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Author(s): Laura Morgan Roberts

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CHANGING FACES: PROFESSIONAL IMAGE CONSTRUCTION IN DIVERSE ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS

LAURA MORGAN ROBERTS
Harvard Business School

I integrate social identity and impression management theories to capture the dual impact of personal characteristics and group affiliations on professional image construction. In so doing, I describe how and why individuals proactively negotiate their personal and social identities during interpersonal encounters. The model highlights the multilevel impact of credible and authentic professional image construction on intrapsychic, interpersonal, workgroup, and organizational outcomes.

Much of the dialogue about the "twenty-first century corporation" has focused on the increasing diversity of the U.S. labor force and the globalization of the economy. Scholars and managers have devoted significant attention to exploring how workforce diversity influences organizational life (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). In a considerable amount of this research, researchers have taken a "top-down" perspective on managing diversity, focusing on how organizational leaders can maximize the benefits and minimize the challenges of diversity among employees and constituents. Leaders are advised to admonish discrimination, discourage stereotyping, reduce inequity, and create an organizational climate where diversity is welcomed so that they can draw on differences to enhance the quality of their work (Cox & Beale, 1997; Thomas & Ely, 1996; Thomas, 1990).

Since leaders design organizational systems, shape organizational cultures, and often serve as role models for normative behavior within the organization, they play a critical role in managing organizational diversity. Organizational policies, structures, and norms shape the macrocontext for cross-cultural interactions. However, social identities are constructed and negotiated, and differences magnified, discounted, transcended, or affirmed, in the microcontext of social interaction in work organiza-

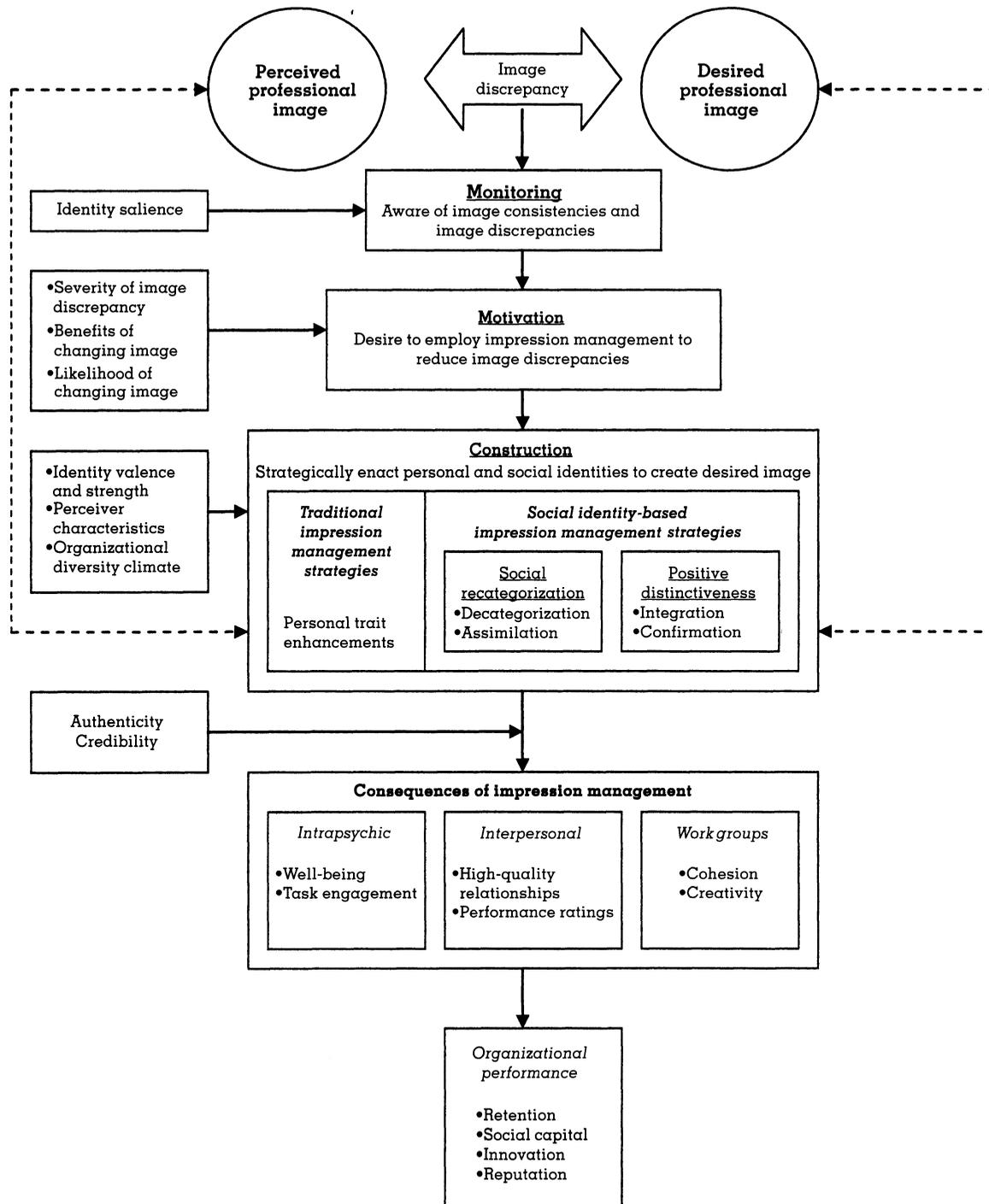
tions (Acker, 1990; Alderfer & Smith, 1982; Alvesson & Billing, 1998; Carbado & Gulati, 2000; Cooley, 1902; Deaux & Ethier, 1998; Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1934; Meyerson, 2001; West & Fenstermaker, 1995; Wharton, 1992).

In a diverse society, all organizational members must learn how to effectively navigate their interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds so that they can build credibility, form high-quality relationships, and generate high performance outcomes with their constituents. Therefore, it is important for researchers to devote an equal amount of attention to the "bottom-up tactics" that employees use to effectively manage the diversity they encounter daily in their work environment. In this article I describe how, in the course of an interpersonal encounter, individuals attempt to leverage the positive impact of the diversity they bring and counteract the conflicts that differences may generate in work organizations.

I assert that professional image construction is a critical element of navigating interactions with key constituents in diverse organizations, and I present a conceptual model for how and why professional image construction occurs (see Figure 1). In this paper I first define professional image construction as the process of assessing and shaping perceptions of one's own competence and character. I describe how personal and social identities shape desired professional images (i.e., how individuals wish to be seen) and perceived professional images (i.e., how individuals think they are currently seen). I then explain the process by which people become aware of and motivated to reduce discrepancies

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FIGURE 1
Professional Image Construction in Diverse Organizational Settings



between their desired and perceived professional images. By integrating social identity and impression management theories, I derive two overarching categories of strategies that individuals employ to reduce severe image dis-

crepancies. Individuals employ traditional impression management strategies to demonstrate that they possess desirable personal characteristics. I propose that individuals also employ social identity-based impression management

strategies to manage the impact of stereotypes on others' perceptions of their competence and character. Finally, I describe the intended and unintended consequences of impression management behavior for individuals', groups', and organizations' images, well-being, and performance and identify directions for future research.

THE POWER OF PROFESSIONAL¹ IMAGE

I define professional image as the aggregate of key constituents' (i.e., clients, bosses, superiors, subordinates, and colleagues) perceptions of one's competence and character. This definition refers to an externally oriented, public persona that is based on reflected appraisals (how an individual thinks others perceive him or her), rather than one's self-image (how one perceives oneself) or others' "actual" perceptions (Ibarra, 1999; Mead, 1934; Tice & Wallace, 2003).

Professional image construction has important implications for achieving social approval, power, well-being, and career success (Baumeister, 1982; Ibarra, 1999; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 2001; Schlenker, 2003). People who construct viable professional images are perceived as being capable of meeting the technical and social demands of their jobs (Ibarra, 1999; Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1991). Thus, individuals invest a considerable amount of energy into constructing viable professional images by enacting personas that represent desirable qualities (e.g., intelligence, confidence, initiative, trustworthiness, gracefulness, and seriousness about

one's work) and that elicit approval and recognition from key constituents (Goffman, 1959; Ibarra, 1999; Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail, & Mackie-Lewis, 1997; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993).

The primary focus of extant research on professional image construction has been on how individuals project personal identity characteristics—uniquely held personal attributes—to shape perceptions of competence and character. For example, studies show that people who are poorly dressed are perceived as less competent and less capable of fitting into the organization's culture (Morem, 1997; Rafaeli et al., 1997; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). Even books in the popular press that grant advice on how to construct a viable professional image emphasize the display of personal identity characteristics, such as appearance management—for example, wearing conventional, conservative, nonornamental clothing in subdued or placid colors, as well as natural makeup, little jewelry, short haircuts, and no facial hair; demeanor—for example, controlling eye contact and posture; and speech—for example, being articulate and using a lower register (Bixler & Nix-Rice, 1997; Lavington, 1997; Molloy, 1977; Morem, 1997; Seitz, 1992; Waldrop, 1997).

