JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 23, 176–187 (1987)

The Reluctance to Transmit Bad News: Private Discomfort or Public Display?

CHARLES F. BOND, JR.

Texas Christian University

AND

EVAN L. ANDERSON

North Carolina State Data Center

Received August 11, 1986

People are reluctant to transmit bad news. In the current article, we note two explanations for this so-called *MUM effect*. One explanation attributes the reluctance to intrapsychic discomfort; a second characterizes the reluctance as a self-presentation. In a study designed to assess the explanations, subjects must tell a peer that the peer has either succeeded or failed at an intelligence test. Subjects who believe that they are visible to the peer take twice as long to deliver failure feedback as success feedback; those who believe that they are visible to no one deliver success and failure feedback with equal speed. These results imply that the reluctance to transmit bad news is a self-presentational display, not a product of intrapsychic discomfort. © 1987 Academic Press, Inc.

Rosen and Tesser (1970) reported an experiment on the transmission of news. In the middle of a "consumer preference" study, a subject heard a message that was intended for a peer who would be arriving soon. The peer was to call home about some very bad news. When given a face-to-face opportunity to transmit this message, all of the subjects in this study told the peer to call home, but only a few mentioned that the news was bad. Apparently, these subjects were reluctant to transmit bad news. Rosen and Tesser termed their reluctance the *MUM effect*.

The MUM effect is pervasive. Sometimes, bad news is withheld (Conlee & Tesser, 1973); at other times, news is distorted to make it seem better

We are grateful to Diane Shulman and John Lauva for help with this research. Correspondence including requests for reprints, should be sent to Charles F. Bond, Jr., Department of Psychology, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX 76129.

0022-1031/87 $3.00

(Fisher, 1979; Ilgen & Knowlton, 1980). Rationalizations may be appended to bad news, relieving the recipient of responsibility by externalizing blame (Folkes, 1982). In its impact on doctor–patient relationships (Waitzkin, 1984), organizational fuctioning (Larson, 1984), and group psychotherapy (Kivlighan, 1985), the reluctance to transmit bad news is a perennial professional concern.

Why do people keep mum? We consider two explanations. One explanation maintains that people *anticipate discomfort* from conveying bad news (Tesser & Rosen, 1975). They might ruminate over the victim's plight, empathize with the victim's distress, or feel guilty for their own good fortune. To avoid these discomforts, would-be communicators keep mum. Their silence services an internal equanimity.

Tesser, Rosen, and Waranch (1973) studied the role of discomfort in news transmission. In an experimental setting, subjects overheard some bad news that was intended for a "subject" who had not yet arrived. In a subsequent interaction with the intended recipient, subjects seemed reluctant to transmit the message; and on a postexperimental questionnaire, they reported that they had felt bad when conveying the bad news. These findings have been replicated: in retrospective self-reports to several experimenters, subjects rated themselves as feeling bad when transmitting bad news (Tesser & Rosen, 1975). Self-reports may suggest that people keep mum to avert private discomfort, but we note an alternative explanation.

Social behavior involves the regulation of a public self-image (Schlenker, 1980). In interactions, people strive to project an acceptable identity and avoid censure. In pursuit of a public image, they exhibit a range of behaviors (Baumeister, 1982): they are altruistic when norms prescribe altruism, aggressive when observers favor aggression. For the benefit of an audience, subjects regulate facial displays of distress (Kleck et al., 1976) and make strategic use of silence (Bond, 1982).

Our second explanation for the MUM effect is a *self-presentational account*: people experience no discomfort when transmitting bad news; rather, their reluctance is a public display. By affecting the reluctance, people regulate a situated image, avoid an unfavorable impression, and pay homage to a social norm. Lest they seem blithe to others' misfortune, lest they seem callous and cruel, people keep mum.

In the current research, we study subjects' willingness to transmit good and bad news. After watching a person either succeed or fail at an intelligence test, subjects are required to score the test and give the test taker performance feedback. Latency is unobtrusively measured. If subjects are reluctant to transmit bad news, they should hesitate before telling test takers that they have failed and spend time double-checking unsuccessful test performances.

