



1981

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Recommended Citation

Ragen, J. M., & Smouse, A. D. (1981). Pose Preference in Social and Business Photographs. 7 (3), 76-82.
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Janet Mills Ragan and Albert D. Smouse

Goffman (1976:78) has suggested that photographs can make available to the eye some aspects of the structure of social life that otherwise might remain implicit and unnoticed. Portrait photographs, according to Goffman, may be understood as decorative representations of the self that serve to present one's social identity (ibid.:85). This study analyzes subjects' evaluations of various poses of male and female models in portrait photographs in order to explicate some implicit aspects of social cognition. Specifically, we undertook this analysis to determine which poses most effectively "decorate" men and women in portrait photographs to be used for either social or business purposes.

Goffman has elaborated the theoretical context for this article in "Gender Advertisements." He organized nearly 500 advertising photographs to delineate major themes that describe the hierarchical structure of male-female relations and coined the term *gender displays* to describe the formalized, ritualized behaviors males and females characteristically perform to announce their alignment and intent in a social situation (ibid.:69-77). From an ethological point of view, gender displays are emotionally motivated behaviors that have become stereotypic, either by simplification or by exaggeration, so that brief expressions substitute for entire acts. Gender displays, Goffman notes, are typically dialogical, in that a gender statement by one person in the presence of an opposite-sex person tends to elicit a reply, and political, in that gender statement-response pairs tend to occur in patterns characterized by masculine dominance and feminine subordination. In the advertising photographs Goffman analyzed, males displayed gender and dominance through their larger size, higher function ranking, positions of protectiveness or distance from their (supposed) families, higher physical elevation, and monitoring of females. By contrast, females displayed gender and submissiveness through their smaller size, lesser rank, lower physical positions, head and body canting, smiling, aversion of heads and/or eyes from the scene, touching themselves gingerly, clowning, and so on.

The scenes in the photographs Goffman assembled were clearly contrived: professional models were posed in actions representing whatever advertisers wanted to create to sell their product, service, or idea. Goffman stressed that these scenes provide viewers with glimpses of the preferred social order, affirm what the basic social

arrangements should be, and present ultimate doctrines about people and the world. The photographs Goffman used in his essay were public pictures in that they were intended to be reproduced and disseminated by the media to a very large audience of anonymous consumers (ibid.:78).

Although he did not include private pictures in his study, Goffman defined them as a class of photographs designed for display within an intimate social circle or a relatively finite organizational structure (ibid.:78). Private pictures may be taken by professional or amateur photographers and may range from action scenes to formally posed portraits. Private pictures frequently commemorate occasions, relationships, achievements, or life-turning points, and thus may also provide viewers with glimpses of social order.

Based on this line of reasoning, several assumptions about the behavior of people in portrait photographs may be made. First, when people pose for their portrait photographs or are posed by a photographer, they are likely guided by an implicit notion of how the self should appear to represent most vividly the ideal self-image. Second, the particular photograph that each individual chooses from an array of proofs is likely the one that most closely approximates his or her ideal social self. Third, gender identity and implicit sex role behaviors are likely to influence posing behaviors and photograph selection. And fourth, the ways in which people choose to "decorate" themselves (e.g., with gender displays) can depend upon the audience to be impressed and the context in which the photograph is to be used. More specifically, gender displays may be more or less appropriate in portrait photographs to be used for social as opposed to business purposes.

In an empirical study of private pictures, Bentz (in press) analyzed for gender displays 1296 portrait photographs from high school and college yearbooks and from the media files of a university. Results showed that females smiled with significantly greater frequency and expansiveness than males, head-canted significantly more than males, and wore glasses with significantly less frequency than males. Contrary to prediction, females did not avert their heads from the camera significantly more than males. It was evident that overall, however, gender displays differentiated males and females in these portrait photographs.

Bentz and Smouse (in review) approached the study of gender displays in portrait photographs in another way, using portrait photographs as stimulus material to assess the effects of gender displays on the subjects who judged the photographs from both business and social perspectives. Since our analysis of portrait photographs in this article derives from the data of that study, we are reporting in detail here.