Despite increasing diversity in organizations, surprisingly little attention has been devoted to the impact of social identities on professional identity construction. Social identity refers to "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from [his or her] knowledge of [his or her] membership in a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978: 63). Social identity group memberships add a layer of complexity to professional image construction in diverse organizations that has not yet been fully recognized. As people encounter members of many different social identity groups, they must consider how their personal characteristics and their social identities influence others' perceptions of their competence and character.

In the next section of this article, I describe how personal and social identities relate to how individuals desire to be seen (desired professional image) and how individuals think they are perceived (perceived professional image) in their professional contexts.

¹ A *profession* is an occupation that meets the following criteria: application of skills based on technical knowledge, requirements of advanced education and training, formal testing of competence, controlled admission, professional associations, code of conduct, and sense of responsibility to serve the public (Benveniste, 1987). Occupations vary in the extent to which they meet the above criteria and are classified on a continuum of professionalism. The term *professional* traditionally referred to an individual who was employed in a profession. However, this term is currently applied more broadly, to refer to any individual who is responsible for providing a particular service to his or her internal clients—for example, coworkers—or external clients—for example, customers (Maister, 1997). *Professionalism* refers to the extent to which one identifies with his or her profession and accepts its values (Morrow & Goetz, 1988). Professionalism can be evidenced by an individual's ability to meet normative expectations by effectively providing a given service to clients and colleagues.

DESIRED AND PERCEIVED PROFESSIONAL IMAGES

Desired professional image refers to how one would ideally like for key constituents to perceive him or her in a given context. One's desired professional image encompasses personal characteristics and social identity affiliations. With respect to one's personal identity, the desired professional image consists of the personal characteristics, such as knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, and values, that one wishes for others to attribute to him or her in a given context. The social identity component of one's desired professional image refers to how one wants others to perceive him or her as a member of various social identity groups, and it is often shaped by one's hopes to be publicly affiliated with or distanced from the stereotypical characteristics of the social identity groups to which he or she belongs.

The desired professional image serves as a future, goal-oriented component of the self-concept (Baumeister, 1989; Ibarra, 1999; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Since identities are validated through public recognition, people often anchor their desired images in their own values or goals for personal development (Baumeister, 1989; Ibarra, 1999; Polzer, Milton, & Swann, 2002; Swann, 1987). For example, one who values and ideally wants to become honest, courageous, and determined will likely desire for others to perceive him or her as such, because reflected appraisals verify that he or she actually possesses these personal identity characteristics.

The socially constructed nature of identity also suggests that others' values and expectations can influence one's desired professional image. People often desire to be perceived in a way that lives up to what others expect from a competent professional (Baumeister, 1989; see Figure 1). For example, the IBM blue suit was long associated with the image of conservatism, whereas Steve Jobs at Apple served as an icon of nonconformity (Rosenfeld et al., 2001). The personal characteristics that individuals thought they should convey likely varied in Apple versus IBM because of these norms for appropriate images in each organization.

Societal standards for behavior can also influence which social identity characteristics individuals feel they should display in the professional context. Many argue that the image of the

"ideal professional" is culturally biased, in that professionalism is inherently associated with being white/Anglo, masculine, heterosexual, middle class, and well educated (Acker, 1990; Alvesson & Billing, 1998; Britton, 2000; Kanter, 1977). Individuals often desire to be perceived as capable of meeting these culturally defined standards for who they should be as professionals. In sum, the desired professional image is shaped by personal values and societal expectations, and it embodies not only personal identity characteristics but also the characteristics of social identity groups that one wishes for others to ascribe to him or her.

Despite their best efforts, people are not always perceived in the manner that they desire, so it is important to distinguish between one's desired (ideal) professional image and one's perceived (current) professional image. Given that reflected appraisals are central to the definition of professional image, *perceived professional image* refers to how one thinks others currently view him or her. The perceived professional image is a representation of how one thinks key constituents perceive his or her personal and social identities. In contrast to an impression or how a specific audience perceives an individual during a single encounter (see Leary & Kowalski, 1990), the perceived professional image is an internalized, global representation of many people's current impressions of an individual, across interactions but within a specific professional context.

Nonverbal cues (e.g., appearance, dress, displayed emotion), verbal disclosures (e.g., information about the self), and actions (e.g., performance, citizenship) shape others' perceptions of one's competence, character, and ability to meet the cultural standards of professional behavior. The perceived professional image is derived from one's perceptions of how others have experienced his or her displays of personal identity characteristics and social identity affiliations. Social identities influence one's perceived professional image because individuals categorize, stereotype, and interpret each other's behavior according to their expectations of social identity groups (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).

Favorable stereotypes of professional competence and character can enhance one's image, whereas unfavorable stereotypes can detract from one's image. For example, white, hetero-

sexual, middle-class men are often perceived as more competent and better suited for most professional roles than are members of other identity groups (Acker, 1990; Alvesson & Billing, 1998; Britton, 2000; Kanter, 1977). Likewise, people often associate membership in socially devalued identity groups with characteristics that are undesirable or inappropriate for the professional context. For example, women are often stereotyped as emotional, maternalistic, and nurturing—characteristics that are incompatible with the manager/leader role (Heilman, 1995; Nelson & Quick, 1985). Black Americans and Hispanic Americans are stereotyped as generally unintelligent, lazy, and deficient in managerial capability, all of which are indicators of professional incompetence (Devine, 1989; Jeanquart-Barone, 1996; Sinclair & Kunda, 1999; Tomkiewicz, Brenner, & Esinhart, 1991). People are aware of the stereotypes others have of their social identity groups (Pinel, 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998), so social identities also have the potential to influence perceived professional images.

In sum, the display of personal and social identities influences perceived professional images. There are times when one might display inappropriate or unfavorably regarded identity characteristics, which can create a gap, or discrepancy, between how one desires to be perceived and how one thinks others currently perceive him or her. At other times, merely belonging to a negatively stereotyped social identity group can create an image discrepancy if stereotypes are inconsistent with one's desired professional image. The essence of professional image construction is bridging this gap between desired and perceived professional images such that key constituents perceive an individual as he or she wishes to be perceived.

In the next section I explain each component of the professional image construction process in more detail, using an impression management framework. Impression management is the vehicle by which professional image construction occurs. It is the process people use to shape the image others have of them (Rosenfeld et al., 2001). Impression management theory is based on the premise that people actively monitor the environment for clues about how others perceive them and look for discrepancies between their desired professional image and their perceived professional image (Leary & Kowalski,

1990). Individuals who experience a discrepancy between their desired and perceived professional images, and who are motivated to reduce the discrepancy, will attempt to present themselves in a manner that reflects their desired professional image (Baumeister & Jones, 1978; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). As such, impression management has three components: (1) monitoring—becoming aware of others' perceptions; (2) motivation—desiring to change others' perceptions; and (3) construction—enacting a persona in an effort to change others' perceptions (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; see Figure 1).

Impression management is a dynamic process that occurs continuously during interpersonal interactions, whereby multiple parties simultaneously attempt to shape each other's perceptions of one another. For the sake of simplicity, in the next section of the paper I describe how the process unfolds through the eyes of a single actor in a specific encounter. An encounter is a focused interpersonal interaction that has a specified beginning and end (Creed & Scully, 2000; Goffman, 1961; Meyerson, 2001). I also emphasize several personal and situational antecedents of impression monitoring, motivation, and construction, to explain why individuals choose to engage in impression management during an encounter. Many scholars have identified a broad range of antecedents of impression monitoring, motivation, and construction (see Cialdini, 1989; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld et al., 2001; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). A primary goal of mine is to extend research on the impact of social identities on professional image construction. Thus, in the discussion of professional image construction that follows, I place greater emphasis on antecedents related to social rather than personal identities.

THREE COMPONENTS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Impression Monitoring

The impression management process begins with monitoring—that is, generating an awareness of how one is perceived in a given situation. As individuals interact with one another, they often search for cues or signals that indicate how others perceive them (Higgins, 1996) and compare this perceived professional image

with their desired professional image. They then determine if this perceived professional image is consistent or inconsistent with how they desire to be seen (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Swann, 1987). For example, in the midst of a job interview, an interviewee, Denise, might wonder about the impact of her personal identity characteristics on her professional image: "What does the interviewer think about my experience? Did I dress appropriately? Did I say something stupid?" Some individuals, such as high self-monitors and those who are high in public self-consciousness, are inclined to attend to others' impressions of them in any situation (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975; Snyder 1974). These individuals are likely to be aware of others' perceptions of them.

