IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT:
SELF-DIRECTED CONTROL OF
INFORMATION IN SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

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“Inevitably we construct ourselves. Let me explain. I enter this house and immediately I become what I have to become, what I can become: I construct myself. That is, I present myself to you in a form suitable to the relationship I wish to achieve with you. And, of course, you do the same with me.”
Luigi Pirandello: The Pleasure of Honesty

Thesis statement:

This thesis paper is intended to analyze how people define themselves in social interactions, how self-presentation takes place in different scenes of life. In contemporary society effective image building of a person is one the core requirements. Unpredictable trends both in private and professional fields of life make it inevitable to equip ourselves with tools of effective impression management in order to experience success instead of failure. In our disposable, plastic and dangerously materialized world where people are mere products one has to make the best commodity. The writer of this paper is trying to provide some theoretical background on the topic in the first part leading the reader’s attention to the most important researches in social psychology. The writer argues that the educational system has a huge responsibility in preparing future generations for the unpredictable by helping them develop not only cognitive but social skills that will enable them to adapt to their social environments and achieve successful performance in life. 157 social media users and 25 actively practicing teachers answered a questionnaire about whether current Hungarian school system is able to prepare its students for the unpredicted. Results show that there is a major deficit in teaching social competencies. Recent studies proved that those without being trained for emotional and social skills in accordance with self-management techniques will experience deficit later on their private and professional careers, therefore traditional learning programs need to be converted into a composition of teaching academic and social skills.

1. Introduction
From birth to death we constantly keep being engaged in different types of interactions. Levels and scenes of life may differ for each of us but we commonly share one particular desire and that is to be accepted and seen as positively as possible by others. Motives behind this desire vary from the most intrinsic ones like a baby or infant trying to make himself perceived by the environment using instinctive tools as crying or smiling to the most carefully planned branding theories and strategies of a corporation to increase its revenue.

Being conscious or unconscious about this effort people tend to have an impact or in other words impress the environment in their performances naturally in consistency with their ultimate goals. The characteristic of human behavior in order to manipulate perceptions about us when entering other people’s presence is known by the term impression management.

The concept was first introduced to social-psychology by Erving Goffman in his book: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

"When an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey."(Erving Goffman)

Notably we must bear in mind that social psychology is the core discipline when human interactions and human behavior are being examined by exact and scientific measures. Nevertheless not less important figures of mankind as Aristotle, Plato, Shakespeare also wrote about how people construct themselves in interpersonal relations. Plato mentioned “the stage of human life” while Shakespeare created his famous sentence "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players".
(Shakespeare, As you Like It, Scene 2, Act 7)

This thesis paper is intended to get the reader acquainted with the basics of
impression management. In the first part basic terminology of social psychology is going to be detailed as not doing so further understanding of the topic might not occur smoothly. The second part is dealing with specific forms of impression management while in the final section the importance of social competencies as defining factors in successful personal performances in life will be elaborated. The results of those collected questionnaires answered by social media users and professional educators will be detailed.

2. The concept of Self

Passersby in Ancient Delphi could read the ever since well-known aphorism: Gnothi Seaton that means know thyself (know yourself) in English. Knowing ourselves is very important to be in possession of reliable self-awareness and to see our weaknesses and strengths in order to perform well in life.

Who am I? What am I like? are frequently asked questions. Nevertheless how we think of ourselves or how we see ourselves are determined by others’ perceptions of us. We all exist in interpersonal circumstances thus it is inevitable to discuss the concept of self from the social psychology point of view.

2.1 Definition

Carl Rogers American psychologist puts the concept of self in the center of personal development. As being the key scientific figure of interpersonal approach in social psychology we are using his theory of self-concept first. According to Rogers three major factors are taken into account about self. (Rogers, 1959)

1. Self. Image (how you see yourself)
2. Self Esteem (how valuable you see yourself)
3. Ideal Self (what you wish you were like)
Baumeister (1999) has a more contemporary approach of self-concept definition: "the individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who and what the self is".  

Finally a general definition of self from Webster’s Third New International Dictionary: “A personality or mode of behavior regarded as typical of a particular individual”

2.2 Self perception

Two components of Rogers’s trilogy of self have considerable effects on personality development and on a person’s social interactions. Their accordance or dissonance in the individual strongly determines how he distorts information in his performances towards the actual audience.

A) Self-image isn’t necessarily the objective reality. Plenty of elements form this picture from early childhood through parental, peer group factors, also media messages have huge impact. It is a well-known and increasing problem among adolescents that false ideals about body shape, tastes, interests are projected through various media channels and this unleashed generation is trying to act accordingly to these requirements. They think meeting them is the key factor to successful life and immediately try to impress their environment.

B) Ideal self is what we would like to be. Unfortunately it is not always in consistency with the actual state or experience of a person’s life.

If there is harmony between self-image and the ideal self we talk about congruence if not it is called incongruence. Very unlikely to find a pure congruent person, however trying to find a healthy balance is a prerequisite of a stable person with high self esteem.
C) Self-esteem

We constantly judge, evaluate, analyze and form personal opinions about things, events other people and most importantly ourselves. The picture one creates about oneself is self-evaluation or self-esteem. It differs individually: some are very happy and satisfied (with high self-esteem) whereas others may struggle to accept who they are (tend to have low self-esteem). Parental attitudes, peer groups, reference groups other people’s perceptions and feedbacks all modify our self-worth. According to researches positive self-image has a protective role within personality, helps coping with problems, reduces stress, (Baumeister 1993) while its opposite can be in relation with anxiety, depression sometimes aggression. Regardless the level of it, self-esteem strongly defines our motives, decisions, strategies and actions we take toward a desired goal.
2.3 The Social self

Humanity is determined to live in groups, to infer and explore the world in social context. The desire of belonging has been present for ages. According to Marylinn M. Brewer: we are not prepared to outlive without a group context. (Brewer 1991) She also points out that while we are craving to remain independent we are also desperate to gain group benefits. Self-terms (self-schema, self-complexity, self-focusing., self-referencing, self-monitoring etc.) have become very frequently used in modern social-psychology as modern society’s urging expectation is to be in possession of strong self-awareness. Not enough to develop a healthy self-esteem we are required to continuously adopt to different expectations, situations where we deliberately or instinctively start to behave accordingly.

