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Bye, H.H.; Sandal, G.M.; van de Vijver, F.J.R.; Sam, D.; Cakar, N.D.; Franke, G.H.

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Personal Values and Intended Self-Presentation during Job Interviews: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

Hege Høivik Bye* and Gro Mjeldheim Sandal

University of Bergen, Norway

Fons J.R. van de Vijver

*Tilburg University, The Netherlands, and North-West University,
South Africa*

David Lackland Sam

University of Bergen, Norway

Nigar Demircan Çakar

Duzce University, Turkey

Gabriele Helga Franke

University of Applied Sciences Magdeburg and Stendal, Germany

This study examined the impact of personal values on intended self-presentation during job interviews among German, Ghanaian, Norwegian, and Turkish students (total $N = 1,474$). We also sought to explain cultural differences in self-presentation among these groups. The Cultural Impression Management Scale for applicants (CIM-A) and the Portrait Values Questionnaire were administered. A multigroup MIMIC model with invariant measurement and structural weights was supported, in which achievement, security, and benevolence values predicted a latent impression management factor. Intended impression management scores were significantly higher in the Ghanaian and Turkish samples than in the Norwegian and German samples. Values (achievement and security) accounted for 19.6 per cent of the cross-cultural differences in self-presentation. Adding acquiescence as an additional predictor (interpreted here as a measure of communication style) decreased the cross-

* Address for correspondence: Hege Høivik Bye, Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen, P.O. Box 7807, N-5020 Bergen, Norway. Email: hege.bye@psysp.uib.no

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cultural differences by 52.8 per cent. It is concluded that values are similarly related to intended self-presentation across these four groups, even though the cross-cultural differences in mean scores in both sets of variables were considerable.

INTRODUCTION

The employment interview is a much researched topic in the field of applied psychology and a common tool for evaluating job applicants in many countries (Huo, Huang, & Napier, 2002). Recently, there has been an increased focus on the ways candidates manage their impressions during interviews and how these may influence subsequent employment decisions (Higgins & Judge, 2004; Levashina & Campion, 2007; Van Iddekinge, McFarland, & Raymark, 2007). However, two areas within research on applicants' self-presentation have received little attention: individual differences as antecedents of candidates' self-presentation (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007) and cross-cultural differences and similarities in self-presentation. As recruiters increasingly face a multicultural applicant pool, knowledge of cultural similarities and differences may become critical for fair and effective selection.

In the present study we investigate both individual- and culture-level differences in self-presentation. At the individual level, we explore whether personal values are associated with intended impression management during job interviews. We also investigate whether these associations are equivalent across cultures (Germany, Ghana, Norway, and Turkey). Previous work including the present samples showed that Ghanaians and Turks scored higher than the Norwegians and Germans on various impression management tactics (Sandal, van de Vijver, Bye, Sam, Amponsah, Çakar et al., 2010). The cultures from which these samples were drawn are known to vary on the cultural value dimensions of embeddedness–autonomy and mastery–harmony (Schwartz, 2006a). Whereas Norway and Germany are higher on autonomy and harmony, Ghana and Turkey are higher on embeddedness and to a lesser extent mastery. These culture-level differences might be reflected in the importance attributed to personal values in our samples. We address the question to what extent cross-cultural differences in values can account for group differences in impression management.

Measuring Self-Presentation across Cultures

Impression management is defined as “the conscious or unconscious attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions” (Schlenker, 1980, p. 6). Schlenker reserves the term self-presentation for the managing of self-relevant impressions; however, following Leary and Kowalski (1990), we use the two terms interchangeably. Through self-presentation people try to influence how others perceive their personality traits, values,

abilities, and intentions. In everyday routine situations, self-presentation tends to be automatic and effortless (Schlenker, 1980; Schlenker & Wowra, 2003). On the other hand, individuals will be motivated to actively attend to their self-presentation in high-stakes situations such as job interviews (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Sometimes impression management in interviews involves *faking*, which is defined as conscious distortions of answers to interview questions in order to obtain a better score or create favorable impressions. However, applicants may also employ impression management tactics to accurately and honestly present themselves (Levashina & Campion, 2007).

Different types of self-presentation tactics have been described in the literature (e.g. Jones & Pittman, 1982; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984), but commonly a distinction is made between assertive and defensive tactics (Ellis, West, Ryan, & DeShon, 2002; Lee, Quigley, Nesler, Corbett, & Tedeschi, 1999; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Whereas assertive tactics function as ways to establish a particular image or identity, defensive tactics concern repairing or defending one's image. Assertive tactics typically include behaviors intended to evoke the attribution of competence (self-promotion) and behaviors aimed at evoking interpersonal liking and attraction (ingratiation). Defensive tactics involve excuses, justifications, and apologies. Research with North American participants indicates that job applicants intend to use assertive tactics and use defensive tactics only when they perceive a need to compensate for a negative image (Stevens & Kristof, 1995).

Most instruments for measuring impression management tactics in interview or organisational settings have been developed in a North American context (e.g. Bolino & Turnley, 1999; Higgins & Judge, 2004; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991; Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Although valid within the boundaries of US American majority culture, these scales may not be applicable in other cultural contexts. When exporting a measurement instrument to new cultural contexts one might find that the instrument does not adequately capture the intended constructs across new cultural groups. This is known as construct bias (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). For example, Xin (2004) investigated the impression management tactics of Asian American and European American managers and suggested that the impression management scales used in her study may be biased against Asian American norms and values.

