

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247746731>

Sandbagging as a Self-Presentational Strategy: Claiming to be Less than You Are

Article in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* · January 2000

DOI: 10.1177/0146167200261006

CITATIONS

59

READS

3,208

2 authors:



Bryan Gibson

Central Michigan University

49 PUBLICATIONS 1,819 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Daniel A. Sachau

Minnesota State University, Mankato

48 PUBLICATIONS 1,034 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Gun attitudes project [View project](#)

Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin

<http://psp.sagepub.com>

Sandbagging as a Self-Presentational Strategy: Claiming to be Less than You Are

Bryan Gibson and Daniel Sachau
Pers Soc Psychol Bull 2000; 26; 56
DOI: 10.1177/0146167200261006

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://psp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/26/1/56>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc.

Additional services and information for *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://psp.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://psp.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations (this article cites 9 articles hosted on the
SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):
<http://psp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/26/1/56#BIBL>

Sandbagging as a Self-Presentational Strategy: Claiming to Be Less Than You Are

Bryan Gibson

Central Michigan University

Daniel Sachau

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Sandbagging is a self-presentational strategy involving the false prediction or feigned demonstration of inability. Three studies explored the individual differences and situational variables influencing sandbagging behavior. Study 1 demonstrated that the newly created Sandbagging Scale possessed adequate reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The next two studies examined the social determinants of sandbagging. In Study 2, greater performance pressure led participants with higher scores on the Sandbagging Scale to predict worse performance on an upcoming task. In Study 3, participants with higher scores on the Sandbagging Scale were more likely to predict worse performance on an upcoming task to someone who was ostensibly evaluating their performance, but only when the individual did not possess prior performance information. Sandbagging is discussed as a self-presentational strategy used to reduce performance pressure and provide a low baseline against which subsequent performance can be compared.

Sandbagging is a self-presentational strategy involving the false claim or feigned demonstration of inability used to create artificially low expectations for the sandbagger's performance. The sandbagger predicts, or provides information allowing an observer to predict, a level of performance lower than the sandbagger is capable of attaining. The origin of the term "sandbagging" is somewhat unclear. One possibility is that the term is based on an analogy related to using sandbags to hold back rivers during high water. Another possibility is that the term came from horse racing. Jockeys are often equated for weight by placing bags of sand on lighter jockeys' horses. A third possibility is that sandbagging refers to a bag of sand used as a weapon, typically applied in a surprise attack to the back of the head. Despite the uncertainties surrounding its origin, the term sandbagging has a long history of use in competitive settings. For example, sand-

bagging is common in the parlance of coaches and card players. A sandbagging coach may publicly predict poor performance for her well-prepared and talented team. A poker player with a strong hand may bet as if he has a weak hand in early betting rounds. The term is also used in country clubs and pool halls. An experienced golfer may sandbag by claiming to be a novice. A pool shark may intentionally lose a few games to set the stage for a later bet. Recent social psychological research suggests that sandbagging in competition can be used to lull an opponent into a false sense of security. Shepperd and Socherman (1997) showed that by claiming low levels of ability, the sandbagger sends the message to an opponent that there is no reason to prepare for or exert effort during competition. Thus, the competitive sandbagger uses sandbagging as a way to gain an edge against his or her opponents.

Sandbagging, however, is not limited to competitive settings. There are a wide variety of performance domains in which false predictions of poor performance are directed at evaluators rather than competitors. For

Authors' Note: We wish to thank Patricia Naas and Jean Sears for their help in the development of the Sandbagging Scale. In addition, Jonathon Bagby, Karen Chaffkin, Kersten Elenteny, Lian Ricca, Nicole Scarpato, and Lori Skibbe provided able assistance in the data collection process. Finally, we thank Fred Rhodewalt, David Sanbonmatsu, and Richard Moreland for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. Portions of this research were presented at the 1995 convention of the American Psychological Association, New York. Both authors contributed equally to this research, so the order of authorship was determined randomly. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to either Bryan Gibson, Department of Psychology, Central Michigan University, Sloan Hall 101, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859; e-mail: bryan.gibson@cmich.edu, or Daniel Sachau, Department of Psychology, Minnesota State University, Box 35, Mankato, MN 56002; e-mail: sachau@mail.mankato.msus.edu.

PSPB, Vol. 26 No. 1, January 2000 56-70

© 2000 by the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc.

example, a well-prepared student may tell her instructor not to expect an outstanding performance on an upcoming test. A doctoral candidate may tell his fellow graduate students that he expects his defense to go poorly when in fact he expects to do well. Similarly, an employee may submit sales performance goals that are lower than he or she expects to achieve. In these situations, sandbagging is not performed to gain a competitive edge. It is our position that in these situations, sandbagging is done to reduce an evaluator's expectations for the sandbagger's performance. This may offer a self-regulatory benefit (Carver & Scheier, 1981) by reducing performance pressure. Sandbagging may also offer a self-presentational benefit by enhancing the perception of the subsequent performance.

Research by Baumeister and others (Baumeister, 1984; Baumeister, Hamilton, & Tice, 1985; Zanna, Sheras, Cooper, & Shaw, 1975) provides evidence for the potential self-regulatory utility of sandbagging. This research suggests that private expectations of success facilitate performance, whereas public expectations of success inhibit performance. For example, Baumeister et al. (1985) found that participants given an anagram-solving task were most successful when they expected to do well and they believed that an audience (the experimenter) expected them to perform at intermediate levels. Furthermore, participants were least successful when they expected to do poorly and believed that an audience expected them to do well. Similarly, J. J. Seta and Hassan (1980) found that performance was facilitated by prior success, but only if the audience was not aware of the earlier successful performance. When the audience was aware of that success, performance declined (see also C. E. Seta & J. J. Seta, 1995). Thus, when audience expectations are high, performance is inhibited. Baumeister et al. (1985) conclude that the social component of audience expectations of success can induce increased self-consciousness, which leads to "choking under pressure." By understating their performance expectations prior to performance, sandbaggers may lower audience expectations and thereby protect themselves from the negative effects of high public expectations.