Self management is important in social interactions as we all want to hold control of our behavior and identity while trying to identify with the group. During my work as a language teacher to young children I have discovered that even kinder garden kids are trying to make these efforts. Later on it becomes more and more evident how hard participants work on to project a well-defined picture of their self in social interactions. I purposefully used “well-defined” as it is not always in reasonable consistency with the requirements or the context of a current situation but rather has a self-positioning intention.

Brewer makes difference between simple membership in a group and social identity. Identification with a group, organization, movement is a stronger link and is deliberately chosen while for example obligatory membership will never imply any forms of internalization. There is significant difference being engaged in compulsory army service or belonging to a fan club. Both will indicate immediate self-construction but obviously the motivation and attitude won’t ever be similar. Elaborating on this it is clear that one can have numerous social identities being activated at alternate times and places.

Uniqueness theory (Snyder and Fromkin, 1980) says that individuals need both similarity and differentiations from others. Peer groups give good examples with shared behavior, outlook appearance and ideas but still one with healthy self-esteem can keep his identity in an ideal case. Questions however are asked to what extent it is considered
to be healthy and what happens if someone is totally submerged in the group losing independency. What happens to self-image and how successfully self-management can take place. How satisfactory can children define themselves and what is the key role of school, education and teachers as basic factors in training them. The following chapters are intended to seek some possible answers with special attention on the group of 6-14 year olds.

3. Interpersonal communications

Socially survive it is impossible without communication. Communication is at least bilateral and requires a lot of elements. Participants form each others personalities, opinions, lives. Therefore in the following chapter the different forms of social interactions and their important role are being discussed.

3.1 Perception

No matter where we go: to the grocery, cinema or work we constantly judge and develop conclusions and so do other people. These conclusions sometimes are based on initial impressions of how we perceive other people, situations and form a distorted, explicitly biased opinion. The level of person perception or the lack of it is number one in communication. How we perceive and how we are perceived by others have of a core significance. The message we want to convey about ourselves is dependent on the context and the people at present. As Goffmann (1959) and also Schenkler (1980) stated we want to be perceived in particular ways according to requirements or goals. Leary and Kowalski(1990)highlighted two concepts: impression motivation and impression construction. The first refers to the degree of how much people are keen to control perceptions of them as in some cases it is basically indifferent. On the other hand there are crucial situations when well-organized self-presentation is very important. The second concept is actually the content of self-presentation that is always biased and relies on the individual’s self-concept.

We have already discussed the importance of self-definition. At this point it is important to introduce the concept of redefinition of self as at the very moment we enter a sociocultural context we adjust ourselves to adopt to the new situation. Redefinition is not simply a mental process but has visible impacts. Clothing, body language, distance
keeping, tone are all visible elements of the redefinition process in order to influence others’ perception of us. These are very important features when forming a first impression that is done very quickly and very hard to change. Taking into account of its importance we are going to elaborate the question of first impression later on.

3.2 Interactions-types and motives

People tend to get involved in various forms of interactions but all have one basic common ground and that is to exchange information. Threads of actions and reactions to what has been said, heard, acquired and how that is interpreted by the receiver.

The domains of social interactions are countless - family, school, workplace, friends, professional situations, travelling, vacation- and have implications on the participants’ personalities. Interpersonal relations are the scenes of these interactions. Many factors contribute to the process included self-image and perceptions of the other party.

The following types of interactions can be depicted worldwide:

1. **Exchange**: when individuals, groups, societies interact in effort to be rewarded for their efforts an exchange takes place. Reciprocity is a key notion to be introduced here as it suggests that if a person does something for others they owe them and vice versa and the return action is possibly material or non-material. Exchange theorists say that people are motivated by their own interests in their interactions and if they are not met or other words not rewarded they tend to loose interest. Reward seeking attitude is present in different levels of interpersonal communication from very private to very formal.

2. **Competition**: in western societies competition is part of everyday life. In business, personal career, school, sport advancement is taking place among competitive circumstances

3. **Conflict**: In competition the emphasis is on achieving a goal. Sometimes it can only happen by causing hard to time to the opponents or even defeating them If it is the case we talk about conflict. Conflict sometimes starts with competition especially in rival businesses if in uptight competitive situation the emphasis shifts from attracting customers to harming competitors.
4. **Cooperation**: As opposed to conflict cooperation is a mutual agreement and work together with others in order to reach the desired goal.

5. **Accommodation**: is somewhere between conflict and cooperation. We give and we take. It is an equilibrium point when demand and supply are equal and all participants are satisfied.


We can also distinguish social interactions by identifying the participants’ social roles:

1. Informal: among friends, with family members, at the shops
2. Formal.: professional , business situations, official occasions

Goffman introduced the notion of role-distance indicating that people play their roles in the society without really meaning it, sometimes even controversially to one’s inner beliefs in order to maintain status and dignity. It is similar to when actors play a role but identifying the distance between reality and their role-playing. Everyday people engage any interaction and they act accordingly or immediately construct themselves as Pirandello says.

Another important concept by Erving Goffman in terms of behavior in social interactions is dramaturgy. Social interactions are similar to theatrical performances he says and the whole process can be seen as small plays where the scripts are dependent on the participants’ social role. Different situations require different attitudes, approaches, behavior as general. People are socialized to know this and some are exceptionally skilled to play roles that are to be played and know perfectly well when to play them to attract and manipulate others in order to achieve the desired goal.