Monitoring becomes even more complex when we take into account the impact of social identities. Individuals may monitor perceptions of certain social identities more than others, based on the salience of the identities (Deaux & Major, 1990). A salient social identity is one that is likely to be evoked in a given situation (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). For example, in the same job interview, Denise might also consider which of her social identities are salient and how these social identities influence the interviewer's perceptions of her competence and fit. If Denise is interviewing to be a police officer, she might attend to how her gender influences the interviewer's perceptions of her ability to handle the physical demands and emotional duress of the job.

Social identities become salient because of features of the social identity and the situation (Deaux & Major, 1990). Social identities that are considered central or important to one's sense of self tend to remain relatively salient in one's mind across situations (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Shelton & Sellers, 2000); therefore, individuals will likely attend to how others view them in terms of those social identities in a given encounter. Culturally meaningful sociodemographic identities, such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, and socioeconomic class, also tend to remain salient across situations, because they serve as primary bases of categorization (Moreland & Levine, 1989; Stangor, Lynch, Duan, & Glas, 1992).

The demographic composition of the interaction context can also increase the salience of certain social identity groups. Social identity

groups that are in the numerical minority in a given situation tend to be more salient than majority identity groups (Cohen & Swim, 1995; Kanter, 1977). As such, individuals who are in a minority social identity group may pay more attention to others' perceptions of that minority social identity than they do to perceptions of their majority social identities. For example, the only woman, one of few Asian Americans, or the oldest person in a department will be more likely to attend to how others view their gender, ethnicity, or age, respectively, because those minority social identities are salient.

Through direct and subtle interpersonal cues, other people can actively increase the salience of certain social identities (Foldy, 2003; Ibarra, 1999; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). Direct cues are interpersonal acts that communicate regard or disregard for one's identities and therefore increase awareness of how social identities may influence one's professional image. People often spotlight or draw attention to individuals' identities by asking questions related to identity group membership (Foldy, 2003). For example, after Tiger Woods won the Masters golf tournament, reporters asked him how he felt, as an African American, about his golf victory. As a result of this questioning, Tiger's racial group membership (and its impact on his image as a golfer) became more salient to him.

People also shape or actively try to influence others' identities by discussing whether one's behavior is consistent or inconsistent with their expectations of members of the individual's identity group (Foldy, 2003). For example, during a pick-up game of basketball with the other law partners at his firm, Robert sprained his ankle and winced in pain, while his colleagues told him to "take it like a man." This comment increased the salience of Robert's gender identity, while also communicating expectations for masculine behavior. Both spotlighting and shaping make certain identities salient and increase awareness of how social identities currently influence one's image.

People also may pick up on subtle cues about their perceived professional image when others describe cultural standards and expectations for members of certain groups. Subtle cues differ from direct cues, because people do not intend to directly communicate social identity group standards and expectations. Imagine that Christine, a lesbian bank teller who has not revealed

her sexual orientation to her colleagues, walks into the break room and overhears two other tellers discussing their disapproval of the recent legalization of same-sex marriages. Even though her colleagues are not aware of her sexual orientation, their comments may suggest that they devalue one of Christine's social identities. Statements such as these convey whether one's personal characteristics and social identities are consistent or inconsistent with cultural standards for competence and character.

In sum, monitoring involves attending to others' perceptions by searching for cues regarding how one is evaluated with respect to personal and social identities, and by determining if these evaluations are consistent or inconsistent with one's desired professional image.

Impression Motivation

Identity threats and negative image discrepancies. Most people experience some degree of discrepancy or inconsistency between their desired professional image and their perceived professional image. Image discrepancies can result from personal identity or social identity threats. Personal identity threats occur when people make a mistake or commit an error that casts aspersions on others' perceptions of their personal traits and characteristics (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Social identity threats take on two forms: devaluation and legitimacy threats.

Social identity devaluation occurs when others denigrate the attributes of one's social identity group, which may threaten the self-esteem one derives from belonging to that group (Breakwell, 1986; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Tajfel, 1978). Devaluation may also induce an image discrepancy if the negative expectations of one's salient social identity groups are inconsistent with the attributes of the "ideal professional." Legitimacy threats—incidents in which one's membership in a favorably regarded social identity group is called into question (Breakwell, 1986; Ellemers et al., 2002)—can also induce professional image discrepancies. For instance, white males, who are expected to fit the prototypical image of the "ideal professional," experience threats to their masculinity when they perceive that their current professional image does not measure up to this ideal (Padavic, 1991; Prokos & Padavic, 2002).

Predicaments, devaluation, and legitimacy threats all result from negative discrepancies—when individuals perceive that their professional images are less favorable than they desire. In rare circumstances, however, individuals might also experience positive discrepancies, in which their perceived professional images are actually more positive than their desired professional images. Positive discrepancies can inspire a person to expand his or her vision of who he or she would like to become and how he or she would like to be perceived (see Roberts, Dutton, Spreitzer, Heaphy, & Quinn, 2005, for a discussion of how positive appraisals can expand one's understanding of one's reflected best-self). Yet if people feel they lack the developmental capacity or external support to live up to these inflated expectations, even positive discrepancies can create distress, as in the case of choking under pressure (Baumeister, 1989; Roberts et al., 2005). In these situations, research shows that individuals may seek to reduce positive image discrepancies by presenting themselves in a more negative fashion. For example, individuals may underperform, display a bad attitude, broadcast limitations, or make false claims or feigned demonstrations of inability (e.g., sandbagging) to create low expectations for their performance (Becker & Martin, 1995; Gibson & Sachau, 2000). Given the relative infrequency with which individuals use such strategies to deflate others' perceptions of them, I focus on why and how people reduce negative image discrepancies that result from predicaments, social identity devaluation, and legitimacy threats.

Motivation to reduce negative image discrepancies through impression management varies from interaction to interaction, depending on the severity of the image discrepancy that exists, the potential benefits one might gain from a successful impression management attempt, and the likelihood of successfully carrying out an impression management attempt. This appraisal process is similar to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping framework; impression management can be considered a viable coping strategy that an individual will use if he or she (1) experiences an event as taxing or stressful (e.g., experiences a severe image discrepancy when he or she cares about another's perceptions of him/her) and (2) thinks he or she possesses the necessary cognitive,

emotional, and behavioral resources to deal with the stressful event (e.g., considers him/herself capable of successfully shaping another's perceptions of him/her).

Experiencing a severe image discrepancy.

The severity of the image discrepancy refers to the degree of inconsistency one experiences between one's perceived and desired professional images. The expectations of a salient social identity group may be more or less inconsistent with one's desired professional image. Similarly, one may experience a personal identity predicament that is more serious than another. For example, sending out a company report with misspelled words and grammatical errors is not as egregious as faxing the confidential company report to the wrong person.

Individuals who experience multiple personal and social identity threats simultaneously are likely to perceive more severe image discrepancies than those who experience fewer threats, given that such threats indicate a greater distance between one's current image and one's desired professional image. Take the example of Jonathan, a 25-year-old freshly minted MBA management consultant who is assigned to work with Bill, a 55-year-old senior executive client. When he meets Bill for the first time, Jonathan has had no prior opportunities to shape the client's perceptions of him, and the client does not yet view him as a trusted and capable advisor. Given Jonathan's age, Bill may be skeptical of his ability to add value to his business operations, equating Jonathan's youth with a lack of experience and wisdom. These negative attributions of Jonathan's age group could induce a discrepancy between Jonathan's desired and perceived professional images, if Jonathan wishes to be seen as a savvy and wise counselor by Bill. During the course of the client engagement, Jonathan makes an offensive comment and provides misguided advice to Bill, which negatively influences Bill's perceptions of his competence and trustworthiness. These mistakes exacerbate Jonathan's discrepancy, making it even more severe than at the beginning of their first interaction.

The severity of one's image discrepancy is also influenced by the extent to which one considers a threatened identity to be relevant to both one's definition of self and to the situation at hand. People who identify less strongly with a social identity group are less likely to incorpo-

rate that identity into their desired professional image and may therefore be less likely to feel threatened when others devalue or question their legitimacy as a member of that social identity group (Ellemers et al., 2002). One may also experience an identity threat as being irrelevant to one's job and therefore may not consider the resulting image discrepancy to be severe in that situation. Playing a poor game of golf with senior executives is likely to be less threatening than overestimating the profitability of one's product line in a given quarter. Thus, image discrepancies vary in the degree of severity, which can heighten or temper one's motivation to reduce the discrepancy. Yet a severe image discrepancy will only provoke an individual to reduce the discrepancy if he or she considers the benefits of changing another's impressions to be worthy of the effort and risk that accompany impression management attempts.

Assessing the potential benefits of successful impression management. People derive two primary benefits from successful impression management: (1) pleasing the audience and (2) maintaining consistency between one's desired and current images (Baumeister, 1999). Research shows that individuals are more likely to engage in impression management when the social and psychological benefits of pleasing others are greater. For example, people tend to be more motivated to engage in impression management when interacting with high-status, powerful people, given their dependence on such people for valued outcomes and resources (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Major, Quinton, McCoy, & Schmader, 2000; Pandey, 1986; Schlenker, 1980). Studies also show that the desire to make a good impression is greater when one expects to have frequent future contact with the perceiver, due to potential interdependence (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Major et al., 2000). In addition, people use impression management to construct images that reflect the identity dimensions they value (Baumeister, 1999). Individuals who identify strongly with their work are often more likely to engage in impression management, given the critical role that image plays in determining self-consistency (Higgins, 1987; Lodahl & Kejnar, 1965), and career advancement (Bolino & Turnley, 1999; Feldman & Weitz, 1991).

