

THE MULTIPLE AUDIENCE PROBLEM: CONSIDERING SITUATIONAL AND  
PERSONALITY FACTORS

By

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People may often find themselves in a challenging self-presentational predicament—seeking to simultaneously convey conflicting impressions to different audiences. How do they resolve such a situation? What personality factors might facilitate or hinder success? To date, research on this “multiple audience problem” has been scarce and confined. The current study attempts to remedy this limitation by comparing distinct multiple audience problems: one in which the participant does not know either audience versus one in which the participant knows both audiences. After completing several individual difference measures, participants described their reactions to each scenario. In general, people responded quite differently to the two situations. For example, participants perceived greater success and confidence when they imagined themselves in situations that contained known audiences as compared to unknown audiences. Moreover, social anxiety consistently affected participants, such that those higher in trait social anxiety reported less success and confidence. In all, this research provides insight that, combined with past research, offers valuable direction for future theoretical and empirical considerations of the multiple audience problem.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Imagine a young man, John, fresh out of high school, trying his best to make friends at college. To accomplish this goal, he wants others to see him in a manner that is most likely to win friends. One night, John meets three men at a party. It is quite obvious that their sole purpose in life is to play sports, party every night, and date many women. Seeing this as an easy image to adopt, John presents himself as a jock, party animal, and playboy to coincide with their interests. Due to his successful self-presentation, the three guys befriend John. A month later, he meets an appealing woman who is quiet and reserved. To secure her interest in him, he acts shy and always carries a book when he expects to see her. Again, he is successful in conveying the desired image, and she agrees to be John's girlfriend. About a month into the semester, family weekend arrives and John's mother, father, and brother come to visit. That weekend, per his mother's request, John goes out to dinner with his family, his friends, and his girlfriend.

What does John do in this situation? He likely wants to simultaneously present multiple impressions to these multiple audiences. This problem of wanting to simultaneously preserve (at least) two distinct impressions that (at least) two audiences hold—that is, the “multiple audience problem”—is commonly discussed in text books and in academic circles. However, researchers have neglected to identify a second type of multiple audience problem – one in which an actor desires to establish (at least) two impressions to (at least) two audiences. For example, what if John sought to establish—rather than merely preserve—these two distinct impressions? That is, what if John had met the three guys and the woman at the same time? Would he be able to convey two distinct first impressions to two audiences, both of which had no prior experience with him? Moreover, how might John's dispositional tendencies affect his performance in various multiple audience situations? The current study examines this idea of presenting multiple

first impressions to multiple audiences and how this compares to multiple audience situations including two previously known audiences. To accomplish this, I presented participants with two multiple audience scenarios, one in which both audiences were unknown and the other in which they were previously known. They then reported their perceived success and confidence. Last, they described which tactics they would use and what they would do in the event that failure was imminent. Individual difference measures were also included to examine their relationship with each of the preceding variables.

### **Past Research on the Multiple Audience Problem**

To understand the multiple audience problem, one must first understand the broader concept of impression management. Impression management is the act of controlling the images that one conveys to an audience (Schlenker, 1980). For example, if a man is interacting with a woman, he may try to manage the impression that the woman has regarding him. It is not limited to acts involving deception, and, instead, includes any act, conscious or automatic, that is intended to convey a particular impression—about the self or others—to a particular audience. In addition, the audience may not actually contain other people; it may be an imagined audience or it may be the self as an audience (Schlenker, 1980). People manage impressions constantly throughout their lives, often without even realizing it. Much of the time, however, people are faced with only a single audience. They are usually armed with many weapons that help in conveying the desired impression. For example, people, even from a young age, can quite effectively use avoidance processes, corrective interchanges, and make specific conversational points to convey the desired impression (Hatch, 1987).

Stemming from the broader concept of impression management, self-presentation is focused more on the ways that people attempt to present themselves in desirable ways (Leary, 1995). Therefore, self-presentation is just one part of the more encompassing impression

management, which also includes managing impressions of others (Schlenker & Britt, 1999). Often, people are in situations where they are aware of the desired image that they seek to convey to a particular audience. In these simple situations, if a desire to do so is present, people can systematically use the tools that they possess to choose what to say and how to act in order to convey the desired image. However, often more complicated situations arise. When seeking to convey a desired impression to more than one audience, an individual must find a way to convey that image to both audiences. Even more challenging, and possibly more interesting, is when one wants to convey different impressions to the various audiences.

