

Efficacious Self-presentation, assertive and defensive tactics, and personality traits in adolescence

by *Fiorenzo Laghi**, *Susanna Pallini***, *Roberto Baiocco**

This study examined the relationship between self-presentation and assertive and defensive tactics. Five hundred adolescents completed measures of self-presentation, assertive and defensive tactics, and personality characteristics. Results suggested that assertive tactics were related to Ability to Regulate self-image, and defensive tactics were related to Social Sensitivity, and Social Openness. Assertive and Defensive tactics are predicted through Friendliness, Conscientiousness, Energy, and Openness. The implications of the findings for future theoretical and empirical development of research in this field are discussed.

Key words: *self-presentation, social influence, self-monitoring, social openness, social sensitivity.*

I

Introduction

The discussion on how people manage the impressions they make on others could have numerous applications in educational programs for adolescents, as well as in the field of vocational guidance (Anderson *et al.*, 1999; Bauer, Truxillo, 2000; Osborn, Field, Veres, 1998; Tedeschi, Melburg, 1984), job performance and leadership emergence (Day *et al.*, 2002). Self-presentation is very close to the self-monitoring concept, which, according to Snyder (1974) and Gangestad and Snyder (1985, 2000), involves the construction of a positive public image. Self-monitoring denotes the tendency to monitor expressive behavior in order to present a particular aspect of self in a social context (Lennox, Wolfe, 1984; Snyder, 1974; Gangestad, Snyder, 1985, 2000; Paulhus, Bruce, Trapnel, 1995). Lennox and Wolfe (1984) distinguish between two dimensions in self-monitoring: *social sensitivity* and the *ability to modify self-presentation*. Social sensitivity is defined as the attention to social cues about context-appropriate behaviors, while the ability to modify self-presentation is defined as the ability to regulate self-image in line with social demands.

On the other hand, self-presentation deals with more self-relevant or authentic presentations (Lee *et al.*, 1999). Self-presentation theorists posit that people are

* Sapienza University of Rome.

** University of Rome 3.

motivated to gain social approval in interpersonal encounters and act in ways that might attract attention and engender recognition (Jackson, 2007).

Highly Efficacious self-presentation subjects regulate their behavior to the social climate around them, monitoring and controlling the image they present in order to deal with different social conditions, and change their attitude in line with whomever they have in front of them. *Poorly Efficacious self-presentation subjects* display more consistent behavior across various social contexts, independently of contextual covert and overt demands (Kilduff, Day, 1994). They tend to act in a similar manner because they are not influenced by social rules. In adolescence this attitude can be related to either *indifference* to self-presentation or *inability* to manage *self-presentation*. In the first case, adolescents can have different reasons for not attuning their behaviours to the context: they could be afraid of losing their identity, or have an autonomous and unconventional attitude, more attentive to inner attitudes and values (Perrine, Aloise-Young, 2004). In the latter, adolescents could be introverted and have problems with focusing attention on social demands and meeting them, because of the unawareness of the impression made on others, and as a consequence, they could be unable to regulate their social image according to the context.

In order to efficaciously present themselves to others, adolescents need to see things from others' perspective, to consider different points of view and different thoughts, to mark their differences, and to consider their worth (Liotti, Pallini, 1990), consequently they can regulate their behavior in order to manage the impression made on others. Flavell (1974) refers to Perspective-taking as the understanding that an object seem different to different people and Falk and Johnson (1977) defined *perspective-taking* as the process of putting oneself in the place of another and of understanding how that person is reacting cognitively and affectively to one's own behavior. According to Elkind (1985) and Ryan and Kuczkowski (1994), in order to succeed in perspective-taking, at every stage of cognitive development there is a form of egocentrism to overcome. In adolescence, "hypothetical reasoning implies the subordination of the real to the realm of possible" (Piaget, 1972/2008, p. 42). In this period adolescents become able to "think about thinking" (Khun, 2008, p. 52), which allow them to conceptualize, to take account of and/or to adopt the point of view of the other (Elkind, 1985). In adolescent's egocentrism there is an overestimation of social attention and a failure to differentiate one's own self thought from those that others have about himself. Thus, adolescent attribute to others, judgments, worries and reflections that he formulates about himself (Frankenberger, 2000). This phenomenon was already defined by Elkind (1985) as "imaginary audience", a sort of cognitive level on which adolescent perceives himself at the centre, and others as being worried about his behaviour and appearance as he is. Hence, egocentric thinking in adolescence is not based on the object centration but on the self centration (Frankenberger, 2000). Imaginary audience has been reconceptualised by Lapsey

and Murphy (1985) and Vartanian (2000) as a problem related to a more general interpersonal understanding. In Epley's terms (Epley, Morewedge, Keysar, 2004) adolescents become less egocentric when they become able to correct an initial egocentric interpretation, which is possible when they learn to consider both the self and the other at the same time. They can shift attentive *focus* from the self to the other and regulate attentive direction, towards both subjective internal experience and environmental demands, therefore, in perspective-taking also attentive control is involved. For example, in an academic context, a *perspective-taking* student could value his academic work both from his own point of view and from his teacher's point of view. In handing in his home work, he might consider his level of training and at the same time might be attentive to the teacher's attitude and point of view about work well done.