In this study we employ the newly developed Cultural Impression Management Scale (CIM-A; Sandal et al., 2010). Although existing literature formed the basis for the scale, efforts were made to avoid construct bias by involving researchers from several cultures in item construction. The CIM-A scale consists of four subscales measuring the respondent's intent to use assertive self-presentational tactics when interviewed for a desired job. Like other measures of self-presentation tactics (Higgins & Judge, 2004), as well as faking in interviews (Levashina & Campion, 2007), the four CIM-A tactics are moderately correlated (Sandal et al., 2010), reflecting a common under-

lying impression management factor. As such, impression management in job interviews can be seen as a hierarchical construct where specific tactics reflect the applicant's overall motivation and general tactic use. The specific tactics included in the CIM-A scale are Emphasising Organisational Competencies, Pointing out Obstacles, Showing Self-Effacement, and Emphasising Individual Excellence.

Emphasising Organisational Competencies involves expressing personal competencies that are likely to be desired in modern organisations. Examples are emphasising that one is active, enthusiastic, confident, and a leader, and at the same time expressing the importance of positive, harmonious relations with co-workers. The image portrayed is that of a person with skills that are relevant for the organisation such as confidence, enthusiasm, and social competence. *Pointing out Obstacles* involves informing the interviewer of problems and obstacles that may arise, such as pointing to gaps between one's personal qualifications and the job requirements, or mentioning that family obligations may impact work performance. It also entails describing how one has tackled previous challenges and stress. The image portrayed is that of a person oriented towards obstacles to performance and ways of overcoming them. The *Showing Self-Effacement* scale is made up of items about humility, hard work, and fitting in. The image portrayed is of a humble, sincere, and hardworking person. *Emphasising Individual Excellence* entails an exclusive focus on one's strengths. The image portrayed is of a person attributing previous accomplishments to own efforts, focusing on why he or she is the best person for the job.

The CIM-A scale shares aspects with other scales, but it also covers aspects that are usually not considered. The main reason for this broad coverage is the cross-cultural nature of the scale. The CIM-A was developed with the aim of measuring tactics that can be found in both western and non-western cultures. Some aspects in the CIM-A like ingratiation and self-promotion are covered in previous scales. For example, showing enthusiasm and interest for the job and organisation is included in Higgins and Judge's (2004) measure of ingratiation and in the Emphasising Organisational Competencies subscale. Taking credit for positive events and describing skills in a positive way is included in Higgins and Judge's measure of self-promotion and the subscale Emphasising Individual Excellence. An important asset of the CIM-A scale is that it measures both self-promotion as described in the American literature ("I am the best and most competent person for the job") in the Emphasising Individual Excellence scale and self-promotion regarding social competencies (e.g. "I am a good colleague, I get along with others, and I am an independent thinker") in the Emphasising Organisational Competencies scale. Stevens and Kristof (1995) and Schlenker (1980) describe a tactic called Overcoming Obstacles, which is similar to the Pointing out Obstacles tactic in the CIM-A scale. Finally, the Showing Self-Effacement scale involves a self-presentation

tactic that is not extensively discussed in the extant literature and is not well represented in existing scales.

Values in Impression Management

Previous research shows that the ways candidates present themselves during interviews influence interviewers' perceptions and evaluations of the candidates (Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009; Ellis et al., 2002; Fletcher, 1990; Gilmore & Ferris, 1989; Higgins & Judge, 2004; Howard & Ferris, 1996; Kacmar & Carlson, 1999; Kacmar, Delery, & Ferris, 1992; Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Franke, 2002; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Less is known about dispositional factors that may shape the candidates' self-presentation in the first place (Gilmore, Stevens, Harrell-Cook, & Ferris, 1999; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). In this study we focus on how individual differences in personal values are related to self-presentation. Like personality traits, personal values are sources of meaningful individual differences that are relatively stable across time and contexts (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002). Values refer to desirable goals that motivate action. They transcend specific situations and serve as standards or criteria, guiding the selection and evaluation of actions and people (Schwartz, 2006b).

Schwartz's (1992, 2006b) value theory defines 10 universally found personal values, each value expressing a broad motivational goal. The 10 values with their main motivational goal in parentheses are: Self-direction (independent thought and action-choosing, creating, exploring), Stimulation (excitement, novelty, challenge in life), Hedonism (pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself), Achievement (personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards), Power (social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources), Security (safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self), Conformity (restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to harm others and violate social expectations or norms), Tradition (respect, commitment, acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture and religion provides), Benevolence (preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact), and Universalism (understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature) (Schwartz, 2006b).

The 10 values form a motivational continuum, which on a general level can be seen as organised along two bipolar dimensions: openness to change versus conservation captures the conflict between independence and readiness for change (self-direction and stimulation) and self-restriction, preservation of the past, and resistance to change (security, conformity, and tradition). Self-transcendence versus self-enhancement contrasts valuing the welfare of other people (universalism and benevolence) with valuing one's own interest and success (power and achievement). Hedonism is related to both openness to

change and self-enhancement (Schwartz, 2006b). Of the ten values types, we focus on three values that, as explained below, should predict higher levels of overall impression management (achievement, conformity, and security). In order to establish the divergent validity of the value measures, we also include three values that should be unrelated to an individual's overall use of self-presentation tactics (benevolence, hedonism, and stimulation).