We have sketched two explanations for the MUM effect. According

to one, the effect is an aversion to private discomfort; according to the other, the effect is a public display. In the current study, we tell some subjects that they are visible to news recipients, others that they are visible to no one. If the MUM effect is an aversion to private discomfort, subjects should show the effect whether or not they are visible. If the effect is a public display, it should be stronger if the subject is visible than if the subject cannot be seen.

Subjects report that they feel bad when they transmit bad news (Tesser et al., 1973). We are skeptical of these reports. By reporting negative affect, the subjects of MUM research make a favorable impression: they seem empathetic and concerned. In studying the role of affect in news transmission, we seek measures that are less reactive than a self-report.

Mood can be inferred from nonverbal behavior. Negative affect leads to gaze aversion (Kleinke, 1986) and to self-manipulations (Patterson, 1983). In the present study, we unobtrusively monitor nonverbal behavior. If subjects avert gaze and manipulate themselves when delivering bad news in private, the discomfort explanation is supported.

METHOD

Under the guise of a study on test administration, subjects delivered feedback to a confederate who had either succeeded or failed on an intelligence test. Subjects believed that they were either visible or not visible to the test taker.

Participants

Twenty-five male and 14 female undergraduates at Duke University participated as subjects to fulfill an introductory psychology course requirement.

Three males (one undergraduate and two graduate students) served as experimenters. One female and two male undergraduates served as experimental confederates.

Experimental Arrangements

The experiment was conducted in two adjoining rooms linked by a one-way mirror and a one-way intercom. From one of the rooms, subjects could see and hear what transpired in a second room. From the second room, events in the first room could neither be seen nor heard. We call the first room the *observation room* and the second the *testing room*. A Sanyo VC500 videotape camera was hidden below the one-way mirror in the observation room. An electrical apparatus permitted lights in each room to be illuminated from a console in the other room. With the apparatus, a confederate would signal responses to a multiple-choice IQ test. Later, a subject would use the apparatus to give the confederate an IQ percentile score.

Procedure

The subject arrived alone for an experiment entitled "Test Administration" and was seated in the observation room. Five minutes later, a confederate arrived (posing as a research participant) and was seated beside the subject. An experimenter explained that the two were participating in a study of test administration. In the study, one of the research participants would administer a brief intelligence test to the second participant. Ostensibly, the goal of the study was to demonstrate that the administration of intelligence

tests was simple; indeed, that IQ tests could be competently administered by introductory psychology students.

The experimenter explained that "to balance out the study" he needed older subjects to take the test. He asked for the subject's age, then the confederate's age; and heard that the confederate was a year older. By this prearranged ruse, he assigned the confederate to take the test and the subject to administer it. The experimenter then asked if the test taker would like to know the IQ test results. Hearing that she/he would, he noted that the test administrator (e.g., the subject) would provide a percentile score upon the completion of the test.

While the confederate was being led to the testing room, the subject read about the intelligence test. The test consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions, preceded by three practice questions. To each question, there were four possible responses: *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*. Taped cues alloted the test taker 25 s to consider each question, then 5 s more to signal a multiple-choice response to the question by flipping one of four switches at a console on the test taker's desk. The switches were wired to four response lights in the observation room labeled *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*. The subject would see the test taker's multiple-choice response, check this response against an answer key, and make an entry onto a score sheet—giving the test taker a *+4* if the response was correct, and a *−1* if the response was incorrect. Upon the completion of the test, the subject would use an electrical signaling system to provide the test taker with performance feedback. The subject was told nothing about future interactions with the test taker.

The confederate answered the three practice questions, giving one incorrect and two correct responses. Afterward, the subject received some final written instructions which indicated that the confederate either could or could not see the subject. Some of the subjects read that they were visible to the test taker through a plate of glass, others that they were not visible to the test taker because of a one-way mirror. As the instructions noted, these conditions had been "carefully designed to conform to established standards of IQ testing."

The intelligence test followed. During this 10-min test, the subject and confederate sat facing one another, 12 ft apart on opposite sides of the one-way mirror. The subject (who was alone in the observation room) could see and hear the confederate. The confederate (who was alone in the testing room) could neither see nor hear the subject. The confederate showed an ego involvement in what seemed to be a difficult test. Upon written cues, the confederate gazed toward the subject three times. Meanwhile, the experimenter was monitoring the subject's behavior from a third room, via a hidden camera.

