always be aware that they are doing so.

Research Question 2. My second research question was about the words and actions that people use to create a busyness façade. From the interviews, 182 examples of busyness were gathered at various points throughout the interview. Some examples emerged during discussions of mentioning busyness (e.g. Questions 4, 5, and 6: "Can you think about a recent conversation you had where you or someone else mentioned that they were busy or talked about their busyness?", "Can you tell me about a time when you mentioned busyness, or being busy, to someone?", and "Can you tell me about a second time when you mentioned busyness, or being busy, to someone?"), while others emerged during discussions of if they had ever exaggerated their busyness (e.g. Question 8:"Have you ever exaggerated how busy you are?"). Using iterative, inductive analysis, I analyzed the busyness quotes looking for patterns and themes (Tracy, 2019), capturing themes about busyness behaviors until no new themes emerged. I used the constant comparative method to compare quotes and adjust themes and theme definitions until reaching the final version (Tracy, 2019). The quotes often fall into more than one theme, as one quote can reference more than one busyness behavior.

I categorized the busyness quotes into six themes: *Displays of busyness*, *time demands*, *direct statements of busyness*, *neglecting self*, *being unavailable or nonresponsive*, and *being overwhelmed/stressed*. These themes are defined in Table 1. In addition, Table 1 also includes sample quotes and an indication about how many times the themes appeared in a quote and by how many participants the theme was mentioned. *Displays of busyness* include behaviors and actions that demonstrate being busy without

directly stating busyness or listing out tasks. Examples of this can include sending emails outside of working hours, CC'ing extra people on an email, swapping computer screens when someone gets near, or showing up early to the office.

The *time demands* theme includes verbally listing out tasks and events that are taking up your time. Examples of this include stating all the tasks you have for the day or venting about all the things you are trying to get done. *Direct statement of busyness* includes when a person explicitly told an interaction partner that they were busy. This theme requires the use of the literal word "busy." *Neglecting self* consists of behaviors where participants are not taking care of their physical or personal wellbeing, such as by not sleeping enough, skipping meals, or not taking any personal time.

Being unavailable or nonresponsive is when people do not respond to others or are unable to spare any time; this includes people not answering texts/calls/emails, cutting meetings or conversations short, or not attending events. Lastly, the *overwhelmed or stressed* theme is defined by words or actions that demonstrate to others that you are overwhelmed or stressed. This can include stating you are stressed or nonverbally showing you are overwhelmed.

Table 1

Categorization of Busyness Behaviors

Theme	Definition	Number of Instances *(Number of Participants)*	Exemplars
Displays of Busyness	Displaying actions or behaviors to demonstrate to others that you are busy, attempting to appear busy to others	27 *(17)*	"…it's really hard to know what people are actually working on, especially when you just sit behind a computer all day or you have headphones in or something. And so I do feel like I will send emails and, yeah, I could probably walk over there and ask or send a phone call, but I want you to see that I am in the office at this certain time or working on stuff when I get the email. So if that's me responding to an email first thing in the morning on Saturday, or whatever, I want you to know that I'm active and understanding what's going on." Daisy "Well, or maybe you're on your computer and you're reading stuff on the internet, and then your boss comes by, and you real quick change browser to some work things, so it looks like you've been working when really you're sitting there." Ein "Yeah, I think other than verbally saying that you're busy, it could be, I feel like between classes, a lot of people will look at their phones at their email and stuff and make it seem like they have a lot going on that they need to check into or working longer than other people

are working, which is kind of signaling, I have more to do than all of you. So I'm staying later, coming in early or whatever. One of the main things that come to mind."
Henry

| Time Demands | Verbally describing tasks and events that take up your time | 72 (31) | "I feel like recently in the last couple weeks I had a day that was just really busy. And I work from home mostly right now, and so my partner usually asks me what have I got scheduled for the day. And I said, "Okay, well I have a 9, a 10, and an 11. I have a meeting at noon. I have a 1, 2, 3, and 4, and then I've got to go pick up the dog.""
Artemis

"A lot of my day, both at work and out of work is a Tetris game. It's what I like to say. I try to pack too much in 24 hours than I need to."
Barbara

"I have had that latter conversation multiple times in the last few weeks, where I have specifically mentioned the things that are making me more busy, which are, as I said earlier, the impending trial that I'm dealing with."
Irving |

| Direct Statement of Busyness | Directly stating that you are busy | 63 (28) | "So everybody likes to come to my door because I'm the nurse manager. And I have an open door policy, and so people are forever knocking on my door and going, "Hey, are you busy?" And I'm like, "I'm kind of always busy. I'm not just chilling in here waiting to talk to somebody."" Belle

"I'm sure my boss has asked me what I've done today before in the past, and I said, "Oh, I've been real busy," because I want my boss to think I was busy, or to know that I was busy." Donna

"Because that's the question that we get, "Are you busy?" And my response is, "Always, I am always busy."" Miles |

Neglecting Self	Not taking care of yourself, not eating or sleeping enough, not taking personal time or vacation days	9 *(8)*	"And people talking about things like how little sleep they got, or just they've barely had time to eat today, and that kind of thing." Artemis "When you do see them, they look haggard, that kind of thing. Visually you can see that they've been working a lot, especially with the guys I've worked with, you can see it. You can see it in their eyes because they work two to three days straight or two to three nights straight, have one day off and then they're back on shift… You can see it in their eyes, they got bags, they're grouchy and they're fun to pick on when they're like that." Tony "And some of the lawyers, and support staff too, but mostly lawyers, it started getting to the end of the year and they hadn't used very much vacation." Matthew
Being Unavailable or Nonresponsive	Not responding to texts/calls/emails, avoiding social events, cutting conversations short, unavailable to provide time to someone	35 *(21)*	"And as far as implying that you're busy, not hearing back from her is a good implication that she's busy and kind of wants me to know that she's busy, because otherwise I usually hear back from her." Coco "One of the ways is actually, a lack of words or a lack of communication. Like if somebody's trying to call or trying to text, and there is no response. No consistent responses, because I don't have time to get up in touch with you, because I'm doing something else, I'm busy with something else." Miles

			"I'm sure I have. Let's say if it, and this is going to sound awful. I apologize for everybody that might listen to this later. In life you're going to encounter sometimes people that you really don't want to talk to. You may come across them in passing. You go back to your hometown and you see somebody you really don't want to have an interaction with. Whatever the fill in the blank, whatever the situation is. And you might inflate the situation to kind of expedite the conversation that you're having with that person." Dan
Overwhelmed/ Stressed	Showing nonverbal cues or stating that you are overwhelmed or stressed	11 *(10)*	"I mean, even in the exaggerated busyness, a lot of it tends to be an outwards emotional response. Honestly, that's probably the way I do it." Jay "If I want to convey that I'm busy, I guess, act stressed out and tired to show that you have been busy." Tommy "And oftentimes, in my experience with these recent conversations, it's been things like, "I had structure at one point in my life, and now I don't know how to create structure for myself. And everything just feels really overwhelming."" Lacy

Note. Frequency of the six themes of busyness behaviors, with the behaviors' definitions and example quotes.

The themes show us what words and actions people use most frequently to create a busyness façade. *Time demands*, *direct statement of busyness*, and *being unavailable or nonresponsive* are the top reported behaviors to indicate busyness. *Time demands* is the most common way to express busyness, with 72 instances and 83.8% of participants referencing this category of behavior. *Direct statement of busyness* is the second most common theme, with 63 instances and 75.7% of participants referencing the behavior. *Being unavailable or nonresponsive* is the third most common theme, with 35 instances and 56.8% of participants referencing this behavior.

Research Question 3. My third research question is about the nature of situations in which people engage in a busyness façade. Of the 182 quotes in which participants described using busyness, 144 included information about the situations in which the participants used busyness. I inductively coded the quotes for patterns into which the nature of the situations fell. Three broad categories emerged for setting and eight categories for the target of the behavior.

The three setting categories of the busyness quotes were personal life (n=71; 49.3%), workplace (n=68; 47.2%), and school setting (n=5; 3.5%). Personal life included anything that was family oriented, leisure time activities, or household chores. The workplace setting included interactions with bosses, subordinates, or coworkers, meetings, or client interactions. School included university interactions or interactions with other students.

In addition to the situational context, I also captured the target of the behavior. Out of the 182 busyness examples, 139 identified at least one target. Some examples identified more than one target, resulting in a total of 158 identified targets. The targets

identified were as follows: coworker (n=42; 26.6%), friend (n=28; 17.7%), boss (n=23;

14.6%), family (n=21; 13.3%), acquaintance (n=17; 10.8%), partner (n=12; 7.6%),

subordinate (n=7; 4.4%), and other (e.g., therapist, parents talking to other parents, work

client; n=8; 5.1%).

Research Question 4. My fourth research question involved understanding the

desired impression participants want to create when engaging in busyness façades.

Interview responses that described busyness behaviors were coded using the five motive

classifications from the Jones and Pittman (1982) impression management taxonomy

(self-promotion, exemplification, ingratiation, supplication, and intimidation). I focused

on the text that most directly described the action or verbal statements displaying

busyness. Below is an example quote:

> **Belle**: And so I felt I needed to come back with, "Oh yeah, I've got so much going
> on this week because I'm going to come in early to do some evals or I'm going to
> stay until night shift, gets there to do some evals." So I feel like we were talking
> about busyness, sort of, it became this, she talked about it and I talked about it
> then I'm sure when she records tonight, it'll be something about how busy her day
> was here at the hospital. And that's generally how my conversation goes as well. I
> think we do use the word busy, that we're busy a lot.

Two teams, each including two coders, coded the 182 busyness quotes. Each team

was assigned half of the quotes, so all quotes were coded twice. Coders were provided

coding guidelines (see appendix C) and trained to code the behaviors using the

impression management taxonomy. Coders were told to assign a code of one through six

to each quote. Each of the five motives corresponded to a code, with code six being a "no

clear fit" option. For training, I met with the coders, and we discussed the taxonomy and

walked through examples of quotes that fell into each of the categories. Coders then

practiced on their own before we met again to discuss any questions they had.