The effects of the remaining four values (tradition, power, universalism, and self-direction) are not included in our study. It is unclear how tradition and universalism values would relate to intended self-presentation. They both refer to quite abstract ideals, and with respect to tradition the relationship with intended impression management would depend on whether the specific traditions and customs the applicant respects are congruent or incongruent with the use of self-presentation tactics. Similarly, it is unclear how power and self-direction values would relate to impression management. Unlike achievement values that focus on successful performance in concrete interaction, power relates to the attainment or preservation of a dominant position in the general social system (Schwartz, 2006b). Power values could be expressed in both more and less impression management in the job interview (e.g. wanting to achieve a more dominant position in society by getting an important job would lead to more impression management, whereas wanting to express one's dominance would lead to less impression management). Similarly, it is difficult to predict whether people for whom independent thought and action is important (i.e. self-direction) would use more or fewer strategies.

Achievement, Conformity, and Security. Achievement values belong to a group of values regulating how personal interests and characteristics are expressed (Schwartz, 2006b). People for whom gaining approval and being seen as competent is very important are likely to be more motivated to manage their impressions in the highly evaluative situation of the job interview. Desiring to be seen as competent and successful in general should be reflected in emphasising one's competencies and focusing on one's accomplishments. The concern with social standards may increase the focus on one's ability to fit in and on possible obstacles to performance. Thus, we hypothesise that achievement values positively predict intended impression management.

Conformity values belong to a group of values regulating social relations (Schwartz, 2006b). We suggest that concern with social norms and the appropriateness of one's behavior will lead to an increased attention to the way one is perceived and evaluated by others. This should lead to a greater concern with one's self-presentation and higher levels of impression management in the job interview. Thus, we hypothesise that conformity values predict higher levels of intended impression management.

Security values reflect the importance of self-protection against threat (Schwartz, 2006b). Being offered a job and a stable income may be very important to people who highly value security. Their motivation to use self-presentation tactics and make a good impression on the interviewer should therefore be high. Consequently, we suggest that security values predict higher levels of intended impression management.

Benevolence, Stimulation, and Hedonism. Benevolence values are on the opposite side of the motivational continuum from achievement values. Benevolence concerns being loyal, helpful, and forgiving towards close others, such as family members and friends (Schwartz, 2006b). Schwartz (2006b) emphasises that benevolence is most critical to relations within the family and other primary groups. We do not see a reason why benevolence values would relate to intended impression management in job interviews, and thus predict that benevolence should be unrelated to intended self-presentation. Stimulation and hedonism values both reflect a desire for affectively pleasant arousal (excitement, pleasure), and are in opposition to security and conformity values. Seeking novelty, excitement, and pleasure in life should not be related to impression management in job interviews.

Some support for our propositions can be found in the literature linking values to social desirability, a phenomenon related to self-presentation. Socially desirable responding can be understood both as a response bias and as a substantive personality variable (McCrae & Costa, 1983; Schwartz, Verkasalo, Antonovsky, & Sagiv, 1997). Schwartz and colleagues found that those with high scores on the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSD) tended to rate values as more important in general, which may reflect a response bias. However, the research also showed that individuals with high scores on the MCSD put more emphasis on the importance of conformity, security, tradition, and benevolence, and renounced hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, and power. Hence, individuals' motivation to avoid social disapproval and follow conventions is manifest both in their value emphases and in their response to the MCSD. Similar relationships between personal values and Paulhus' impression management scale have been established (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 1995; Verkasalo & Lindeman, 1994). These findings lend support to our propositions, except with respect to benevolence, which we believe will be less relevant in a job interview setting; therefore, we do not expect any relationship between benevolence and intended self-presentation.

To summarise, we view candidates' impression management during job interviews as guided by the motivation to be seen as the right person for the job. People for whom achievement, conformity, and security values are more important will be more motivated to manage their impressions. We therefore hypothesise that these personal values predict an individual's level of

intended impression management, whereas benevolence, stimulation, and hedonism should be unrelated. The values included in Schwartz's (2006b) value theory show cross-cultural equivalence; in addition, there is no evidence to suggest that the relations between values and intended self-presentations would differ across the four countries; therefore, we expect similar relationships between values and impression management across the samples from Germany, Ghana, Norway, and Turkey.

Hypothesis 1a: Achievement, conformity, and security values predict higher levels of intended impression management.

Hypothesis 1b: Benevolence, stimulation, and hedonism values are unrelated to impression management.

Hypothesis 1c: The associations between values and intended impression management are equivalent across the German, Ghanaian, Norwegian, and Turkish samples.

Cross-Cultural Differences in Self-Presentation

Our previous research, including data from 10 different countries, showed that the German, Ghanaian, Norwegian, and Turkish samples employed here differed in their intended self-presentation tactics (Sandal et al., 2010). Ghanaian students scored highest and German students lowest on Emphasising Organisational Competencies and Emphasising Individual Excellence. The Norwegian and Turkish groups were not different from each other, but scored lower than the Ghanaians and higher than the Germans. All four groups had a different score on Pointing out Obstacles; the Turkish sample had the highest mean, followed by the Ghanaian, Norwegian, and German groups. On the Showing Self-Effacement scale, the Ghanaian and Turkish samples had higher means than the Norwegian and German samples. In general, the Ghanaian and Turkish respondents had higher levels of intended impression management than the German and Norwegian respondents.

While uncovering the existence and nature of cross-cultural differences is an important first step, it does not address the source of the observed differences. Researchers need to "unpack" cross-cultural differences by identifying the individual-level factors and processes that produce the observed differences (Whiting, 1976). Knowing that cultural value orientations differ across the four countries (Schwartz, 2006a), we expect group differences in individual achievement, conformity, and security values. If these values influence self-presentation, cultural differences in self-presentation could potentially be explained by differences in values. Thus, we aim to investigate whether cultural differences in self-presentation can be understood as a reflection of group differences in personal values.