Pioneering research on this multiple audience problem originally looked at multiple messages (Fleming et al., 1990). In these studies, participants either wrote or recorded a message in which they attempted to embed a hidden message. The results indicated that friends were able to detect the hidden message while strangers were not. In later work, Fleming and Darley (1991) again focused exclusively on conveying messages that contained hidden messages intended for a certain audience. Again, they found that participants were successful. Regardless of the intended audience (e.g., the senders' friends, strangers), the messages were only detected by that audience and not by the others. Whereas such ability could serve useful purposes in some circumstances (e.g., a POW who has the opportunity to address someone back home while in the company of captors), people are seldom faced with a similar situation in their day-to-day lives. However, people are, as the beginning example demonstrates, often presented with multiple audiences to whom they desire to convey different impressions. This appears to be a more common occurrence and, therefore, more applicable to what goes on today.

A little over a decade ago, Fleming (1994) included considerations of the desire to present multiple impressions. Again, he claimed that people are successful in multiple audience

situations. However, situations that varied in difficulty were not explored, and no additional data were presented. Therefore, the current study not only attempted to add to research by considering impressions rather than messages, but it also examined multiple situations in order to measure perceived success across a variety of scenarios, including audiences that have not yet formed an impression of the actor. These situations seem common due to the many times people are faced with multiple strangers and wanting different impressions to be formed by each, such as the first day of class when a student meets fellow students and the professor both for the first time. By studying these more challenging multiple audience situations, it is possible to determine whether people are successful in most multiple audience situations or just some.

Bringing a new set of hypotheses to the multiple audience literature, Van Boven and colleagues (2000) sought to measure participants' confidence in these situations. Participants were asked to present one impression (i.e., an extremely studious individual) while alone with one person and then an opposite impression (i.e., a reckless party animal) when alone with a second person. Finally, the actor was faced with both people and instructed to preserve both impressions. The researchers found that people could successfully convey each desired impression to the correct audience. In addition, they found that participants were overconfident in their ability to convey the two different impressions. In the current study, I used this as guidance to create two scenarios that involve impressions rather than code words. I also measured confidence to examine its relationship with perceived success.

More recently, Bond and colleagues (2004) demonstrated that people are not always successful in multiple audience situations. Specifically, these studies were focused on telling lies to convey desired impressions. Although blatant lies may not be as common as other multiple

audience situations, this does suggest there are certain situations that limit success. Therefore, I intended to examine what people do if they do fail.

## **Current Study**

### **Overview**

This multiple audience problem has interested many, yet few have empirically tested it. Moreover, those tests that have been done have been limited and lack applicability. However, some important implications have arisen from the data that do exist; people seem to be quite successful and even more confident in multiple audience situations. However, past research has left much to be desired. Therefore, to begin a more comprehensive exploration into the multiple audience problem, three main questions were addressed in the current study: (1) How successful do people perceive themselves to be at presenting multiple impressions to multiple audiences in the same social interaction?; (2) How confident do people project they will be in presenting these multiple impressions?; (3) What individual difference variables affect perceived success and confidence in a multiple audience situation? To address these questions, perceived success and confidence were considered. After completing individual difference measures, participants contemplated two scenarios (one at a time), and then answered questions regarding their perceived success and confidence in each scenario. In all, this scenario study lays a valuable foundation for future experimental investigations of actual behavior within multiple audience situations.

A scenario study was chosen for the following reasons. First, as many researchers and institutional review boards frown on using deception, having participants role-play offers a little to no deception alternative to highly deceptive interaction studies. Second, in this case, a role-play study maximized the time and number of participants needed to adequately test the hypotheses. Although some researchers suggest that participants are not actively involved in

role-play studies (Cooper, 1976), there is sufficient evidence to suggest both types of studies provide similar validity and involvement (Mixon, 1973; 1977). Finally, a role-play type study was designed to create the exact situation desired. Attempting to get participants into the lab with friends they acted completely different around would be quite difficult. Despite some controversy over this type of procedure, the above factors combined with support for the validity of role-play studies was believed to be sufficient reason to use scenarios, especially considering my plan to do interaction studies in the future.

**How successful do people perceive themselves to be at presenting multiple impressions to multiple audiences in the same social interaction?** Thus far, research has suggested that people, in general, are quite successful in multiple audience situations (Fleming, 1994). Fleming and colleagues (1990) suggest that this may be due to shared knowledge between the audience and the actor. However, in many of the studies, participants were placed in rather contrived situations (e.g., instructed to communicate a code word to one audience while disguising it from another). Therefore, these situations appear limited in their ability to represent what happens in real-world situations in which people are usually trying to convey multiple impressions about themselves to others. Instead, I proposed that perceived success would vary across different multiple audience situations and across different actors. Two possible reasons for this are the difficulty of the situation (i.e., some situations pose especially large self-presentational challenges) and the personality of the actor (i.e., some individuals are especially motivated or able to achieve success). To test this, the current study instructed participants to imagine two common situations, including a more challenging multiple audience situation with two unknown others (e.g., the first day of class, when students must convey a first impression to

their professor and classmates), and examined the degree of success they reported. This allows us to examine how successful people perceive themselves to be in multiple audience situations.