The coders read each quote and indicated which of the five motives seemed to be expressed in the example. I calculated interrater reliability using Cohen's Kappa. Team 1 had an unweighted interrater reliability score of .205, while the value for Team 2 was .098. Based on standards described by Landis and Koch (1977), values of Cohen's Kappa between 0.00-0.2 indicate slight agreement and 0.21-0.4 indicate fair agreement. However, a value of 0.41 marks the lowest threshold of moderate agreement and 0.61 marks the lowest threshold of substantial agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Since my interrater reliability scores did not indicate moderate or substantial agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977), I decided to test whether providing more context to the behaviors improved the level of agreement. Originally, I included only the text that described the action or verbal statement displaying busyness. However, in reflecting on that decision and the low levels of agreement observed, I thought that additional context that came about from conversations with the participants may provide more insight into participants' motives and therefore lead to an increase in rater agreement when assigning a motive. I had a new set of coders code each of the quotes, but with additional contextual details included this time. I chose new coders to minimize any bias from having read through and coded quotes previously.

For this second round of coding, I pulled 51 busyness quotes that included additional context beyond just the busyness behavior, such as audience, setting, and/or self-reflection on the behavior. Not all of the descriptions of busyness behaviors had additional context. Here is Belle's sample quote from above, but including additional context around the behavior:

> **Belle**: But I also think it's, in some ways, she was telling me how busy she was. And so I felt I needed to come back with, "Oh yeah, I've got so much going on

this week because I'm going to come in early to do some evals or I'm going to stay until night shift, gets there to do some evals." So I feel like we were talking about busyness, sort of, it became this, she talked about it and I talked about it then I'm sure when she records tonight, it'll be something about how busy her day was here at the hospital. And that's generally how my conversation goes as well. I think we do use the word busy, that we're busy a lot.

Amber: Yeah, okay. So from your perspective, when you were, she says she's busy, you say you're busy. Was there a goal and replying with your own busyness?

Belle: I think with some of mine, it was just to kind of commiserate with her because our schedules were both kind of wonky this week. And then I think too, sometimes just in general conversation when we're talking about it, sometimes it is to brainstorm about, I've got so much on my calendar. I don't know if I'm going to fit one more thing in and looking for somebody to help me figure out how to rearrange or what to do to fit something in, or to take something off my plate. We're trying to figure out what that could be.

Amber: Okay, so when you're using busyness as sort of a way to commiserate with somebody, almost like a bonding activity.

Belle: Yep.

Amber: Is there anything that makes that interaction successful or key to making that work to be a good commiserating activity?

Belle: I would say sometimes again, when we're having live in person conversation versus some of the recorded things that we do, I would say that it's helpful. Number one, to know you're not alone in it, but also again, she and I both use it to kind of problem solve. Are there things we can take off? Are there things we can miss? Is there something we can shift in some way? Or maybe we haven't thought about, well, if I just left 30 minutes earlier, or if I decided to do this activity versus this one that I could still get, I use exercises, I think that we could still get a quick workout in, instead of driving to the gym maybe it's just doing the walk or doing the exercises their home or something.

Amber: Right, okay. Was there a particular way that you wanted to be seen during this interaction?

Belle: I think empathetic, maybe, and that I understood where she was coming from with how busy she was because I often feel that way too.

The two new coders read each of the 51 quotes and decided which of the motives was best reflected in the quote, using the same 1-6 coding scheme as the previous coders. This round of coding had an unweighted interrater reliability score of .30, indicating fair agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Overall, including the context of the behavior improved the interrater reliability, but not to a point of having moderate or substantial

agreement. Therefore, I could not determine if, or to what extent, the Jones and Pittman

impression management motives (1982) were driving the desire to engage in busyness

behaviors.

Discussion

I conducted qualitative interviews to understand how people discuss busyness and display busyness to others. In these interviews, most people reported having told someone that they were busy so that the other person would have a particular opinion or image of them. The majority of these participants were aware they were using busyness to impression manage, but even those who initially said that they did not use busyness this way went on to provide examples showing that they were, in fact, using busyness to impression manage.

The interviews also provided examples of how participants presented busyness to others or experienced it being presented to them, which fell into six themes. The themes are *display of busyness*, *time demands*, *direct statements of busyness*, *neglecting self*, *being unavailable or nonresponsive*, and *being overwhelmed/stressed*. These behaviors occurred in a wide range of situations encompassing personal life, work, and school, and the behaviors were aimed at many different targets (e.g., family, bosses, coworkers, friends).

Coders attempted to align the busyness quotes with the impression management taxonomy that included the motives of self-promotion, exemplification, ingratiation, supplication, and intimidation (Jones & Pittman, 1982). However, adequate agreement was not reached across the coders. From this data, I cannot conclude what impressions people are trying to bring about with the busyness façade. The lack of agreement indicates there is not enough information provided for coders to make an informed coding decision and this could have occurred for a few reasons. I will discuss four such reasons.

First, the lack of agreement may be due to difficulty with the coding task. The five motives from Jones and Pittman (1982) may be overlapping or may not be clearly differentiable in this context, thus the coder disagreement could be a function of the forced choice when assigning a code. For example, a quote may fall into more than one category, such as the desire to be seen as competent and to be seen as dedicated, but when having to pick one, coders may have chosen different ones. In addition, the coders themselves may not have fully understood the nuanced differences between the motives, meaning that more extensive training could have improved agreement.

Another challenge with the coding task is that the coding was completed by third party coders who judged motive in an interaction between an actor and their audience. Since the coder is neither the actor nor the audience in the interaction, they may simply be too far removed from the situation to be able to accurately perceive the motive of the actor. This makes impression management more challenging to code than anticipated because, while participants told stories of times they impression managed, coders were unable to agree on motives without having been a part of the interaction. To better gather the motivation behind displaying busyness may require a strong experimental design to elicit displaying busyness or a study design where you could ask follow-up questions about motivation after someone displays their busyness.

Second, the lack of agreement may be due to a lack of fit with the Jones & Pittman (1982) taxonomy. There may be other motives at play that are not included in this taxonomy framework, or a framework that fits better. For example, warmth and competence are key components of social perception and how people are judged and treated by others (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008). Perceptions of warmth and competence

contribute to stereotypes and biases towards others (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008), and individuals may engage in busyness facades to influence these perceptions and alter how others view them.

Third, it is also possible that the participants may not have expressed themselves clearly enough for the coders to assign one motive, or the participants may not be aware enough of their reasons for engaging in the behavior to recall the motives and express them in an interview so far removed from the time of the incident. I define the busyness facade as an intentional behavior, but people can and do engage in impression management behaviors unconsciously (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). It is possible that the busyness facade is more habitual and unconscious than I proposed, making the behaviors less self-monitored and ultimately harder to explain.

Fourth, these results indicate that others have difficulty identifying the motives behind someone stating or showing busyness. It is possible that the reason we could not code for motive is the reason for why it may be effective in such a wide range of situations: It is ambiguous. The lack of obvious motive makes it ideal because others may default to assuming good intentions by the person displaying busyness. This can generally be an effective strategy because people have a hard time perceiving others accurately (Hall, Mast, & West, 2016; Kenny, & Albright, 1987) or detecting deception (Malone & DePaulo, 2001; Mast, Murphy, & Hall, 2006). People may be giving others the benefit of the doubt when they engage in a busyness facade, even if they are unsure of the reason for engaging in the busyness facade.

This study provided evidence that people are using busyness behaviors as an impression management strategy, but it does not fully explain why participants are

engaging in the behavior since we could not reliably assign a Jones and Pittman impression management motive (1982) to the behaviors. However, continuing this line of research, the most common busyness behavior themes of *time demands*, *direct statement of busyness*, and *being unavailable or nonresponsive* may be able to provide more insight into how and why people are engaging in busyness behaviors. For example, in this study I found that 56.8% of participants engaged in or witnessed busyness behaviors being used to avoid interpersonal interactions or social engagements. I posit that using busyness to *avoid* is an impression management strategy because saying no in these situations is seen as a potential threat to desired images. If a person says no to seeing a friend, then they could be viewed as being a bad friend. If a person says no to a work meeting, then they could be viewed as not being a team player or a hard worker. In an attempt to avoid these negative images, people may say they are too busy, instead of saying no directly or providing other reasons that could be less well received (ex: "I'm not interested in that event/project."). Being busy is known to be held in high regard in the United States' society (Du Bois, 1955; Schor, 1992); therefore, busyness can be used as an excuse to prevent blame being placed on the individual's identity (i.e. you're a bad friend or worker).

I posit that using busyness as an excuse may be related to the Jones and Pittman taxonomy (1982), specifically the desire to be seen as competent, the desire to be seen as dedicated, and the desire to be liked. If a person cannot, or does not want to, join a new work project, but they want to maintain an image of competency in the workplace, then using busyness as an excuse in this context may accomplish the goal. For instance, instead of directly rejecting a project, you might say, "I would really love to join the

project, but I just don't have the extra time. I'm already busy on X number of projects and I want to make sure I continue to do a good job." Busyness as an excuse may work in this context to maintain an image of competency because it implies that the individual is already hard at work on other tasks and is in demand.

Additionally, busyness as an excuse may also work in this situation if maintaining an image of dedication is the goal. For instance, one might say , "I would really love to join the project, but I am already busy working overtime on XYZ projects. I stayed late at the office every day last week." Busyness as an excuse may work in this context to maintain an image of dedication because it implies the individual is sacrificing their personal time and prioritizing the company's needs, despite turning down the additional project.

Busyness as an excuse may also work in some situations if being liked is the goal. In my interviews, not wanting to hurt someone's feelings was cited as a reason for using busyness as an excuse. This motive may be less relevant in the work project example, but it would apply well if a friend asked you to dinner and you needed a reason to politely say no.

STUDY 2

In Study 2, I dive deeper into the phenomenon of using busyness as an impression management strategy to protect desired images, specifically when they want to say no to some form of interpersonal interaction or they need to provide an excuse for poor performance. Previous research posits that, in day-to-day life, people encounter threats and obstacles to their desired identity (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). These threats and obstacles can come in many forms, such as accidents that happen under their supervision, poor performance, or not meeting expectations. To try to minimize any negative impact from these threats to their identity, the actor can "use an excuse that attempts to minimize personal linkage" (Schlenker & Wiegold, 1992; pp 159). Thus, people will behave in a way to protect themselves and their image, and I believe that people will do this by using busyness as an excuse in order to minimize their personal linkage (i.e. reduce personal responsibility or shift blame to an external source rather than themself), especially when avoiding interpersonal interactions or when they believe they are providing unfavorable responses.