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Two male and two female models were photographed professionally in twelve poses displaying all combinations of head cant, head bow, and smile. Head cant was posed as *no cant* (a line bisecting the face from mid-chin to mid-forehead was parallel to the sides of the photograph) or *cant* (the bisecting line was not parallel); bow was posed as *no bow* (a line connecting each earlobe to the tip of the nose was straight) or *bow* (a similar pair of lines formed a "v"); and smile was posed as *none*, *simple* (no teeth showing), or *broad* (teeth showing). Twenty-two male and twenty-two female graduate students in business administration classes performed Q-sorts of the photographs and their mirror images for each of the four models (96 photographs in all) into categories ranging either from most to least attractive or from most to least competent. *Attractive* photographs were "the ones that would be appropriate to give to friends, romantic partners, or family," whereas *competent* photographs were "the ones that would be appropriate to use in a managerial job for news releases, résumés, or company files."

Separate preference scores for cant, bow, and smile were calculated by (a) summing separately the cant, bow, and smile values of each photograph in each Q-sort category; (b) multiplying these sums by the value of the Q-sort category; and (c) summing the products across categories. In addition, pose preference scores were calculated for each photograph by totaling the Q-sort values across subjects.

We hypothesized (a) that raters would prefer greater cant, bow, and smile behaviors of female models than of male models since these are stereotypically feminine gender displays (Goffman 1976:108-126; Henley 1977: 128, 136-139, 168-178) and (b) that raters would prefer these behaviors more in social photographs than in business photographs (e.g., under conditions of attractiveness rather than competence) since these are also signals of ingratiation and appeasement (Goffman 1976:116; Henley: *ibid.*). We also asked if male and female raters might prefer different nonverbal behaviors of male vs. female models under either of the two conditions.

Table 1
Frequency of Pose Choices for Most Competent and Most Attractive Categories Shown by Model Sex

Pose Composition	Condition			
	Most Attractive		Most Competent	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
No cant, no bow, no smile	0	0	0	1
No cant, no bow, simple smile	4	6	12	6
No cant, no bow, broad smile	18	11	10	9
No cant, bow, no smile	0	2	1	0
No cant, bow, simple smile	0	1	1	0
No cant, bow, broad smile	4	0	0	0
Cant, no bow, no smile	0	6	11	23
Cant, no bow, simple smile	3	5	4	2
Cant, no bow, broad smile	5	8	4	2
Cant, bow, no smile	3	0	0	1
Cant, bow, simple smile	4	2	0	0
Cant, bow, broad smile	3	3	1	0
Chi square values*	$\chi^2 = 56.11$ $p < .001$	$\chi^2 = 26.36$ $p < .01$	$\chi^2 = 47.69$ $p < .001$	$\chi^2 = 109.03$ $p < .001$

Bold figures:
Modal choice.

*Chi square tests for divergence from equal cell distributions, expected by chance, d.f. = 11.

The cant, bow, and smile preference data were analyzed separately in 2 x 2 x 2 repeated measures analysis of variance designs with model sex repeated under rater sex and condition. As predicted, raters preferred females to cant and bow significantly more than males; however, raters did not prefer female models to smile significantly more than male models. Raters preferred models to cant and smile significantly more in the attractive (social) condition than in the competent (business) condition; however, they showed no preference for greater or lesser bow by condition.

With respect to rater sex by condition interaction effects, male and female raters showed differences in their preference for gender displays in models across the two conditions. Although male and female raters alike preferred male canting and smiling in the attractive condition, male raters preferred significantly less canting and smiling than did female raters in the competent condition.

Pose preference scores for given poses were correlated across all possible groupings. All correlations were significant at the .05 level or better, indicating that no patterns of pose preference were completely independent across rater groups, models, or condition. Comparing the relative size of correlations, we found that male raters

rated models quite differently, depending on condition, but that female raters did not differentiate nearly as much. The greatest similarity in judgments was between male and female raters judging females for attractiveness, and the greatest divergence in judgments was among males judging males for attractiveness vs. competence.