After the confederate's 20th response, the subject followed some earlier instructions—by tallying the test taker's 20 scores (the *+4*s and *−1*s), converting the total to a percentile rank, and flipping one of 13 console switches labeled with percentiles. The switch signaled the confederate's intelligence percentile rank (as either the top or bottom 20%—see below) by illuminating a light on a console in the testing room. When the light came on, the confederate acted startled by dropping her jaw, shaking her head from side to side, and looking toward the subject. A minute later, the experimenter (whom the subject had not seen since the test began) removed the confederate from the testing room and had the subject answer a questionnaire while alone in the observation room. An oral debriefing concluded the experiment.

Overall Design

The experiment manipulated two independent variables: Subject Visibility and Confederate Success. Subject Visibility was manipulated by written instructions which told some of the subjects that they were visible to the test taker; others that they were not visible. The latter would have presumed themselves visible to no one while administering and scoring the test. Confederate Success was manipulated by supplying the subject with one of two

bogus answer keys. As the confederate gave a predetermined sequence of 20 multiple-choice responses, the subject discovered that either 17 or only 6 of the responses were correct. By virtue of this performance, the confederate seemed either to succeed or fail at the test, ranking among either the top or bottom 20% of all Duke undergraduates. Subjects were randomly assigned to the four conditions in a 2 × 2 (Subject Visibility × Confederate Success) factorial design. The experimenter and confederate were blind to both manipulations.

Measures

The subject was videotaped four times: early in the test (at Questions 5 and 6), late in the test (at Questions 18–20), during the confederate's wait for feedback, and after the delivery of feedback. From the resulting videotape, a judge who was blind to experimental condition scored the following behaviors: latency to feedback, gaze, self-manipulations, and sounds.

Latency to feedback was defined as the time (in seconds) between the end of the test and the delivery of feedback, by the subject's flipping a switch. During this interval, the subject was determining the test taker's percentile score. Gaze was measured as the proportion of time the subject was looking toward the confederate. Self-manipulations were defined as self-touches or self-scratches; sounds, as verbalizations, laughs, or sighs. Frequency counts were made of self-manipulations and sounds; in statistical analyses, these were expressed in rates per minute. For each subject there were four measures of gaze, self-manipulations, and sounds—one for each videotaped segment (early in the test, late in the test, during the wait for feedback, and after feedback).

Behavioral data for eight subjects were independently scored by a second judge. Correlational analyses show reasonable interrater consistency: *r*s between the two sets of scorings = .99 for latency, .96 for gaze, .91 for self-manipulations, and .86 for sounds.

RESULTS

During the postexperimental debriefing, 2 of the 39 subjects expressed suspicion that they had been videotaped. We have included these subjects in the analyses below; however, analyses that omit the two yield identical conclusions. Equipment failure prevented the videotaping of a third subject. Hence, analyses of behavior are based on 38, rather than 39 subjects. There were no effects of experimenter, confederate, or subject's sex.

Manipulation Checks

The postexperimental questionnaire included some manipulation checks. When asked whether or not the "test taker" (that is, the confederate) could see them, all of the subjects correctly recalled their instructions. This corroborates our manipulation of Subject Visibility. There were two checks on the manipulation of Confederate Success. On a 7-point scale, subjects were to indicate "how well the test taker did." They reported that the test taker had done better if 17, rather than 6, responses had been correct, $F(1, 35) = 191.05$, $p < .0001$. Subjects were also asked to estimate the test taker's percentile rank in IQ, relative to Duke undergraduates. Unwilling to answer this question were 12 subjects—8 who had seen the confederate fail and 4 who had seen the confederate succeed. The subjects who responded estimated that the test taker who had given

TABLE 1
MEANS, BY EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION

	Experimental condition			
	Success		Failure	
	Not visible	Visible	Not visible	Visible
Behavioral measures				
Latency to feedback (seconds)	89.6	73.1	72.5	147.2
Sounds after feedback (Per minute)	0.36	1.09	0.55	0.04
Self-report measures				
Comfort (1 = uncomfortable, 7 = comfortable)	5.7	6.4	5.8	4.5
Enjoyment of test (1 = no enjoyment, 7 = very much enjoyment)	4.7	5.4	3.9	3.7
Accuracy of test (1 = test is totally inaccurate, 7 = test is totally accurate)	3.9	4.6	3.4	3.4
Desire to participate again (1 = no desire, 7 = strong desire)	5.4	5.9	4.8	4.6
Test taker's motivation (1 = no motivation, 7 = high motivation)	5.9	6.0	4.3	4.7
Liking for test taker (1 = no liking, 7 = very much liking)	4.8	4.8	4.3	4.5
Interest in meeting test taker (1 = none, 7 = very much)	4.7	5.2	3.7	4.5