3.3 First impression

You can’t judge a book by its cover says the well-known sentence indicating that we shouldn’t judge others by simply their outlook appearance and the first impressions we have about them. Nevertheless it is a common human trait that we immediately connect facial appearance to inner traits and adjust our own behavior. According to researches it is very typical that people tend to attach positive attitudes such as intelligence,
trustworthiness, competence and skills in different areas to physically attractive people. (Eagly et al. 1991, Feingold 1992) It is not only physical appearance but clothing and other accessories such as expensive car, gadgets tend influence our judgments of others. When different elements of a situation are in a mismatch it can be very confusing to recipients and can lead to serious misunderstandings. A man driving a Rolls Royce is generally considered to be a wealthy, high-class member of the society often treated with respect. On the other hand if this man gets out of his car wearing worn-out clothes a total confusion takes place in the recipients giving them hard time how to relate to the situation therefore first judgment becomes more perplexed and complex.

We judge immediately and this judgement is hard to be changed. How we perceive others has a strong impact on our initial behavior in our interactions and in return or as a non-material reward -referring back to the exchange theory- it defines our partners’ approach, attitude towards us. Trust building generally depends on our first impression of others and having interactive experience with them. We never get a second chance to make a first impression thus the importance of first impression is advisable no to neglect.

4. Self-Presentation

“There will be time, there will be time, to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet. “

T.S. Eliot, The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock

In the following chapter the phenomenon of self-presentation will be detailed. How people truly see or describe themselves are highly private and in some cases even remain hidden to public. On the other hand how they introduce this self to others is already a social and public issue as it takes place among those others being at present.

4.1 Concept

Generally defined self-presentation or also called impression management is a behavioral action in which a person acts so as to modify or lead the audience’s attention, opinion, perception into a desired direction. Any occasion when we intend to act in order to generate a particular view of us by others we engage in self-presentation.
We constantly convey a message about ourselves pointless if we are aware of it or not. Intentionally or even without noticing we represent and simultaneously present a story that is called us in other words most interpersonal behavior involves communicating some information or some image of self to others (Baumeister, 1982;, Schlenker, 1980). According to Leary’s study people spend more than 3 hours a day consciously directing their public images (Leary et al., 1994). Naturally it is sort a of a mixture of truth and carefully planned-socially advantageous-design about the person.

We send out a coded message and it immensely depends on the recipients how they are able to decode. Naturally we can give hints to the decoding process and also divert and focus their attention into a specific direction purposefully.

People put a lot of effort to maintain a successfully established image or images of themselves. They are also restless in building newer ones to meet emerging requirements. All our faces are us and necessarily need to be in consistency with our self-image yet particular circumstances require particular parts to be highlighted within a personality. In most of our time we are socially involved in various types of activities. Regardless -whether these are formal and thus less carefully designed or more formal and this way regulated by protocol -we behave. In a way or another we adjust to the situation and long for being accepted and seen the most positive way. It is evidently obvious that self-construction process is easy to detect during a job interview or at presentation, when being introduced to a new company of people. It is less trivial that when changing our hairstyle, starting a new diet to lose weight or choose our outfit before going out we also engage in self-presentation.

4.2 Motives

Different situations require different behavior, language, dress code, approach. We all know these patterns of behavior. Children are constantly being taught of these rules. It is a typical characteristic of them however to break these rules trying to experience to what extent they are flexible. This way they learn what is acceptable and what is not in a particular set up of events. This learning process takes place primarily within the family and also later on it is the responsibility of education systems to contribute to socialization as a core task of schools.
Different societies don’t share common sets of unstated rules of social behavior but all societies possess one. Members of a particular group (culture) – sometimes even subcultures – are aware of these rules. Goffman calls them scripts. Scripts are unstated but everybody understands and follows them. According to him we perform in our everyday interactions as actors perform in a theatre. This dramaturgical approach suggests that we can perform well, poorly or badly and the audience helps with our performances even by ignoring some mistakes to extreme extents in order to keep society working.

In this chapter so far we have been discussing what the presentation of self is in social interactions and what forms of it can be easily grabbed in everyday life. We also have to bear in mind that no matter how tactfully we try to influence other people’s perceptions of us it might happen that we fail to reach the desired goal. In the following part we are going to discuss some of the reasons why people get engaged in self-presentation. What motives lay behind and fuel our intentions.

A. Trigger social interactions

In society most interactions are role determined. Participants know their roles and represent supportiveness rather than undermine others. Norms are very important in these interactions. In certain cases very strict roles like royal etiquette in others more informal ones such as politeness or culturally accepted morals. Goffman calls face work when efforts are made to stick to the roles and thus social interaction becomes smooth. These roles are sometimes subordinate and people occasionally misrepresent their real opinion in order to maintain public respect to others or simply reduce conflicts or tension.

B. To be rewarded

It has been several times proven in psychological experiments that praise and reward, emphasis on positive things, encouragement, kindness can give wings to people in all scenes of life. Obviously lack of acknowledgment, constant negative feedback can cause serious mental and in extreme cases somatic symptoms. Naturally people strive to be rewarded as it increases level of serotonin and facilitates desirable general well-being. There are different rewards people long for. We can place them in two basic
groups: material and social rewards. Both are equally important and we would do a lot to gain them as they help to increase and maintain higher level of self-esteem. The importance of self-awareness and healthy level of self-esteem has been discussed earlier in this paper. To gain reward people strategically try to manipulate others to be seen as worthy for that particular reward as possible. It does not necessarily mean deceiving the audience it is carefully designed self-presentation. However nothing is farther from reality than stating deceit is unknown to mankind.

Most of the time, strategic self-presentation involves “selective disclosures and omissions, or matters of emphasis and timing, rather than blatant deceit or dissimulation” (Jones, 1990, p.175).

It is not difficult to imagine an employee’s intentions and efforts to impress his superior so as to be seen the best for a position with more responsibility thus with more favorable financial package. Rewards depend on external judgement therefore the only thing we can do to put as much effort as we can in convincing others.

C. To create identity

We all live our lives with plenty of different identities. This is valid for mentally healthy people we are not talking about medical and serious psychological extremes.

It is not surprising if we think of all our different roles in life. A woman has to be a woman first, but she is also a mother a wife a daughter, a friend, a housewife not mentioning her professional status which can require a lot of other roles from her.