While analysis of the data in this study has yielded some interesting theoretical results largely supporting Goffman's work and other research, some practical knowledge may also be derived. By considering which poses were most frequently chosen as the single most attractive or most competent, and by identifying which poses received the highest total pose preference scores, we can identify the poses that characteristically enhance men and women in their social and business photographs. Table 1 summarizes the frequency with which each pose was chosen as the single most attractive or competent. Although one of the assumptions necessary for chi square analysis was not met (expected values were 3.7 instead of 5.0 or more), we proceeded with analysis to measure departure from the cell frequencies expected by chance and lowered the acceptable alpha level from .05 to .01. As seen in Table 1, the results are highly significant. Table 2 provides a summary of pose preference scores.

Table 2
Summary of Pose Preference Scores Shown for Condition and Model Sex

Pose Composition	Condition			
	Most Attractive		Most Competent	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
No cant, no bow, no smile	192	293	228	393
No cant, no bow, simple smile	337	397	390	389
No cant, no bow, broad smile	548	489	445	423
No cant, bow, no smile	170	103	253	178
No cant, bow, simple smile	284	243	298	199
No cant, bow, broad smile	426	332	353	254
Cant, no bow, no smile	233	376	371	536
Cant, no bow, simple smile	423	449	462	387
Cant, no bow, broad smile	487	506	426	373
Cant, bow, no smile	253	191	255	243
Cant, bow, simple smile	435	332	265	246
Cant, bow, broad smile	413	398	290	306

Bold figures: Most frequently chosen as most attractive or most competent.



First choice pose for social photograph.



First choice pose for business photograph.



Second choice pose for social photograph.



Second choice pose for business photograph.

Figure 1 First and second choice poses for females in social and business photographs.

Social Portraits of Females

When raters' preferences for female poses in social portraits (the attractive condition) were examined, the no cant, no bow, broad smile pose (see Figure 1) clearly emerged as the favorite on both measures. Table 1 shows that this pose was most frequently chosen as the most attractive pose, and Table 2 shows that this pose had the highest pose preference score as well. The cant, no bow, broad smile pose (see Figure 1) was the second choice on both measures.

Social Portraits of Males

The data indicating preferences for male poses in social portraits (the attractive condition) are less clear than the data for females. Table 1 shows that the no cant, no bow, broad smile pose (see Figure 2) was most frequently chosen as the most attractive pose, but Table 2 indicates that the cant, no bow, broad smile pose (see Figure 2) received the highest pose preference score. In resolving the discrepancy between these two indices, one should note that, since the pose preference score is summed across raters, a given pose may receive few "most attractive" nominations and yet be rated consistently as second or third most attractive, thus yielding a high total score. The pose receiving the greatest number of "most attractive" nominations might be simultaneously receiving a large number of moderate ratings or even some very low ratings. Therefore, to select the pose most preferred overall by raters as a group, one would consult the pose preference scores.

Business Portraits of Females

When the preferences for business portraits of females (the competent condition) are considered, the data fail to converge clearly; in fact, they are quite divergent. The frequency data in Table 1 indicate a trimodal distribution with 27.3 percent of the subjects preferring the no cant, no bow, simple smile pose, 25 percent preferring the cant, no bow, no smile pose, and 22.7 percent preferring the no cant, no bow, broad smile pose (the most highly rated social pose for female models). The highest pose preference score is another pose entirely—the cant, no bow, simple smile pose. Given these confusing indicators, it is reasonable to ask whether or not any differences in preference are accountable by raters' sex. Table 3 summarizes the frequency of pose choices for the single most competent poses by rater sex. Obviously, male-female choices are similar; a trimodal distribution prevails for both sexes. Table 4 summarizes the pose preference scores by subject sex, revealing no subject sex differences in the overall popularity of poses. Both sexes preferred the cant, no bow, simple smile pose. Based on pose preference

indices, the second choice for the most competent female pose is the no cant, no bow, broad smile pose. As a matter of strategy, however, one might consider eliminating this pose as a second choice inasmuch as it has been reported previously by Bentz and Smouse that males prefer models to smile less under conditions of competence vs. attractiveness (Ragan and Smouse in review). Since males dominate the managerial world at the present time, it seems most efficacious for women to project the most credible image of themselves, in light of how men perceive them (Harragan 1977:320-336). The same strategy would dictate skipping the third-ranked pose (cant, no bow, broad smile) and choosing the pose ranked fourth (no cant, no bow, simple smile), which was also the pose most frequently nominated as "most competent" for the female (see Figure 1).