For this study I created five vignettes for participants to read and respond to in a manner as realistically as possible. Each of the five vignettes prompted having the participant decline an invitation and/or provide an excuse to an interaction partner. I created two versions of each of these vignettes: an experimental version with the goal of the participant caring what the other hypothetical person thought of them and a control version where the participant hopefully cares less what the other hypothetical person thought of them. The experimental version of the vignettes were written such that the respondent would want the interaction partner to view them favorably. The control group

vignettes, in contrast, were written such that the respondent would be far less concerned about whether or not the interaction partner viewed them favorably. Thus, the experimental versions should have engaged the participants' desire to engage in impression management while the control versions should not have. I predicted that people would be inclined to use busyness as an excuse when they were responding to vignettes in which they felt the desire to impression manage. This is because people would want to minimize the potential negative image that could occur.

Hypothesis 1: In the experimental vignettes designed with an increased desire to impression manage, participants will use busyness more often than participants in the control vignettes designed with less of a desire to impression manage.

Methods

Sample

Participants were recruited through a large, southeastern university's research participation system. I posted a description of the study to the research platform and individuals could choose to participate in exchange for research participation credit. To be eligible for the study, individuals had to be 18 years or older, fluent in English, and have access to a smartphone, laptop, or desktop device in order to take the survey. Individuals interested in participating followed a link to a Qualtrics survey. The survey started with informed consent, and, upon agreement, individuals could move forward with the survey. The survey closed with 498 participants. Of those, 96 (or 19.3%) were dropped: 95 were due to incomplete surveys and/or failing attention checks, and one for being a duplicate submission.
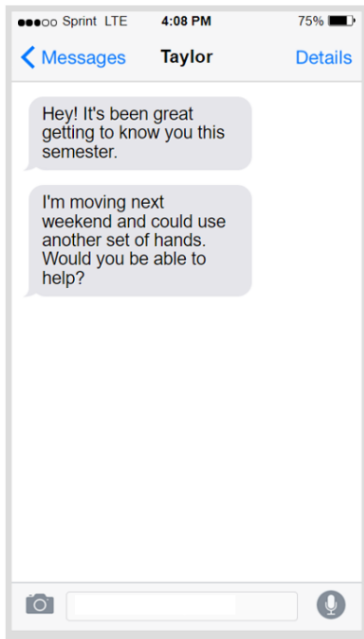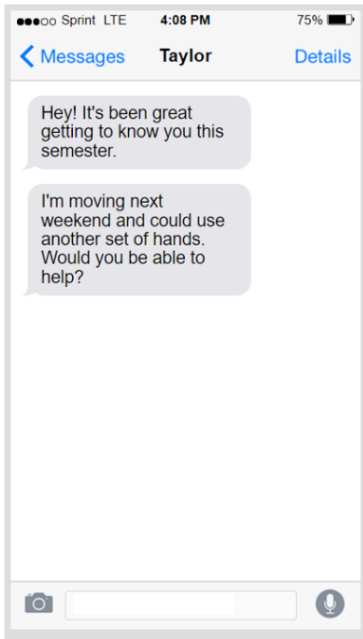
The final sample of 402 individuals ranged in age from 18 to 62 years old, with a mean of 19.6 ($SD = 3.56$) and a median of 19 . Regarding class standing, 48.5% (n=195) were freshmen, 28.4% (n=114) were sophomores, 13.7% (n=55) were juniors, 8.7% (n=35) were seniors, and 0.7% (n=3) identified as Other. Participants were 17.1% (n=68) Hispanic or Latino/a and 82.9% (n=329) not Hispanic or Latino/a. Participants were 0.76% (n=3) American Indian or Alaskan Native, 10.3% (n=41) Asian, 24.4% (n=97) Black or African American, 0.25% (n=1) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 54.2% (n=215) White, and 10.1% (n=40) Other. Lastly, 67.4% (n=271) of participants identified as female, 30.1% (n=121) identified as male, and 2.5% (n=10) identified as non-binary.

Procedure

      Participants were asked to respond to five vignettes and imagine themselves in the described situation. The five vignettes asked participants to: (1) say no to helping a classmate move, (2) turn someone down for a second date, (3) explain to their boss why they have been making mistakes at work, (4) turn down an invitation to a birthday party, and (5) email a professor asking for an extension on a deadline. The complete vignettes can be found in Table 2 and I bold the sections of the vignette that are altered between the two conditions. The five vignettes were designed so that the participant would respond to prompts that asked them to write a response saying no or to say something that may not be well received by the hypothetical other person. The experimental version of the vignettes were designed to elicit a stronger desire to impression manage by leading the participant to care what the other person thought of them, while the control group was designed to not elicit as much pressure to impression management (this manipulation is described in greater detail below).

Table 2

Study 2 Vignettes

Vignette	Experimental Version	Control Version
1	In one of your classes, you have been working closely with a fellow student, Taylor, on a group project. You have enjoyed working with and getting to know Taylor. **You seem to have a lot of common interests and you see them as someone that you would want to hang out with outside of class.** A few days after the semester ends, you get the following text from Taylor:	In one of your classes, you have been working closely with a fellow student, Taylor, on a group project. You have enjoyed working with and getting to know Taylor. **However, you don't think that you have much in common with them and they're not someone who you would want to hang out with outside of class.** A few days after the semester ends, you get the following text from Taylor:
	You don't have any real plans this weekend, but you really don't like moving or helping others move. How would you tell Taylor you do not want to help them move?	You don't have any real plans this weekend, but you really don't like moving or helping others move. How would you tell Taylor you do not want to help them move?

	Please write out your text message below.	Please write out your text message below.
2	A friend of yours, Sam, **is really excited to set you up on a blind date with a close friend** of theirs, Alex. The only information you have about Alex is what Sam has told you. But from what you have heard, you are interested in meeting them. You agree to meet Alex at noon for coffee at a local coffee shop.	A friend of yours, Sam, **has set you up on a blind date with an acquaintance** of theirs, Alex. The only information you have about Alex is what Sam has told you. But from what you have heard, you are interested in meeting them. You agree to meet Alex at noon for coffee at a local coffee shop.
	As you walk into the coffee shop and see Alex, you don't find them very attractive, and once you have talked to them for a while you realize that the two of you don't have much in common. You don't see this having any potential.	As you walk into the coffee shop and see Alex, you don't find them very attractive, and once you have talked to them for a while you realize that the two of you don't have much in common. You don't see this having any potential.
	At the end of the date, Alex asks you to see a movie next Friday. You are going to tell Alex no, **but you know this is a close friend of Sam. You're worried about hurting your friendship with Sam by rejecting Alex**. How do you say no?	At the end of the date, Alex asks you to see a movie next Friday. You are going to tell Alex no, **and you know Alex is only an acquaintance of Sam and they don't know each other very well. You know you won't hurt your friendship with Sam by rejecting Alex**. How do you say no?
	Type out your response below as if you were directly talking to Alex.	Type out your response below as if you were directly talking to Alex.
3	As one of your job responsibilities, you write weekly reports and submit them to your boss. After submitting your last report, your boss asks to speak with you. They say that you are making more errors than usual, and that the quality of your work has decreased.	As one of your job responsibilities, you write weekly reports and submit them to your boss. After submitting your last report, your boss asks to speak with you. They say that you are making more errors than usual, and that the quality of your work has decreased.
	This is a good job, and you would like to keep it. You also like your boss and want a good relationship	**You are indifferent towards this job, and you know it is just something temporary for now.**

with them. What do you tell your boss? Type out your response below as if you were directly talking to them.

You also don't really like your boss and you see no need to maintain a positive relationship with them. What do you tell your boss? Type out your response below as if you were directly talking to them.

4   A close friend of yours is hosting a birthday party **for themself**. You know most of the people that will be there, but there are a couple of people going whom you dislike. Because of this, you have decided you are not going to attend the party. How do you tell your friend that you're not going?

Write a text message to your friend telling them that you're not going.

A close friend of yours is hosting a birthday party for **someone you know, but not well**. You know most of the people that will be there, but there are a couple of people going whom you dislike. Because of this, you have decided you are not going to attend the party.

Write a text message to your friend telling them that you're not going.

5   It is near the end of your last semester in college before you graduate. You have an assignment for one of your classes, which is a very large lecture-based course. You started working on the assignment, and you quickly realized that the assignment is more complex than you expected, and you will be unable to finish it by the deadline. The instructor has a stated policy that they do not accept late work.

You have never emailed or spoken to the instructor in person before. Write an email to your instructor asking if they would consider allowing you to turn in your assignment a couple days late.

It is near the end of your last semester in college before you graduate. You have an assignment for one of your classes, which is a very large lecture-based course. You started working on the assignment, and you quickly realized that the assignment is more complex than you expected, and you will be unable to finish it by the deadline. The instructor has a stated policy that they do not accept late work.

You have taken multiple classes with this instructor before and they know you well. Write an email to your instructor asking if they would consider allowing you to turn in your assignment a couple days late.

Note. Study 2 vignettes, highlighting the differences between control group and experimental group.

After responding to the five vignettes, participants also responded to two (of five possible) attention check questions and two (of six possible) manipulation check questions. The attention checks and manipulation checks each correspond to a vignette, with vignette two having two manipulation check questions. Participants were randomly assigned to answer the attention and manipulation checks corresponding to two vignettes. The attention check questions asked simple reading comprehension questions about a vignette and were administered after the participants had responded to all five vignettes. The attention checks were to ensure participants were paying attention to and understanding the prompts they were reading. The manipulation check questions asked participants the extent to which they cared what the interaction partner described in the scenario thought of them. This was to check that the experimental versions of the vignettes evoked a stronger desire to impression manage than the control version. The full set of vignettes, attention check questions and manipulation check questions can be found in Appendix D.

Vignette Development

I created five vignettes to explore whether people will use busyness as an excuse when under pressure to impression manage. Study 1 helped inform the creation of the vignettes by providing common examples of situations in which people recalled talking about theirs or others' busyness. In developing the vignettes, I first came up with situations where people had to say no or provide an excuse for behavior that may be perceived negatively by another person, but that may or may not be motivated to impression manage. For the experimental conditions, I adjusted the situation to enhance the desire of the participants to want to impression manage. For each experimental

vignette, the way in which the desire to impression manage was created was slightly different, but the situations generally involved someone with whom the participant was told they wanted to continue to have a positive relationship with. Therefore, I believe participants should seek to minimize the chance of being viewed negatively and overall have a desire to care what the other person thought of them. I then modified the situation as minimally as possible to create a counter situation where the participant would care less what the other person thought of them and so would not, or at least be far less likely to, engage in impression management (control conditions).