At the cultural level, German, Ghanaian, Norwegian, and Turkish societies differ greatly on embeddedness versus autonomy (Schwartz, 2006a). In societies where embeddedness is emphasised, people are seen as parts of the collective, social relationships are very important, and there is an emphasis on restraining actions that may disrupt in-group solidarity or order. In societies where autonomy is emphasised, people are seen as separate entities and encouraged to cultivate and express their own uniqueness. Translated into values at the individual level, conformity and security will on average be valued more in societies high in embeddedness (such as Ghana and to some extent Turkey) than in societies high in autonomy (Norway and Germany). Following our earlier line of reasoning, group differences in self-presentation should be reduced when controlling for differences in conformity and security values.

The four cultural groups also differ on the mastery versus harmony cultural dimension (Schwartz, 2006a), although the variation seems to be less pronounced. In mastery-oriented cultures, values such as ambition, success, and competence are important, and active self-assertion is encouraged. In harmony-oriented cultures, people aim to fit into the natural environment, understanding and appreciating the world as it is. Translating this into personal values, achievement values will on average be of more importance in cultural groups higher on the mastery orientation (Ghana and Turkey) relative to groups lower on this orientation (Germany and Norway). Given that achievement values predict higher levels of impression management, group differences in self-presentation should be reduced when achievement values are controlled for.

Hypothesis 2: Achievement, conformity, and security values account for a significant amount of variance in the cross-cultural differences in intended self-presentation.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were university students from Germany ($n = 301$), Ghana ($n = 442$), Norway ($n = 324$), and Turkey ($n = 407$). In total, the number of respondents was 1,474. We used a double strategy to deal with missing data. First, the participants' number of missing values across core variables (the PVQ items, the CIM-A items, sex, and age) was assessed. A total of 23 respondents had more than 20 missing data points (out of 59 responses; 34%) and these were deleted. Another two respondents lacked information about sex and were also deleted. The remaining missing values were replaced by regression estimates. The estimation was done per country

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics for All Samples

| Characteristic | Germany (n = 301) | Ghana (n = 425) | Norway (n = 316) | Turkey (n = 407) |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Sex | | | | |
| % Women | 79.4% | 60.7% | 69.0% | 54.1% |
| Age | | | | |
| Mean | 24.29 _{b,c} | 24.73 _c | 23.68 _b | 22.72 _a |
| (Standard Deviation) | (3.69) | (5.24) | (6.34) | (1.73) |

Note: Means with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$.

group and the complete data set was employed in all subsequent analyses. New sample sizes were: $n = 301$ for Germany, $n = 425$ for Ghana, $n = 316$ for Norway, and $n = 407$ for Turkey.

Combining the four samples, the mean age was 23.84 years ($SD = 4.59$) and the percentage of women was 64.5 per cent. Descriptive statistics for all samples are presented in Table 1. We assessed differences in age by means of a one-way analysis of variance. The result showed that the average age was significantly different across groups, $F(3, 1445) = 14.91, p < .001$. Differences in means are indicated in Table 1. The distribution of men and women also differed across samples, $\chi^2(3, N = 1449) = 54.06, p < .001$.

Questions regarding the respondents' main subjects and years of study were tailored to fit the educational system in each country. In the German sample the respondents were following either a course in rehabilitation psychology (57.1%), business (35.9%), or childhood science (7.0%). They were spread out across years 1 to 5 (year 1: 27.6%, year 2: 29.6%, year 3: 25.9%, year 4: 15.3%, and year 5: 1.7%). The majority of the Ghanaian participants were studying at the bachelor level (96.5%). Various majors were represented, but the largest study major was psychology, either separately (68%) or in combination with another major (23.3%).

In the Norwegian sample, 67.7 per cent were studying at the bachelor level, and 31.0 per cent were master level students. The Norwegian respondents were studying at the following faculties: Psychology (53.5%), Social Science (25.0%), Mathematics and Natural Science (13.9%), Humanities (2.8%), and Medicine (2.2%). In the Turkish sample, 98.3 per cent were students at the bachelor level and 1.7 per cent at the master level. They were majoring in Business Administration (50.6%), Economics (26.0%), Public Relations (18.7%), International Relations (4.2%), and Engineering (0.5%).

Materials

The Cultural Impression Management scale for Applicants (CIM-A). All of the CIM-A items describe behavior during job interviews and the instruc-

tion to the respondent is: "The following questions deal with how you behave during job interviews. Imagine that you are applying for an attractive position, and you have been invited for an interview. How important would it be for you to behave in the ways described below?" Responses are given on a 5-point scale, ranging from *of very little or no importance* (1) to *of utmost importance* (5). The subscales Emphasising Organisational Competencies (EOC), Pointing out Obstacles (OBS), Showing Self-Effacement (SSE), and Emphasising Individual Excellence (EIE) consist of 11, eight, four, and four items, respectively. Example items are "Emphasise that colleagues and work groups have been important for your previous work accomplishments" (EOC), "Describe your most significant setbacks at a previous workplace and how you overcame them" (OBS), "Look, talk, and behave in a sincere and humble manner" (SSE), and "Talk about strengths and positive aspects only" (EIE).

An important condition for the valid use of scales in different cultural groups is that the scales measure the same underlying construct in all samples. This is referred to as construct equivalence or structural equivalence (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). The structural equivalence of the CIM-A scales has been demonstrated in the samples employed here (Sandal et al., 2010), indicating that we are dealing with the same self-presentation tactics across cultures. The scales were also screened for item bias and only unbiased items were included in the final version used in the present study.