17 correct responses was more intelligent than 57.5% of Duke undergraduates, but that the one who had given 6 correct responses was more intelligent than only 44.1%, $F(1, 23) = 4.80$, $p < .05$.

Behavioral Measures

A 2 × 2 analysis of variance was conducted on latency to deliver feedback, with Subject Visibility and Confederate Success as factors. It revealed a strong Visibility × Success interaction, $F(1, 34) = 10.45$, $p < .005$; qualifying a main effect for Visibility, $F(1, 34) = 4.26$, $p < .05$; and a near effect for Success, $F(1, 34) = 4.09$, $p < .051$. Post hoc comparisons indicate that subjects who thought that they were visible to a failing test taker took longer to deliver feedback than subjects in any other condition (each Newman–Keuls $p < .01$). Latencies in the other three conditions did not differ (each $F < 1$). Means for latency to feedback appear in the top row of Table 1. Subjects appear reluctant to transmit bad news—but only when they are visible to the news recipient.

Tesser et al. (1973) believe that people experience negative affect when

they transmit bad news. Negative affect reduces eye contact (Kleinke, 1986) and occasions self-manipulations (Patterson, 1983).

The subjects' gaze and self-manipulations were analyzed, each measure being submitted to a 2 × 2 × 4 mixed model analysis of variance, with Subject Visibility, Confederate Success, and Videotape Segment (Early in test, Late in test, During the wait for feedback, and After feedback) as factors. Gaze showed a main effect for videotape Segment, $F(3, 102) = 14.14$, $p < .0001$, and no other effects, lowest other $p > .20$. On the average, subjects Gazed at the confederate 13.60, 10.45, 2.08, and 19.32% of the time Early in the test, Late in the test, During the wait for feedback, and After feedback, respectively. Self-manipulations showed a similar pattern of results: a main effect for videotape Segment, $F(3, 102) = 3.85$, $p < .02$, and no other effects, lowest other $p > .40$. On the average, subjects manipulated themselves 1.79, 2.30, 1.37, and 2.46 times per minute Early in the test, Late in the test, During the wait for feedback, and After feedback, respectively. The Gaze and Self-manipulation results may reflect subjects' preoccupation with tallying the confederate's intelligence performance during the wait for feedback. Neither Gaze nor Self-manipulations was affected by the confederate's success.

The experimental protocol did not require verbal communication with the test taker; indeed, no subjects were told that the test taker could hear them. Even so, we listened to subjects, wondering if they would keep mum.

The measure of sounds was submitted to a 2 × 2 × 4 (Subject Visibility × Confederate Success × Videotape Segment) mixed model analysis of variance. It revealed three effects: a main effect for videotape Segment, $F(3, 102) = 4.83$, $p < .005$; a Subject Visibility × Segment interaction, $F(3, 102) = 2.88$, $p < .05$, and a Subject Visibility × Confederate Success × Segment interaction, $F(3, 102) = 4.06$, $p < .01$. The latter reflects a Visibility × Success interaction after the feedback, $F(1, 34) = 4.59$, $p < .05$; at this point, subjects who thought that they were Visible made more sounds if the confederate had succeeded than if the confederate had failed, $t(34) = 2.56$, $p < .02$. If Visible to a failing confederate, subjects kept mum: only one made any sound after the confederate had scored in the lowest 20th percentile; this subject sighed. By contrast, subjects were garrulous if visible to a successful confederate: after signaling that the test taker had scored in the top 20th percentile, many of the subjects offered congratulatory remarks. Confederate success had no effect on sounds made after feedback by subjects who were not visible, $t(34) = -0.47$. Prior to the feedback, subjects made few sounds, and neither subject visibility nor confederate success had any effects. Means for sounds after feedback appear as the second row of Table 1.