Self-presentation is deeply related to bodily image confidence and general self confidence. Bodily image confidence plays an important role for self-presentation. Physical attractiveness has been found to impact on peer relationships in adolescence (Davison, Mc Cabe, 2006; Whitehead, Hoover, 2000). Adolescents may link body image to their sense of self worth and perceptions of social relations and they are particularly vulnerable to body image problems. Body dissatisfaction derives from a social comparison process whereby adolescents compare themselves to culturally valued images and believe that they don't meet social expectations (Morrison, Kalin, Morrison, 2004; McArthur, Holbert, Peña, 2005). A poor body image may hamper adolescents' development of interpersonal skills and positive relations with other boys and girls (Davison, Mc Cabe, 2006). In turn, social appearance is influenced by bodily feeling, such as the amount of time and effort an individual invests in maintaining or improving his or her physique (Jones, Vigfusdottir, Lee, 2004). Adolescents with interpersonal problems can be concerned about others as sources of disapproval and the self as lacking in skills to forge connections and circumvent rejection (Jackson, 2007). Avia *et al.* (1998) and Lee *et al.* (1999) distinguished between two separate self-presentation orientations: defensive self-presentation stems from looking for social approval and avoiding social rejection, while acquisitive self-presentation is typically agonistic and emerges from the active search for power and social status. *Defensive* style individuals are guided by negative emotional states. Particularly, devaluation of self confidence would influence behaviours and consequently other's impressions, e.g., a silent and unsociable adolescent, afraid of not being accepted, with likely, induce the rejection he is afraid to cause (Jackson, 2007).

Agonistic attitudes and defensive and assertive tactics. When a person interacts in an agonistic relationship for enhancing power and status, the communication is not oriented towards a full self disclosure, but instead requires that a choice be made as to the most relevant and suitable information for the situation. In that case, is useful to monitor behavior, and the influence it has on others.

According to Wright, Holloway and Roloff (2007), self-monitoring, and not self-presentation might more likely be related to an agonistic relationship. They found that self-monitoring was negatively related to intimate communication and relational quality.

Avia *et al.* (1998) and Lee Quigley, Nesler, Corbett, and Tedeschi (1999) distinguished between two separate self-presentation orientations: *defensive* self-presentation stems from looking for social approval and avoiding social rejection, while *assertive* self-presentation is typically agonistic and emerges from the active search for power and social status. *Defensive* style individuals are guided by negative emotional states. Particularly, devaluation of self confidence would influence behaviours and consequently other's impressions, e.g., a silent and unsociable adolescent, afraid of not being accepted, with likely, induce the rejection he is afraid to cause (Jackson, 2007). *Assertive* self-presentation was associated to openness to experience and extraversion. Avia *et al.* (1998) found that also an assertive self-presentation was associated to openness to experience and extraversion, while Gangestad and Snyder (2000) found that high self-monitoring subjects displayed a high orientation towards others.

According to Lee, Quigley, Nesler, Corbett, and Tedeschi (1999), defensive tactics protect the self, and assertive tactics enhance the self in the eyes of observers. Defensive self-presentational tactics comprehend *excuses*, *justifications*, *disclaimers*, *self-handicapping*, *apologies*. Assertive self-presentational tactics, comprehend *ingratiation*, *intimidation*, *supplication*, *entitlements*, *enhancements*, *blasting*, *exemplification*.

According to Christopher, Lasane, Troisi and Park (2007) defensive tactics all seem to place subject in a submissive social position relative to others actors. Among assertive tactics, *blasting*, *intimidation* and *enhancement* are related to a social position of dominance whereas *supplication* are related to a social position of submission. Blasting requires derogating others to look good by comparison to establish an identity or superiority (Christopher *et al.*, 2007). Intimidation is a tactic used to gain power frightening others, enhancement requires to judge the self better than the other: Ingratiation do is a manipulative attitude. Only entitlement and exemplification no express agonistic attitudes of dominance or submission: both are verbal claims about positive personal behaviour, the first of responsibility for positive events, the latter of moral behavior. Both requires only self confidence and not the occurrence of power dynamics.

Aims and the Hypotheses for the Current Study. The main aim of this paper is to explore the link between self-presentation dimensions and assertive and defensive tactics. According to many authors (Avia *et al.*, 1998; Lee *et al.*, 1999) we predict that the assertive tactics are positively related to Ability to regulate self-image, and negatively related to Social Sensitivity, that is a dimension related to the ability to consider different points of view and different thoughts as the result of *perspective-taking* and consequent cognitive and attentive flexibility

(Pledger, 1992; Epley, Morewedge, Keysar, 2004). Assertive tactics are typically agonistic and emerges from the active search for power and social status (Gilbert, 2003). The defensive tactics should be positively related to Social Openness, and Social Sensitivity. Avia *et al.* (1998) and Lee *et al.* (1999) affirm that defensive self-presentation stems from looking for social approval and avoiding social rejection. As the expression of the defensive tactics a person can shift attentive *focus* from the self to the other and regulate attentive direction, towards both subjective internal experience and environmental demands (Jackson, 2007).