The reliabilities of the total scale were acceptable: .81, .79, .73, and .79 in the German, Ghanaian, Norwegian, and Turkish samples, respectively. Cronbach's alphas for the subscales in the German, Ghanaian, Norwegian, and Turkish samples were (in order) .79, .75, .73, and .76 for the EOC subscale, .65, .52, .59, and .58 for the OBS subscale, .53, .51, .47, and .51 for the SSE subscale, and .50, .45, .44 and .57 for the EIE subscale. These reliabilities are lower than desired.

The Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ, Schwartz, 2006b). The full PVQ scale includes short verbal portraits of 40 different people, e.g. "He thinks it is important to be ambitious. He wants to show people how capable he is." For each of the portraits, respondents answer the question "How much like you is this person?" on a scale from *very much like me* (6) to *not like me at all* (1). The verbal portraits describe each person in terms of what is important to him or her, thus capturing the person's values. The achievement, conformity, security, benevolence, hedonism, and stimulation value scales all consist of three to five items. Reliabilities across scales and samples ranged from .52 to .84 (mean $\alpha = .67$). This is similar to the range of reliabilities commonly reported for the PVQ (Schwartz, 2006b).

Schwartz (2006a, 2006b) recommends centering each person's score on the value scales on their mean score on the entire PVQ as a whole to remove individual and group differences in the use of the response scale. These

centered value scores reflect the individual's value priorities (e.g. the centered conformity score indicates the importance of conformity relative to the importance of the other values). We centered all value scales.

Procedure

The students were invited to participate in the study in class and filled in the questionnaire during lectures/seminars at their universities. All information and materials were in the students' native language, with the exception of the Ghanaian respondents who received the questionnaire in English. The students were informed that they were participating in an international research project on recruitment, and that their responses would be anonymous. Filling in the questionnaires took 20 to 40 minutes.

RESULTS

The Impact of Personal Values on Impression Management

To investigate Hypotheses 1a–c, a multigroup structural equation modeling analysis was performed using AMOS 16.0.1 (Arbuckle, 2007). The method of estimation was maximum likelihood. We tested a MIMIC model (multiple indicators, multiple causes; Jöreskog & Goldberger, 1975). In the model, personal values are associated with a latent impression management factor that has the four tactics as indicators. To examine the equivalence of the model across the four samples a series of nested models were tested, increasingly constraining the number of equivalent parameters across groups. These analyses followed the standard sequence in AMOS. First, configural invariance (unconstrained model) was tested, which involved assessing whether the overall configuration of the model was similar across groups. Next, invariance of the factor loadings was tested (measurement weights model), that is, we tested whether the loadings of the CIM-A subscales on the global impression management factor were equivalent. In the third model (structural weights model), the equivalence of the relationships between the predictors and the latent impression management factor was tested. Thus, the associations between the personal values and impression management were constrained to be equal across groups. Fourth, we constrained the correlations between the predictors (i.e. personal values) to be equal across samples (structural covariances model). Fifth, we tested whether the residuals of the latent impression management factor were equivalent (structural residuals model), and finally, the equivalence of the error terms of the indicators of the latent impression management factor were constrained to be equal (measurement residuals model).

TABLE 2
Results of the Structural Equation Model Analysis

| <i>Model</i> | χ^2 | <i>df</i> | χ^2/df | <i>GFI</i> | <i>AGFI</i> | <i>TLI</i> | <i>CFI</i> | <i>RMSEA</i> | $\Delta\chi^2$ | Δdf |
|---------------------------|----------------|------------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------------|-------------|
| Unconstrained | 198.956 | 80 | 2.487 | .97 | .93 | .87 | .94 | .032 | – | – |
| Measurement weights | 220.939 | 89 | 2.482 | .97 | .93 | .87 | .94 | .032 | 21.983** | 9 |
| <i>Structural weights</i> | <i>270.528</i> | <i>107</i> | <i>2.528</i> | <i>.97</i> | <i>.93</i> | <i>.87</i> | <i>.92</i> | <i>.033</i> | <i>49.589***</i> | <i>18</i> |
| Structural covariances | 850.581 | 170 | 5.003 | .89 | .86 | .66 | .68 | .053 | 580.053*** | 63 |
| Structural residuals | 872.391 | 173 | 5.043 | .89 | .86 | .66 | .67 | .053 | 21.810*** | 3 |
| Measurement residuals | 988.672 | 185 | 5.344 | .87 | .85 | .63 | .62 | .055 | 116.236*** | 12 |

Note: The most restrictive model with acceptable fit statistics is printed in italics. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

As the chi-square difference test is sensitive to sample size, we based our evaluation of model fit on several fit indices, namely the goodness of fit index (GFI), the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), the Tucker Lewis index (TLI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The structural weights model was the most restrictive model with acceptable fit statistics (indices of fit for all models are presented in Table 2). These findings support Hypothesis 1c.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the median standardised regression weights of values on impression management were $\beta = -.02$ (*ns*) for conformity, $\beta = .12$ ($p < .001$) for achievement, and $\beta = .13$ ($p < .001$) for security values. Achievement and security values predicted intended impression management; however, contrary to our hypothesis conformity did not. In line with Hypothesis 1b, neither stimulation ($\beta = .04$) nor hedonism ($\beta = .02$) had a significant impact on intended impression management. Moreover, contrary to Hypothesis 1b, benevolence did in fact have a significant impact on intended impression management ($\beta = .07$, $p < .01$). So, both Hypotheses 1a and 1b were partly supported.