Notably our personality determines all our roles or in other words identities however different circumstances require different approaches, abilities to be preferred and highlighted. While being a mother and caring about children women are generally more gentle, kind-hearted, playful and relaxed. In this identity self-construction is supposedly less carefully designed things happen instinctively. However books about child raising, latest trends in psychology and attitudes, norms toward kids might change one’s natural approaches and make the person do some adjustments in order to perform a desirable role as a mother. The same person when being at work puts on an other desirable identity and tries to act according to the requirements. In all life scenes we work hard to convince others that we are in possession of qualities needed to perform well. Both
Goffman and Schlenker stated that people are exposed to public pressure when trying to make good on their identities.

In this part of the paper three different reasons have been discussed why people intend to be involved in self-constructions. They might differ in some of their concepts however appear interconnected in everyday life. Very interesting that people pay much more attention to make good impression when interacting with those whom they have rather formal relationship. The earlier mentioned woman would might not care about her hair when playing with kids at home or cooking dinner. Meanwhile it is likely impossible for her to go to a business meeting without her hair nicely done. People also tend be much more aware of being exposed to public attention when their interaction is recorded in any ways. These circumstances also increase level of carefully planned and designed behavior, use of word, posture etc.

One highly disturbing but very common example is when teachers are examined either by fellow teachers or parents. They act completely different as normal. They change their tone, gestures not mentioning their rituals. This has a reasonable impact on students as they might get perplexed by the changes and might create an image about the teacher that is not so desirable in the long run.

4.3 We construct ourselves

This paper is intended to give a moderately elaborated but pervasive picture about impression management in social interactions. What has been discussed so far led us to the questions of why and how we construct ourselves.

In social psychology this topic has been researched by considerable number of scientists. Some of them at the beginning regarded impression management as phenomenon only present in professional, business or corporate world. It has been discussed and proven many times so far that people constantly construct themselves being aware or unaware of the process. They are able to modify their images instantly if factors in the situation change.

According to Baumeister there are two basic reasons why people get involved in self-constructive processes. One is to please the audience the other is to please ourselves. When we want to satisfy people around us we really keen on meeting their expectations
and preferences. It is a hard process as in many cases we have to be in consistency with ourselves, our own ideas. This often happens when we desperately want something but we are not in control and the final outcome depends on others. Jones and Pittman (1982) refined the audience pleasing concept by adding that impressions toward the audience might not be intended to give favorable impressions. They are more of self-presenting actions rather than pleasing to the audience. They might appear dangerous or needy and helpless. The idea behind these strategies is to manipulate the audience in a beneficial way to the presenter. Throughout history we find typical examples of dictators who wanted to demoralize, threaten and keep under strict control helpless masses. In their success intimidating self-presentation played a key role. Also we can mention those homeless people who ask for money in the streets often accompanied by dogs or even children this way trying to convince the audience to help them. It is far from the passerby’s expectations however due to feel of pity or compassion they drop some coins to the helpless. According to a detailed study forms of self-presentation are distinguished as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of self-presentation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-promotion</td>
<td>Positive information about oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplification</td>
<td>Self-presentation design to elicit perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesty</td>
<td>Under-representing one’s positive traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>To gain power by creating fear in others while convincing them that one is powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>The impressions of one are based on flattery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplication</td>
<td>Making known one’s weakness or dependence on others in the hope of soliciting them</td>
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Hogan (1982) introduced the idea of offensive and defensive self-presentation. While offensive is based on persuasion defensive self-presentation is denying some images not claiming. He also stated that need for popularity and status is a core motivational factor.

5. Self-efficacy and conformity
In the previous chapter we have discussed various motivational factors that have significant impact on a person’s behavior. These determine the techniques, approaches a person will apply in a certain situation. We all try to avoid experience inconvenient moments, events. Nobody wants to feel embarrassed, ridiculed, outcast. On the contrary we constantly pursue pleasant and desirable experiences. Unfortunately life is not always gracious and we have to cope with tasks are not so fascinating. The way we handle these tasks has another motivational factor and that is what we think about our capability.

5.1 Concept of Self-Efficacy

"If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning" - Mahatma Gandhi

We have seen that high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence facilitate successful performance. While someone, who thinks very little of himself and has little belief in his own strength, struggles in most areas of life. We are all contributors to our behavior and personal development in life. However it is a great difference whether we are equipped with tools that enable us for facilitative or debilitative contribution. How we approach hard and difficult tasks and events that affect our life is defined by self-efficacy.

The basic idea behind the Self-Efficacy Theory is that performance and motivation are in part determined by how effective people believe they can be. (Bandura, 1982; as cited in Redmond, 2010).

Albert Bandura introduced self-efficacy theory in accordance with social learning theory that has finally developed into Social Cognitive Theory. Self-efficacy is task – oriented self-esteem. Our perceptions about our competence and capability the belief that we can find solution when facing a difficult task, is the level of our self-efficacy. There are people who are fairly assured about their abilities and of course there are those, who have very low level of self-efficacy. People who believe in themselves can perform much more efficiently in their lives. It enhances their personal well being beside being successful in overtaking hard and challenging obstacles. Moreover they consider these problems possibilities rather than threats. They are more likely to
persuade challenging tasks and very committed to solve them. Failure does not mean
they will not try it again and again as they recover easily and ready to start it over.

In stark contrast people who are dubious about their inner strength, knowledge, abilities,
find it really hard to overcome inconvenient problems. They have obviously lower level
self-confidence they long for staying in their comfort zones, have low aspirations. They
typically dwell on the possible obstacles that might prevent them from success instead
of looking for creative solutions. Consequently these type of people will not chase
challenges and less likely to become genuine or innovative members of the society.

Although self-esteem and self-efficacy have very similar meaning they can’t be used
interchangeably as they are different at a fairly important point. Self-esteem is a rather
pervasive notion meaning overall self-worth of a person, while self-efficacy is more of
an evaluation of our capabilities in a particular situation. Therefore self-esteem is a
general and this way a static opinion about a person’s self. Self-efficacy can vary in
accordance with the situation. A worker might fear that he is not able to accomplish one
task as not having been qualified for that (low level of self-efficacy) meanwhile his self-
esteeem remains unharmed.