**How confident do people project they will be in presenting these multiple impressions?** Past research has also suggested that people are overconfident in their abilities to perform in a multiple audience situation (Van Boven et al., 2000). I suggest that people will indeed be overconfident in their abilities for the same reasons that they are overconfident about other tasks of everyday life that they perform, such as gambling (Goodie, 2005), playing basketball (McGraw, Mellers, & Ritov, 2004), and hearing (Bar-Tal, Sarid, & Kishon-Rabin, 2001). The current study examined this by measuring participants' confidence of conveying both impressions across two multiple audience situations and comparing it to the level of perceived success. Those who perceive significantly more confidence than success were considered overconfident. The prediction was that people would be more confident in situations in which they already know the audience(s). This is due to the extra anxiety of exposure to someone that is unfamiliar (Duronto, Nishida, & Nakayama, 2005). Also, they will be aware that their typical self-presentational tools may not work in this social context with unknown others. Therefore, they will be overconfident in both conditions, but the level of overconfidence is expected to be greater in the situation involving people previously known.

**What individual difference variables affect perceived success and confidence in a multiple audience situation?** In adding to past research, I propose that several variables related to the individual will affect perceived success within a social interaction. These variables have been chosen due to their history of importance in self-presentation (Leary, 1995). In general, the motivation and ability associated with certain individual differences are expected to increase or decrease perceived success and confidence in multiple audience situations. The predictions

following assume that the participants will perceive some degree of success at conveying the different impressions to different audiences. First, I suggest that need to belong will affect perceived success. People high in need to belong are described as having “a strong desire to form and maintain enduring inter-personal attachments” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Therefore, people high in need to belong should be highly motivated to convey the desired impressions because they want to both gain and maintain the personal attachments that could develop from self-presentational success. Similar to other contexts where higher motivation leads to greater success (Ball, 1976; Singh, 1978; Waschull, 2005), this motivation should facilitate perceived success in a multiple audience situation, therefore leading people to achieve their goal. I also predict that those high in need to belong will be more motivated to succeed in situations involving the possibility of gaining new friends. As stated, people high in need to belong possess a desire to form attachments. I predict that this will be more important than maintaining established attachments when the two are not competing desires. The more people those high in need to belong can gain as new friends, the more that need will be fulfilled. This may lead to more perceived success in the two unknown audiences situation than the two known audiences situation.

Also, the need for consistency should similarly motivate people to be more successful; those higher in need for consistency will be more likely to succeed because failing means showing an inconsistency. As a societal norm, people are expected to perform in a manner consistent with their past actions and claims (Gergen, 1968). Those high in need for consistency have a strong need to appear consistent, and appearing inconsistent produces many problems. Therefore, those high in need for consistency should be more motivated and, in turn, perceive more success at conveying impressions, even if that means conveying multiple impressions

simultaneously. However, this need for consistency should exert a greater effect in situations in which impressions have already been formed. That is, these people will perceive more success in the known audiences situation than in the unknown audiences situation. Alternative predictions exist regarding other forms of consistency. For example, people may want to appear consistent to themselves. This (and other potential forms of consistency) would affect perceived success differently. However, the proposed form of consistency is hypothesized to be the driving factor for people high in need for consistency due to the wording of the current questions and the essence of the situations being explored.

One variable that is expected to affect perceived success negatively in a multiple audience problem is social anxiety. Leary (1983) defines social anxiety as what people experience when they are motivated to make desired impressions on others but are not confident in doing so. Therefore, those high in social anxiety may falter under the social pressure, perceiving less success than those low in social anxiety, when faced with a multiple audience problem. Plus, with anxiety increasing when presented with unfamiliar people, those high in social anxiety should do even worse when presented with unknown audiences. For these individuals, then, the two unknown audiences situation should produce less perceived success than the two known audiences situation. Also, it was theorized that these people will actually be underconfident in their ability to succeed due to this general lack of confidence.

## **Hypotheses**

In sum, considering past research and the current expectations, the following were hypotheses of the current study:

- **People will perceive less success in a multiple audience situation when the audiences are previously unknown.** Conceptually, I define success in the current multiple audience situations as conveying the desired impressions to the desired targets. Having no past experiences with the audiences, actors will be unable to convey different impressions to

each. They will, therefore, perceive greater success in the two known audiences multiple audience situation.