Results

Manipulation Checks

I conducted independent samples *t*-tests on the manipulation check data for each vignette to determine whether the experimental group reported a stronger desire to engage in impression management than those in the control group. The *t*-tests for four of the vignettes were statistically significant, suggesting the manipulation checks worked and enhanced the desire to impression manage. The results for the fifth vignette (i.e. asking the professor for a deadline extension) were not statistically significant (see table 3). Based on these findings, I dropped the fifth scenario from the analysis.

Table 3

Manipulation Check T-tests

Vignette	Manipulation Check Question	Experimental Mean (SD)	Control Mean (SD)	T-test	p	95% CI
1	In one scenario, you were told to imagine that a classmate named Taylor asked for help moving. To what extent did you care what Taylor thought of you? *(1 through 5 scale, with 1 being "I cared very much" and 5 being "I did not care at all.")*	2.17 (0.99)	2.73 (1.06)	-3.35	0.001	(-0.88, -0.23)
2	In one scenario, you were set up on a blind date. To what extent did you care about what the person you were on the date with thought of you after the date? *(1 through 5 scale, with 1 being "I cared very much" and 5 being "I did not care at all.")*	2.81 (1.22)	3.24 (1.19)	-2.29	0.023	(-0.81, -0.06)
	In the same scenario, to what extent did you worry about what your friend might think of you rejecting the date? *(1 through 4 scale, with 1 being "I was very worried"*	2.31 (1.02)	2.97 (0.75)	-4.80	.000	(-0.93, -0.39)

	and 4 being "I was not worried at all.")					
3	In one scenario, your boss asked to speak with you. To what extent did you care what your boss thought of you? *(1 through 5 scale, with 1 being "I cared very much" and 5 being "I did not care at all.")*	1.3 (0.65)	3 (1.19)	-11.00	.000	(-2.00, -1.39)
4	In one scenario, your friend invited you to a birthday party. To what extent did you care what your friend thought of you? *(1 through 5 scale, with 1 being "I cared very much" and 5 being "I did not care at all.")*	1.57 (0.83)	2.27 (1.12)	4.54	.000	(0.40, 1.01)
5	In one scenario, you were asked to write an email to your instructor. To what extent did you care what your instructor thought of you? *(1 through 5 scale, with 1 being "I cared very much" and 5 being "I did not care at all.")*	1.7 (0.87)	1.57 (0.91)	-0.93	0.35	(-0.42, 0.15)

Note. Manipulation check question(s) for each of the vignettes, and means and T-test analyses results.

Coding Participant Responses

Four coders were trained to code participants' open responses to the five vignettes; However, statistical analyses were run only on the four vignettes that passed the manipulation checks. I met with coders to train them on the codebook (codebook can be found in Appendix E). Coders were asked to assign responses a code of 1 through 4. A code of 1 indicated a direct statement of busyness was made (ex: "I'm busy), a code of 2 indicated a schedule conflict or other demand on time (ex: "I have to work that day."), a code of 3 meant a direct statement of busyness was made and there was a schedule conflict or other demand on time (i.e. codes one and two applied), and 4 meant no direct statement of busyness was made and there was no schedule conflict or other demand on time (i.e. neither code one nor two applied).

After the first meeting, coders independently practiced coding a random set of 100 responses. I then met with the coders again to review and talk through any questions that arose. Interrater reliability across the 100 codes from each of the four coders was 0.77, indicating substantial agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Coders were then broken into two teams of two coders, one team (Team A) was assigned the same 1182 responses to each code, and the other team (Team B) was assigned their own 1182 responses to each code. Interrater reliability for Team A was 0.84 and interrater reliability for Team B was 0.84, indicating almost perfect agreement for both teams (Landis & Koch, 1977). After coding all the responses independently, the coding teams met with their partner to come to a consensus code for any responses for which they did not provide the same code.

Test of the Hypothesis

Hypothesis one posited that when participants respond to vignettes with an increased desire to impression manage, they will use busyness more frequently than participants responding to vignettes where there is less of a need to impression manage. I conducted chi-squared tests for each of the four vignettes to see if there was a statistically significant difference across the groups on the codes given to the participants open ended responses. The chi-squared test results for vignette one, where participants said no to a classmate asking for help moving, were statistically significant (χ^2 (df = 3, N = 402)= 13.05, p = 0.005), meaning that there was a significant relationship between the vignette condition and codes used. However, the results were significant in the opposite direction than I predicted. I hypothesized participants would utilize busyness more frequently when they were providing an excuse to someone they wanted to be friends with, but instead participants used busyness more frequently when they did not care to continue being friends. In the experimental version of vignette one, when a classmate they wanted to be friends with asked for help moving, participants directly stated they were busy 10.8% of the time, that they had a time demand/schedule conflict 33.0% of the time, they stated both 1.5% of the time, and neither 54.7% of the time, compared to participants in the control vignette, with someone they did not want to be friends with, who directly stated they were busy 9.5% of the time, that they had a time demand/schedule conflict 41.7% of the time, both 7.0% of the time, and neither 41.7% of the time. The experimental vignette had slightly higher instances of direct statements of busyness, but the control group had much higher instances of stating a time demand/schedule conflict or stating both busyness and a time demand/schedule conflict.

No statistically significant differences were observed in the frequencies of the codes of the open ended responses for vignettes two (where participants were asked to decline a second date) (χ^2 (df=3, N=401) = 2.77, p = 0.43), three (where participants had to explain to their boss why they have been making errors at work) (χ^2 (df=2, N=402) = 4.37, p = 0.11), or four (where participants declined attending a birthday party hosted by their friend) (χ^2 (df=3, N=402) = 3.47, p = 0.32) (see table 4 for frequency counts). Contrary to my hypothesis, these results indicate that people do not use a busyness facade more frequently when there is an increased desire to impression manage.

Table 4

Frequency of open response codes

Code	Vignette 1		Vignette 2		Vignette 3		Vignette 4	
	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control
1: Direct Statement of Busyness	22	19	17	10	0	3	4	1
2: Time Demand/ Schedule Conflict	67	83	17	22	1	3	30	37
3: Both direct statement of busyness and time demand/ schedule conflict	3	14	2	1	0	0	1	0
4: Neither direct statement of busyness nor time demand/ schedule conflict	111	83	166	166	206	189	163	166

Note. Numbers represent the number of times a participant in either the experimental or control condition made a statement that is coded under the 4 codes in the first column.

Another way to analyze the data is to compare all of the "busyness" codes to the "not busyness" code (i.e., code 4: neither direct statement of busyness nor time demand/schedule conflict). I collapsed codes one through three to create a "busyness" code (i.e. direct statements of busyness, time demands/schedule conflicts, and both) and compared that to code four (i.e. neither direct statement of busyness nor time demand/schedule conflicts). I then reran the chi-square tests for each of the four vignettes. Vignette one, where participants said no to a classmate asking for help moving, was once again statistically significant, but in the opposite direction than I predicted (χ^2 (df=1, N=402) = 6.26, p = 0.01). That is, participants used busyness as an excuse more often in the control condition (58.3% of the time) where there should have been less of a desire to impression manage compared to the experimental condition (45.3% of the time) The tests for vignettes two (where participants were asked to decline a second date) ((χ^2 (df=1, N=402) = 0.05, p = 0.83), three (where participants had to explain to their boss why they have been making errors at work) (χ^2 (df=1, N=402) = 2.58, p = 0.11), and four (where participants declined attending a birthday party hosted by their friend) (χ^2 (df=1, N=402) = 0.01, p = 0.91) were all not statistically significant (see table 5 for frequency counts). Once again, these results do not provide support for my hypothesis.

Table 5

Frequency of busyness code

Code	Vignette 1		Vignette 2		Vignette 3		Vignette 4	
	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control
Busyness	92	116	36	33	1	6	35	38
4: Neither direct statement of busyness nor time demand/ schedule conflict	111	83	166	166	206	189	163	166

Note. Numbers represent the frequency of times participant responses were coded under either a busyness excuse or a non-busyness related excuse. The busyness code is an indicator comprising codes 1 - 3.

Discussion

I aimed to explore the phenomenon of people using statements of their busyness as an impression management strategy. I posited that when participants had to–per vignette instructions– say no to helping or provide excuses to someone that they wanted to view them favorably, participants would rely on busyness because it minimizes personal responsibility and shifts blame to an external source. I created five vignettes that were designed to create conditions conducive to impression management. In other words, each vignette attempted to create a scenario in which some participants (experimental condition) would be more likely to care what their hypothetical interaction partner thought of them compared to other participants (control condition). However, my hypotheses were not supported; Participants in the experimental condition were not more likely than participants in the control condition to use busyness as an excuse. The only statistically significant result was in vignette one, but the result was in the opposite direction to what I hypothesized.

For the first vignette in which participants were told to say no to a classmate who asked for help moving, I predicted that participants would more frequently use busyness as an excuse when they were saying no to someone they wanted to be friends with, as opposed to when saying no to someone they did not care about being friends with. However, the data suggested the opposite: My data suggests that participants in the control condition for vignette one were more likely to use busyness as an excuse than participants in the experimental condition (χ^2 (df = 3, N = 402)= 13.05, p = 0.005).

In the other three vignettes (Vignettes 2-4), there was no statistically significant difference in terms of how often people used busyness as an excuse, meaning that, on average, participants used busyness as an excuse to get out of something or justify a

behavior regardless of whether there was increased desire to care what the hypothetical other thought of them or not. In other words, participants were equally likely to state that they were busy or had a time demand/schedule conflict regardless of the relationship they had, or hoped to have, with the hypothetical other person.

These results contradict my hypotheses. They suggest that busyness is used about equally by people regardless of whether they have reason to care what the interaction partner thinks of them. This is in contrast with impression management theory (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008; Leary & Kowalski, 1990) which propose that people are more motivated to impression manage when they have reason to care about the other person's views of them. These findings cast doubt on the impression management theory because busyness was frequently used as an excuse to navigate a situation regardless of how much the participant cared what the other person thought of them.