We want also to investigate the relation between self-presentation tactics and personality traits. According to our hypothesis the assertive tactics are better predicted through by personality characteristics as openness to experience, and energy (Hypothesis 2). Gangestad and Snyder (1985, 2000) found that subjects used assertive tactics display a low orientation towards others and they are not able to modulate their image as an expression of their greater openness to social experience (Avia *et al.*, 1998; Leary, Kowalski, 1990; Koca, Asçi, 2006). Subjects that used defensive tactics could be afraid of losing their identity, they are more introverted although they do not have problems with focusing attention on social demands (Perrine, Aloise-Young, 2004). Adolescents with interpersonal problems can be concerned about others as sources of disapproval and the self as lacking in skills to forge connections and circumvent rejection (Jackson, 2007). According to these authors, we predict that defensive tactics are strictly related to emotional stability.

2 Method

2.1. Participants

The study involved 14 high schools: 4 from the north of Italy (Lombardia), 6 from the centre (Lazio) and 4 from the South (Sicily). The sample consisted of 500 students (250 boys and 250 girls). The average age of the students was 16.87 ($SD = 0.99$; range 16-18). High schools in Italy are divided into distinct educational and occupational fields and include five grade levels. In terms of type of high school 24% of students were enrolled in science-focused schools, 22% were in technical-industrial arts schools, 26% were in liberal arts-focused schools, and 28% were in teacher-training schools. Participation was preceded by an informed-consent procedure that required active consent from both students and parents. The questionnaires were administered in the classroom during a regular class period and took approximately 30 min. to complete. Instructions stated that the questionnaires were voluntary and that responses were anonymous and confidential. All students responded to the same questionnaire packet, with measures administered in counterbalanced order to each group of subjects.

2.1.1. Measures

Efficacious Self-Presentation Scale (ESS). The Efficacious Self-Presentation Scale (Laghi *et al.*, 2011), is a 36-item instrument which includes five dimensions: Ability to Regulate self-image to adapt to contextual demands, Social Sensitivity – related to the ability to consider different points of view and different thoughts, also known as perspective-taking ability –, Bodily Self-confidence – acceptance of one's own body –, Social Self-confidence awareness – acceptance of one's social appearance –, Social Openness – interest and propensity for interpersonal relations –, Social Desirability – tendency to give a stereotyped, favorable self-image. Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Alpha reliability indices in the present sample were 0.76, 0.75, 0.78, 0.80, 0.82, and 0.84 for Ability to Regulate self-image, Social Sensitivity, Bodily Self-confidence, Social Self-confidence; Social Openness, and Social Desirability, respectively. The ESS has been shown to have good psychometric properties (Laghi *et al.*, 2011).

Big Five Questionnaire (BFQ). Big Five Questionnaire (Caprara *et al.*, 1993) is a 132-item questionnaire measuring five domains (Energy, Friendliness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness). The respondents have a 5-choice answer format that ranges from complete disagreement (1 = very false for me) to complete agreement (5 = very true for me). Alpha reliability indices in the present sample were 0.72, 0.74, 0.77, 0.80, and 0.78 for Energy, Friendliness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness, respectively. The BFQ has been shown to have good psychometric properties (Caprara *et al.*, 1993).

Self-Presentation Tactic Scale (SPT). Self-Presentation Tactic Scale (Lee *et al.*, 1999) comprises 63 items and measures different self-presentation tactics divided into two distinct categories, defensive and assertive (see Appendix).

The former comprehends Excuses (verbal statements denying responsibility for negative events; Cronbach's alpha = 0.76 in the present study); Justifications (providing overriding reasons for negative behavior as justified, but accepting responsibility for it; Cronbach's alpha = 0.75 in the present study); Disclaimers (expressions offering explanations before predicaments occur; Cronbach's alpha = 0.73 in the present study); Self-handicapping (describes the production of an obstacle to success with the intention of preventing observers from making dispositional inferences about one's failure; Cronbach's alpha = 0.76 in the present study); Apologies (a confession of responsibility for any harm done to others or negative events and expressions of remorse and guilt; Cronbach's alpha = 0.70 in the present study).

The latter comprehends Ingratiation (actions performed to get others to like the actor so that the actor can gain some advantage from them; Cronbach's alpha = 0.75 in the present study); Intimidation (describes actions that have the intent to project an identity of the actor as someone who is powerful and dangerous;

Cronbach's alpha = 0.80 in the present study); Supplication (an actor projects himself or herself as weak and displays dependence to solicit help from a target person; Cronbach's alpha = 0.76 in the present study); Entitlement (an actor claims responsibility and credit for positive achievements; Cronbach's alpha = 0.78 in the present study); Enhancement (an actor persuades others that the outcomes of his or her behavior are more positive than they might have originally believed; Cronbach's alpha = 0.82 in the present study); Basking (a subject associates his or her self with another person or group perceived positively by others; Cronbach's alpha = 0.74 in the present study); Blasting (a behavior intended to produce or communicate negative evaluations of another person or groups with which the actor is merely associated; Cronbach's alpha = 0.86 in the present study); Exemplification (a behavior presenting the actor as morally worthy and as having integrity; Cronbach's alpha = 0.73 in the present study). Participants were asked to describe their use of each tactic on a Likert type scale ranging from 1 (very infrequently) to 9 (very frequently). Because the SPT is a questionnaire not developed and validated in Italian context, the adaptation is based on a rational translation procedure: 2 Italian researchers independently translated the original version, in order to make the items as clear and concise as possible. The 2 different translations were subsequently compared with the purpose of obtaining an unanimously accepted version. The agreed version was then translated back into English by 1 bilingual American/Italian translator with no knowledge of the original version translated the Italian version back into English and compared to the original one, in order to guarantee syntactic and technical matching and conceptual equivalence. The SPT has been shown to have good psychometric properties (Lee *et al.*, 1999).