Assessing the likelihood of a successful impression management attempt. People not only assess the severity of the image discrepancy

and their desire to make a certain impression but also estimate the likelihood that they will succeed in creating a desired impression. Some individuals, namely high self-monitors, are more skilled at making favorable impressions on others, given their sensitivity to the appropriateness of the image they are conveying and the frequency with which they change their behavior to suit different social situations (Turnley & Bolino, 2001). For these reasons, high self-monitors are more likely to engage in impression management than low self-monitors.

Yet there are instances in which even high self-monitors may decide that an impression management attempt is too risky such that the potential cost of failing to make a favorable impression will outweigh the benefit of reducing the image discrepancy (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Risk of disconfirmation, due to prior actions or other socially available information, can temper one's desire to engage in impression management (Baumeister, 1999). For example, a person is unlikely to present him/herself in an overwhelmingly positive manner to a coworker if the coworker is already aware of the person's shortcomings. Further, it is quite difficult to change others' impressions, especially when those others have negative, identity-based expectations about someone (Darley & Fazio, 1980; Snyder & Stukas, 1999).

People may choose not to respond to social identity threats if they feel they are incapable of changing the perceptions others have of them (Major et al., 2000). Instead of trying to reduce another's deeply held prejudices, they might focus on changing how they feel about the prejudice that exists (Crocker & Major, 1989; Miller & Myers, 1998). Even if they feel capable of changing others' perceptions, people might still opt out of responding to social identity threats if they feel that the benefit of doing so is not worth the cognitive and emotional effort that such an impression management attempt might require (Major et al., 2000). For example, when a hospital visitor mistakes her for an orderly, Cheryl, an African American pediatric resident, may decide that it is not worth the effort to try to correct the person's assumption, and instead may simply answer the person's question regarding directions to the restroom. However, when the mother of one of her new patients mistakes her for an orderly, Cheryl may decide that it is worth the effort to explicitly communicate her status

as a medical resident because she considers this to be an important relationship that will ultimately impact the health of her young patient, and she feels she is able to correct this misperception.

In sum, impression motivation—an individual's desire to change another's impression of him/her—is contingent on the individual's assessment that he or she has experienced a severe threat and has the capacity to reduce the threat to his or her professional image.

Impression Construction

Once motivated, individuals must enact their personal and social identities in order to create their desired professional images. This enactment phase, known as impression construction, is perhaps the most complex component of impression management, given the broad range of strategies individuals must select and employ to shape others' perceptions of them as individuals and as group members. Individuals may use traditional impression management strategies to directly influence others' perceptions of their personal traits and characteristics. They may also use social identity-based impression management strategies to indirectly influence others' perceptions of their personal traits and characteristics by communicating their affiliation with social identity groups.

Traditional impression management. A great deal of impression management research details how people enact personas that reduce image discrepancies (Lee, Quigley, Nesler, Corbett, & Tedeschi, 1999; Rosenfeld et al., 2001; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Traditional impression management researchers have focused on the use of direct self-presentation tactics, such as assertive and defensive strategies, to present information about one's own traits, abilities, and accomplishments (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980). People employ assertive self-presentation strategies to create images that promote desirable qualities. For example, self-promotion involves drawing attention to personal accomplishments so as to appear competent, and ingratiation involves doing favors for other people in order to appear likable (Jones & Pittman, 1982). People also use defensive self-presentation strategies to maintain a particular image, minimize deficiencies, or avoid looking bad in response to a predicament or "event that casts

aspersions on one's lineage, character, conduct or skills" (Schlenker, 1980: 125). Defensive strategies include apologies, excuses, and justifications, all of which are used to repair a "spoiled" or negative identity (Scott & Lyman, 1990; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984).

Both assertive and defensive strategies are important for constructing viable professional images, since they are a means of signaling that people possess a high degree of competence and character. However, these direct tactics are only a subset of strategies that individuals use to respond to social identity devaluation and legitimacy threats to their professional images. To fully address such threats, individuals must adopt strategies that effectively shape others' perceptions of their personal and social identities.

Research on a second category of tactics—indirect self-presentation tactics—provides evidence that people might attempt to use impression management in order to influence others' perceptions of their group affiliations. Indirect tactics are often used to "enhance or protect one's image by managing information about the people and things with which one is simply associated" (Cialdini, 1989: 46). For example, college students use verbal and nonverbal cues to increase the likelihood that others will associate them with positive events—for example, football victories (Cialdini et al., 1976). People also attempt to influence the extent to which others associate them with favorably regarded people—for example, celebrities (Cialdini & de Nicholas, 1989). This stream of research on indirect impression management tactics has documented how people will attempt to leverage or suppress their relational or institutional affiliations, but it has not identified the strategies people use to address social identity devaluation or legitimacy threats. Thus, impression management theory must be extended to account for how individuals shape others' perceptions of their social identity groups in order to construct viable professional images.

Social identity-based impression management.

Social identity theory helps to explain how individuals might respond to social identity-induced image discrepancies. Social identity theorists propose that people seek to affiliate with groups that are distinctive (Brewer, 1991) and positively valued (Tajfel, 1978). Members of socially devalued identity groups will attempt

to either affiliate with groups that are more positively valued or improve the status of their current group in order to maintain their self-esteem (Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999; Tajfel, 1978). Since certain social identity groups are associated with favorable expectations and others with negative expectations, individuals must leverage their affiliations with positively regarded social identity groups and deflect the negative attributions that accompany their devalued social identity group memberships in order to construct viable professional images.

Increasingly, scholars in organizational behavior, psychology, and sociology have documented how people strategically enact their social identities to communicate favorable attributes, leverage positive group affiliations, and counteract the impact of negative stereotyping on others' perceptions (Anderson, 1999; Bell, 1990; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Cassell & Walsh, 1997; Cross & Strauss, 1998; Deaux & Ethier, 1998; Dickens & Dickens, 1991; Ely, 1995; Major et al., 2000; Miller & Kaiser, 2001; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). In one study researchers found that female college students who expected to be evaluated by a prejudiced male wrote essays that were less family oriented, less feminine, and less nice than students who had no such expectations (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Another study revealed that African American college students were less likely to claim to like rap music and basketball when they were concerned about confirming negative stereotypes (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Several studies have documented the various ways that gay and lesbian professionals manage the stigmatization of their sexual identity, including attempts to pass as heterosexual, to avoid discussions of sexual orientation altogether, or to claim and advocate for their sexual identity group (Chrobot-Mason, Button, & DiClementi, 2001; Creed & Scully, 2000; Frable, 1997).

These strategies have not yet been incorporated into a conceptual model of professional image construction, despite the powerful role that social identities play in influencing others' perceptions of competence and character. Collectively, these strategies can be considered a distinct form of impression management, which I term *social identity-based impression management (SIM)*. SIM is the process of strategically influencing others' perceptions of one's own social identity in order to form a desired

impression. Given that social identity refers to both membership in and psychological attachment to social groups (Hogg, 2003; Tajfel, 1978), SIM involves shaping perceptions of identity group affiliation, as well as communicating the personal significance and emotional value one associates with such affiliations. SIM can be used to reveal one's membership in concealed or ambiguous social identity groups, such as religion, sexual orientation, age, nationality, or socioeconomic class. Even when social identity affiliations are visible to the public (e.g., gender, race), the significance and meaning that individuals ascribe to their social identity group memberships is not readily apparent but can be communicated to others using SIM. SIM strategies may be used to enhance one's professional image by increasing the likelihood of being associated with positively stereotyped social identity groups and decreasing the likelihood of being associated with negative stereotypes about social identity groups.

Refer back to the example of Jonathan, the young management consultant. Jonathan received his MBA from an elite institution and has received a high-profile assignment in a notorious consulting firm. These associations may serve to enhance the client's perceptions of his competence, so Jonathan may be motivated to establish legitimacy in these positively regarded organizational groups by demonstrating that he embodies the characteristics that are often associated with these organizational identities.

Jonathan also may be concerned that his youth will negatively influence how Bill perceives him. To counter this devaluation, Jonathan may attempt to present himself in a manner that reduces the likelihood he will be associated with stereotypes of young people, such as inexperience and naivete. He may use self-promotion, a traditional impression management tactic, by discussing his experience in working with clients of similar stature. He might also indirectly influence Bill's perceptions of his experience by employing SIM strategies.