- **People will be less confident in a multiple audience situation when the audiences are previously unknown.** Similarly to success, having no past experiences with the audiences, actors will lack the confidence to convey different impressions to each. They will, therefore, be more confident in the two known audiences multiple audience situation.
- **On average, people higher in need to belong and need for consistency will perceive more success than those lower in these variables. However, people lower in social anxiety will perceive more success than people higher in social anxiety.** In general, need to belong and need for consistency will facilitate perceived success derived from the motivation and ability to succeed. However, only need to belong will predict more perceived success in the unknown audiences situation than the known audiences situation. Need for consistency will produce the reverse effects. In addition, anxiety will cause actors to expect negative outcomes which will prevent them from predicting success. This will also inhibit them most in the unknown audiences situation and less in the known audiences situation.
- **On average, people higher in need to belong and need for consistency will be more confident than those lower in these variables. However, people lower in social anxiety will be more confident than people higher in social anxiety.** In general, need to belong and need for consistency will facilitate confidence derived from the motivation and ability to succeed. However, only need to belong will predict more confidence in the unknown audiences situation than the known audiences situation. Need for consistency will produce the reverse effects. In addition, anxiety will cause actors to expect negative outcomes which will produce lower confidence. This will also inhibit their success most in the unknown audiences situation and less in the known audiences situation.

## CHAPTER 2 METHOD

### **Overview**

Groups of up to four participants, all of the same gender, arrived for each session. They completed individual difference measures and received instructions for the rest of the study. Next, they contemplated two scenarios, one at a time. After each scenario, the participants answered questions regarding their thoughts and actions in each scenario. All participants then were debriefed and dismissed.

### **Participants**

One hundred fifty-five undergraduate students participated in this study in partial fulfillment of a course requirement.

### **Materials and Procedure**

Participants signed up in groups with other members of their gender. They were taken into the laboratory and placed in front of individual computers, which controlled the order and answer choices of questions. Then they completed questionnaires designed to measure factors potentially related to perceived success. Included were questions measuring need to belong, need for consistency, and social anxiety.

To measure the preceding variables, the following scales were employed in this order (Appendix A-C): (1) Need to Belong - the Need to Belong Scale ( $\alpha = .81$ ) (Leary, Kelly, Cottrell, & Schreindorfer, 2007), a 10 item scale with response options ranging from 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly Agree”); (2) Need for Consistency - the Preference for Consistency Scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ) (Cialdini, Trost, & Newsom, 1995). Cialdini and his colleagues have developed and tested this scale, proving its validity in measuring people’s tendency to act in ways that are consistent with previous expectancies, commitments, and choices. The scale consists of 18 items,

with response options ranging from 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) to 9 (“Strongly Agree”); (3) Social Anxiety - the Interaction Anxiousness Scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ) (Leary, 1983). The 15 item scale, with response options ranging from 1 (“Not At All characteristic of me”) to 5 (“Extremely characteristic of me”), is widely used and has been demonstrated to be a valid measurement of social anxiety (Leary & Kowalski, 1993). The scales were presented first in an attempt to get a true measure of their personality before putting them into the scenarios. It was considered that the likelihood of this affecting their thoughts and feeling in the scenarios was less than their thoughts and feeling in the scenarios affecting their report on these measures.

After completing the preceding battery of questions, the participants were given instructions on the remainder of the study. They then read a scenario and answered questions about their expected experiences in the situation. They read a total of two scenarios, one in which both audiences were previously unknown to the participant and one in which both audiences were previous known (Appendix D). The scenarios were counterbalanced, and the audience names were matched to the participants’ gender. The impressions (party animal and book worm) were adopted from past research regarding multiple audiences (Fleming et al., 1990, Van Boven et al., 2000). Immediately after reading each scenario, participants reported how confident they would be going into the interaction (Appendix E). More specifically, using a scale from 1 (Not At All) to 5 (Extremely), each rated how confident he/she would be on conveying four traits (serious, outgoing, bookish, and sociable). These traits coincide with the impressions and allowed for tests of confidence. Following other questions regarding their feelings, actions, and intent in the situations, participants then, using the same scale as confidence, rated how much success they perceived in conveying the impressions (Appendix F). Questions similar to those regarding confidence were employed. Last, they reported how common the general scenario is in

real life for the average student (scale from 1 – “Very Common” to 7 – “Very Uncommon”) and for themselves (scale from 1 – “Almost Never” to 5 – “Every Day”) (Appendix G). The order of the preceding questions was carefully considered and sorted in the logical progression they would be encountered in a real multiple audience situation.