Business Portraits of Males

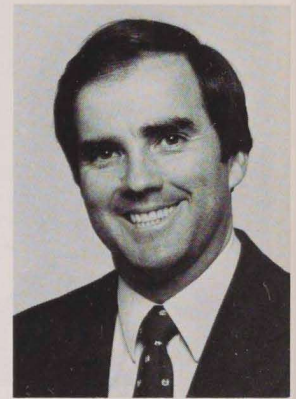
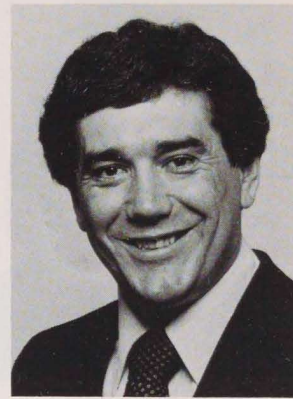
Finally, the data indicating preference for male poses in business portraits (the competent condition) are clear and unambiguous: the cant, no bow, no smile pose was chosen by a majority of the subjects (52 percent) as the most competent (see Table 1) and obtained the highest pose preference score (see Table 2). No alternative choice is indicated by these data (see Figure 2).

Conclusions

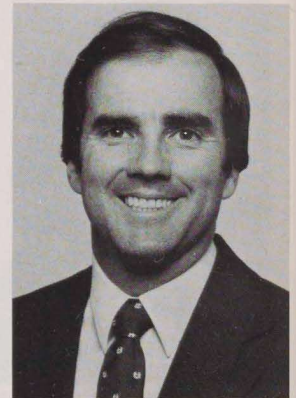
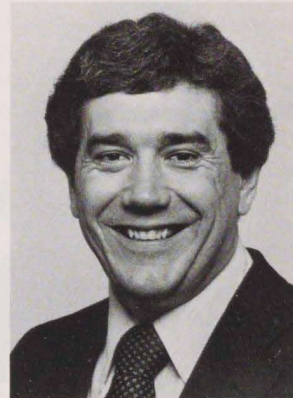
Several conclusions and practical inferences may be drawn from this study.

First, the data provide us with some clear stereotypes for portrait poses, namely, *the attractive woman* and *the competent man*. Chances are very good that the no cant, no bow, broad smile pose will enhance the social image of almost any woman and that the cant, no bow, no smile pose will sharpen the managerial image of almost any man. It is also fairly clear how men are best posed in social portraits: they smile broadly, do not bow, and may or may not cant.

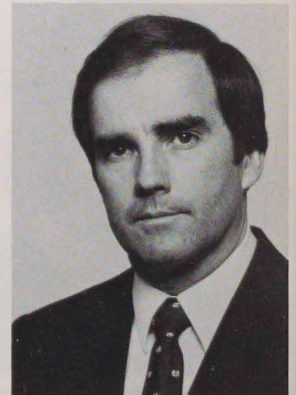
Second, the lack of clear-cut, convergent data pointing to a pose reflecting competence in a female can be interpreted variously. On the one hand, we may conclude that there is no stereotypic pose for the competent female because females are not stereotypically seen as competent. On the other, we can conclude that the divergence of indicators is a reflection of social changes currently in progress; that is, there is no agreement on what a competent managerial woman looks like. This diversity of style may be a detriment to women in management since social conformity has been and still is an important issue in organizations (Kanter 1977: 47-55). Perhaps the purposeful development of some stereotypic indicators of feminine competence in the business world is desirable, as several writers on women in management suggest (Harragan 1977:320-336). To



First choice pose for social photograph.



Second choice pose for social photograph.



First choice pose for business photograph. No second choice is indicated by the data.

Figure 2 First and second choice poses for males in social and business photographs.