People commonly use two categories of SIM strategies to reduce social identity-induced image discrepancies: (1) social recategorization and (2) positive distinctiveness strategies. Jonathan can use social recategorization strategies to reduce the salience of his age by avoiding talking about the hip hop music and popular

television shows he often enjoys. Instead, he might discuss current affairs, politics, and classical music to appear more mature. Alternatively, Jonathan may choose to employ positive distinctiveness strategies to create a new, more positive meaning of his identity group. He might generate more positive regard for his generation by talking about the clients his young contemporaries have assisted. He may even bring a great deal of energy and enthusiasm to his work with the client, to draw on the positive associations that others have of young adults. I explain these two strategies in more detail in the next section.

Achieving social recategorization. Social recategorization strategies are the self-presentation behaviors individuals use to increase social mobility by changing the social categories to which they are assigned (Tajfel, 1978). Research shows that people can directly influence the social category to which they are assigned by manipulating the extent to which their behavior is congruent with social identity group expectations. For example, Macrae, Bodenhausen, and Milne (1995) found that the same Chinese woman was more likely to be categorized as Chinese when she was seen eating lo mein noodles with a pair of chopsticks but as a woman when seen putting on makeup. Social recategorization involves reducing the salience of a devalued social identity. When a devalued identity is less salient, others are less likely to categorize an individual as a stigmatized, out-group member, and that individual may subsequently avoid negative stereotyping (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998; Cross & Strauss, 1998; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994).

There are two related yet distinct ways that members of social identity groups can reduce the salience of their devalued social identity group membership: (1) decategorization and (2) assimilation. *Decategorization* involves attempts to avoid categorization altogether by deemphasizing one's social identities and encouraging others to classify oneself on the basis of personal, individuating characteristics rather than group memberships (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2000; Ellemers et al., 2002; Fiske, Lin, & Neuberg, 1999; Major et al., 2000). By conveying personal uniqueness, individuals may attempt to create a richer picture of the self that transcends categorization and stereotyping (Ellemers et al., 2002).

Decategorization is often achieved by cutting down the flow of social identity-related information and allowing others to see only one's professional identity—what McBroom (1986) calls wearing the "mask of the professional." Some gay males use decategorization strategies in the workplace by eluding personal questions and talking in generalities in order to appear asexual and to avoid revealing their sexual orientation (Woods & Lucas, 1993): Several black professionals choose to suppress their racial identity and avoid race-related discussions during interactions with white supervisors (Thomas, 1993). This decategorization strategy is particularly useful when supervisors prefer not to focus on racial differences (Thomas, 1993).

In sum, individuals who employ decategorization strategies desire to be viewed only in terms of their professional identity and individual characteristics, not as members of a devalued social identity group. If they successfully achieve such social recategorization, their professional image is less likely to be threatened by the negative stereotypes that accompany their devalued social identity group membership.

Alternatively, individuals may achieve social recategorization by maintaining the salience of social categories but attempting to alter the social category to which they are assigned. *Assimilation* encompasses attempts to reduce the salience of one's own social identity by emphasizing distinctiveness from one's own social identity group and similarities with members of more positively regarded social identity groups (Dovidio et al., 2000; Ellemers et al., 2002; LaFramboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1995; Thomas, 1993). For example, many professionals engage in conspicuous consumption to suppress their working-class backgrounds and to generate the impression that they belong to a higher socioeconomic class group (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Some gay males and lesbians choose to conceal their homosexuality and, instead, to pass for heterosexuals to avoid discrimination in the workplace (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001). Female attorneys sometimes adopt masculine characteristics in order to meet their firm's requirements for success (Ely, 1995). One interviewee in Pierce's study of litigators stated, "To be a lawyer, somewhere along the way, I made a decision that it meant acting like a man. To do

that I squeezed the female part of me into a box, put on the lid, and tucked it away" (1995: 134).

Ethnic minorities are often expected to assimilate into the dominant culture when they join professional organizations (Bell, 1990; Cox, 1993; Dickens & Dickens, 1991). In Anderson's study of African American executives, an African American vice president made the following statement about assimilation:

The thing is that once you [African Americans] get on that management track, either you change right away and start wearing different suits and different clothing or you never rise any higher. They're never going to envision you as being a White male, but if you can dress the same and look a certain way and drive a conservative car and whatever else, they'll say, this guy has a similar attitude, similar values. He's a team player. If you don't dress with the uniform, obviously you're on the wrong team. . . . It's a choice (1999: 17).

Appearing similar to others can counter stereotypes of deviance in exchange for an emphasis on commonality (Major et al., 2000). It can also decrease the likelihood that one is categorized as an outgroup member, which can lead to increased liking and benefits from desirable targets. As the above quote suggests, social recategorization may be a viable strategy for generating an impression that is based on one's professional competence rather than one's membership in a devalued social identity group.

Restoring positive distinctiveness. Not all individuals seek to reduce the salience of their identity group, even if it is socially devalued (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Major et al., 2000). Instead, some individuals may employ strategies for increasing the status of their own group by restoring the group's positive distinctiveness. Positive distinctiveness strategies are aimed at communicating the notion that difference is valuable (Ellemers et al., 2002). As such, these strategies involve claiming one's social identity while attempting to create a positive social meaning for that identity.

One strategy for restoring positive distinctiveness is social identity integration. *Integration* refers to attempts to incorporate a given social identity into one's professional image by communicating the favorable attributes of the identity group and challenging others' simplistic or negative stereotypes of that group. Dovidio et al. (2000) suggest that ethnic minorities use integration strategies to retain their cultural identities

while also seeking out positive relationships with the majority group. Bell and Nkomo describe integration strategies that several black female executives use in the workplace as part of their business persona or style, including refined sassiness, "a posture of speaking out that allows them to give voice to their views without being perceived as impertinent" (2001: 164), and "subtle display markers of their cultural identities in their work settings [such as] . . . a petite, gold Nubian mask pin on the lapel of a fashionable blue suit [and] a copy of Gordon Parks' photographic essay book *Songs of My People* alongside a stack of *Fortune* magazines" (2001: 168). Ely (1995) shows that some female professionals use integration strategies by incorporating both traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine characteristics into their professional identity. Chrobot-Mason et al. (2001) use the term *integration* to refer to individuals who reveal their true sexual identity at work and attempt to manage the consequences of doing so.

Integration strategies can include verbal statements that point out the inadequacy of negative stereotypes for characterizing one's social identity group and that educate others about the favorable attributes of one's group (Creed & Scully, 2000; Meyerson, 2001). In sum, integration strategies involve the use of SIM to communicate favorable attributes of one's identity group, which may, in turn, lead to a reevaluation of the individual's status and transformation into a more positive professional image.

Confirmation strategies involve capitalizing on social identity stereotypes in order to gain desired rewards and outcomes. Members of social identity groups are often expected to fit into certain roles, conform to stereotypes, and remain distinct from other groups. For example, gender congruency theory suggests that individuals who use upward influence and/or impression management tactics that are consistent with gender stereotypes are more likely to gain acceptance from or access to organizational members who wield more power and influence (Rudman & Glick, 1999; Tepper, Brown, & Hunt, 1993). As a result, some women adopt flirtatious or mothering strategies for relating to colleagues (Ely, 1995; Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Pierce, 1995; Sheppard, 1989). Some African American domestic workers play on their employers' fears of stereotypical hostility by trying to intimidate

them with firm or angry looks, especially when they are asked perform tasks they would rather not do (Wrigley, 1999). Frable (1997) describes how some homosexuals employ minstrelization, playing into the stereotypes that others have of them, in order to achieve organizational outcomes.

Even individuals who belong to positively regarded social identity groups may use confirmation strategies to leverage their affiliation with such groups. When individuals feel they need to prove their legitimacy, they may attempt to demonstrate that they can live up to the positive expectations of their identity groups. For example, many people experience internalized anxiety about being insufficiently masculine or feminine, and therefore behave in a stereotypical manner to ensure their association with gendered expectations (Alvesson & Billing, 1998). Some Asian Americans attempt to demonstrate their intelligence in order to fulfill others' expectations of them as the "model minority" when they face legitimacy threats (Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997).

Antecedents of social identity-based impression construction. People's decisions regarding which self-presentation strategies to use are influenced by their perceived and desired professional images; they reassess how they want others to perceive them and how others currently perceive them, and then use this assessment as a basis for determining how to bring their perceived professional image in alignment with their desired professional image. With respect to their perceived professional image, they must discern the source of the image discrepancy (i.e., which personal identity predicaments, social identity devaluations, and/or social identity legitimacy threats have negatively impacted their perceived professional image). They must then present themselves in a manner that is more consistent with the desired, rather than the perceived, professional image.

The type of identity threat an individual experiences directly influences the range of strategies the individual might use to enact his or her social identity. Legitimacy threats are likely to generate the use of confirmation strategies, whereas social identity devaluation might lead to the use of any of the following strategies: decategorization, assimilation, integration, or confirmation (Ellemers et al., 2002). Several other factors related to desired professional image

and perceived professional image impact people's proclivity to use social recategorization versus positive distinctiveness strategies in a given interaction: the strength and valence of their social group identification, characteristics of the person with whom they are interacting, and the diversity climate of the employing organization in which the interaction takes place.