Interesting to examine what determines a person’s beliefs about his abilities, what
factors constitute sufficient level of self-efficacy that lead to goal oriented, task-
centered cognitive processes. It is very important because self-efficacy has a
fundamental influence on how people construct themselves in their social interactions.

Bandura(1977) stated that there are four sources that imply how a person judges his
capabilities.

A. Past experiences: success facilitates, failure undermines further efficacy,
especially in cases when self-efficacy has not been built up properly.
B. Examine and evaluate someone else’s performance in similar situation: we all
know that wise people learn from others’ faults. We can also benefit from
others’ success and experience in our personal cognitive development
C. Verbal encouragement / discouragement: natural if a person is not given positive
reinforcement on the contrary his incapability is constantly emphasized, he is
less likely to build up personal-efficacy
D. Physical sensation from their body: in different social interactions we experience different physical signs such as: pleasure, satisfaction, anxiety, rejection, acceptance. These all have significant impact on our performance and further self-efficacy.

As we can see our personal belief in our own abilities is another very important motivational factor in our social life. There is an additional notion to be introduced for further understanding and that is conformity.

5.2 Conformity

Our interactions with others are constantly being modified by huge number of factors. They are interconnected in such a complex way, that it would be hardly possible to discuss them separately. Sometimes we do not even realize what makes us change our opinion, approach, decision. We just simply adjust our behavior because we find it more convenient, consequently safer more protective for us. We would like to avoid confrontation, we are unsure or simply do not want to stick out of the crowd. There might be an important group of people or public tension. No matter the reason but a change in the behavior due to real or imaginary effect by a group of people is conformity.

Elliot Aronson in his book The Social Animal shares a very interesting experiment that has been carried out by Solomon Asch. Volunteers took part in his initial conformity experiment, which intended to examine how group pressure modifies personal opinion, beliefs. It was a very simple perceptual test where participants had to decide which of three lines in the card was equally long as the line in the first card. The answer was so obvious that everybody was sure to say C without hesitation. However when intentionally wrong answers were given, some of the participants changed their mind despite the fact they were sure in the correct answer.
source: www.simplypsychology.org/asch-conformity.html

When participants took the test individually the rate of correct answers was 100%. Even though there were no sanctions some individuals melted under group pressure and obeyed them. There was no punishment no reward and some people still adjusted their opinions to the group.

There are different motives behind conformity. We have already discussed that people continuously construct themselves in order to gain reward or please the audience. In this particular experiment there was no reward so it must not have been the reason. Participants merely wanted to act in favor of the other group members. Other words they wanted to please the audience. They did not want to look fool neither did they want to stick out of the mass.

Aronson states that those people with lower self-esteem are more likely to obey group pressure, while high self-esteem in general means willingness to nonconformity. Not surprising that task-based self-esteem can be manipulated therefore conformity level might drop if a person believes that he is in possession of all the abilities he needs to successfully cope with a particular task. It is the question of low or high self-efficacy that determines tendency for conformity or nonconformity in a situation.

On the other hand it also important to see that the composition of the audience has a great impact on our decisions. With friends, close acquaintances we tend to construct our behavior less conform meanwhile experts in a topic or those whom we are dependent on or are really important for us most probably will trigger certain modification in our performance in order to direct attention in a beneficial way for us.
Asch carried out a laboratory experiment and made his conclusions later. The following case however happened in 2016 in a public primary school in Hungary. It is on one hand fascinating how easily conformity is captured in everyday life on the other hand we must pay attention how serious moral problems exist in our society.

Bullying is unfortunately not unknown to teenagers. Classmates, peers can conjure severe mental injuries to each other. A twelve-year-old girl had been a target of group of other girls’ constant verbal harassment for a year, she felt completely lost in her class, she was alone and lost all her friends as they had decided she was not desirable anymore in the group. Short before summer vacation they were waiting for their handball training when in the changing room the girls started searching her personal belongings and threw out everything they found in her bag to the foyer. When the bullied girl came back she found all her clothes all around the floor of the corridor and the changing room. She was stunned and in total shock. There were some witnesses who did not intervene remained neutral as if nothing had happened. That is another form of conformity, when we stay outside and for a certain reason do not want to get involved. These neutral spectators chose to be loyal to the bullying girls. There were numerous reasons behind their behavior how they unconsciously constructed themselves. They simply did not want to be the next targets(avoid punishment) or they wanted to belong to the group because it is a privilege therefore some sort of a reward.

As it has been demonstrated there are various motivations behind our performances in social interactions. The importance of social and emotional competencies is more significant than ever in order to be able to navigate in the ever most complex situations of our modern society. Children must be taught these competences and our current educational system that is focused on cognitive development has to go through a paradigm shift and insert social learning into the curriculum. Personal success in the unpredictable future is 75% dependent on one’s social competencies. It requires flexibility from the teachers, they have to look at their work from a different and much broader angle.
6. Impression management in social media

Nothing is more seductive now days to people than present themselves through any forms of social media. Rapid technological improvement has however created a very dangerous situation besides all its inevitable advantages. Communication is without boundaries, life is at its top speed ever but mankind is not design for such a pace. Human psyche is struggling to keep speed up with the changes nevertheless we are trying hard. Younger generations make the best racers. Seemingly they have no difficulties with handling even the latest gadgets. They surely easily learn and adopt to living cyber life. There is nothing wrong with that. They are digital natives (Prensky, 2001). The problem that makes us teachers worry is the significant change in their behavior. Children are present on platforms from sometimes their very young age where they shouldn’t be present. They are engaged in various forms of self-presentation without being instructed and prepared for the risks they occasionally take. This is another important area where the education system should intervene as it is clearly seen in everyday practice that parental support is incomplete. Diverse reasons lay behind one of them is that even adults are unaware of the dangers and detrimental effects.