In order to understand why the relationships between conformity and benevolence values and intended self-presentation differed from our expectations we examined the items included in the two value scales. The conformity items appeared to primarily concern obedience (e.g. “He believes he should always show respect to his/her parents and to older people. It is important to him/her to be obedient”), whereas the benevolence items seem to cover a broader relationship orientation beyond immediate close others (e.g. “It is important to him to respond to the needs of others. He tries to support those he/she knows”). Our results indicate that a person’s concern with the quality of social interactions (covered by benevolence items) is predictive of intended self-presentation in job interviews, whereas concern with obedience (covered by conformity items) is not. Therefore, we decided to include benevolence, instead of conformity values, in the assessment of cross-cultural differences in the test of Hypothesis 2.

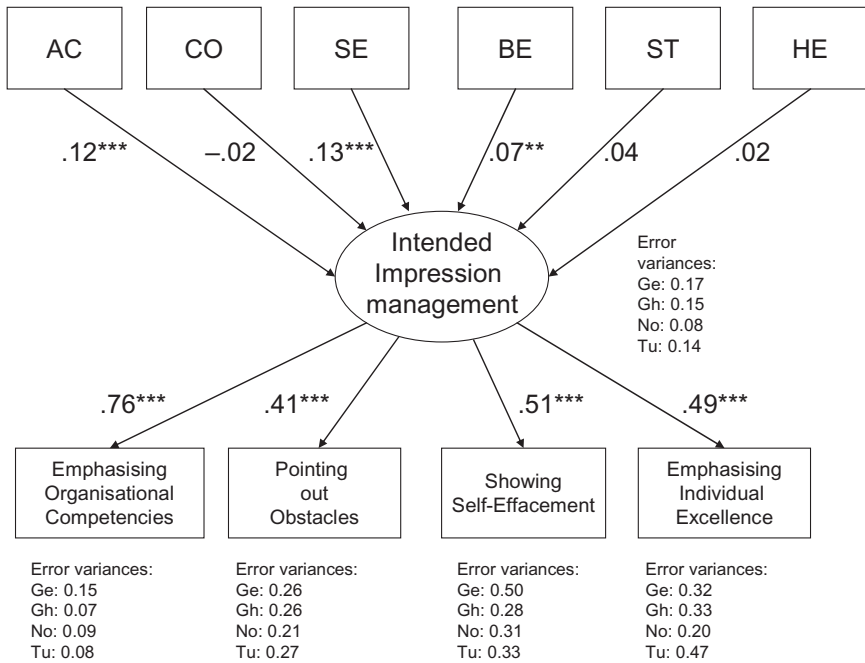


FIGURE 1. A model of personal values and intended impression management.

Note: Ge = Germans, Gh = Ghanaians, No = Norwegians, Tu = Turks, AC = Achievement, CO = Conformity, SE = Security, BE = Benevolence, ST = stimulation, and HE = Hedonism.

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Cross-Cultural Differences in Self-Presentation

In order to test Hypothesis 2 we conducted a three-step “unpacking” procedure. The aim of the analyses was to compare the size of the original cross-cultural differences in self-presentation with the size of the differences after controlling for values. First, an ANOVA was performed, assessing the main effect of culture on the total CIM-A scale. Next, we performed an ANCOVA controlling for age and sex. In the third step we included benevolence, achievement, and security values as covariates, so that the effect of culture on intended self-presentation before and after controlling for the values could be compared.

We tested the presence of group differences in values, which is a prerequisite for testing our hypothesis about cross-cultural differences. A one-way MANCOVA was performed to assess group differences in achievement,

TABLE 3
Means and Standard Deviations of All Scales per Sample

| Scale | Sample | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----|--------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|
| | Germany | | Ghana | | Norway | | Turkey | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Cultural Impression Management Scale | | | | | | | | |
| Emphasising Organisational Competencies | 3.60 _a | .57 | 4.12 _b | .47 | 3.84 _c | .42 | 3.96 _d | .48 |
| Pointing out Obstacles | 2.36 _a | .56 | 2.92 _b | .57 | 2.57 _c | .48 | 3.14 _d | .58 |
| Showing Self-Effacement | 3.42 _a | .81 | 3.84 _b | .65 | 3.51 _a | .61 | 3.79 _b | .69 |
| Emphasising Individual Excellence | 2.81 _a | .69 | 3.44 _b | .67 | 3.17 _c | .50 | 3.11 _c | .73 |
| Overall impression management | 3.09 _a | .44 | 3.62 _b | .40 | 3.32 _c | .31 | 3.56 _b | .40 |
| Portrait Values Questionnaire | | | | | | | | |
| Achievement | .15 _a | .77 | .03 _{a,b} | .61 | -.05 _{b,c} | .85 | -.13 _c | .67 |
| Conformity | -.63 _a | .76 | .22 _b | .59 | -.14 _c | .77 | .12 _b | .56 |
| Security | -.09 _a | .71 | .56 _b | .47 | -.07 _a | .66 | .32 _c | .44 |
| Benevolence | .73 _a | .57 | .36 _b | .55 | .50 _c | .75 | .18 _d | .53 |
| Stimulation | .05 _a | .95 | -.21 _b | .73 | -.01 _a | .91 | -.03 _a | .66 |
| Hedonism | .37 _a | .97 | -.96 _b | .97 | .15 _c | .90 | -.16 _d | .86 |

Note: Means with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$. Differences in means were assessed by one-way ANOVAs and Tukey-b post-hoc tests.

benevolence, and security values, controlling for age and sex (Table 4). After taking into account the covariates, the groups differed significantly on achievement, security, and benevolence values: Wilks' lambda = .72, $F(9, 3507.166) = 55.26$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .107$. Univariate statistics are presented in Table 4. Differences in means (prior to controlling for sex and age) are presented in Table 3. In line with expectations, security values were rated as more important by respondents from Turkey and Ghana than from Norway and Germany. Differences in achievement values were less pronounced. The German and Ghanaian students placed most emphasis on achievement values, and the Turkish respondents had the lowest mean score. The Norwegian participants did not score significantly differently from either the Turkish or the Ghanaian respondents. Benevolence values were the most strongly endorsed in the German sample, followed by the Norwegian, Ghanaian, and Turkish samples, respectively.