## CHAPTER 3 RESULTS

In preparation of the following analyses, averaged composites were computed for perceived success and confidence within and across each situation. Each composite was computed to reflect the level of perceived success (confidence) that the participant felt regarding portraying the desired impressions to the corresponding targets, resulting in four composites per participant (confidence when faced with previously known audiences, confidence when faced with previously unknown audiences, perceived success when faced with previously known audiences, perceived success when faced with previously unknown audiences). These situation specific variables indicate how much success (confidence) was perceived by the participants regarding their ability to present the party animal impression to the person who was the party animal and the book worm impression to the person who was the book worm. Therefore, each demonstrated the extent to which both impressions were conveyed to the correct audiences. A reliability analysis was performed for each composite (all  $\alpha$ s > .57).

### **How Successful Do People Perceive Themselves to Be at Presenting Multiple Impressions to Multiple Audiences in the Same Social Interaction?**

The first analyses were aimed at determining how much success actors perceived in multiple audience situations. To test this, I performed t-test analyses against the scale median of 3 (labeled “moderately”) to see if the mean success (within each situation and across both) was significantly greater. In performing these analyses, it was assumed that the midpoint of the scale represented being neither successful nor unsuccessful. On average, people perceived themselves to be successful in all situations (all  $t$ s > 8, all  $p$ s < .01) (Previously Known (PK):  $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = .54$ ; Previously Unknown (PU):  $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = .59$ ; Overall:  $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = .52$ ). An independent samples t-test with gender of participant as the IV and perceived success as the DV

was next performed to test for differences in perceived success due to gender. Perceived success did not differ as a function of gender (all  $t_s < 1.22$ , all  $p_s > .22$ ).

**Hypothesis A. People will perceive less success in a multiple audience situation when the audiences are previously unknown.** To examine differences in perceived success between the two multiple audience situations, I performed a Mixed Factorial ANOVA with perceived success in the previously known and previously unknown situations as the two levels of the within subjects factor and gender and order as the between subjects variables. A main effect of situation was observed ( $F(1,151) = 16.10, p < .01$ ). Consistent with the hypothesis, participants perceived more success when faced with previously known audiences than unknown audiences. However, an interaction between situation and order qualified this main effect ( $F(1,151) = 7.48, p = .01$ ). Simple effects tests revealed that participants perceived more success in the previously known situation when they first viewed the previously unknown situation ( $F(1,154) = 23.10, p < .01$ ). When the previously known situation was viewed first, participants' perceived success did not differ between situations ( $F(1,154) = .84, p = .36$ ). Therefore, the comparison between the two situations appeared to strengthen the already significant difference between the situations. No gender effects were observed. Gender and order were dropped from further analyses regarding success due to their inability to significantly affect the results.

### **How Confident are People in Presenting These Multiple Impressions?**

To test this, I again performed t-test analyses against the scale median of 3 to see if the mean confidence (within each situation and across) was significantly greater. On average, people appeared to be confident (all  $t_s > 7.99$ , all  $p_s < .01$ ) (PK:  $M = 3.56, SD = .49$ ; PU:  $M = 3.36, SD = .56$ ; Overall:  $M = 3.46, SD = .47$ ). In addition, gender again had no significant effect in any situation (all  $t_s < |1.16|$ , all  $p_s > .25$ ).

**Hypothesis B. People will be less confident in a multiple audience situation when the audiences are previously unknown.** As well as examining relative confidence, the difference in confidence between the two situations was examined. A Mixed Factorial ANOVA with confidence in each situation as the two levels of the within subjects factor and gender and order as the between subjects factors suggested that participants were more confident when faced with previously known audiences than unknown audiences ( $F(1, 151) = 21.93, p < .01$ ). No order or gender effects were observed. Therefore, the following analyses regarding confidence were performed without gender and order.

#### **What Individual Difference Variables Affect Perceived Success and Confidence in a Multiple Audience Situation?**

**Hypothesis C. On average, people higher in need to belong and need for consistency will perceive more success than those lower in these variables. However, people lower in social anxiety will perceive more success than people higher in social anxiety.** To test this hypothesis, I performed three Mixed Factorial ANOVAs with perceived success in each situation as the two levels of the within subjects factor and each individual difference variable separately as the between subjects factor. Contrary to the predictions, neither need to belong nor need for consistency produced significant effects on perceived success (all  $F$ s  $< 2.67$ , all  $p$ s  $> .10$ ). However, a main effect of Social Anxiety was observed ( $F = 24.77, p < .01$ ). Those lower in social anxiety perceived less success than those higher in social anxiety.

**Hypothesis D. On average, people higher in need to belong and need for consistency will be more confident than those lower in these variables. However, people lower in social anxiety will be more confident than people higher in social anxiety.** Three Mixed Factorial ANOVAs with confidence in each situation as the two levels of the within subjects factor and each individual difference variable separately as the between subjects factor were performed.