We have already mentioned that we all have more than one identities. That is normal and mature personalities can navigate among these identities with proficiency. Children as well operate with more than one identity unintentionally and these identities long for appreciation from the family, nuclear or wider environment and particularly among teenagers from their peers. Before the social media boom impression management to satisfy our desire for acknowledgement was only possible in face-to-face interactions. Manipulating others’ perceptions of us required completely different tools. In real time interactions achieving to be seen in the most positive light by others is the question of a well- designed self-presentation a coherent performance. And still non-verbal communication that is hard to keep under control and various other circumstances can undermine our attempts and result in an undesirable end.

6.1 Social validation

At this point it is important to introduce the concept of social validation of identities. When people construct themselves they do it in order to create a particular identity (Schenlker, 1980). They apply self-construction( Baumeister) in the presence of others
to convince them that they are qualified to represent that particular identity. In cases when people are uncertain about their right to represent an identity they need validation from their environment. According to Robert Wicklund and Peter Gollwitzer most important social identities must be recognized by others prior to a person’s belief that he fully owns that identity. Symbolic self-completion (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982) theory says that people use identity relevant tools in order to convince the audience and these convince themselves that they are fully in possession of all characteristics of that particular identity. This process takes place within a person and results in positive or negative outcome.

In teaching practice it is a very common situation during a teacher parent consultation that parents desperately try to establish a responsible parent status whilst it is clear that there are serious dysfunctions in this identity. Blaming of teachers, the school system is a typical reaction. Obviously it is hard to cope with the mismatch between the desired goal and reality. They can’t experience self-completion in this role as they are not acknowledged by the audience, they are not validated. Another very common phenomenon in school life is popularity. Most children (as most grown-ups) seek popularity. It is hard to convince ourselves that we are liked and accepted by a high number of people if we are basically left alone. No social validation no self-completion.

These are the situations when social media platforms can make up for all face-to-face failure. In face-to-face interactions no matter how carefully we design our performance not only our best characteristic features come under investigation, but unfortunately undesired elements as well.

Social media however offers a platform where we can design our profile without unwanted trap holes. In the safety of not being personally present people can create the most desired face—as Goffman says. In his work “On face-work”(Goffmann, 1955) he highlights that people constantly try to make a deliberate impression on others. He adds that within a group a person has to maintain his “face” in order to receive appreciation from that group. There is no better place than social media to create impressions purposefully in order to avoid embarrassment. Nobody likes negative feedbacks, critical remarks. This causes inconvenient, sometimes embarrassing feeling we are trying to avoid. Healthy personal development however cannot take place without them. Some people can’t cope with refusal, failure, conflicts therefore are very keen on escaping
them. Goffmann explains that when people experience embarrassment in the society they experience defeat and weakness consequently want to reduce this tension. In real life it is impossible to exclude undesired impressions meanwhile virtual surfaces offer this possibility. Moreover on Facebook users can simply block those who have become unwanted because not supporting the ideal picture of one’s self and causing the feeling of incongruence.

6.2 Dangers of creating false impressions

“All the world’s a stage and all the men and women are merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts” (As You Like It, act II, scene VII).

Shakespeare has created a brilliant summary of our social games and matches. Seemingly not much have changed in human behavior since he wrote his famous lines. Born to be social beings we spend high majority of our time engaged in social interactions. We send and receive information, create identities, impressions trying to make the best out of them. This paper is discussing the connection between human self and how it is presented publicly. Self-construction is always in coherence with person’s goal nevertheless it is not always in coherence with reality other words our intentions distort the information we convey about us. This behavior is very manipulative and occasionally very harmful in the long run.

People seek validation from others as we have seen it in the earlier part of this chapter, but if we are not valid in our performances what can be expected. Build and maintain credibility and accountability are very important factors to achieve social success.

Those parents can’t be credible in their responsible parent identity, who forget to check their children’s progress in school or don’t pay for the school lunch, never attend to events that are relevant and important for the children. They might use self-definitional symbols (utterances, behaviors) to support their actual identity however if they are not in accordance with their everyday practice they will not receive validation from the reference audience and lose credibility as responsible parents.

Self-definitional symbols both material and non-material are used in relation with an identity in question. A rocker for example carefully chooses his hairstyle, clothes and
other signs of the group in order to represent his identity and belonging to the group unmistakably. Typical forms of material symbols are possessions, material status, accessories, while non-materials are behavior and utterances. (Braun, Ottmar L.; Wicklund, Robert A. (1989).

There is a much greater concern about presenting false impressions when we are in the company of those with whom future interaction is predicted or have a relevant knowledge of our past. (Schenkler, 1980). On the other hand these are people who we spend a lot of time with like friends, family or colleagues and our performances may become more intrinsic and authentic as we presumably don’t have to face insecurity. Our most genuine self-presentation obviously takes place among family members as finally we can afford taking off our masks.

6.3 Social selling

“No (person) is an island” (John Donne 1975). This frequently quoted line refers to the long known fact that people are highly motivated to build and maintain interpersonal bonds. The need to belong is a natural human trait that has been analyzed by Fraud and Maslow also ranked it in the middle of his drive hierarchy. Finding a common field in any area of life (doing the same sport or having a mutual hobby for example) automatically enhances the chance to achieve more trusted relationships. This has a very serious effect on the business market.

Building relationships is a core requirement for success in our contemporary world. Its importance is even more elementary in the business world. Effective sales process cannot be carried out without trusted relationships. Compared to traditional selling in social selling relationship building represent immense part of the sales proves. The rapid technological development makes it simple and evident to use social media sites in sales interaction and social relationship management. This is obviously a very field specific form of impression management applied in the business world. Nevertheless the idea remains the same in B2B (business to business) selling and in case of C2C (direct selling companies) to impress and influence their buyers future customers in a way that is financially beneficial for them.
Social selling techniques were used long before online surfaces appeared. Today however it generally takes place on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest etc. LinkedIn even developed social selling index (SSI) to measure the contribution of social media presence to the selling index.