Self-Report Measures

On 7-point scales, subjects were asked to rate their feelings about administering the test (their comfort, their enjoyment, their perception of the test's accuracy, and their desire to administer the test again), as well as their feelings about the confederate (their perception of the test taker's motivation, their liking for the test taker, and their interest in meeting this person).

The confederate's success affected subjects' questionnaire responses. A multivariate analysis of variance on the seven self-report measures in Table 1 revealed a main effect for confederate's success, Wilks $F(7, 26) = 2.83$, $p < .025$. Main effects for confederate success were also significant in four univariate ANOVAs, and marginally significant in a fifth. Subjects who had administered the test to a successful, rather than a failing, confederate felt more comfortable, $F(1, 35) = 4.12$, $p < .05$; enjoyed their job of test administration more, $F(1, 35) = 7.95$, $p < .01$; said that the test taker was more motivated, $F(1, 35) = 10.76$, $p < .005$; regarded the test to be a more accurate measure of intelligence, $F(1, 33) = 6.63$, $p < .02$; and tended to have more interest in meeting the test taker, $F(1, 35) = 2.94$, $p < .10$. Subject visibility had no significant main effect on any questionnaire response. There was one univariate Success $\times$ Visibility interaction—subjects who had delivered failure feedback reported more discomfort than those who delivered success feedback, but only if they were visible to the test taker, interaction $F(1, 35) = 4.86$, $p < .05$. Relevant means appear in Table 1.

The questionnaire results suggest a modified discomfort explanation: that subjects delay news transmission when they feel bad, but feel bad only when they are visible to someone who must be given bad news. This modified discomfort explanation holds that experimental effects on the speed of news transmission are mediated by effects on discomfort. To assess the explanation, we conducted a Subject Visibility $\times$ Confederate Success analysis of covariance on latency to feedback, controlling for self-reported comfort. Contrary to the explanation, the ANCOVA showed a Subject Visibility $\times$ Confederate Success interaction, $F(1, 33) = 7.72$, $p < .01$. Controlling for discomfort, subjects took longer to deliver failure feedback than success feedback if they were visible to the feedback recipient, adjusted Ms = 143.6 and 76.0 s, respectively; $t(33) = 3.00$, $p < .01$; but no longer to deliver failure than success feedback if they were visible to no one, adjusted Ms = 73.2 and 90.0 s, respectively; $t(33) = 0.83$. According to the explanation, the less comfortable a subject feels, the longer the subject should hesitate before transmitting news. No such correlation was evident in our data. For the relationship between latency and comfort, the pooled within-cell $r = -.11$, $p > .50$; for the 10 failure-visible subjects, this relationship yielded $r = .004$. Perhaps

subjects feel bad when visible to someone who will receive bad news, but their feelings cannot account for delays in news transmission.

DISCUSSION

In a variety of settings, people seem reluctant to transmit bad news (Tesser & Rosen, 1975). We noted two explanations for this phenomenon. One explanation assumes that people experience discomfort when transmitting bad news and holds that they are reluctant to feel bad. A second explanation characterizes the reluctance to transmit bad news as a public display. People affect reluctance to appear sympathetic and humane.

In the current experiment, subjects were required to give a test taker either success or failure feedback. While doing so, they presumed themselves either to be visible to the test taker or visible to no one. Subjects who were visible took twice as long to deliver failure feedback as success feedback; those who were not visible delivered failure and success feedback with equal speed.

These results are not consistent with the discomfort explanation as originally conceived. We had imagined that subjects might empathize with another's failure, that mere observation of the failure would be sufficient to arouse vicarious distress. We found no behavioral evidence of such discomfort. Subjects did not avert gaze from the failing test taker, nor did they exhibit the self-manipulations that usually accompany distress. We had also imagined that subjects would be reluctant to induce discomfort by announcing a poor intelligence performance, and that they would defer the announcement while checking the intelligence test score. We found evidence of this deferral—but only when the subject could be seen. In private, subjects seemed blithe to others' misfortune; as quick to relay bad as good news. As the latency results suggest, there is no inherent discomfort in the transmission of bad news. Even so, the results may not compel a self-presentational account.