Divergent validity estimates indicated that scores were not related to age, and type of school, whereas convergent validity was supported via correlations with different measures of self-presentation (Laghi *et al.*, 2011).

3 Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 18.0) was used to conduct bivariate and multivariate analyses relating to independent variables. The internal consistency of the overall scale and subscales were measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Gender differences were analysed using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), with Bonferroni's correction; the α level was divided by the number of statistical tests performed (6 for self-presentation dimensions). The adjusted P values were reported. For these multivariate analyses, Wilks' λ criterion was used.

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to assess the relationship between self presentation dimensions and assertive and defensive tactics.

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relevance of personality characteristics to predict assertive and defensive tactics.

4

Results

– *Preliminary Analyses: Psychometric characteristics of the ESS scale and gender differences on self-presentation*

Means for the 36 items of the ESS scale ranged from 1.43 to 3.82 (possible range 1 to 5). Standard deviations indicated adequate variability for all items from 0.77 to 0.84.

Because the preliminary analysis regarding the differences of type of school was not significant for all dependent measures, we did not include this variable in the further analysis.

As a preliminary analysis, we checked the skewness and kurtosis of all variables. Skewness varied from -0.52 to 0.68 , all within the -1 to $+1$ range. Kurtosis varied from -1.15 to 0.87 , Bodily Self confidence (-1.15) being the only one slightly outside the -1 to $+1$ range. Overall, all variables seemed to conform to the normal distribution.

To investigate gender differences, we conducted MANOVA on self-presentation dimensions, with Bonferroni's coorection ($p = 0.008$). The analysis revealed main effect for sex (Wilks's Lambda = 0.81 ; $F(6,493) = 8.72$; $p < 0.001$). Results from the univariate tests revealed that groups differed on the subscales of Social sensitivity ($F(1,498) = 17.58$; $p < 0.001$), Bodily ($F(1,498) = 20.16$; $p < 0.001$) and Social self-confidence ($F(1,498) = 24.10$; $p < 0.001$). Males showed a higher mean score on the Bodily ($M = 22.40$; $SD = 4.32$) and Social self confidence subscales ($M = 21.30$; $SD = 4.36$) than females ($M = 20.32$; $SD = 4.46$; $M = 17.14$; $SD = 4.94$ respectively), while females had a higher mean score on the Social sensitivity subscale ($M = 22.34$; $DS = 3.60$; Males $M = 20.12$; $DS = 3.44$).

– *Self-presentation, and assertive and defensive self-presentation tactics*

Table 1 shows the relationship between ESS and the dimensions of SPT, separately by sex. Excuses was inversely correlated with Social Sensitivity and Social Openness. Disclaimers was weakly correlated with Ability to regulate self-image, Social Openness, and Social self confidence. Self-handicapping was inversely correlated with Social self confidence while Apologies was related to Social sensitivity, Social Openness, and Bodily self confidence. Ingratiation was correlated with Ability to regulate self-image and Social Sensitivity. Intimidation was correlated with Ability to regulate self-image. Supplication was inversely correlated with Social Sensitivity, Social Openness, Bodily and Social self confidence. Entitlement and Enhancement were correlated with Ability to regulate self-image, and with Social self confidence. Basking was correlated with Ability to regulate self-image, Social Sensitivity, and Social Openness. Blasting

was related to Ability to regulate self-image, Social Sensitivity, and Social self confidence.

TABLE I
Pearson correlation between EES subscales, and SPT subscales

	Ability to regulate self-image	Social sensitivity	Social openness	Bodily self-confi- dence	Social self-confi- dence	Social Desirability
<i>Males</i>						
<i>Defensive tactics</i>						
Excuses	0.10	-0.35*	-0.13*	-0.10	0.02	-0.10
Justifications	0.10	0.24*	-0.04	-0.02	0.03	0.01
Disclaimers	-0.16*	-0.05	-0.15*	-0.07	-0.18**	0.10
Self-handicapping	0.06	0.03	-0.05	-0.06	-0.17*	-0.03
Apologies	-0.04	0.19*	0.22**	0.16*	-0.09	-0.03
<i>Assertive tactics</i>						
Ingratiation	0.18**	-0.16*	-0.11	-0.05	0.07	0.04
Intimidation	0.25**	-0.02	-0.12	0.00	0.10	-0.06
Supplication	-0.04	-0.22**	-0.15*	-0.22**	-0.19*	-0.07
Entitlement	0.17*	-0.02	-0.09	0.04	0.34**	-0.11
Enhancement	0.18*	-0.03	-0.10	0.08	0.18*	0.05
Basking	0.19*	-0.14*	-0.16**	-0.10	0.09	-0.11
Blasting	0.20**	0.14*	0.09	0.08	0.24**	0.08
<i>Females</i>						
<i>Defensive tactics</i>						
Excuses	0.11	-0.13*	-0.14*	-0.10	0.01	-0.11
Justifications	0.11	0.22*	-0.04	-0.01	0.00	0.00
Disclaimers	-0.14*	-0.04	-0.13*	-0.07	-0.17**	0.11
Self-handicapping	0.07	0.01	-0.06	-0.02	-0.39**	-0.05
Apologies	-0.03	0.17*	0.20**	0.14*	-0.09	-0.03
<i>Assertive tactics</i>						
Ingratiation	0.37**	-0.13*	-0.11	-0.05	0.07	0.05
Intimidation	0.26**	-0.02	-0.11	0.00	0.12	-0.06
Supplication	-0.05	-0.41**	-0.16*	-0.20**	-0.18*	-0.07
Entitlement	0.16*	-0.03	-0.08	0.03	0.15*	-0.11
Enhancement	0.16*	-0.01	-0.10	0.06	0.17*	0.05
Basking	0.14*	-0.14*	-0.18**	-0.10	0.08	-0.10
Blasting	0.19**	0.17*	0.09	0.07	0.22**	0.07