Researches carried out at the University of British Columbia have proved that similarities in other words bonds create a sense of belonging to the same group either physically, emotionally or theoretically and enhance the possibility of a successful business relationship between a buyer and a seller. The link of liking and trust is a key factor. Daniel Kahneman found business is more likely to be made with those whom we like and trust even though the quality of commodity or service is lower than other applicants’.

7. **The importance of social and emotional skills**

Daniel Goleman says that intelligence and technical knowledge can not predict success, what really has to be taken into account is social and emotional intelligence.(Goleman, D(n.d.): Emotional Intelligence. Retrieved from: http://danielgoleman.info/topics/emotional-intelligence/)


Jensen (2012) uses the concept of human engineering that contributes to success 85% proven by a research at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. He says personality and ability to communicate, negotiate and lead are the most important.( Jensen,K (2012): Intelligence is Overrated: What you really need to succeed. Forbes. Retrieved from: http://www..forbes.com/sites/keldjensen/2012/04/12/intelligence-is-overrated-what-you-really-need-to-succeed/)
7.1 IQ and EQ

Intelligence quotient is a numerical figure deprived from valid and standard tests that are intended to measure knowledge and skills having been acquired earlier as well as logic and problem solving skills. Emotional quotient on the other hand measures a person’s emotional intelligence based on his ability to perceive, control, evaluate and express emotions.

The importance of social and emotional intelligence(SEL) has been highlighted over the past years in different areas of life. It can be developed and should be an important part of education.

7.2 Social learning

Social learning is a process in which we acquire new behavioral patterns by perception and observing others in social interactions. We learn our social roles, norms, universally, culturally defined rules. We modify our behavior according to social requirements. This type of learning process always takes place in interpersonal relations where we try to follow model behaviors, observe and adjust to socially desirable patterns. Obviously this is a lifetime project for individuals and determines how one’s personality develops. What personality traits can be depicted later on has a strong relationship with social and emotional learning processes.

It is quite evident and easy to understand that in social learning we are not talking about factual learning, it is not data based and the emphasis is not on conveying lexical knowledge. This is the process of learning how to apply adequate behavioral patterns when interacting with others in order to be accepted, acknowledged and reach success in different areas of life. We all know that, early stages of social and emotional learning are represented by the family where an individual’s socialization process begins. Children receive guidance in developing effective social skills primarily from parents, however this process enhances and new participants enter the scene. Educators, teachers have great responsibility in social learning as integration into adult society starts in schools. This is not new to pedagogy as the so-called hidden curriculum has been a significant part of schoolwork for a long time. Hidden curriculum is the social added value by teachers to teaching processes while delivering knowledge- based information.
Nevertheless there is a universal paradigm shift happening in education as the relevance of social skills in contemporary society has been upgraded. It is not enough to convey simple data based knowledge and academic skills, it has been understood by educators that it is impossible to prepare students for rapidly altering future by only equipping them with facts. They have to learn how to successfully present themselves in their relations. Social and emotional skill development must be part of modern schoolwork. Children have to internalize the ability of understanding and analyzing situations they are involved in order to progress in life. Intelligence as researches have proved is not sufficient alone in our globalized world, social competences are the key factors to success.

7.3 Social and emotional learning in schools

Preliminary requirement for future is to be socially smart. More and more experts in pedagogy have realized that traditional teaching methods and learning process can not play effective supporting role in preparing children how to handle challenges in their future and how to perform desirably in interpersonal relationships. Special target oriented methods must be implemented in everyday school life in order to meet these needs. The development of social and emotional skills takes place through social and emotional learning.

Social and emotional learning enhances students' ability to succeed in school, careers, and life. Researchers have also shown that social and emotional learning contributes to such positive personality traits such as kindness, empathy and it helps to reduce stress and tension and the likeability of depression. (Durlak et. al. 2011). Social competencies influence individual mental and physical health, social interactions and also have a great impact on cognitive performance. Earlier cognitive dominance was considered to be the most important prerequisite of overall performance in one’s professional life. (Cefai and Cavioni 2014.)

Naturally effective learning process requires co-operation from families, learning groups and the official school system. According to researches institutional development of social skills has to be carried out in five major areas. The following chart was published by a Chicago organization called Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).
They defined five main domains that need to be professionally promoted.

**Self-awareness**: individual understanding of strengths, weaknesses, values, goals, limits and have accurate self-efficacy

**Self-management**: ability to regulate and control one’s behavior accordingly to the situation.

**Social-awareness**: sensitivity to others. Ability for compassion and empathy towards people with different cultural, social background

**Relationship skills**: ability to build and keep in existence healthy and sufficient relationships in accordance with socially accepted norms. Important traits are exceptional communication, active listening, negotiating and the desire for consensus in problem solving.

**Responsible decision making**: is the ability of making constructive choices with taking into consideration ethical, risk factors and evaluation of coming consequences.

According to Durlak an effective social and emotional learning program should contain the following four elements with the acronym SAFE (Durlak et al., 2010, 2011):

- **Sequenced**: linked and organized sets of activities
- **Active**: interactive forms to help develop new skills
- **Focused**: significantly personal and social skill mastery
- **Explicit**: goal specified skills
Integration of SEL programs to school curriculum has several benefits as it seen. Some appear in a very short period of time while others mean outstanding advantages in the long run. Self-awareness, self-management, rational decision making are among those that can be developed quite rapidly and result in better school performance. Recent studies discovered more positive outcomes:

- enhanced self-efficacy, confidence, persistence, improved social relations, reduced risk taking behavior, professional success, mental health, reduced behavior deviances. (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015).