Contrary to the predictions, neither need to belong nor need for consistency produced significant effects on confidence (all  $F$ s  $< 2.13$ , all  $p$ s  $> .14$ ). However, a main effect of Social Anxiety was observed ( $F = 27.75$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Those lower in social anxiety were more confident than those higher in social anxiety.

## CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION

Past research on the multiple audience problem has suggested that people are successful at conveying multiple, distinct impressions to multiple people at the same time (Fleming et al., 1990; Fleming and Darley, 1991; Fleming, 1994; Van Boven et al., 2000) and overconfident in their ability to do so (Van Boven et al., 2000). However, prior to this study, no research had yet examined what facilitates this success and confidence. Therefore, the current study attempted to examine the effect that a variety of personality and situational factors has on perceived success and confidence.

It was hypothesized that people would perceive greater success when faced with audiences with which they had previous experience. The results were supportive, indicating that the familiarity of the individuals in the situation did affect perceived success in the predicted way - people perceive more success in situations that include audiences that they are familiar with than those people are unfamiliar with. In addition, coinciding with past research, results suggest that people perceive success in multiple audience situations, regardless of their prior experience with the audiences involved. The question now is if there are situations in which people are not successful. Are people only less successful in situations that contain unknown audiences, as results suggest, or might they fail in these situations? I would suggest that people do fail in these situations, as research by Bond and colleagues (2004) suggests. It is up to future research to fully explore this question.

Finally, several individual difference variables were proposed to affect level of perceived success and confidence. Social anxiety arose as the only personality variable that reliably predicted level of perceived success and confidence. The more socially anxious people are, the less perceived success and confidence they have. This is not particularly surprising, but it should

be considered in future research. Is there some level of social anxiousness that causes people to fail completely? There might be, but these people would probably avoid multiple audience situations, so testing this would be difficult. A good next step would be to study people that are high in social anxiety to see what level of success or failure they obtain. In addition, as the four variables examined in this study are not a comprehensive selection of all variables that may affect success and confidence in these situations, more variables should be considered in the future.

Taken together, the results of this study prove to be a promising start to the investigation of possible factors that affect success and confidence in multiple audience situations. The results suggest that there are certain factors that affect how much success people perceive in these situations. Although the current study only demonstrates that levels of perceived success vary dependent on certain personality and situational factors, it is possible that these same factors lead people to be unsuccessful at times. For example, if people are actually faced with two unknown audiences, desiring to convey opposite impressions to each, they may not be successful at all. Future research should investigate whether there are some situations or people that are not successful and how a number of other variables affect level of success and confidence.

### **Limitations**

As the first study attempting to examine moderators of success in multiple audience situations, some limitations exist. One limitation of the design of the study is that it is a scenario study. Participants were only reporting what they thought they would do and how they would feel in each situation. It is possible that, if placed in these situations, people would act and feel differently than they reported. This is especially troubling when considering the measure of success that was used. One could argue that perceived success is just another measure of

confidence. This is a possibility, and future research should determine how accurate people's reported success is.

In addition, one key assumption was made in the design of the procedure and when analyzing the results. Using the impressions "party animal" and "book worm" was intended to present participants with impressions that were incompatible. However, we did not assess the incompatibility of these impressions. Particularly in a college sample, like the current one, participants might not find these impressions to be incompatible. Especially, if participants viewed these impressions as fairly compatible, confidence may have been artificially inflated. Therefore, future research should take the compatibility of the impressions into consideration.

### **Implications**

Knowing the factors affecting success in multiple audience situations is indeed important. First, it allows us to predict when someone will be successful. By knowing this, we can determine if people are ever not successful. If people fail, the consequences of failure may be severe and should be studied. Also, people may sacrifice (e.g., time, money, health, etc.) to obtain success. Better understanding the sacrifices people make and the consequences of the situation outcome, we can help people to manage these situations optimally.

The multiple audience problem is termed such not only for the problem that it presents to people trying to be popular. Success in these situations could mean much more. For example, when a teenager is at the doctor with a parent, the information given to the doctor may differ than if the parent were not present. The doctor may become deprived of pertinent information that is necessary for the correct prognosis to be reached. This is just one example of when success in a multiple audience problem may mean more than simply being liked.

## **Future Directions**

With over 80% of participants reporting the commonality of each of these situations as slightly to very common, it appeared that both of these situations are common in everyday life. When reporting how often they personally encounter similar situations, over 60% of participants reported encountering each situation at least once a month. Taken together, this suggests that multiple audience situations are commonly and frequently encountered in the real world, suggesting that more research needs to examine this phenomenon.