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: the correlation reported in bold are significantly different in magnitude for sex.

– *Personality dimensions as predictors of assertive and defensive self-presentation tactics*

Next, using hierarchical multiple regression, we further examined the associations between personality traits, self presentation dimensions, and assertive and defensive tactics.

In each regression, we entered sex in the first step. Big Five dimensions were entered in the second step, and Self-presentation scales in the third step.

Regressions were repeated separately for defensive, and assertive tactics. Regarding defensive tactics, the inclusion of the Openness, Emotional Stability, and Social Sensitivity dimension in the model increased the variance accounted for by 16%. These dimensions were significantly associated with defensive tactics in the expected directions. For predicting assertive tactics, the inclusion of sex, Energy, Friendless, and Ability to regulate self-image in the model increased the variance accounted for by 30%.

TABLE 2

Hierarchical regression analyses for self presentation and personality traits predicting defensive and assertive tactics

	Defensive tactics				Assertive tactics			
	R ²	F change	Beta in	Final beta	R ²	F change	Beta in	Final beta
Step 1: Sex (0 = girls; 1 = boys)	0.01	2.88	–0.12	0.08	0.11	24.10**	0.32	0.29**
Step 2	0.13	4.79*			0.23	5.89*		
Energy			–0.13	–0.09			0.16	0.17*
Openness			0.19	0.22**			–0.16	–0.14
Conscientiousness			–0.01	–0.02			–0.09	–0.12
Emotional stability			–0.33	–0.35**			–0.17	–0.11
Friendliness			–0.06	–0.08			–0.15	–0.20*
Step 3	0.16	3.09*		0.07	0.30	3.22*		
Social sensitivity			0.14	0.14*			–0.01	–0.01
Ability to regulate self-image			–0.01	–0.01			–0.22*	–0.22*
Bodily self-confidence			–0.11	–0.11			–0.11	–0.11
Social self-confidence			0.01	0.01			–0.06	–0.06

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$.

5 Discussion

In this study we examined on the one hand the relationship between self presentation dimensions and assertive and defensive tactics and on the other, the Personality dimensions as predictors of assertive and defensive self-presentation tactics.

The results about the relationship between self-presentation dimensions and assertive and defensive tactics leads us to think that there is much work to be done on self-presentation. The literature in this field, including this study, is limited in two ways that could be the object of future research: first, the relationship between self presentation and cooperative or agonistic relationship, and second, the difference in self-presentation between socially-open and manipulative attitudes.

Regarding the relationship between self presentation dimensions and assertive and defensive tactics, we found that tactics that place the subject in a submissive social position, as defensive tactics and ingratiation and supplication are either unrelated or inversely related to efficacious self presentation dimensions, whereas ingratiation tactics, that express a manipulative attitude, is related to the only ability to regulate self image , more in the females than in males. It seems that is an attitude gender social role influenced. Assertive tactics that express a social position of dominance, as enhancement and blasting are related to ability to regulate self-image and social self confidence. Entitlement among males is the more related to self-confidence.

Our results show that the acquisitive and defensive tactics of self-presentation can be interpreted as an ability to distinguish and adopt a specific level of relationship. To cite an example one tries to produce a certain impression on others in order to ensure recognition of one's rank or status (Gilbert, 2003), such as in a job interview. Thus, in this level of relationship the image presented to others is meant to increase the power of the individual and convince others of one's qualities (Laghi *et al.*, 2009). Assertive tactics in the model of Lee *et al.* (1999) are power tactics, in which an actor utilizes a dominating manner, such as in *Intimidation* and *Entitlement*, or a submissive manner, such as in *Supplication*. These tactics are assertive and individuals on these occasions are undoubtedly characterized by an ability to regulate self image and by social self confidence, but are not acting in a socially open manner, as showed in our results. On the other hand, the dimension of *Defensive Tactics* comprises items related not only to a lack of Social Self Confidence, such as in *Self-handicapping*, but also some items related to a cooperative attitude, such as in *Apology*: "I apologize when I have done something wrong". This aspect can be useful in specific occasions of self-presentation and distinguish individuals more open to relationship and more socially sensitive. In contrast, the dimensions of *Excuse* and *Disclaimer*

seem to be more clearly interrelated to an agonistic attitude of submission and not to social openness. Future research could investigate the motivational systems that underlie the tactics of self-presentation by distinguishing agonistic from cooperative attitudes in relationships and by analyzing the link between cooperative attitudes and openness to experience.