Whenever hypotheses are not supported, the theory could be wrong, or the method could be wrong (Aguinis & Vandeberg, 2014). Ultimately, I believe that the failure of the study to support my hypothesis was due to the study design. Specifically, the hypothetical nature of the vignettes may not have accurately captured how people respond in real situations (Lonati, Quiroga, Zehnder, & Antonakis, 2018). First, participants were told how to respond (i.e. that they should say no to this person), which did not leave room for them to respond authentically. In the survey administered at the end of the experiment we asked participants, "In one of the scenarios, Taylor asked you for help moving. You were instructed to say no. However, if given the option, would you have said yes?" Participants answered on a 1-5 scale, with one being very likely to have said yes and 5 being very unlikely to have said yes. The mean response was 2.74 (*SD* =

1.28, median = 2.00, *n* = 402), indicating that participants were someone more likely to have said yes to this request then no which they were asked to do in the experiment. In all, 213 (53%) participants indicated that they were either "very likely to have said yes" or "likely to have said yes." Thus, the manipulation (i.e. how much the participant cares what the person thought of them) may not have created the desired difference between the experimental and control vignettes when the interaction differed from participant's natural inclination. The failure of the manipulation in this case may be because some participants wanted to say yes, and when forced to say no, they used busyness as an excuse in both conditions because–per my theorizing–busyness helps externalize responsibility for saying no. It is possible that participants' natural inclinations were countered by the other vignettes as well, decreasing the effectiveness of the manipulation, and leading to busyness facades being used equally across the conditions.

Second, even though participants were asked to imagine themselves in a situation in which there was a desire to impression manage, there was no real-life consequence for engaging in impression management or not (Lonati, et al., 2018). If the experiment were to be run in a lab setting where participants had to say no to an individual, they may have responded quite differently. However, the manipulation checks for Vignettes 2 - 4 were statistically significant, suggesting that participants in the experimental condition did care more about their interaction partner's perceptions of them than participants in the control condition.

Building on the idea that impression management may not be able to be captured in this hypothetical, asynchronous type of study design, it is important to note that, when told in a vignette to break socially acceptable/ideal behavior, many participants directly

stated the reason provided in the scenario (e.g., the participant doesn't see the relationship going anywhere in Vignette 2) for saying no as opposed to making an excuse. In the second vignette, participants were told to turn down the request for a second date because they did not have anything in common with the person. In the experimental version, 17.8% of the participants indicated they were busy as an excuse and, in the control group, 16.5% of the participants gave busyness as an excuse (not a significant difference), but of those who did not use busyness as an excuse, qualitatively my perception was that it was common for them to state the truth (i.e., exactly what the vignette said as an excuse). This may be how the participants would have really responded in real life situations, or they may be sharing the "truth" because it is easier to do so in an asynchronous context with no costs compared to a real social situation with corresponding social expectations they want to meet (Turnley & Bolino, 2001).

In the fifth vignette–in which participants were told they were in their last semester of college and had an assignment due that they would be unable to finish in time–there was no evidence that participants in the experimental condition cared more about what the other person thought of them than in the control condition. In this vignette, participants were told to email their professor and ask for an extension even though they know this professor does not accept late work. In the experimental condition, they have never spoken directly with the professor before. In the control condition, they have taken multiple classes with this professor and the professor knows the participant well. Looking at the mean answers for the manipulation check, in both conditions, participants cared what their hypothetical professor thought of them. Specifically, both groups averaged a response that fell between "I care very much" or "I care a little" (i.e.

between one and two on a five-point scale) when asked to what extent they cared what their professor thought of them. This suggests that the control group was not successful since this group was *not* meant to strongly care what their interaction partner thought about them. This is most likely because both groups of participants were being asked to interact with an authority figure who had influence over whether they graduated that semester or not. Thus, regardless of whether they were familiar with the professor (experimental condition) or not (control condition), the professor's opinion of the participant is important.

It is possible the control group included too much incentive to impression manage, resulting in all participants wanting to impression manage to similar degrees. To create a stronger control group (i.e. have a set of participants not care so much about what the hypothetical other thinks of them) I may have had to create a more extreme difference in how much the participant cared what the other person thought of them between the vignettes. For instance, perhaps in the control group participants could be told they do not need the class to graduate and that they do not care about the outcome of the interaction. This would allow the participant to care less about the opinion of the other person and better allow the person to have a wider range of response options. A similar example of a participant talking with an authority figure can be found in vignette three, where participants are told they have to explain to their boss why they have been making more mistakes than usual at work. This vignette passed the manipulation check because we clearly told participants in the experimental condition that they like their boss and their job, and in the control condition they were told that they do not like their boss or their job.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In this dissertation, I sought to understand why people tell others that they are busy and what it is they are trying to accomplish by doing so. I drew on the impression management literature to propose that people signal their busyness to others so that the audience will form or hold a positive impression of them. I proposed the concept of the busyness facade, a set of behaviors and verbal statements that are intentionally enacted by an individual to signal to others that they have a lot to do or limited available time. Using impression management theory, I proposed that people are motivated to signal busyness because it helps maintain a valued image by externalizing actions that might be perceived as negative (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). The busyness façade could be an accurate representation of the person's level of busyness or it could be an exaggerated expression of busyness, but is used to create a desired image and certain perceptions from a target audience. I posited that a busyness facade would be a useful tool with which to impression manage because productivity and hard work have long been valued in US culture (Du Bois, 1955) and particularly in organizational contexts where productivity is prioritized (Kasser, et al., 2007; Schneider, et al., 2013). The cultural value of busyness incentivizes people to want to be seen by others (with similar values) as busy.

I proposed that, given cultural values in the United States, using busyness as an excuse or a reason for providing an undesirable response is a way to manage the impressions of others. This curated image of busyness is the busyness façade. Further, I proposed that the busyness facade would fall within the Jones and Pittman (1982) impression management taxonomy. The interview data from Study 1 showed that people display busyness in interpersonal interactions, in multiple areas of life (personal life,

work, school), and to a wide audience (from family to friends to bosses). Using the Study 1 data, coders reviewed how the participants talked about busyness and coded those statements using Jones and Pittman's (1982) impression management motives, including the desires to be seen as competent, be seen as dedicated, be liked, be seen as needy, and be seen as intimidating. However, there was not strong agreement among the coders on the motivation underlying the specific statements of busyness. This could be due to coding errors (such as forced choice coding), the motives not fitting the Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy, or lack of clarity/information from the participants.

In Study 2, I tried to invoke a busyness facade response through vignettes designed to provide respondents with an increased desire to express impression management behaviors. However, the vignette data showed that people engaged in a busyness facade at equal rates regardless of whether a motive to engage in impression management was present or not (i.e., regardless of whether participants were given reason to care what their hypothetical other thought of them). From Study 1 we have evidence that people engage in busyness facades, but neither Study 1 nor Study 2 data provided a clear picture for why they are doing so.

In the face of these findings that were not consistent with my hypotheses, I am left with two options: Either the data were problematic or the theory was problematic. I believe the methodology was the issue, and that the theory still holds.

Methodology versus Theory

The lack of clear evidence regarding peoples' motivations for saying that they are busy may be due to methodological limitations of my research. I asked participants to recall when they told another person that they were busy (Study 1) and asked them to

imagine themselves in a hypothetical situation (Study 2). Observational research designs

may yield more information about why people display their busyness. For example,

participants being proctored in a lab setting or in real organizational contexts may elicit

stronger outcomes because the consequences for behaving in certain ways are real rather

than hypothetical (Lonati et al., 2018). In other words, in a real work context other

people's perceptions of you have consequences for things like career development and

well-being. That said, the design I used in Study 1 was appropriate given how nascent

this stream of research is (Edmondson & McManus, 2007), and the vignette experiment I

used in Study 2 helped me assess verbal behaviors that are difficult to observe in real life

settings.

My dissertation was unable to identify specific motives for why busyness facades

might be used as an impression management tactic. Nevertheless, this does not mean that

people are not motivated to engage in busyness facades. Identifying motives is

challenging and often even participants' themselves do not know their reasons for

engaging in certain behaviors (Graham & Weiner, 2012). It is also possible that

participants are unable to accurately recall the motive or enough details after the fact.

Despite the lack of findings, I still believe in the theory and posit that busyness

facades are being used to impression manage and that the impression management

framework is necessary for continuing the busyness stream of research. My interview

data from Study 1 richly described instances of participants using busyness displays in

order to be viewed a certain way, and, despite a lack of consensus regarding the Jones

and Pittman (1982) motives taxonomy, I believe that motives do exist behind a busyness

facade. For example, in the interviews, KC and Mickey (pseudonyms) directly stated that they wanted to be seen as competent, which is one of Jones and Pittman (1982) motives.

>**KC**: "I want to seem competent, seem as though I had a good handle on it"

>**Mickey**: "I think my, my view of myself, you know, I want to feel about myself as being a professional and competent person in my field, and I want other people to see that too."

In addition, Genesis and Belle (pseudonyms) discussed not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings, which can be interpreted as the Jones and Pittman (1982) motive to be liked.

>**Genesis**: "I would say yes, that I'm trying to lay a message so that they don't feel slighted or feel that I don't value them as a friend. Because I am a very emotional person and I care about people's feelings"

>**Belle**: "But instead of hurting your feelings and being like, "No girl, I don't want to hang out with you." I made up some extra busyness in my life."

Future research should continue to narrow in on how and why busyness is being used from an impression management perspective. I propose three ways to address this.

Future Research

First, I believe a starting point would be to analyze how people self-report their motivation to discuss their busyness (i.e. what do they think is motivating them to tell others about their busyness?). Some of this information started emerging during probing discussions in the interviews, but more targeted questions on motivation should be asked in future interviews. Inductively analyzing this data could support the Jones and Pittman (1982) taxonomy or it could help form a new framework that allows us to better

understand individual's motives. I posit that the Jones and Pittman (1982) taxonomy provides a plausible explanation for the motivations behind engaging in a busyness facade but that, unfortunately, my study designs were not able to fully capture the motives.

Second, future research could distinguish between genuine busyness and exaggerated busyness when investigating the concept of a busyness façade. Traditionally, busyness has been studied both as objective time use (e.g., Aguiar & Hurst, 2007; Robinson & Godbey, 2005) and as a sense of time scarcity (e.g., Govasli & Solvoll, 2020; Wilcox et al., 2016). Time scarcity refers to the feeling that we have more tasks than time to complete them. Our perceptions of time, and consequently our self-perceptions of busyness, are influential—they shape our behaviors and how we interact with others.