With ad hoc assumptions, intrapsychic explanations can often be amended to accommodate unexpected results. To accommodate the effects of visibility, the explanations assume that visibility is a precondition to the induction of a mediating intrapsychic state (Tetlock & Manstead, 1985). Perhaps people experience discomfort from the public transmission of bad news, discomfort they do not feel in private. They may fear derogation from the news recipient or anticipate an awkward interaction. If so, their reluctance derives from a specifically public discomfort.

This amended discomfort explanation could account for one of our results. Consistent with the explanation, subjects report discomfort only when they are visible to someone who must receive bad news. However, statistical analyses reveal that this discomfort is independent of the hesitance to transmit bad news, and learning theory suggests that discomfort might speed, rather than retard, news transmission. It would speed bad news

transmission if subjects had learned that their discomfort would be relieved after the news had been transmitted.

The results do not encourage a discomfort explanation; instead they suggest that the reluctance to transmit bad news is a public display. In delaying failure feedback, subjects managed to seem both responsible and humane. Often, they filled the delay with an active self-presentation: they spent time double-checking the poor intelligence performance by retallying the test taker's score. In projecting a need for certainty in their computations, these subjects were publicly dissociating themselves from the impending revelation while scrupulously fulfilling their administrative chores. Other subjects had no way to compensate for the upcoming predicament because they were not visible. Only after transmitting bad news did the nonvisible subjects have a chance to display themselves, on a questionnaire that the experimenter would see. There, they claimed displeasure from the test taker's failure and made excuses in the test taker's behalf. To the experimenter, this would make them seem magnanimous.

The results inspire a reexamination of previous research. In most demonstrations of the MUM effect (Tesser & Rosen, 1975), a face-to-face encounter provides the opportunity to transmit bad news. By seeming reluctant, subjects seek a favorable evaluation from the intended news recipient. Occasionally, other opportunities arise. In a study by Deaux (1974), people happened upon a lost postcard that contained either good or bad news. These bystanders could mail the card to ensure news delivery, but their action would be anonymous. Results showed that the valence of the message did not affect news transmission. Transmissions have no self-presentational value unless the transmitter can be identified.

The reluctance to transmit bad news is comparable to other self-presentational tactics. Like the tendency to externalize responsibility for failure (Weary & Arkin, 1981), it is a defensive maneuver—designed more to limit self-presentational damage than to secure self-presentational gain. Like other public dissociations (Snyder, Higgins, & Stucky, 1983), the MUM effect plays to a situated, external audience; not an internalized self-image (Baumeister, 1982). Had the effect served a self-image, all of the subjects in our study would have hesitated before sending bad news; had the effect been aimed at a future audience, a reluctance would have been displayed by any subjects who assumed that they would later be meeting the news recipient (Kardes & Kimble, 1984). In fact, our subjects' reluctance to communicate was a concurrent communicative act.

The reluctance has a counterpart in the eagerness to transmit good news. After apprising test takers of their successful IQ performances, our subjects volunteered congratulations. Perhaps congratulations are a spontaneous spillover of good will, but in partaking of others' good fortune, our subjects were advancing their own interests. They associated

themselves with the test taker's success to bask in a reflected glory (Cialdini et al., 1976).

Our results have implications for the study of social facilitation. According to the drive theory of social facilitation (Geen & Gange, 1977), observation by others increases generalized drive and accelerates simple performance. According to a self-presentational analysis (Bond, 1982), observation by others provides an incentive for the exhibition of socially valued attributes. In the interval preceding feedback, our subjects had a task that is regarded as simple by social facilitation researchers (e.g., Cottrell, 1972; Crandall, 1974): these college students were adding single digits. Public observation did not facilitate this simple performance; in fact, our subjects took longer to complete the assignment when visible to a failing observer. This result does not evince the operation of generalized drive; instead, it indicates that behavior is regulated to serve a public self-image.

Norms prescribe a reluctance to transmit bad news, but they may also prescribe that the reluctance be surmounted. When victims need to hear their misfortune, people have an obligation to bear bad news. These norms raise a self-presentational dilemma: an individual can transmit the news and risk being blamed for others' misfortune, or can withhold the news and risk censure for irresponsibility.

Rosen and Tesser (1972) report evidence of the second hazard. Male subjects anticipated an interaction that would be either anonymous or nonanonymous. Prior to the interaction, the subject overheard some bad news that was intended for his interaction partner. In a subsequent telephone conversation, subjects who anticipated an anonymous interaction were *less* likely to relay the bad news to their interaction partner than those who anticipated a face-to-face interaction. As the authors argue (and ancillary results suggest), people fear a face-to-face derogation if they fail to transmit bad news.