Regarding Personality dimensions as predictors of assertive and defensive self-presentation tactics, our second hypothesis is partially disconfirmed, we found that more Openness, and Social Sensitivity and less Emotional Stability predict defensive tactics. Gender, Energy, and less Friendless, and Ability to regulate self- image predict assertive tactics. , All of the studies described above have focused exclusively on efficacious self-presentation without distinguishing between a socially open attitude and a manipulative one: to our knowledge, no studies have closely examined this aspect. The relationship between self-presentation and openness is very complex. Efficacious Self-presentation can result from an openness to social experience or from pretentiousness or the acting of a socially valued role; only in the first case is it the expression of an interest in others, and related to attention to social cues, disposition to interaction and cognitive flexibility. Also according to Lee *et al.* (1999), one of the distinctions between self-presentation and impression management is that only the first deals with more self-relevant or authentic presentations and a better relational quality (Wright, Holloway, Roloff , 2007). Moreover, this distinction is very important in terms of educational planning for adolescents. The purpose of programs to enhance self-presentation in adolescence should not be teaching them to lie.

Our study is intended to lay the groundwork, but further efforts must be made: programs to enhance efficacious self-presentation in adolescence should aim to improve social openness, perspective-taking and self confidence.

Some limitations of the study must be pointed out. First, the relation identified in the study is correlational and not causal. For this reason, this study represents only a first step in understanding the relations among self-presentation and assertive and defensive tactics in adolescent sample. Second, all data were collected using self-report questionnaires. Studies using behavioural self-presentation measures, observational data and other-report methodologies to assess behaviours could be very useful for this topic. The present study focused on self-presentation dimensions in a sample of secondary school students. A longitudinal study would provide perspective and generate data on changes in self-presentation styles and cognitions across the years. The lack of racial diversity in this sample also limits the generalizations we can make as regards to the findings. Replication of the research on groups with different demographic characteristics might be another possibility for further research.

Appendix

Self-Presentation Tactic Scale (Lee *et al.*, 1999)

	Mai	Sempre
1. Mi comporto in modo tale che gli altri abbiano paura di me	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2. Uso la mia prestantza fisica per influenzare le persone quando ne ho bisogno	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. Se faccio del male a qualcuno, chiedo scusa e prometto di non rifarlo	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
4. Fornisco spiegazioni prima di fare qualcosa che gli altri potrebbero pensare sia sbagliata	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. Giustifico il mio modo di comportarmi per ridurre le reazioni negative degli altri	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
6. Racconto alle persone un lavoro ben fatto che ad altri è risultato difficile	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
7. Uso le mie debolezze per ottenere la simpatia degli altri	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
8. Chiedo agli altri di aiutarmi	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
9. Assumo gli stessi atteggiamenti degli altri per farmi accettare	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10. Quando penso che la mia prestazione non sarà buona, fornisco in anticipo delle scuse	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
11. Ho l'abitudine di fare complimenti agli altri per ottenere dei favori	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
12. Sto male quando sono sotto pressione per ottenere un buon risultato	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
13. Chiedo scusa quando faccio qualcosa di sbagliato	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
14. Porto gli altri a pensare che sono incapace di aiutarli	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
15. Cerco di essere un modello di come le persone dovrebbero comportarsi	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
16. Cerco l'approvazione degli altri prima di fare qualcosa che potrebbero percepire negativamente	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
17. Provo a rimediare se ho fatto del male a qualcuno	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
18. Raccontare cose sul mio conto è un modo per dimostrare agli altri il loro valore	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
19. Sottolineo le affermazioni scorrette del partito politico che è all'opposizione	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
20. Cerco di farmi imitare dagli altri per servire così da buon esempio	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
21. Quando racconto a qualcuno di eventi passati, mi attribuisco più meriti positivi di quanti effettivamente mi spettino	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
22. Racconto alle persone i miei successi	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
23. Cerco di essere un esempio da seguire per gli altri	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
24. Giustifico in anticipo le azioni che agli altri potrebbero non piacere	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
25. Spingo gli altri ad agire in modo positivo come faccio io	1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