The self-concept is an important determinant of impression management behavior; people often use impression management to display valued aspects of themselves to the public at appropriate times (Baumeister, 1989; Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). As such, psychological attachment to social identity groups may influence an individual's choice of SIM construction strategy. When faced with social identity devaluation, individuals who identify strongly with a social identity group will be more likely to use positive distinctiveness strategies to attempt to change the social meaning of that identity. Those who identify less will likely attempt to symbolically exit the devalued social identity group through social recategorization (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Ellemers et al., 2002). Past research on racial identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation shows that individuals who consider a given social identity to be an unimportant and devalued aspect of the self-concept are more likely to try to suppress that identity during intergroup interactions (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Cross, 1991; Ely, 1995; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Thomas, 1993). Based on these findings, individuals who identify strongly and positively with a given social group should be more likely to employ positive distinctiveness strategies and less likely to employ social recategorization strategies.

Considerable research has shown that the perceiver's values and preferences shape traditional impression management behavior (Leary & Kowalski, 1990), as well as the strategic enactment of one's social identity (Deaux & Major, 1990). Research on the self-fulfilling prophecy highlights the active role observers play in maintaining or creating a social reality through their cognitions or behaviors toward a particular individual (Darley & Fazio, 1980; Snyder & Stukas, 1999). One person, having certain expectations of another person, will act in ways that lead the other person to unknowingly confirm his or her expectations (Snyder & Stukas, 1999).

However, when individuals are aware of negative expectations, they do not naively succumb to such expectations but, instead, play an active role in deliberately confirming or disconfirming others' expectations (Hilton & Darley, 1985; Miller & Myers, 1998).

In order to facilitate the flow of an interaction, an individual might employ a confirmation strategy to meet the perceiver's preferences and expectations (Snyder & Stukas, 1999). For example, women may display behaviors that are stereotypically feminine (e.g., speaking less and placing greater importance on the role of marriage and family) when they believe men who hold traditional beliefs about women will evaluate them in job interviews (von Baeyer, Sherk, & Zanna, 1981) or career essays (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Men are also likely to alter their expression of gender role attitudes, based on a female interaction partner's gender role attitudes and desirability (Morier & Seroy, 1994). People are most likely to use confirmation strategies when interacting with others they consider to be powerful or attractive, given the social approval and resources they may gain from such individuals (Hilton & Darley, 1985; Snyder & Stukas, 1999).

Despite the power of interpersonal expectancies, it is important to note that individuals often consciously attempt to disconfirm others' stereotypes of them, particularly when others' views of them threaten their self-image, self-expression, and self-regulation (Baumeister, 1999; Hilton & Darley, 1995). For example, when Padavic (1991) was treated as a stereotypical female in her manufacturing plant, she had ambivalent gender reactions. Internally, she began to doubt her ability to perform heavy lifting tasks, yet interpersonally she attempted to act "macho" to defy her male colleagues' stereotypes and paternalistic concern (Padavic, 1991). Thus, one should not expect that individuals always enact their social identities in a manner that is consistent with others' stereotypical perceptions. On the contrary, impression management and social identity research shows that they may consciously employ strategies to change others' perceptions (Major et al., 2000; Rosenfeld et al., 2001; Steele, 1997; Swann, 1987).

Finally, research shows that individuals' discretionary action (e.g., advocacy for gender equity issues) is influenced by context favorability—that is, their appraisal of how encouraging, benign, or threatening a situation is (Ashford,

Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The demographic composition of one's employing organization, particularly at the senior level, is likely to influence how an individual enacts his or her social identities. For example, female attorneys in firms with a higher proportion of female partners are more likely to use integration strategies, whereas female attorneys in male-dominated firms are more likely to use confirmation, decategorization, and assimilation strategies (Ely, 1995).

Even in demographically diverse organizations, individuals receive messages regarding the extent to which such diversity is welcomed into the organization's culture. Cox (1993) and Ely and Thomas (2001) distinguish between monolithic organizations that merely contain diversity and multicultural organizations that value diversity. The organizations that merely contain diversity generally adopt a "discrimination and fairness" paradigm for managing diversity that is based on a colorblind philosophy: assimilation and conformity are expected, and employees are not invited to draw on their unique assets and perspectives to do work more effectively (Ely & Thomas, 2001). On the other end of the continuum are organizations that adopt an integration and learning perspective: they enable employees to incorporate their perspectives into the core work of the organization by redefining market strategies, business practices, and organizational cultures.

It is likely that people who work in organizations with strong norms for assimilation will be more inclined to use social recategorization strategies and less inclined to use positive distinctiveness strategies. People who work in organizations where the expression of cultural differences is valued and appreciated, however, may be more likely to use positive distinctiveness strategies and less likely to use social recategorization strategies. For example, research shows that gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transsexuals are more likely to claim, educate, and advocate for their sexual orientation identity group when they feel the work context is favorable for receiving such behavior (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Creed & Scully, 2000). Similarly, people of color are more likely to integrate their racial identity into their work when the context welcomes such integration (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

CONSEQUENCES OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

How you present yourself directly shapes the impressions others have of you. Thus, the use of traditional impression management and SIM directly impacts one's perceived professional image (as indicated by the feedback loop in Figure 1). Impression management can also have beneficial or adverse consequences that extend beyond one's image and that impact one's psyche, relationships, workgroups, and employing organizations (see Figure 1).

Rosenfeld et al. (2001) suggest that impression management is beneficial when it involves an accurate, favorably regarded portrayal and facilitates positive interpersonal relationships within or outside the organization. However, it may have adverse effects for actors and perceivers when it inhibits or obstructs positive interpersonal relationships or distorts information about people, leading others to erroneous conclusions. This proposition implies that no impression management strategy is inherently better than any other but, rather, that credibility and authenticity determine whether impression management attempts are successes versus failures.

Credibility refers to the extent to which others believe an individual's self-presentation of personal and social identity is a reasonably accurate portrayal of his or her attributes (Schlenker, 1985). Research on the social construction of identity shows that credibility is essential, because a person's identity claims must be honored in a given context (Alvesson & Billing, 1998; Bartel & Dutton, 2001; Baumeister, 1999; Foldy, 2003; Goffman, 1959). Authenticity refers to the degree of congruence between internal values and external expressions. In other words, it is the extent to which an individual acts in accord with the true self, and it involves owning one's personal experiences, thoughts, emotions, needs, wants, preferences, or beliefs (Harter, 2002).

Authenticity and credibility likely moderate the impact of traditional impression management and SIM strategies on well-being, interpersonal relationships, and performance in work organizations (see Figure 1). When one presents oneself in a manner that is both true to oneself and valued and believed by others, one's impression management can yield a host of favor-

able outcomes for individuals, groups, and entire organizations. When one presents oneself in an inauthentic and noncredible manner, however, one is likely to experience negative consequences on well-being, relationships, and performance.

Most often, individuals attempt to build credibility and maintain authenticity simultaneously, but they must negotiate the tension that can arise between the two. One's "true self" or authentic self-portrayal is not always consistent with external standards of professional competence and character. In order to gain certain social and professional benefits, individuals often suppress or contradict their personal values or identity characteristics for the sake of meeting societal expectations of professionalism (Hewlin, 2003). Such inauthenticity may provide certain professional benefits but may compromise other psychological, relational, and organizational outcomes. In the next section I describe the links between traditional impression management and SIM and several outcomes, as moderated by authenticity and credibility.

Intrapsychic Consequences

Psychological well-being. Individuals who engage in successful impression management behavior often experience a number of psychological benefits, due to their enhanced authenticity and credibility in their work organizations. Research has linked credible self-presentation to positive psychological consequences (Goffman, 1967). For example, administrative assistants mention feeling competent and confident and experiencing an "emotional lift" when their dress is considered organizationally appropriate (Rafaeli et al., 1997). Impression management can also enhance authenticity, in that it enables individuals to reduce gaps between who they are and who they would like to become (Ibarra, 1999). Reducing these gaps can positively affect well-being (Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004). For example, managing impressions of one's social identities can be a source of psychological empowerment, since it is a means of disarming stereotypes and creating a desirable image (Bell, 1990).

However, engaging in impression management that is both authentic and credible is chal-

lenging, and, therefore, impression management attempts are often linked to detrimental psychological outcomes. Efforts to enhance credibility may counter natural desires to act authentically and to express valued personality characteristics, which can negatively impact well-being (Ibarra, 1999). For example, employees experience stress, depression, decreased job satisfaction, and increased intentions to turnover if their public displays of emotion are inconsistent with their internal feelings (Abraham, 1999; Côté & Morgan, 2002; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Pugliesi, 1999; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Hewlin (2003) also proposes that individuals who create facades of conformity by masking their true values when they differ from or conflict with organizational values will experience tension and stress.