In some cases, people might actually be busy, and while their busyness is real, they still use it strategically to avoid undesirable situations or tasks. People may use busyness as a reason or an excuse for not being able to comply with a request, and the distinction between using busyness as a reason versus an excuse hinges on the authenticity and intent behind the claim. When busyness is cited as a reason, it reflects a genuine constraint on time or resources, in which an individual is truly too busy to add anything additional to their time. On the other hand, busyness as an excuse may be used to mask what could otherwise be seen as a desire to not comply to a request or event due to disinterest or avoidance. Here, the claim of busyness is insincere, often serving as a socially acceptable way to decline a request without revealing the true reasons (Schlenker, Pontari, & Christopher, 2001). This distinction is important in understanding

interpersonal dynamics and the ethical implications of how we communicate our availability and priorities.

There may also be differences between actual busyness (e.g., the actual time spent on tasks), self-perceived busyness, and how one wishes others to perceive their busyness. While it is possible for no discrepancy to exist between actual busyness and the desired perception of it, any discrepancies that do occur merit exploration. If an individual deliberately exaggerates or lies about their busyness (i.e., trying to manipulate others' perceptions to differ from their own self-perception or objective busyness), this could be a form of impression management. Further research should examine how often a busyness facade involves lying or exaggeration and why the individual believes this strategy is more effective than telling the truth or using a different lie. Additionally, it would be valuable to explore which situations or target audiences prompt a lie more often than the truth. For instance, when a friend asks for help moving, you might decline because you genuinely have other plans, or you might lie and claim to be busy as an excuse. While both responses manage the impression your friend has of you, your self-perception varies between these scenarios. Understanding why and how people lie about or exaggerate their busyness would deepen our understanding of the busyness facade and the motivations behind it. Since perceptions of busyness influence interpersonal interactions (e.g., Huang & Zhang, 2021) and decision-making (e.g., Gross, 1987; Keinan & Kivetz, 2011), this is an important phenomenon to study.

Moreover, people might not only lie about their busyness but also misperceive it. They may genuinely believe they are busier than others perceive them to be, or vice versa—they think they have time but are actually more pressed than they realize.

Research could investigate both the factors that contribute to these misperceptions (e.g., personality traits like neuroticism) and their outcomes (e.g., self-esteem, self-rated performance). It may also be worth exploring whether some individuals have more accurate perceptions of their busyness, considering the tendency for people to view their attributes as better than average compared to their peers (Zell, Strickhouser, Sedikides, & Alicke, 2020). Research could explore the potential benefits of higher accuracy in perceiving one's busyness.

Third, the busyness facade should be explored at the dyadic or group level. In the interview data, participants were asked questions such as, "Tell me about a time you or someone else mentioned busyness." Responses often included stories about discussing their own or others' busyness. This group discussion and potential commiseration or comparison aligns with social identity theory, which emphasizes the desire for individuals to be accepted and respected by their group (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Stets & Burke, 2000). The need for group acceptance and respect may create situations where individuals use busyness facades to manage impressions.

Research could investigate how perceptions of busyness vary within a group. If everyone in the group is perceived as equally busy or not busy, there may be no significant outcomes. However, if an individual believes their level of busyness differs from the group's, they might be more likely to engage in a busyness facade. This aligns with the social comparison perspective, which suggests that people self-evaluate based on those around them and aim to close perceived gaps between themselves and others (Garcia, Tor, & Schiff, 2013). Studying busyness facades at the dyadic or group level could reveal how these facades spread from person to person and highlight the

importance of perceived similarity in busyness for interpersonal relationships and group

dynamics.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I set out to understand how people discuss busyness and to investigate whether people use busyness facades—claiming to be busy to influence others' perceptions. I presented the busyness facade as a tactic for impression management, suggesting that individuals use it to project a positive image or avoid negative judgments. Study 1 indicated that people often discuss busyness and that busyness facades occur in various contexts, but failed to identify the underlying motivations. Study 2, which used vignettes, did not find clear evidence that people use busyness facades more when concerned about their interaction partner's opinions. The dissertation concludes that while the theory remains plausible, methodological limitations may have affected the results. Future research should explore the differences between genuine and exaggerated busyness, perception discrepancies, and group dynamics. Understanding busyness facades is challenging due to the difficulty in recognizing when impression management is occurring and in determining others' motives. Effective study of this phenomenon will require creative and innovative methodologies to capture people's true motives.

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APPENDIX A: STUDY 1 SURVEY

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9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001
t/ 704-687-8622

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of the Project: Time Use Trends

Principal Investigator: Amber Greenwood, Ph.D. Candidate, Organizational Science

Co-investigator: Dr. Amy Canevello, Associate Professor of Psychological Science, UNC Charlotte

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Eric Heggestad, Chair and Associate Professor of Psychological Science, UNC Charlotte

You are invited to participate in a research study. Participation in this research study is voluntary. The information provided is to give you key information to help you decide whether or not to participate.

·   The purpose of this study is to understand how people use their time.

·   You must be age 18 or older to participate in this study.

·   You must be born and raised in the United States of America, currently living in the United States, and a native English speaker to participate in this study.

·   You are asked to complete a survey asking a series of questions about your time use. The questions are not sensitive or overly personal.

·   It will take you about 10-15 minutes to complete the survey.

·   We do not believe that you will experience any risk from participating in this study outside of what is encountered in day-to-day life.

·   You will not benefit personally by participating in this study. What we learn about how people use their time may be beneficial to others.

·   By completing the study and meeting requirements, you may be eligible for a $10 gift card. To receive a gift card you must complete this survey and participate in a follow up interview. If you do not follow all instructions or meet requirements, if you do not complete the survey, if you complete this study faster than is reasonable, or if you withdraw, then you will not receive the incentive.

You must have access to a smart phone, laptop, or desktop device in order to participate in an online survey and, potentially, a follow-up virtual interview.

Your privacy will be protected and confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. Your responses will be treated as confidential.

Survey responses will be stored with access to this information controlled and limited only to people who have approval to have access. We might use the survey data for future research studies and we might share the non-identifiable survey data with other researchers for future research studies without additional consent from you. After this study is complete, study data may be shared with other researchers for use in other studies without asking for your consent again. The data we share will NOT include information that could identify you. Participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study. You may start participating and change your mind and stop participation at any time.

If you have further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, contact the Office of Research Protections and Integrity at (704) 687-1871 or uncc-irb@uncc.edu. If you have questions concerning the study, contact the principal investigator by email at adavid21@uncc.edu or the faculty advisor Dr. Eric Heggestad by email at edhegges@uncc.edu.

You may print a copy of this form. If you are 18 years of age or older, born and raised in the United States of America, located in the United States of America, are a native English speaker, have read and understand the information provided, and freely consent to participate in the study, you may proceed to the survey.

○ I consent.

○ I do not consent.

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Default Question Block

What is your age?

_____

What is your level of education?

- ○ Less than high school

- ○ High school graduate

- ○ Some college

- ○ 2 year degree

- ○ 4 year degree

- ○ Professional degree

- ○ Doctorate

What is your employment status?

- ○ Employed full time

- ○ Employed part time

- ○ Unemployed looking for work

- ○ Unemployed not looking for work

- ○ Retired

- ○ Student

- ○ Disabled

If you are employed, within what industry do you work?

_____

What is your ethnicity?

○ White

○ Black or African American

○ American Indian or Alaska Native

○ Asian

○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

○ Hispanic or Latino

○ Other

What is your sex?

○ Male

○ Female

○ Non-binary / third gender

○ Prefer not to say

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 2

Please take a moment to observe and consider your schedule from the past couple of weeks. In the following questions, report how many hours you spend on each task during a **typical weekday**. Please be as accurate as possible.

How many hours a day (during a typical weekday) do you spend doing paid work?

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical weekday) do you spend commuting? Examples include commuting to or from work.

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical weekday) do you spend on childcare? Examples include playing with your child or putting your child to bed.

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical weekday) do you spend on household maintenance? Examples include cleaning, mowing the lawn, cooking.

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical weekday) do you spend on leisure activities? Example include reading, watching tv, spending time with friends.

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical weekday) do you spend on voluntary work? Examples include volunteering or community services.

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical weekday) do you spend sleeping?

_____

In the following questions, report how many hours you spend on each task during a **typical Saturday or Sunday**. Please be as accurate as possible.

How many hours a day (during a typical Saturday or Sunday) do you spend doing paid work?

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical Saturday or Sunday) do you spend commuting? Examples include commuting to or from work.

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical Saturday or Sunday) do you spend on childcare? Examples include playing with your child or putting your child to bed.

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical Saturday or Sunday) do you spend on household maintenance? Examples include cleaning, mowing the lawn, cooking.

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical Saturday or Sunday) do you spend on leisure activities? Example include reading, watching tv, spending time with friends.

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical Saturday or Sunday) do you spend on voluntary work? Examples include volunteering or community services.

_____

How many hours a day (during a typical Saturday or Sunday) do you spend sleeping?

_____

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Block 3

May we contact you for a follow up interview?

If you are contacted for a follow up interview and complete both this survey and the interview, you will receive a $10 Amazon gift card. There is no incentive for completing the survey alone. Not everyone will be selected for an interview. We will reach out by email to inform you if you have or have not been selected. If you are selected, the

interview will occur by Zoom, last approximately 30 minutes, and will be recorded (audio and video).

○ Yes

○ No

If you selected yes, please provide your email address below.

_____

End of Block: Block 3

APPENDIX B: STUDY 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTRODUCTION: Thank you for taking time to talk with me. We are conducting this study to gain a better understanding of how people talk about how busy they are and why they tell people that they are busy. We hope that the findings from this study will shed light on how we communicate our busyness with others.

Do you have any questions about the Informed Consent link you received? Are you willing to continue with the interview?

answer any questions/wait for confirmation

When we do research like this, we prefer not to use people's names in our notes. Instead, we like to refer to people with a nickname or some other name; some people choose a funny name or their dog's name or a superhero. Is there a name that you would you like to use instead of your real name?

wait for answer

Great! Now to get started, how did you hear about this study?

1. How busy would you say you have been over the last several weeks?
    A. What is it that is leading you to describe your life in this way?
    B. Do you see your busyness as something that is under your control?
    C. Are you happy with this level of busyness in your life? (If no, how would you change it?)

2. Can you think about a time when you would say that you didn't feel busy – this could either be for a short period of time or a more extended period.
    A. Can you tell me about that time?
    B. Did you enjoy this period of time? Why or why not?

3. What do you think it is that leads people to describe themselves or their lives as busy?
    A. Do you think that this is under their control? In other words, do you think being busy is a choice that we make?

I would like to change our focus a bit to talk about how people talk about being busy.