It is evident that these widely welcome outcomes that manifest in positive personal traits and result a quality life are strongly interconnected and are impossible to acquire from books and through traditional learning practices. Nevertheless they must be more than welcome and embraced by responsible and sophisticated educators. In contemporary Hungarian school system this approach is not widely represented, to be more precise theoretical recommendations in methodology are very far from realization in everyday practice. There are several reasons behind. Most importantly there is no infrastructural support that could meet 21st century requirements. On the other hand there is a split between teachers. Some are up to date in modern methodological approaches while others still in favor of old-school methods where knowledge based teaching is emphasized. Very serious problem is the lack of consensus about the core of present school system. As long as some educators, teachers and here it is important to include parents as well are unwilling to see what irreversible changes have taken place in our modern society and the urgency of living up to these new trends, it is hard to introduce new methods and approaches into practice. There must be a common understanding that social skill development is as equally necessary as cognitive development. Another Gordian knot is the lack of coherence between elementary and secondary education structure. While at lower primary level educators seem to be much more flexible to new approaches and try to navigate students rather than stuffing them with date based knowledge, entry requirements at secondary level are still information, data and knowledge based to an irrational extent. The role of teacher and the importance of grades are also very different. Grades are very important in upper primary level too. It is still the basic measure of personal progress in school.
There is absolutely no smooth transition, moreover a very stark contrast defines the situation. There is no time to integrate social and emotional learning programs because students must be properly prepared to sit their central entrance exams. Even those with outstanding cognitive skills experience emotional hardship. Unfortunately we cannot pass by the increasing number of mental and behavioral problems from minor to major. Social deviances accompanied with learning disorders make it even more difficult to cope with school life.

The above introduced cases show how problematic it is to meet modern requirements without a whole paradigm shift in our education system. We educators must find the way to build social competency improvement into school practice in order to help our students get ready for future challenges.

SEL programs when integrating to school life take years to be accomplished. (Humphrey 2013). There are countries in Europe where SEL programs have been integrated successfully into school life. England, Finland and the Netherlands have different programs. Hungary is still far behind these trends from the perspective of average public schools. There are institutions that apply new methodology because they have understood the need for change. These are only for a few privileged. Public education should also implement such programs.

8. Survey analysis

The aim of the ten-question survey (attachment 1.) was to gain data about how average people see our current education system in the light of its responsibility and ability to prepare students for the unpredictable future. A total number 157 Facebook users answered the questionnaire. A group of educators also participated in the research carried out with 25 public school teachers. Responses came from participants of various age groups and professional background with different levels of education. It was deliberate to get a wide range of respondents involved so as to receive an overall picture on the topic.

Empirical researches show as it has been introduced earlier in this paper that modern society requires competencies to be taught instead of data. People face new challenges in the labor market as well as in their private lives. Social and emotional learning has
become equally important parallel knowledge based education. Moreover mankind owns such tremendous amount of knowledge that is impossible to consume therefore modern people need to acquire competencies that enable them to meet yet unknown requirements. Is our current education structure ready to take the challenge and turn away from traditional mindset in the teaching process? Survey results show that while people understand the necessity of social competencies and consider them inevitable in successful self-presentation reality at schools is far beyond expectations.

The majority of online participants (83%) are older than 35 years thus have a relevant experience in their professional life. Gender proportion is 16,16% male and 83, 84 % female. Men seemed to be more reluctant to take part and the tendency was very similar with teachers. 4,08% have elementary education 50% have secondary education, 29,59% have collage or university degree and 16,33% have PHD.

This mixed group however showed significant uniformity in the answers. 47, 42% thinks only data is taught at schools, one-third (29.29%) states that social competencies are integrated partly and only 5,15% finds social skills development satisfactory. Interesting to see that 71, 72 % think that schools fail to prepare students for the future in this existing structure. Teachers produced almost the same percentage (72%). The reason behind it according to 34, 41% is the lack of teaching social competencies but they find it equally problematic (32, 26%) that too much data is taught and 33,33% say that we are not taught to navigate in the global world. These three criteria however are strongly interconnected and their complex existence is the most crucial factor. Teachers think too much data is the main problem (56%) and only 44% miss social learning. This result unfortunately supports the idea that only some teachers realize the responsibility of schools in teaching competencies. Theoretically there is a common ground on how modern perspectives should be taken into practice, but reality is that we still have an old-fashioned mindset about the role of education system.

Remaining questions intended to seek answers about what determines future success. We have found that in our current school practice too much data is taught, there is very little focus on teaching social skills. According to researches-as we have already seen-the lack of social and emotional skills have negative effect on overall self-performance, self-management, rational decision making and successful self-presentation in life. Both online respondents and teachers agreed on that excellent school-performance has very
little to do with future success in life. They also think that the a healthy combination of academic skills and social skills guarantee the best outcome. 44% of teachers and 40%,24 of online respondents consider interpersonal relationships the most crucial components in life.

There is a common understanding that in its present system schools are not capable of teaching social competencies due to the fact that they basically convey information, data and knowledge. Nevertheless an average 24% of answers indicate that there is some emphasis on teaching self-presentation techniques. Interestingly 76% of online participants and 92% of teachers find it inevitably necessary to integrate social learning into the curriculum as not doing so would result in deficits in one’s life later on. This significant difference illuminates the fact that teachers are aware of how trends have altered in the labor market recently. Nevertheless it will take some time for our school system to close up to fruitful SEL programs. We see that we need to take steps forward, teachers need to be trained and motivated as the demand is so urgent.

9. Conclusion

People are constantly exposed to situations where they have to represent themselves. On the stage of life we have to play our roles. In all our roles we long to perform perfectly. We try our best to convince our audiences and give the best possible impressions about us. Most of the time self-construction is unconscious meanwhile there are plenty of occasions when we do it intentionally applying wide range of self-presentation strategies. This thesis paper introduced the reader to the basic theoretical background of impression management and sought answer for how social skills influence our self-presentation, self-management techniques which are key factors to modern society success. Collected answers from survey respondents clearly proved the hypothesis to be true. Contemporary expectations require new skills to be developed with special emphasis on social competencies. Setting one’s mind accordingly is a must in order to reduce failure and bear fruit in life.
AUTHORSHIP DECLARATION

Undersigned MUNDRUCZ ADRIENN I officially declare that the content of my thesis entitled Impression Management-Self directed control of information in social interactions

and submitted to the Centre for Foreign Language Education and Research, Corvinus University of Budapest, Faculty of Social Sciences and International Relations does not violate the rights of persons prescribed by law. It is the result of my individual intellectual work.

Budapest, 2016 November 28

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Author of the thesis