26. Svalorizzo gli altri per sentirmi migliore	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
27. Faccio favori agli altri al fine di piacere	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
28. Mi assumo le conseguenze del mio comportamento negativo quando è chiaramente colpa mia	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
29. Enfatizzo il valore dei miei successi	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
30. Spero che siano gli altri a prendersi la responsabilità nei lavori di gruppo	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
31. Minaccio gli altri quando penso che mi potrà essere utile per ottenere quello che voglio.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
32. Esprimo opinioni che piacciono agli altri	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
33. Parlo male dei gruppi emarginati	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
34. Provo a convincere gli altri che non sono responsabile di eventi negativi	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
35. Quando le cose vanno male, spiego perché non ne sono responsabile	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
36. Agisco nel modo in cui penso che anche gli altri dovrebbero far	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
37. Racconto agli altri le mie qualità positive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
38. Quando sono incolpato di qualcosa,mi invento delle scuse	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
39. Sottolineo le cose positive che faccio e che gli altri fanno fatica a notare	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
40. Tendo a far notare agli altri il valore dei regali che faccio loro	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
41. La mia cattiva salute è stata responsabile del mio rendimento mediocre a scuola (o all'università)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
42. Aiuto gli altri perché poi mi aiuteranno	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
43. Offro motivi socialmente accettabili per giustificare comportamenti che agli altri potrebbero non piacere	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
44. Quando gli altri vedono il mio comportamento come negativo do spiegazioni in modo che capiscano che i miei comportamenti sono giustificati	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
45. Quando lavoro ad un progetto di gruppo faccio sembrare il mio contributo più grande di quello che è	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
46. Enfatizzo le qualità negative dei miei concorrenti	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
47. Invento scuse quando ho una prestazione scadente	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
48. Invento delle scuse per un mio possibile insuccesso ancora prima di iniziare una prova particolarmente difficile	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
49. Comunico il mio rimorso e il mio senso di colpa quando faccio qualcosa di sbagliato	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
50. Intimidisco gli altri	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
51. Quando voglio qualcosa cerco di apparire al meglio	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

52. Non mi preparo abbastanza bene per gli esami perché sono troppo impegnato in attività sociali	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
53. Dico agli altri che sono più validi o più competenti di me al fine di farmi fare qualche favore	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
54. Reclamo diritti per cose che non ho fatto	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
55. Do giudizi negativi riguardo a persone appartenenti a gruppi rivali	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
56. Pongo ostacoli alla mia realizzazione	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
57. L'ansia interferisce sulle mie prestazioni	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
58. Faccio cose che spaventano, così che gli altri faranno ciò che voglio	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
59. Quando porto a compimento un lavoro con successo enfatizzo l'importanza di quel compito	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
60. Offro buone ragioni per il mio modo di comportarmi, non importa quanto possa sembrare disdicevole agli altri	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
61. Per evitare di essere incolpato, lascio credere agli altri che non ero malintenzionato	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
62. Faccio complimenti alle persone per averle dalla mia parte	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
63. Dopo un'azione negativa provo a far capire agli altri che, se fossero stati nella mia situazione, avrebbero fatto lo stesso	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

References

- Anderson N., Silvestre J., Cunningham-Snell N., Haddleton E. (1999), Relationships between candidate self-monitoring, perceived personality and selection interview outcomes. *Human Relations*, 52, pp. 1115-31.
- Avia M. D., Sanchez-Bernardos M. L., Sanz J., Carrello J., Rojo N. (1998), Self-presentation strategies and the Five-factor model. *Journal of Research and Personality*, 32, pp. 108-14.
- Bauer T. N., Truxillo D. M. (2000), Temp-to-permanent employees: A longitudinal study of stress and selection success. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 5, pp. 337-46.
- Caprara G. V., Barbaranelli C., Borgogni L., Perugini M. (1993), The "Big Five Questionnaire": A new questionnaire to assess the big five factor model. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 15, pp. 281-8.
- Christopher A. N., Lasane T. P., Troisi J. D., Park L. E. (2007), Materialism, defensive and assertive self-presentational tactics, and life satisfaction. *Journal of Social And Clinical Psychology*, 26, pp. 1145-62.
- Cohen J., Cohen P., West S. G., Aiken L. S. (2003), *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Erlbaum, Hillsdale (III ed.).
- Davison T. E., McCabe M. P. (2006), Adolescent body image and psychosocial functioning. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 146, pp. 15-30.
- Day D. V., Shleicher D. J., Unckless A. L., Hiller N. J. (2002), Self-monitoring personality at work: A meta-analytic investigation of construct validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 2, pp. 390-401.