4. Can you think about a recent conversation you had where you or someone else mentioned that they were busy or talked about their busyness? It could be something quick – like when a person asks, "how are things" and the response is "good, but busy" – or it could be a bit more detailed where a person describes things that are making them busy. Can you think about such a conversation? <<pause to give them a moment to think >>

A. Can you tell me about that conversation? (be sure to get them to identify who the conversation was with and what the relationship is to that person, who it was that talked about busyness, and maybe the nature of the situation)
B. Was the goal to relay something specific?

BUSYNESS: Thank you. Now we are going to talk about a time you talked about busyness or being busy.

5. Can you tell me about a time when you mentioned busyness, or being busy, to someone?
    A. Who was the person?
    B. How long had you known this person?
    C. What was the situation?
    D. How did you want to be seen?
    E. Why did you want this person to have this impression?
    F. Did you say or do anything to demonstrate your busyness?
    G. Do you think you were successful in showing your busyness? What was key to making it work or not work?
    H. Does this match how you view yourself?
    I. What was your goal in mentioning busyness?

6. Can you tell me about a second time when you mentioned busyness, or being busy, to someone?
    A. Who was the person?
    B. How long had you known this person?
    C. What was the situation?
    D. How did you want to be seen?
    E. Why did you want this person to have this impression?
    F. Did you say or do anything to demonstrate your busyness?
    G. Do you think you were successful in showing your busyness? What was key to making it work or not work?
    H. Does this match how you view yourself?
    I. What was your goal in mentioning busyness?

7. Have you ever told someone, or implied, that you were busy so that they would have a particular opinion or image of you?
    A. Who was the person?
    B. How long had you known this person?
    C. What was the situation?
    D. How did you want to be seen?
    E. Why did you want this person to have this impression?
    F. What did you do or say to try to create this impression?
    G. Do you think you were successful in creating this impression? What was key to making it work or not work?
    H. Does this match how you view yourself?

8. Have you ever exaggerated how busy you are?
    A. Why?
    B. Who were you talking to? Upward managing, downward managing, sideway managing, etc.

9. When you want to create an impression that you have been very busy, other than telling someone that you have been busy, how might you convey that image?

10. Do you use busyness as prevention of negative image or promotion?

11. Have you ever felt that someone has used busyness so that you form a specific impression of them?
    A. What do you think they were trying to accomplish?
    B. What was your response?

12. Now that we have talked about situations and people where busyness is discussed, are there any times when it is not discussed? Can you think of any people who are not using busyness for a specific purpose? Are there any situations where busyness is not relevant or important?

CONCLUSION: Is there anything else you would like to share with us? Do you have any additional opinions regarding how people discuss busyness?

And finally, with what ethnicity do you identify?

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. We appreciate your participation!

APPENDIX C: STUDY 1 CODING GUIDE

You will code examples of busy behaviors. You have been given a document with the examples pulled from 37 interviews.

Materials provided to you:
- Coding Guide + Explanations of Jones & Pittman's 5 Motives
- Coding Document + Excel Sheet

Your Objective:
Assign a Jones & Pittman Motive to the Examples

Coding Guidelines:
- You will read the transcribed example. Examples can come in many forms. Examples include, but are not limited to, stories and statements that mention:
  - Stating their busyness (ex.: "I am very busy")
  - Listing off tasks
  - Working long hours
  - Sending emails on nights/weekends
  - Missing calls/texts from friends
  - Showing a busier calendar than they really have
  - Saying they are busy to leave a situation
- After reading a busyness example, assign one or more relevant motives (i.e. corresponding numbers 1-6).
- Codes:
  - Self-promotion = 1
  - Exemplification = 2
  - Ingratiation = 3
  - Supplication = 4
  - Intimidation = 5
  - No clear fit = 6
- If you have questions, you may reach out to me at any time.
- Place codes in excel document with coordinating number (to be provided).

Explanations of Jones & Pittman's Five Classifications of Impression Management Motives

Self-promotion

Self-promotion is the motive to have others see oneself as competent and successful. This image can be useful to gain status or be seen as a good worker (Jones & Pittman, 1982). The behaviors people use to create this impression can include boasting about accomplishments or drawing attention to something in which one takes pride.

Exemplification

Exemplification is the motive to be seen as dedicated. This motive can be achieved through actions that seemingly go above and beyond what is expected or are self-sacrificing (Bolino, et al., 2008). Behaviors driven by this motive may include the demonstration of self-sacrifice, drawing attention to going out of one's way to help others, or volunteering for tasks even with a full schedule (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Long, 2017).

Ingratiation

Ingratiation is the motive to be liked and viewed favorably (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Ingratiating behaviors can include conforming to the target's opinion or doing favors to arouse affection in a target (Jones & Pittman, 1982). A more specific example of ingratiation may be buying a gift for a coworker to elicit their favorable view of the self. Another is opinion mimicking, where an individual seemingly adopts the values and opinions of the target to whom they wish to ingratiate themselves (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Opinion mimicking helps the individual seem relatable and similar to the target, making them more agreeable.

Supplication

Supplication is when an individual seeks to "be viewed as needy by showing their weaknesses or broadcasting their limitations" (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). This strategy can be used when a person strives to be seen as helpless or unfortunate through self-deprecation or through asking for help. The goal is to arouse feelings of nurturing or a sense of obligation from the target (Jones & Pittman, 1982). An example could be a friend explaining to you that they are very overwhelmed, so you cook them dinner to take one chore off their plate. However, if an individual fails at supplication, they can receive negative outcomes, such as being seen as lazy and/or demanding.

Intimidation

Intimidation is when "individuals seek to be viewed as intimidating by threatening or bullying others" (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). With this tactic, a person seeks to be seen as dangerous or ruthless and to evoke fear in a target through threats, anger, or breakdowns (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Examples of this tactic are influenced by the power dynamics of the actor and target. For instance, a supervisor or person of higher authority will threaten a subordinate and evoke fear. A subordinate or person of lower power, does not have the ability to make threats, so instead typically threatens to embarrass the other person by acting out or not completing a task (Jones & Pittman, 1982). If an individual fails at intimidation, they can be seen as temperamental and ineffectual.

APPENDIX D: STUDY 2 SURVEY

Busyness Vignettes - Official Launch

Department of Psychological Sciences
 9201 University City Boulevard
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Consent to Participate in a Research Study
 Title of the Project: Using Excuses in Relationship Management Situations
 Principal Investigator: Amber Greenwood, Ph.D. Candidate, UNC Charlotte
 Co-investigator: Dr. Amy Canevello, Professor of Psychological Science
 UNC Charlotte Faculty Advisor: Dr. Eric Heggestad, Professor of Psychological
Science, UNC Charlotte

 You are invited to participate in a research study. Participation in this research study is
voluntary. The information provided is to help you decide whether or not to participate. If
you have any questions, please ask Amber Greenwood at adavid21@uncc.edu.

 Important Information You Need to Know
 • The purpose of this study is to understand how people communicate in a variety of
interpersonal scenarios.
 • You will be asked to complete an online Qualtrics survey.
 • If you choose to participate it will require 10 minutes of your time.
 • We do not believe that you will experience any risk from participating in this study
outside of what is encountered in day-to-day life.
 • You will not benefit personally by participating in this study. What we learn about how
people communicate may be beneficial to others.

 Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you decide whether to
participate in this study.

 Why are we doing this study?

The purpose of this study is to better understand how people communicate with others across different scenarios. Specifically, we are exploring how giving excuses may change depending on the situation and who you are speaking to, such as to friends, boss, professor, etc.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?
You are being asked to be in this study because you may fit eligibility criteria. To participant, you:
• Must be 18 or older
• A fluent English speaker
• Have access to a smart phone, laptop, or desktop device

What will happen if I take part in this study?
If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to consent to this form and continue with the Qualtrics survey. You will read five scenarios and be asked to write how you would respond to each. You may take the survey any time and any place that is convenient for you. Your time commitment will be about 10 minutes. There is set minimum time requirement for each scenario.

What are the benefits of this study?
You will not benefit personally by participating in this study. What we learn about how people communicate may be beneficial to others.

What risks might I experience?
We do not believe that you will experience any risk from participating in this study outside of what is encountered in day-to-day life.

How will my information be protected?
We plan to publish the results of this study. To protect your privacy, we will not include any information that could identify you. Your privacy will be protected, and confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. Your responses will be treated as confidential. Survey responses will be stored with access to this information controlled and limited only to people who have approval to have access. Other people may need to see the information we collect about you, including people who work for UNC Charlotte and other agencies as required by law or allowed by federal regulations.

How will my information be used after the study is over?
After this study is complete, study data may be shared with other researchers for use in other studies without asking for your consent again or as may be needed as part of publishing our results. The data we share will NOT include information that could identify you.

Will I receive an incentive for taking part in this study?

By completing this study and meeting requirements, you may be eligible for 0.5 research participation credit toward your Psychology course. To receive credit, you must adequately complete this survey. If you do not follow all instructions, if you do not complete the survey, if you complete this survey faster than 3 minutes, if you do not pass the attention checks, or if you withdraw, then you will not receive research participation credit. The SONA system may atomically award the 0.5 research participation credit upon completion of the survey, but if upon review of the data you have not met the listed requirements, then you will be notified that your 0.5 research participation credit is removed.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?
It is up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you withdraw from the study, your data will be deleted.

Who can answer my questions about this study and my rights as a participant?
For questions about this research, you may contact Amber Greenwood at adavid21@uncc.edu or 706-825-0975, or Dr. Eric Heggestad at edhegges@uncc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Office of Research Protections and Integrity at uncc-irb@uncc.edu.

You may print a copy of this form. If you are 18 years of age or older, a fluent English speaker, have read and understand the information provided, and freely consent to participate in the study, you may proceed to the survey.

By continuing forward with this survey you are giving consent to participate. Click the arrow below to continue. If you do not want to consent, close your browser.

End of Block: Consent Form

Start of Block: Vignette Instructions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey! You are about to be shown five short scenarios. Each scenario will describe an interaction with another person. Please imagine yourself in this scenario and to respond as realistically as possible. Please give us your gut response; do not overthink your reactions. We are hoping to capture how people

authentically interact and respond to others across various situations. There are no right or wrong answers.

Please click the arrow button below to continue.

In one of your classes, you have been working closely with a fellow student, Taylor, on a group project. You have enjoyed working with and getting to know Taylor. You seem to have a lot of common interests and you see them as someone that you would want to hang out with outside of class.