The ANOVA assessing the impact of culture on intended impression management showed a significant effect of culture, $F(3, 1445) = 134.61$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .218$. As indicated in Table 3, the Ghanaian and Turkish samples had a higher mean overall intended impression management score than the Norwegian and the German samples. The mean of the German sample was significantly lower than the mean of the Norwegian sample.

TABLE 4
Cultural Differences in Benevolence, Security, and Achievement Values,
Controlling for Sex and Age

| <i>Factor</i> | <i>Dependent variable</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>df</i> | η^2_p |
|---------------|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Sex | Benevolence | 14.26*** | 1, 1443 | .010 |
| | Security | 3.94* | 1, 1443 | .003 |
| | Achievement | .36 | 1, 1443 | .000 |
| Age | Benevolence | .71 | 1, 1443 | .000 |
| | Security | 15.60*** | 1, 1443 | .011 |
| | Achievement | 7.83** | 1, 1443 | .005 |
| Country | Benevolence | 44.63*** | 3, 1443 | .085 |
| | Security | 114.42*** | 3, 1443 | .192 |
| | Achievement | 10.54*** | 3, 1443 | .021 |

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 5
Effect of Culture on Intended Self-Presentation Correcting for Sex, Age, Values,
and Acquiescence

| <i>Independent variable</i> | <i>Effect size (η^2_p)</i> | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|------------------------------------|--|
| | <i>No correction</i> | <i>After correction for sex and age</i> | <i>After correction for values</i> | <i>After correction for acquiescence</i> |
| Country | .218*** | .219*** | .176*** | .083*** |
| Sex | | .003* | .002† | .002 |
| Age | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| Achievement | | | .012*** | .002† |
| Security | | | .006** | .004* |
| Benevolence | | | .001 | .000 |
| Acquiescence | | | | .077*** |

† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Including sex and age as covariates did not reduce the impact of culture on intended impression management, $F(3, 1443) = 134.99$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .219$. The third ANCOVA assessed the impact of culture on intended impression management, controlling for age, sex, and achievement, security, and benevolence values. We found a significant effect of culture after taking into account the covariates, $F(3, 1440) = 102.67$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .176$. As indicated in Table 5, both achievement and security values were significant covariates; however, benevolence was not. Overall, the cultural differences in intended impression management were reduced by 19.6 per cent when group differences in values were controlled for.

Acquiescence. We were intrigued by the relatively modest amount of cultural variance in intended impression management that could be explained by cultural differences in personal achievement, benevolence, and security values. If the large cultural differences in intended impression management cannot be explained by differences in values, what may be a plausible source of this difference? One possibility is that cultural differences are explained by acquiescent responding, which involves “the tendency to agree rather than disagree with items, irrespective of item content” (van Herk, Poortinga, & Verhallen, 2004, p. 347). To assess this possibility we used the respondents’ answers to the 40 PVQ items to create a measure of acquiescence. We employed the formula described by van Dijk, Datema, Piggen, Welten, and van de Vijver (2009, p. 151). Conceptually, acquiescence is indicated by agreement with both positive and negative items in the same domain. None of the PVQ items are negatively formulated. However, values at opposite sides of the motivational continuum are conceptual opposites, so if the items of one value type are designated as positive (e.g. power) then the items of the opposite value can be designated as negative (e.g. universalism). Based on this logic, we created four acquiescence scores (security vs. self-direction, benevolence vs. achievement, universalism vs. power, and conformity and tradition vs. stimulation and hedonism). The absolute values were then averaged to a mean acquiescence score ranging from -1 to $+1$. The mean acquiescence score differed across the four samples, $F(3, 1445) = 422.49$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .467$. The mean acquiescence score was lowest in the Norwegian sample ($M = .14$, $SD = .27$), followed by the German ($M = .21$, $SD = .20$), Ghanaian ($M = .53$, $SD = .21$), and Turkish ($M = .63$, $SD = .21$) samples, respectively. Adding acquiescence as a covariate in the ANCOVA (final line, Table 5), reduced the cross-cultural differences in intended impression management by an additional 52.8 per cent. So, acquiescence turned out to be the most powerful explanatory factor.

DISCUSSION

We addressed the question of how personal values are related to both individual-level differences and culture-level differences in intended self-presentation in samples of German, Ghanaian, Norwegian, and Turkish students. At the individual level of analysis we predicted that achievement, conformity, and security values would be associated with higher levels of intended impression management (Hypothesis 1a). We found significant associations for achievement and security values but not for conformity values. In an effort to demonstrate divergent validity, we also predicted that benevolence, stimulation, and hedonism values are unrelated to intended impression management (Hypothesis 1b). In line with expectations, neither stimulation nor hedonism values were significant predictors. However, we

did find that people who attribute greater value to benevolence scored higher on intended self-presentation. We interpreted this partial lack of support for our hypotheses as indicating that it is not conformity (with its emphasis on obedience), but the concern for the quality of social relationships and fitting in more generally (i.e. benevolence) that is relevant for predicting intended impression management. Moreover, benevolence may be especially relevant for the motivation to engage in the relationship-oriented tactic of self-effacement.¹

In line with Hypothesis 1c, the associations between values and intended impression management were invariant across the samples. Equivalent relationships between achievement, security, and benevolence values and intended self-presentation across our four samples provide strong evidence that these values are equally predictive of how people intend to present themselves during job interviews across various cultural contexts. The results from the MIMIC model also support the conceptualisation of self-presentation in job interviews as a hierarchical construct across the four samples. Our results showed that the overall level of intended impression management was highest among respondents from Ghana and Turkey, lower among Norwegians, and lowest among the German respondents. A close look at Table 3 reveals that the mean scores on the subscales follow a similar rank order. However, the differences are not equally pronounced across the four subscales.