- Elkind D. (1985), Egocentrism redux. *Developmental Review*, 5, pp. 218-26.
- Epley N., Morewedge C. K., Keysar B. (2004), Perspective-taking in children and adults: equivalent egocentrism but differential correction. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 40, pp. 760-8.
- Falk D. R., Johnson D. W. (1977), The effects of perspective-taking and egocentrism on problem solving in heterogeneous and homogeneous groups. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 102, 1, pp. 63-72.
- Flavell J. K. (1974), The development of inferences about others. In T. Mischel (ed.), *Understanding other persons*. Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 66-116.
- Frankenberger K. D. (2000), Adolescent egocentrism: A comparison among adolescents and adults. *Journal of Adolescence*, 23, pp. 343-54.
- Gangestad S. W., Snyder M. (2000), Self-monitoring: Appraisal and reappraisal. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 4, pp. 530-55.
- Idd. (1985), On the nature of self-monitoring. In P. Shaver (ed.), *Review of personality and social psychology: Self, situations, and social behavior*, vol. 6. Sage, Beverly Hills, pp. 65-85.
- Gilbert P. (2003), Evolution, social roles and the differences in shame and guilt. *Social Research*, 70, pp. 1205, 1230.
- Jackson T. (2007), Protective self-presentation, sources of socialization, and loneliness among Australian adolescents and young adults. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 43, pp. 1552-62.
- Jones D. C., Vigfusdottir T. H., Lee Y. (2004), Body image and the appearance culture among adolescent girls and boys: An examination of friend conversations peer criticism, appearance magazines, and the internalization of appearance ideals. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 19, pp. 323-39.
- Kilduff M., Day D. V. (1994), Do chameleons get ahead? The effects of self-monitoring on managerial careers. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37, pp. 1047-60.
- Koca F., Asçi H. (2006), An examination of self-presentational concern of turkish adolescents: An example of physical education setting. *Adolescence*, 41, 161, pp. 185-97.
- Kuhn D. (2008), Formal operations from a twenty-first century perspective. *Human Development*, 51, pp. 48-55.
- Laghi F., D'Alessio M., Pallini S., Baiocco R. (2009), Attachment representations and time perspective in adolescence. *Social Indicators Research*, 90, pp. 181-94.
- Laghi F., Pallini S., D'Alessio M., Baiocco R. (2011), Development and validation of the efficacious Self-Presentation Scale. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 172, 2, pp. 1-11.
- Lapsley D. K., Murphy M. (1985), Another look at the theoretical assumptions of adolescent egocentrism. *Developmental Review*, 8, pp. 201-17.
- Leary M. R., Kowalski R. M. (1990), Impression management a literature review and two component model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107, pp. 34-47.
- Lee S., Quigley B. M., Nesler M. S., Corbet A. B., Tedeschi J. T. (1999), Development of a self-presentation tactics scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 26, pp. 701-22.
- Lennox R., Wolfe R. (1984), Revision of the Self-monitoring Scale. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46, pp. 1349-64.
- Liotti G., Pallini S. (1990), Lo sviluppo della conoscenza di sé e la psicopatologia [The development of self-knowledge and the psychopathology]. In F. Mancini, A. Semerari (a cura di), *Teorie cognitive dei disturbi emotivi*. NIS, Roma, pp. 55-78.
- McArthur L. H., Holbert D., Peña M. (2005), An exploration of the attitudinal and perceptual dimensions of body image. *Adolescence*, 40, pp. 801-16.

- Morrison T. G., Kalin R., Morrison M. A. (2004), Body image evaluation and body image investment among adolescents: A test of sociocultural and social comparison theories. *Adolescence*, 39, pp. 571-92.
- Osborn S. M., Field H. S., Veres J. G. (1998), Introversion-extraversion, self-monitoring, and applicant performance in a situational panel interview: A field study. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 13, pp. 143-56.
- Paulhus D. L., Bruce M. N., Trapnell P. D. (1995), Effects of self-presentation strategies on personality profiles and their structure. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21, pp. 100-8.
- Perrine N. E., Aloise-Young P. A. (2004), The role of self-monitoring in adolescents' susceptibility to passive peer pressure. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 37, pp. 1701-16.
- Piaget J. (1972/2008), Intellectual evolution from adolescence to adulthood. *Human Development*, 51, pp. 40-7.
- Pledger M. L. (1992), Development of self-monitoring behavior from early to late adolescence. *Adolescence*, 27, pp. 329-38.
- Ryan R. M., Kuczkowski R. (1994), The imaginary audience, self-consciousness, and public individuation in adolescence. *Journal of Personality*, 62, pp. 219-38.
- Snyder M. (1974), Self-monitoring of expressive behaviour. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 30, pp. 526-37.
- Tedeschi J. T., Melburg V. (1984), Impression management and influence in the organization. *Research in the Sociology of Organization*, 3, pp. 31-58.
- Vartanian L. R. (2000), Revisiting the imaginary audience and personal fable constructs of adolescent egocentrism: A conceptual review. *Adolescence*, 35, pp. 639-61.
- Whitehead J. R., Hoover J. H. (2000), The link between body image and behavioral problems. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 9, pp. 130-2.
- Wright C. N., Holloway A., Roloff M. E. (2007), The dark side of self-monitoring how high self-monitors view their romantic relationship. *Communication Reports*, 20, pp. 101-14.

Riassunto

Il presente studio ha analizzato la relazione tra autopresentazione e tecniche difensive ed assertive. 500 adolescenti hanno partecipato alla ricerca e hanno completato diversi questionari che valutano l'autopresentazione, le tecniche assertive e difensive e le caratteristiche di personalità. I risultati evidenziano come le tecniche assertive sono correlate all'abilità di modulare l'immagine di sé e le tecniche difensive alla Sensibilità al comportamento altrui e all'Apertura sociale. Le tecniche assertive e difensive sono predette dall'Amicalità, Coscienziosità, Energia e Apertura mentale. Sono discusse le implicazioni dei risultati per lo sviluppo futuro di ricerca in questo ambito.

Parole chiave: *autopresentazione, influenza sociale, automonitoraggio, apertura verso gli altri, sensibilità al comportamento altrui.*

Articolo ricevuto nell'aprile 2015, revisione dell'agosto 2015.

Le richieste di estratti vanno indirizzate a Fiorenzo Laghi, Dipartimento dei Processi di Sviluppo e Socializzazione, Sapienza Università di Roma, via dei Marsi 78, 00185 Roma; tel.: +39 06 49 91 7619, fax: +39 06 49 91 7672, e-mail: fiorenzo.laghi@uniroma1.it