A few days after the semester ends, you get the following text from Taylor:

You don't have any real plans this weekend, but you really don't like moving or helping others move. How would you tell Taylor you do not want to help them move?

Please write out your text message below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timing

First Click
Last Click
Page Submit
Click Count

In one of your classes, you have been working closely with a fellow student, Taylor, on a group project. You have enjoyed working with and getting to know Taylor. However, you don't think that you have much in common with them and they're not someone who you would want to hang out with outside of class.

A few days after the semester ends, you get the following text from Taylor:

*

You don't have any real plans this weekend, but you really don't like moving or helping others move. How would you tell Taylor you do not want to help them move?

Please write out your text message below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timing

First Click
Last Click
Page Submit
Click Count

A friend of yours, Sam, is really excited to set you up on a blind date with a close friend of theirs, Alex. The only information you have about Alex is what Sam has told you. But from what you have heard, you are interested in meeting them. You agree to meet Alex at noon for coffee at a local coffee shop.

As you walk into the coffee shop and see Alex, you don't find them very attractive, and once you have talked to them for a while you realize that the two of you don't have much in common. You don't see this having any potential.

At the end of the date, Alex asks you to see a movie next Friday. You are going to tell Alex no, but you know this is a close friend of Sam. You're worried about hurting your friendship with Sam by rejecting Alex. How do you say no?

Type out your response below as if you were directly talking to Alex.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timing

First Click
Last Click
Page Submit
Click Count

A friend of yours, Sam, has set you up on a blind date with an acquaintance of theirs, Alex. The only information you have about Alex is what Sam has told you. But from what you have heard, you are interested in meeting them. You agree to meet Alex at noon for coffee at a local coffee shop.

As you walk into the coffee shop and see Alex, you don't find them very attractive, and once you have talked to them for a while you realize that the two of you don't have much in common. You don't see this having any potential.

At the end of the date, Alex asks you to see a movie next Friday. You are going to tell Alex no, and you know Alex is only an acquaintance of Sam and they don't know each other very well. You know you won't hurt your friendship with Sam by rejecting Alex. How do you say no?

Type out your response below as if you were directly talking to Alex.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timing

First Click
Last Click
Page Submit
Click Count

As one of your job responsibilities, you write weekly reports and submit them to your boss. After submitting your last report, your boss asks to speak with you. They say that you are making more errors than usual, and that the quality of your work has decreased.

This is a good job, and you would like to keep it. You also like your boss and want a good relationship with them. What do you tell your boss? Type out your response below as if you were directly talking to them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timing

First Click
Last Click
Page Submit
Click Count

As one of your job responsibilities, you write weekly reports and submit them to your boss. After submitting your last report, your boss asks to speak with you. They say that you are making more errors than usual, and that the quality of your work has decreased.

You are indifferent towards this job, and you know it is just something temporary for now. You also don't really like your boss and you see no need to maintain a positive relationship with them. What do you tell your boss? Type out your response below as if you were directly talking to them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timing

First Click
Last Click
Page Submit
Click Count

A close friend of yours is hosting a birthday party for someone you know, but not well. You know most of the people that will be there, but there are a couple of people going whom you dislike. Because of this, you have decided you are not going to attend the party.

Write a text message to your friend telling them that you're not going.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timing

First Click
Last Click
Page Submit
Click Count

A close friend of yours is hosting a birthday party for themself. You know most of the people that will be there, but there are a couple of people going whom you dislike. Because of this, you have decided you are not going to attend the party. How do you tell your friend that you're not going?

Write a text message to your friend telling them that you're not going.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timing

First Click
Last Click
Page Submit
Click Count

It is near the end of your last semester in college before you graduate. You have an assignment for one of your classes, which is a very large lecture-based course. You started working on the assignment, and you quickly realized that the assignment is more complex than you expected, and you will be unable to finish it by the deadline. The instructor has a stated policy that they do not accept late work.

 You have taken multiple classes with this instructor before and they know you well. Write an email to your instructor asking if they would consider allowing you to turn in your assignment a couple days late.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timing

First Click
Last Click
Page Submit
Click Count

It is near the end of your last semester in college before you graduate. You have an assignment for one of your classes, which is a very large lecture-based course. You started working on the assignment, and you quickly realized that the assignment is more complex than you expected, and you will be unable to finish it by the deadline. The instructor has a stated policy that they do not accept late work.

You have never emailed or spoken to the instructor in person before. Write an email to your instructor asking if they would consider allowing you to turn in your assignment a couple days late.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timing

First Click
Last Click
Page Submit
Click Count

Now that you have completed your responses to the 5 scenarios, we are going to ask you a few questions about the scenarios.

In one scenario you were shown, you received a text message from Taylor. How did you meet Taylor?

○ In class

○ You are roommates

○ Through a mutual friend

○ You grew up together

In one scenario you were shown, you were on a blind date. How did the date go?

○ You are excited for a second date.

○ You told your date you aren't interested.

○ You are waiting for your date to call you.

○ You made plans to meet again next week.

In one scenario you were shown, your boss asked to speak with you. Why did your boss want to speak with you?

   ○ You are being assigned a new project.

   ○ You arrived late to work.

   ○ You are receiving a promotion.

   ○ You have been making more errors than usual at work.

End of Block: Attention Check 3

Start of Block: Attention Check 4

In one you were shown, you were invited to a birthday party. Why do you not want to attend this party?

   ○ The party is too far away.

   ○ There are going to be people there that you do not like.

   ○ You already have plans that night.

   ○ You are too tired.

End of Block: Attention Check 4

Start of Block: Attention Check 5

In one scenario you were shown, you were asked to write an email to your instructor. What did you ask for in the email?

○ An extension on a deadline

○ Extra credit

○ Clarification on an assignment

○ To be excused from the next class

End of Block: Attention Check 5

Start of Block: Scenario 1 additional info

In one of the scenarios, Taylor asked you for help moving. You were instructed to say no. However, if given the option, would you have said yes?

○ Very likely to have said yes

○ Likely to have said yes

○ Unsure

○ Unlikely to have said yes

○ Very unlikely to have said yes

End of Block: Scenario 1 additional info

Start of Block: Manipulation Check 1

In one scenario, you were told to imagine that a classmate named Taylor asked for help moving. To what extent did you care what Taylor thought of you?

○ I cared very much

○ I cared a little

○ I was indifferent

○ I didn't care much

○ I did not care at all

In one scenario, you were set up on a blind date. To what extent did you care about what the person you were on the date with thought of you after the date?

○ I cared very much

○ I cared a little

○ I was indifferent

○ I didn't care much

○ I did not care at all

In the same scenario, to what extent did you worry about what your friend might think of you rejecting the date?

○ I was very worried

○ I was somewhat worried

○ I was not worried at all

○ I was not worried at all

In one scenario, your boss asked to speak with you. To what extent did you care what your boss thought of you?

○ I cared very much

○ I cared a little

○ I was indifferent

○ I didn't care much

○ I did not care at all

In one scenario, your friend invited you to a birthday party. To what extent did you care what your friend thought of you?

○ I cared very much

○ I cared a little

○ I was indifferent

○ I didn't care much

○ I did not care at all

In one scenario, you were asked to write an email to your instructor. To what extent did you care what your instructor thought of you?

○ I cared very much

○ I cared a little

○ I was indifferent

○ I didn't care much

○ I did not care at all

We would now like to know some general information about you.

What is your age?

_____

What year are you in school?

○ Freshmen

○ Sophomore

○ Junior

○ Senior

○ Other _____

What is your ethnicity?

○ Hispanic or Latino/a

○ Not Hispanic or Latino/a

What is your race?

○ American Indian or Alaska Native

○ Asian

○ Black or African American

○ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

○ White

○ Other _____

What is your gender identity?

○ Female

○ Male

○ Non-binary

○ Other _____

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Debrief

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! You were given five scenarios where you were asked to respond as realistically as possible. We are interested in how people respond to others, specifically how frequently people use being busy as an excuse when speaking with others. Your responses are much appreciated!

Please do not discuss this survey and its purpose with others. However, if you must say something about this survey, you can say that this is a survey exploring how people provide excuses to others across different scenarios.

Please click the arrow below to submit the survey.

APPENDIX E: STUDY 2 CODE BOOK

Hello! Thank you for your help coding my dissertation data.
In this exel sheet you will find the coding instructions ("Instructions" tab) and the quotes to code ("Quotes for Coding" tab).

You will be assigned 100 quotes to code by our next meeing.
The quotes have been collected in response to my dissertation's study 2 survey.

Assigning a code:
I created scenarios where participants needed to respond to a person in the scenario. You will read what the participant wrote/said in response to that request. We want to know whether they stated or implied that they were busy in their response.
In the "Quotes for Coding" tab, read your assigned quotes and then record your code in the "Code" column.

Code Definition	Code Number
Direct statement of busyness:	1
Participant has a scheduling conflict or other demand on time that interferes with ability to attend to task/event:	2
Directly stated busyness and a schedule conflict (Both 1 and 2):	3
Quote does not include Code 1 or Code 2:	4

Code 1- Examples of stated busyness
Use this code when the participant directly states that they are busy. The response needs to include the word "busy"
Examples: "I'm busy", "Sorry, I'm busy"

Code 2- Examples of a schedule conflict/demand on time
Use this code when the participant provides a scheduling conflict or lists other demands on their time as an excuse/reason for answer
"I already have plans"
"I'm scheduled to do…."

"I have to work"
"I have had a lot of work and assignments that have put me a bit behind in everything. The current assignment is quite large and I need more time for it due to being overworked."
"death in the family"
"A lot of things, have been happening and I haven't gotten time to do the work."
"other personal responsibilities outside of the classroom it looks like I will not finish the assignment on time"

Code 3- Directly stated busyness and a schedule conflict/demand on time
Use this code when the participant states busyness and provides a schedule conflict/demand on time (i.e. when participant response fits both codes 1 and 2)
"Sorry, I'm busy this weekend. I'm scheduled to work."
"I'm busy that day, I already have plans."

Code 4- Does NOT directly state busyness or a schedule conflict/demand on time
Use this code when the participant does NOT states busyness or provide a schedule conflict/demand on time (i.e. when participant response fits neither code 1 or 2)
"I can't"
"I'm unavailable"
Responses that give you no information about their schedule
Simply stating they have been stressed with no mention of other tasks/responsibilities

These are not exhaustive lists of examples.