Impression management requires a skillful negotiation of the hazards that surround misfortune. Self-presenters should not withhold bad news if their withholding will be discovered by people with whom they will later interact. But for would-be transmitters who are in a one-time encounter, and for those who can conceal their withholding, silence may be a preferable course. Future research should address these contingencies to illuminate the strategy of keeping mum.

REFERENCES

Baumeister, R. F. (1982). A self-presentational view of social phenomena. *Psychological Bulletin*, **91**, 3–26.

Bond, C. F., Jr. (1982). Social facilitation: A self-presentational view. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **42**, 1042–1050.

Cialdini, R. B., Borden, R. J., Thorne, A., Walker, M. R., Freeman, S., & Sloan, L. R. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **34**, 366–375.

Conlee, M. C., & Tesser, A. (1973). The effects of recipient desire to hear on news transmission. *Sociometry*, **36**, 588–599.

Cottrell, N. B. (1972). Social facilitation. In C. G. McClintock (Ed.), *Experimental social psychology*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Crandall, R. P. (1974). *Influence of affective bonds on the social facilitation of multiple tasks*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan.

Deaux, K. (1974). Anonymous altruism: Extending the lost letter technique. *Journal of Social Psychology*, **92**, 61–66.

Fisher, C. D. (1979). Transmission of positive and negative feedback to subordinates: A laboratory investigation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **64**, 533–540.

Folkes, V. S. (1982). Communicating the reasons for social rejection. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, **18**, 235–252.

Geen, R. G., & Gange, J. J. (1977). Drive theory of social facilitation: Twelve years of theory and research. *Psychological Bulletin*, **84**, 1267–1288.

Ilgen, D. R., & Knowlton, W. A., Jr. (1980). Performance attributional effects on feedback from superiors. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, **25**, 441–456.

Kardes, F. R., & Kimble, C. E. (1984). Strategic self-presentation as a function of message valence and the prospect of future interaction. *Representative Research in Social Psychology*, **14**, 2–11.

Kivlighan, D. M. (1985). Feedback in group psychotherapy: Review and implications. *Small Group Behavior*, **16**, 373–385.

Kleck, R. E., Vaughan, R. C., Cartwright-Smith, J., Vaughan, K. B., Colby, C. Z., & Lanzetta, J. T. (1976). Effects of being observed on expressive, subjective, and physiological responses to painful stimuli. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **34**, 1211–1218.

Kleinke, C. L. (1986). Gaze and eye contact: A research review. *Psychological Bulletin*, **100**, 78–100.

Larson, J. R. (1984). The performance feedback process: A preliminary model. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, **33**, 42–76.

Patterson, M. L. (1983). *Nonverbal behavior: A functional perspective*. New York: Springer.

Rosen, S., & Tesser, A. (1970). On reluctance to communicate undesirable information: The MUM effect. *Journal of Communication*, **22**, 124–141.

Rosen, S., & Tesser, A. (1972). Fear of negative evaluation and the reluctance to transmit bad news. *Journal of Communication*, **22**, 124–141.

Schlenker, B. R. (1980). *Impression management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Snyder, C. R., Higgins, R. L., & Stucky, R. J. (1983). *Excuses: Masquerades in search of grace*. New York: Wiley.

Tesser, A., & Rosen, S. (1975). The reluctance to transmit bad news. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 8, pp. 193–232). New York: Academic Press.

Tesser, A., Rosen, S., & Waranch, E. (1973). Communicator mood and the reluctance to transmit undesirable messages. *Journal of Communication*, **23**, 266–283.

Tetlock, P. E., & Manstead, A. S. R. (1985). Impression management versus intrapsychic explanations in social psychology: A useful dichotomy? *Psychological Review*, **92**, 59–77.

Waitzkin, H. (1984). Doctor–patient communication: Clinical implications of social scientific research. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, **252**, 2441–2446.

Weary, G., & Arkin, R. M. (1981). Attributional self-presentation. In J. H. Harvey, W. Ickes, & R. F. Kidd (Eds.), *New directions in attribution research* (Vol. 3). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.