The results of this study also provide evidence supportive of the need for more research in this area. To begin, more research is needed to determine what factors affect success and confidence in a multiple audience situation. The current study examined just a few of the many personality and situational variables that may be active in this situation. Other personality factors to consider include extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and private self-consciousness. Situational variables such as the discrepancy between the desired impressions, the number of people in each audience, and the importance each audience has to the actor should also be examined. In general, the current results suggest that social anxiety and amount of prior experience with the audiences both affect success and confidence. Future studies will need to put participants in similar interactions to see if the results hold outside of role-play scenario.

## **Conclusion**

The multiple audience problem is an intriguing situation that people often encounter. Some research has been done examining success in these situations, but more research is needed to explore situations and people that are not successful. The current study is an important first step in accomplishing this goal. Future research now needs to put people in these situations to examine these variables in a real life situation, rather than a scenario. As we discover more

factors that affect success, we will be better able to further this research and to use this information to mitigate the negative consequences that result from failure in these situations.

APPENDIX A  
NEED TO BELONG SCALE

Instructions: For each of the statements below, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Moderately disagree
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = Moderately agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

1. If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me.
2. I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me.
3. I seldom worry about whether other people care about me.
4. I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need.
5. I want other people to accept me.
6. I do not like being alone.
7. Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me.
8. I have a strong need to belong.
9. It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people's plans.
10. My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me.

APPENDIX B  
PREFERENCE FOR CONSISTENCY SCALE

Instructions: For each of the statements below, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat disagree
- 4 = Slightly disagree
- 5 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 6 = Slightly agree
- 7 = Somewhat agree
- 8 = Agree
- 9 = Strongly agree

1. I prefer to be around people whose reactions I can anticipate.
2. It is important to me that my actions are consistent with my beliefs.
3. Even if my attitudes and actions seemed consistent with one another to me, it would bother me if they did not seem consistent in the eyes of others.
4. It is important to me that those who know me can predict what I will do.
5. I want to be described by others as a stable, predictable person.
6. Admirable people are consistent and predictable.
7. The appearance of consistency is an important part of the image I present to the world.
8. It bothers me when someone I depend upon is unpredictable.
9. I don't like to appear as if I am inconsistent.
10. I get uncomfortable when I find my behavior contradicts my beliefs.
11. An important requirement for any friend of mine is personal consistency.
12. I typically prefer to do things the same way.
13. I dislike people who are constantly changing their opinions.
14. I want my close friends to be predictable.
15. It is important to me that others view me as a stable person.
16. I make an effort to appear consistent to others.
17. I'm uncomfortable holding two beliefs that are inconsistent.
18. It doesn't bother me much if my actions are inconsistent.

APPENDIX C  
INTERACTION ANXIOUSNESS SCALE

Instructions: Indicate how characteristic each of the following statements is of you.

- 1 = Not at all characteristic of me.
- 2 = Slightly characteristic of me.
- 3 = Moderately characteristic of me.
- 4 = Very characteristic of me.
- 5 = Extremely characteristic of me

1. I often feel nervous even in casual get-togethers.
2. I usually feel comfortable when I'm in a group of people I don't know.
3. I am usually at ease when speaking to a member of the other sex.
4. I get nervous when I must talk to a teacher or a boss.
5. Parties often make me feel anxious and uncomfortable.
6. I am probably less shy in social interactions than most people.
7. I sometimes feel tense when talking to people of my own sex if I don't know them very well.
8. I would be nervous if I was being interviewed for a job.
9. I wish I had more confidence in social situations.
10. I seldom feel anxious in social situations.
11. In general, I am a shy person.
12. I often feel nervous when talking to an attractive member of the opposite sex.
13. I often feel nervous when calling someone I don't know very well on the telephone.
14. I get nervous when I speak to someone in a position of authority.
15. I usually feel relaxed around other people, even people who are quite different from me.

## APPENDIX D SCENARIOS

Instructions: Please take a couple minutes to read over the following scenario and then place yourself in the situation, imagining that you are there feeling and thinking what you would be in that situation.