Table 3
Summary of Frequency of Choices for Most Competent
Female Pose by Male, Female, and Total Raters

Pose Composition	Female	Male	Total
No cant, no bow, no smile	0	0	0
No cant, no bow, simple smile	7	5	12
No cant, no bow, broad smile	5	5	10
No cant, bow, no smile	0	1	1
No cant, bow, simple smile	0	1	1
No cant, bow, broad smile	0	0	0
Cant, no bow, no smile	6	5	11
Cant, no bow, simple smile	1	3	4
Cant, no bow, broad smile	2	2	4
Cant, bow, no smile	0	0	0
Cant, bow, simple smile	0	0	0
Cant, bow, broad smile	1	0	1

Table 4
Summary of Pose Preference Scores for Competent Female
Models Shown by Male, Female, and Total Raters

Pose Composition	Female	Male	Total
No cant, no bow, no smile	100	128	228
No cant, no bow, simple smile	226***	164	390
No cant, no bow, broad smile	234**	211**	445
No cant, bow, no smile	122	131	253
No cant, bow, simple smile	162	136	298
No cant, bow, broad smile	191	162	353
Cant, no bow, no smile	191	180	353
Cant, no bow, simple smile	250*	212*	462
Cant, no bow, broad smile	225	201	426
Cant, bow, no smile	123	132	255
Cant, bow, simple smile	145	120	265
Cant, bow, broad smile	150	140	290

*Most frequently
 chosen as most
 competent.

**Second most
 frequently chosen as
 most competent.

***Third most frequently
 chosen as most
 competent.

this end, managerial women might adopt a prototypical pose for their business portraits; if widely used, the pose could assume social significance. The results of our analysis suggest that the most widely preferred pose for the competent female contains a cant, no bow, and a simple smile. This pose as well as its alternate (no cant, no bow, simple smile) minimizes the gender displays of low status and high affiliation commonly observed in women in their social photographs.

A third inference is that men and women in management would best serve their own interests by having a portrait photograph posed specifically for business purposes. Portraits taken for social purposes may create an unintended or unwanted impression when used in the business context.

Fourth, a word to personnel administrators: the Bentz and Smouse data indicate that men and women probably hold different notions about what a business portrait should look like. Male raters preferred models to smile and cant significantly less in business than in social portraits, but female raters made no such distinction. Men and women in personnel work should be alert to this bias as they consider résumé photographs.

Many other questions could be raised in future studies about the composition of an appropriate business portrait. Only a few of the many possible variables were systematically varied in the Bentz and Smouse study. The variables we tried to hold constant included positioning variables: for example, body orientation to the camera was $\frac{3}{4}$; head orientation was $\frac{7}{8}$; eye focus was directly on the camera; and shoulders were straight vs. canted. All these positions except straight shoulders are conventions photographers use widely for business photographs. Clothing variables were also held constant in this study: clothing chosen for models included dark jackets, light shirts, and club ties for men, and dark jackets and light blouses with small self-ties for women. Other attire might be more appropriate for social portraits.

In this study we identified the poses most appropriate for social and business portraits, focusing specifically on the managerial role. It is entirely possible that different poses would be preferred for men and women working in sales or advertising. Furthermore, the "decorations" that lend credibility to different professionals (e.g., doctors, lawyers, politicians, engineers, therapists) may vary. These are questions for further research.

A final point relates to a discrepancy between the perception and practice of photographers, on the one hand, and Goffman's sense of gender display on the other. Many photographers view shoulder and head canting in the same direction as showing action and drive, and frequently pose men with shoulder cant and head cant "for an aggressive look."¹ Goffman characterizes canting as more feminine than masculine and describes it as a display of subordination, submissiveness, ingratiation, and appeasement.

We speculate, along with Goffman, that portrait photographs provide not only glimpses of social reality but also distortions which are introduced by photographers (Goffman 1976:84). It is plausible that the public is accustomed to being posed in, and will thus view, portrait poses on the basis of a certain amount of photographic convention. For example, a number of years ago, it was fashionable for men to pose with one arm inserted into their suits or uniforms at the waist. Given the fact that social conditions change and conventions along with them, we agree with other researchers (especially Henley) who suggest that women might modify current perceptions of them and their influence in social situations by modifying their nonverbal behaviors to include more signals of high status, dominance, and power (Henley 1977:202-204). Specifically, we suggest that women develop a photographic business image of themselves separate and distinct from their social image, and we suggest that this business portrait avoid or minimize low-status and submissive gender displays. For now, however, the choice of the single most efficacious business portrait remains hampered by changing social conditions and unresearched variables.

Acknowledgment

The authors gratefully acknowledge the photographic contributions of Richard Faust.