Controlling for the differences in values reduced the difference in intended self-presentation by 19.6 per cent. In Whiting's (1976) terms, achievement and security values were able to unpackage a significant part of the observed cultural differences in intended self-presentation. We added a measure of acquiescence to our analyses in an effort to further explain the observed cross-cultural differences in intended impression management. Response styles such as acquiescence are more pronounced in less-affluent, collectivist countries (Church, 2009; Harzing, 2006; van Hemert, van de Vijver, Poortinga, & Georgas, 2002). Our findings match this pattern, as mean acquiescence was higher among respondents from Turkey and Ghana than from Germany and Norway. Adding acquiescence as a covariate in our analyses reduced the cross-cultural differences by 52.8 per cent. Clearly, this indicates that acquiescence plays an important part in intended impression management.

Whereas the statistical definition of acquiescence is clear, the psychological meaning of the tendency to express agreement is more ambiguous. At the country level, acquiescence is related to extraversion, power distance, in-group collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance (Harzing, 2006), as well as

¹ We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this specific link.

hierarchy and embeddedness values (Smith, 2004). Smith argues that cultural differences in acquiescence can be seen as a meaningful expression of differing communication styles. If a majority of the members within a cultural group tend to respond in an acquiescent manner, this likely reflects established systems of social interaction that are functional in a context where maintaining good relationships and honoring the existing power differential is of great importance for group harmony.

Cultural value orientations influence and are influenced by other societal factors such as affluence, socioeconomic development, and democratisation (Schwartz, 2006a). Value orientations at the cultural level are also inextricably connected to values at the individual level. We believe that personal values can be seen as mediating or moderating variables through which societal-level factors such as affluence affect self-presentation in job interviews. For example, it is likely that people's motivation to make a good impression and get the job will be stronger in less affluent countries, with high unemployment rates and a less-developed welfare system, than in more affluent countries where employers typically face more problems recruiting qualified personnel. However, the influence of societal factors on candidates' self-presentation can be conceptualised as working through personal values. The motivation to obtain a job offer and a high priority of security values may be more dominant in societies where people are less affluent. In line with this interpretation, endorsement of both self-presentation tactics and security values was stronger in the less affluent countries (Ghana and Turkey) than in the more affluent countries (Norway and Germany). We conclude that cultural differences in intended self-presentation can thus be explained by both differences in achievement and security values, and differences in communications styles as reflected by variations in acquiescence.

Limitations

The CIM-A scale is a measure of intended behavior in a hypothetical situation rather than an observation of actual behavior. Specifically, respondents are asked to indicate which behaviors would be important for them to perform when they are being interviewed for a job they really want. The scale was constructed to capture intended behaviors and tactics the respondents consider essential to make a good impression during interviews. When forming intentions (e.g. the day before an interview) applicants are likely to consider behaviors in terms of their importance (e.g. "It is important that I get there on time, I want them to get the impression that I am a timely person", or "I really need to get across that I am excited about the job"). We therefore argue that the CIM-A scale captures intentions.

The question can be asked to what extent self-reported intentions reflect actual job interview behavior. The degree to which responses to the CIM-A

scale translate into real-life behaviors depends on the strength of the intention–behavior relationship. Armitage and Conner’s (2001) meta-analysis of the theory of planned behavior, in which the intention–behavior relationship is a core component, showed that intention–behavior relationships tend to be strong. We contend that desirable self-presentations are essential in job interviews and that it is realistic to expect a close concordance between intended and actual behavior. It is important to note, however, that impression management during interviews is sometimes assessed by frequency of occurrence (e.g. Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). Intentions to use a specific tactic (as assessed by the CIM-A) may be related to the frequency of use of the tactic. However, it is also possible that personal values relate differently to the importance of use and the frequency of use. For example, interviewees who value stimulation may be more verbal and therefore have a higher frequency of verbal impression management. Such a relationship would not be captured by the CIM-A scale.² To conclude, intended impression management as measured by the CIM-A scale may well be reflected in actual interview behavior. However, assessing the convergence between intended self-presentation and self-reported or observed interview behavior is an important avenue for future research.

Implications

Our results showed strong cross-cultural evidence that personal achievement, security, and benevolence values influenced the participants’ overall motivation to manage their impressions. However, the emphasis placed on self-presentation tactics varied across national groups. Sources of cultural differences in self-presentation styles can partly be found in differences in the endorsement of achievement and security values, as well as in differing communication patterns indicated by acquiescence. Gaining an accurate impression of an applicant may be much more difficult when the person’s self-presentation is guided by values and communication norms different from those of the interviewer. The likelihood of a wrong hiring decision may increase with cultural distance, as it may become increasingly difficult for the interviewer to adequately interpret the interviewee’s self-presentation. Sensitivity to cultural differences in self-presentation may therefore be essential in cross-cultural selection settings.

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² We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this point.

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