SIM may negatively impact well-being in a similar manner, because it potentially engenders feelings of identity conflict. Identity conflict occurs when one has a strong personal and emotional commitment to two distinct components of life that are incompatible; in this circumstance, one may think it is necessary to betray one's social identity for the sake of one's professional identity, which can be a source of psychological stress (Anderson, 1999; Bell, 1990; Baumeister, 1982; Carbado & Gulati, 2000; Cox, 1993; Dickens & Dickens, 1991; Thomas & Alderfer, 1989). Specifically, people who identify strongly with a given social identity but use social recategorization strategies to suppress that identity and to build professional credibility may experience detrimental psychological consequences. In sum, individuals who are able to both authentically and credibly manage impressions of their personal and social identities will have higher levels of well-being than those who sacrifice authenticity for the sake of credibility, or vice versa.

Task engagement. Many researchers have proposed that engaging in traditional impression management and SIM has detrimental effects on task engagement because of cognitive distraction. Task engagement, or attention to and absorption with a task, is essential for high-quality job performance (Kahn, 1990). Any form of deliberate self-presentation can place an additional cognitive load on actors (Baumeister, 1989), owing to heightened arousal and preoccupation with self-distinctiveness and self-presentation strategies. Such arousal and preoccu-

tion often lead to attention deficits and reduced incidental learning on tasks (Lord & Saenz, 1985). For example, when negative stereotypes are activated about a group's competence on a given task, members of the stereotyped group often underperform on that task because their attention has been diverted to task-irrelevant, self-presentation worries and self-consciousness (Steele, 1999).

Building credibility through SIM can be especially destructive. People who use positive distinctiveness may be particularly susceptible to decreased task engagement, because their focus might be on disproving stereotypes rather than performance. Likewise, attempts to decrease the salience of one's social identity might detract from one's task engagement, because one might focus on achieving social recategorization rather than high performance.

Deception or inauthenticity can increase the cognitive load that traditional impression management and SIM usually require (Baumeister, 1989). Deception and identity suppression often involve hiding aspects of one's true identity and/or replacing them with false information about one's values or experiences. For example, Smart and Wegner (1999) found that individuals with concealable stigmas who attempt to pass as "normal" must deal with the constant preoccupation of hiding their stigmatizing condition. Thus, employees who can enact their authentic selves at work spend less time and cognitive energy guarding against stigmatization and may contribute more fully to the workplace (Creed & Scully, 2000). Individuals who suppress aspects of themselves through traditional impression management or SIM, however, will likely experience lower levels of task engagement and subsequent task performance.

Interpersonal Consequences

High-quality relationships. Human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relations (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Lawrence & Nohria, 2002). Rejection, exclusion, or isolation leads to anxiety, grief, depression, loneliness, and jealousy, whereas acceptance leads to positive emotions of happiness, elation, contentment, calm, and personal growth (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Dutton, 2003; Kram, 1996). When perceived as credible, personal and social identity

displays of favorable characteristics and affiliations can facilitate the development of high-quality relationships. Traditional impression management strategies can signal that one possesses desirable qualities, can enhance others' perceptions of one's attractiveness, and can increase subsequent liking (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984; Wayne & Liden, 1995). SIM can signal that one belongs to a favorably regarded identity group.

Impression management is especially important for people whose salient social identities differ from the majority of their colleagues. Demographically different people who are more attuned to others' impressions of them are also better able to manage the potential impact of stereotyping and to enhance others' impressions of them, both of which lead to heightened perceptions of social integration (Flynn, Chatman, & Spataro, 2001). This relationship may be due to the fact that SIM can also be used to increase attraction, liking, and the quality of the relationship with the perceiver. Research on the homophily bias (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987) and similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) indicates that people of similar backgrounds (e.g., socioeconomic status and attitudes) are more likely to be attracted to each other. SIM, especially social recategorization, may be an effective means of enhancing relationship quality, if one is able to credibly present oneself as similar to members of favorably regarded identity groups.

Regardless of which SIM or traditional impression management strategies an individual uses, authenticity can enhance the quality of the individual's relationships, while inauthenticity can detract from relationship quality. As Goffman, states, "To the degree that an individual maintains a show before others that he himself does not believe, he can come to experience a special kind of alienation from self and a special kind of wariness of others" (1959: 236). Relationships tend to develop by a process of gradually escalating self-disclosure; people are more likely to disclose information to those they like initially, and after disclosing intimate information, people like more and are liked more by those to whom they disclose (Aron, 2003; Collins & Miller, 1994). Authentic self-presentations enable a person to disclose more about him or herself, which engenders a sense of feeling known and understood by others and can en-

hance the quality of a person's relationship (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Kahn, 2001; Miller & Stiver, 1997). People who present themselves authentically are also more likely to receive self-verifying feedback from others, which increases their sense of feeling known (Polzer et al., 2002). Therefore, it is likely that individuals who employ authentic traditional and SIM strategies will form higher-quality relationships with others than individuals who employ inauthentic strategies.

Performance ratings. A person's career success is partially determined by the extent to which others believe the individual possesses the necessary technical and social skills to meet the demands of his or her job, according to the parameters of a given organizational culture and/or profession (Dickens & Dickens, 1991; Rafaeli et al., 1997; Rosenfeld et al., 2001; Schlenker, 1980). In particular, performance ratings are often based on one's ability to demonstrate that one is able to meet context-specific standards for professional behavior. Thus, credibility is an essential determinant of performance ratings. Individuals who credibly display the appropriate signals of professionalism will achieve a number of social benefits, including enhanced client perceptions (Ibarra, 1999) and performance ratings (Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995).

An organization's climate toward diversity often sets the standard for which social identity displays are considered appropriate for professional behavior in that context. Individuals who use SIM strategies that are congruent with organizational norms will likely receive higher performance ratings, and perhaps more subsequent career success in their organization, than individuals who use strategies that are inconsistent with the organization's diversity perspective. Along these lines, using Ely and Thomas's (2001) diversity perspectives paradigm, social recategorization should be more effective in organizations that adopt a discrimination-and-fairness or colorblind perspective, because these organizations do not consider it appropriate to draw attention to dimensions of difference, such as social identity groups. Positive distinctiveness should be more effective in organizations that adopt the integration-and-learning diversity perspective, because such organizations welcome the integration of one's social identity background into one's profes-

sional work. Positive distinctiveness is also likely to be effective in organizations that adopt the access-and-legitimacy perspective, but only when it grants access to and legitimacy among designated markets and constituency groups (e.g., when interacting with clients or consumers who belong to one's social identity group). Positive distinctiveness is less likely to be effective in an organization that espouses the access-and-legitimacy perspective if one attempts to incorporate one's identity into the core organizational tasks or culture.

Workgroup Consequences

Workgroup cohesion. Workgroup productivity requires cohesion; group members must develop genuine, open, and trusting relationships with one another (Edmondson, 1999). Such relationships can be difficult to establish in diverse organizations, since conflicts often arise based on communication problems, discomfort, differential values, misperceptions, and misunderstandings (Chatman et al., 1998; Jehn et al., 1999). Many scholars and practitioners recommend that employees categorize themselves on the basis of common workgroup memberships (e.g., superordinate identities), rather than distinct social identity groups, in order to achieve cohesion and cooperation with members of different social identity groups (Allison & Herlocker, 1994; Chatman et al., 1998; Dovidio et al., 2000). Thus, one might expect that individuals who can credibly counter negative stereotypes, reduce the salience of distinct categories, and present themselves as legitimate members of their workgroup will likely enhance workgroup cohesion. In particular, one might expect that the use of social recategorization strategies is positively correlated with workgroup cohesion.

Yet it is important to note that authenticity is also critical for developing high-quality relationships with workgroup members. Group functioning (e.g., social integration, group identification, and intragroup conflict) is related to the extent to which group members see others in the group as others see themselves (Polzer et al., 2002). Those who rely on suppressing aspects of their identity may be perceived as antisocial or aloof by coworkers (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Woods & Lucas, 1993). For example, the use of social recategorization tactics may restrict a les-

bian or gay employee's ability to contribute fully to a workgroup because it involves lying to coworkers about one's sexual orientation (McNaught, 1993). However, individuals who are willing to share their ideas and feedback with other members are more likely to contribute to workgroup cohesion, in the form of open group process (Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis, & Cammann, 1982) and high-quality workgroup relationships (Seers, 1989). If social recategorization involves suppression of a valued identity, positive distinctiveness may be a more effective strategy for enhancing open group process.

Workgroup creativity. One of the greatest benefits of diversity is the increased variance in perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups can bring to organizations (Hoffman & Maier, 1961; Nemeth, 1986; Thomas & Ely, 1996). Cox (1993) proposes that, when given the opportunity to "be different," minority group members can promote coworker innovation and creativity. Yet people may interact with and trust ingroup members more than outgroup members and, thus, may be less likely to share novel ideas with outgroups (Amabile, 1988; Brewer, 1979; Chatman et al., 1998; Nemeth, 1986). This ingroup bias can pose a considerable challenge to attaining the desired benefits of a heterogeneous workforce.