Imagine that you:

1. are new to UF and enrolled in General Psychology. One of the requirements of the course is to do a small group presentation. Your instructor assigns you to a group with two other students, Mike [Elizabeth] and James [Jen]. You don't know either of them, and they also don't know each other. You all decide to meet at the library to make progress on your presentation. You do not have many friends here at UF, so you would very much like to make friends with both of them. You are the first to show up to the library. Minutes later, James [Jen] and then Mike [Elizabeth] show up. After a few minutes of talking, it is quite obvious that Mike [Elizabeth] and James [Jen] are very different from each other. Mike [Jen] is more of a party animal and likes to go out every night. However, James [Elizabeth] is more of a book worm and tends to stay in at night and read. From your Psychology course, you have learned that people tend to favor those who are more similar to them. Therefore, to make friends with each of them, you will want to act similar to each of them. To do this, you will have to convey to Mike [Jen] that you are a party animal while you convey to James [Elizabeth] that you are a book worm.
2. are new to UF and enrolled in General Psychology. One of the requirements of the course is to do a small group presentation. Your instructor assigns you to a group with two other students, John [Mary] and Robert [Lisa]. Fortunately, you are friends with both of them, but Robert [Lisa] and John [Mary] do not know each other. You all decide to meet at the library to make progress on your presentation. You do not have many friends here at UF, so you would very much like to keep both John [Mary] and Robert [Lisa] as friends. You are the first to show up to the library. Minutes later, Robert [Lisa] and then John [Mary] show up. You know that John [Lisa] is more of a party animal and likes to go out every night because you are usually with him [her]. However, you know that Robert [Mary] is more of a book worm and stays in at night because you often watch movies when you hang out with him [her]. From your Psychology course, you have learned that people tend to favor those who are more similar to them. Therefore, to stay friends with each of them, you will want to act similar to each of them. To do this, you will have to convey to John [Lisa] that you are a party animal while you convey to Robert [Mary] that you are a book worm.

APPENDIX E  
CONFIDENCE QUESTIONS

Instructions: Please answer the following questions regarding how confident you would be about conveying the desired impressions to Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary] BEFORE the meeting at the library continues on.

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Very
- 5 = Extremely

1. How confident are you that Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary] will view you as serious?
2. How confident are you that Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary] will view you as outgoing?
3. How confident are you that Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary] will view you as bookish?
4. How confident are you that Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary] will view you as sociable?

Instructions: Please answer the following questions regarding how confident you would be about conveying the desired impressions to James [Robert, Jen, Lisa] BEFORE the meeting at the library continues on.

5. How confident are you that James [Robert, Jen, Lisa] will view you as serious?
6. How confident are you that James [Robert, Jen, Lisa] will view you as outgoing?
7. How confident are you that James [Robert, Jen, Lisa] will view you as bookish?
8. How confident are you that James [Robert, Jen, Lisa] will view you as sociable?

## APPENDIX F SUCCESS QUESTIONS

Instructions: Please answer the following questions regarding how Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary] would have viewed you AFTER the meeting at the library.

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Very
- 5 = Extremely

1. To what extent do you think Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary] viewed you as serious?
2. To what extent do you think Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary] viewed you as outgoing?
3. To what extent do you think Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary] viewed you as bookish?
4. To what extent do you think Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary] viewed you as sociable?
5. Which impression did you intend to convey to Mike [John, Elizabeth, Mary]?

Instructions: Please answer the following questions regarding how James [Robert, Jen, Lisa] would have viewed you AFTER the meeting at the library

6. To what extent do you think James [Robert, Jen, Lisa] viewed you as serious?
7. To what extent do you think James [Robert, Jen, Lisa] viewed you as outgoing?
8. To what extent do you think James [Robert, Jen, Lisa] viewed you as bookish?
9. To what extent do you think James [Robert, Jen, Lisa] viewed you as sociable?
10. Which impression did you intend to convey to James [Robert, Jen, Lisa]?

APPENDIX G  
SITUATION COMMONALITY QUESTIONS

How common is it for people to encounter a situation similar to this one, in which someone is faced with two (or more) people that they have never met before but want to convey different impressions to [in which someone is faced with two (or more) people who have different impressions of him/her and want to preserve those impressions]?

- 1 = Very Uncommon
- 2 = Somewhat Uncommon
- 3 = Slightly Uncommon
- 4 = Neither Common nor Uncommon
- 5 = Slightly Common
- 6 = Somewhat Common
- 7 = Very Common

How often do you encounter a similar situation?

- 1 = Almost never
- 2 = Once a year
- 3 = Once a month
- 4 = Once a week
- 5 = Every day

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Austin Lee Nichols was born in 1984, in Palm Springs, California. An only child, he grew up mostly in New Jersey where his mother and he moved after his parents divorced. When he was 12 years old, the two of them moved to Tennessee because of his mother's work. He graduated from Tullahoma High School in Tullahoma, TN in 2002.

He next moved to Tallahassee to attend Florida State University, where he earned his B.S. in Psychology, graduating cum laude and completing an honors thesis. Upon graduation, Austin moved to Gainesville to attend the Social Psychology PhD program at the University of Florida. After earning his PhD, he intends to pursue a job as a professor at a major research university.