Perceived similarity can influence willingness to trust and share novel ideas with workgroup members (Kramer, Brewer, & Hanna, 1996). Minority group members may use social recategorization strategies to increase perceptions of similarity with majority group members, and, as a result, majority group members may be more likely to share novel ideas with the group. The opposite trend may occur, however, for the minority group member who uses social recategorization. He or she may be consciously aware of the ways in which he or she differs from the majority, may feel less able to be authentic at work (Kahn, 1992), and may be less likely to draw attention to differences in a number of ways, including contributing novel or innovative ideas (Dickens & Dickens, 1991; Swann et al., 2004). Thus, the use of social recategorization can have contrasting effects for majority and minority group members in workgroups.

Organizational Consequences

Each of the aforementioned consequences of impression management for individuals, dyads, and workgroups has implications for organizationally relevant outcomes (see Figure 1). Organizations indirectly benefit from their employees' credible and authentic self-presentations through increased retention. Employees who experience the psychological benefits of credible and authentic self-presentation are more satisfied with their employing organizations and are less likely to quit (Abraham, 1999; Côté & Morgan, 2002; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Further, credible and authentic self-presentation is often linked to heightened task engagement and workgroup creativity, both of which may enhance the quality and innovation of the products and services an organization provides (Hewlin, 2003; Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Individuals who engage in credible and authentic self-presentation may also experience higher-quality interpersonal relationships and workgroup cohesion. The enhanced relational quality at the dyad and workgroup levels is likely to generate increased social capital within employing organizations (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Leana & Van Buren, 1999). Moreover, the extent to which individuals present themselves in an authentic and credible manner influences client ratings of professional service, which can build the organizations' reputation as a high-quality service provider (Ibarra, 1999).

Finally, the extent to which individuals successfully claim or suppress various social identities can impact the image that organizational insiders and outsiders have of the organization's climate toward diversity. Just as the demographic composition and power integration of an organization have symbolic significance for internal and external stakeholders (Ely, 1995; Milliken & Martins, 1996), the suppression or enactment of social identities also establishes precedent within a workplace culture for identity display (Carbado & Gulati, 2000). If individuals are encouraged to suppress dimensions of difference in order to attain professional success, others may deduce that diversity among social identity groups is not valued within the employing organization (Ely, 1995). But when individuals are welcome to present themselves authentically, publicly claiming valued aspects of their identities within work organizations, the em-

ploying organization may gain a reputation for being diversity friendly. Such implicit messages, communicated over time through employees' self-presentation of personal and social identities, may even shift the cultural standards regarding what it means to be a true professional and change people's desired professional images (as indicated by the feedback loop in Figure 1).

Agenda for Future Research on Professional Image Construction

In this article I have presented a conceptual model of professional image construction that weaves together multiple streams of research in social identity, impression management, and organizational behavior. In so doing, the model surfaces the connections among theories, extends the scope of application for each theory, and deepens understanding of a complex phenomenon—professional image construction in diverse organizations. At a fundamental level, the model generates insight into how, in the course of interpersonal encounters, people both appraise and shape others' perceptions of them as individuals, as well as members of social identity groups. Adding the social identity lens onto professional image construction brings to light many of the tensions that arise between professional images and social identities in organizations: tension between stereotypical attributions that are inconsistent with desirable attributions; tension around the salience of stereotypes that override a holistic, accurate vision of one's identity; tension around the salience of social identities that individuals may not personally value; and tension around the invisibility, legitimacy, or devaluation of social identities that individuals personally value. Thus, the model helps to elucidate the process by which personal and social identities are constructed in organizations, as well as the impact this process has on important organizational outcomes, such as well-being, performance, and interpersonal relationships.

The model of professional image construction presented here serves as a means of both integrating past research and shaping an agenda for continued exploration into the impact of personal and social identities on professional image construction. While the model presents an overarching framework for professional image

construction, future research should also be directed at testing and applying the model among various populations to determine how the nature, antecedents, and consequences of traditional impression management and SIM may differ across identity groups and professions. It is important to identify the identity-specific strategies that individuals will use to construct viable images, given that individuals face different challenges, constraints, and opportunities when managing impressions of their visible versus concealable social identities (Clair, Beatty, & Maclean, 2005; Ragins, *in press*) and their assumed versus ascribed social identities.

Moreover, the specific strategies that members of one profession may use to create an image of competence and character will likely differ from the strategies members of another profession may use, given that the definition of competence and the desirable personal and social identities characteristics vary across professions. Further, people generally do not manage impressions of one identity in isolation (e.g., race or gender) but, rather, manage impressions of the intersections of their identity groups (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Carbado & Gulati, 2001). Future studies should take into account the differential impact of multiple identities on constructing viable images in a variety of professions.

The current model portrays professional image construction as a linear process to provide a detailed explanation of a sequence of events that often occurs quite rapidly and intuitively. Image construction is actually a dynamic and recursive process, wherein actors continually assess their effectiveness based on the perceivers' responses to their self-presentation (Higgins, 1996; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). When conducting research on professional image construction and impression management, it is critical to employ methods that capture dynamism in the process. At the level of the encounter, it is important to assess both the actor's and perceiver's roles in the interaction, since one often shapes the other's attitudes, behaviors, and motivation to control prejudice (Fiske et al., 1999; Shelton, 2003). For example, two individuals may start out suppressing their social identities and wearing the mask of the professional, but when one person reveals something about her working-class origin, it may signal to the other person that it is safe to discuss his own socioeconomic background. In future studies re-

searchers should investigate how traditional impression management and SIM strategies influence the development of interpersonal relationships within and over the course of multiple interactions.

It is also important to investigate the level of attention and effort impression management requires across interactions and during the phases of one's career. Impression management is likely to involve controlled cognitive processing when the situation or audience is significant or when an individual is uncertain about the type of impression that might be created (Schlenker, 2003). Impression management becomes more habitual and less conscious when people are in routine, unstructured situations in which tasks are relatively unimportant and when they are with people they know well and who regard them favorably (Schlenker, 2003).

The combination of traditional and SIM strategies an individual employs may also vary over the course of his or her career. Researchers should identify the organizational and career factors (e.g., career successes and failures, organizational restructuring, job assignments) that provoke changes in the use of certain impression management strategies. Organizational newcomers tend to be particularly concerned with the extent to which their perceived professional image fits the organization's standards and culture, owing to assimilation goals, the inordinate weight of first impressions on others' opinions, and the heightened proclivity for stereotyping when interacting with strangers (Asch, 1946; Ashford & Black, 1996; Goffman, 1959; Ibarra, 1999; Jones, 1986). During periods of initial transition, individuals are preoccupied with trying to develop a credible professional identity and to assimilate themselves into the organization (Ibarra, 1999), and they may be less likely to use proactive efforts to integrate cultural and professional identities. Later in their careers, they may begin to experiment with ways to integrate their cultural and professional identities, rather than decoupling them (Anderson, 1999; Dickens & Dickens, 1991; McBroom, 1986; Thomas, 1993). It is also interesting to explore whether the use of certain impression management strategies may have beneficial consequences early in one's career but then become more detrimental as one's career develops and job demands change.

Impression management and identity researchers have used the full spectrum of methodologies to discover how and why people strategically present themselves in various situations. To test this framework, researchers should design experimental studies to manipulate the impact of personal and social identities on one's perceived and desired professional images and then to detect changes in impression monitoring, motivation, and construction during specific encounters. Longitudinal survey methods would be appropriate for investigating normative patterns of traditional impression management and SIM behavior across situations and for determining the long-term consequences of professional image construction for individuals and their employing organizations. Qualitative methods are useful for revealing how and why individuals develop their repertoire of impression management strategies.

In conclusion, this article contributes to our understanding of how professional images are constructed in diverse organizational contexts, where individuals must manage impressions of their personal and social identities to reduce discrepancies between their perceived and desired professional images. Individuals who are successful in employing traditional and SIM strategies achieve psychological, relational, and performance benefits because of their ability to address the misconceptions that often arise during intergroup interactions. It has been argued that impression management ability is a new form of social competence in organizations, which individuals employ to master organizational politics, facilitate better work relationships, increase group cohesiveness, avoid offending coworkers, and create a more pleasant organizational climate (Rosenfeld et al., 2001). This paper extends that argument to suggest that impression management also represents an important skill set for building high-quality relationships in diverse organizations. By highlighting it as such, scholars and practitioners can understand the sophisticated strategies that organizational members use to maximize the benefits and minimize the challenges of the diversity they bring to their work organizations.

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Laura Morgan Roberts is an assistant professor of organizational behavior at the Harvard Business School. She received her Ph.D. in organizational psychology from the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on authenticity, professional identity development, image management, and cross-cultural competence in diverse organizations.