In addition to reducing performance pressure, sandbagging also might offer a self-presentational benefit by creating a low performance standard against which subsequent performance is contrasted. That is, the sandbagger may hope that evaluators will use performance expectations as a benchmark and evaluate subsequent performance more positively when the performance is compared to a low rather than high standard. Sandbagging can thus have a positive effect on the perception of performance. Baumgardner and Brownlee (1987) suggested that this contrast effect was a potential benefit of

strategic failure, a type of sandbagging. In further support of this hypothesis, Siegall (1992) and Murphy, Balzar, Lockhart, and Eisenmann (1985) found that given the same work history, participants made more favorable evaluations of employees for whom they had low rather than high expectations.

Sandbagging Compared to Other Self-Deprecating Self-Presentational Strategies

On the surface, sandbagging may appear to be a straightforward example of modesty. A number of studies suggest that, used appropriately, modesty can increase the degree to which an individual is liked while at the same time maintaining perceptions of competence (Brickman & Seligman, 1974; Jones, Gergen, & Jones, 1963; Schlenker & Leary, 1982; Stires & Jones, 1969). However, on closer examination, sandbagging is different than modesty. Although both sandbagging and modesty involve disclaiming ability, sandbagging occurs prior to performance and modesty after performance. To describe a given self-presentation as an act of modesty assumes that the audience has access to information that the actor has been successful or possesses the ability that the actor is disclaiming. Thus, modest statements typically occur after a performance and are aimed at audiences who have the ability to identify such statements as modesty rather than as a lack of self-confidence (cf. Cialdini & DeNicholas, 1989; Frey, 1978; Gould, Brounstein, & Sigall, 1977; Miller & Schlenker, 1985).

Sandbagging is also similar to the strategy of supplication described by Jones and Pittman (1982). Supplication involves self-deprecation as a means to get an evaluator to feel sorry for, be nurturant toward, or mentor the supplicant. The supplicant advertises his or her weaknesses to elicit helpful responses from a more competent other. However, as described by Jones and Pittman, supplication is a statement of inability used to persuade others to nurture the supplicant or carry out some task beyond the scope of the supplicant's ability. We believe that the sandbagger, in contrast, claims less ability not to evoke feelings of sympathy or to avoid performing but instead to reduce performance pressure and appear competent following successful performance.

Sandbagging also shares some features of self-handicapping (Berglas & Jones, 1978; Jones & Berglas, 1978; see Higgins, Snyder, & Berglas, 1990, for a review). Both the self-handicapper and the sandbagger engage in what might be termed negative self-presentations prior to an upcoming performance. Both the sandbagger and the self-handicapper create the belief in an audience that a poor performance is forthcoming. There are, however, important differences between these two types of self-presentations. The self-handicapper either creates or claims impediments to success on an upcoming

performance. In this way, the self-handicapper may avoid negative ability attributions following failure and benefit from enhanced ability attributions following success. The sandbagger, however, may not create or claim such impediments to success. Instead, the sandbagger simply claims or demonstrates low levels of ability. Thus, the sandbagger may offer the potential explanation for a subsequent failure (i.e., lack of ability) that the self-handicapper is striving to avoid. An additional distinction between self-handicapping and sandbagging is that self-handicappers are often uncertain of their ability to succeed on an upcoming task (cf. Berglas & Jones, 1978). In contrast, we believe that the sandbagger may engage in sandbagging even when relatively confident of his or her abilities to perform a task.

Finally, sandbagging resembles defensive pessimism (Norem & Cantor, 1986a, 1986b). Norem and Cantor (1986b) describe defensive pessimism as “setting unrealistically low expectations in a risky situation in an attempt to harness anxiety so that performance is unimpaired” (p. 1208). A key difference, however, between our conception of sandbagging and defensive pessimism is that defensive pessimists actually convince themselves that poor performance is a possibility and use this uncertainty as a tool to motivate them to prepare for task performance. Sandbaggers, in contrast, do not necessarily convince themselves that poor performance is forthcoming but rather attempt to manipulate audience expectations for their benefit.

Thus, sandbagging may be similar in some respects to modesty, supplication, self-handicapping, and defensive pessimism. Each of these strategies involves a form of negative self-presentation in which the self-presenter denigrates his or her performance in some way. These similarities make it possible in some situations for the lines between these different types of self-presentation and sandbagging to be blurred. Nevertheless, it seems clear that sandbagging is conceptually distinct from each of the other constructs.

Sandbagging Strategies

The goal of sandbagging is to reduce observer's expectations for performance. This goal can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The sandbagger can strategically fail; understate his or her skills, abilities, or effort; or simply make a false prediction for performance.

Strategic failure. The most active form of sandbagging involves intentionally demonstrating poor performance. Although they did not call the behavior sandbagging, Baumgardner and Brownlee (1987) found that participants high in social anxiety were likely to engage in strategic failure in front of an audience with unrealistically high expectations for the participants' performance.

Baumgardner and Brownlee argued that uncertainty about being able to recreate successful performance and live up to high audience expectations can lead to strategic failure. We propose that strategic failure is a type of sandbagging not limited to situations in which individuals are experiencing high levels of uncertainty about their ability. Under the right circumstances, people may sandbag even when they are confident that they possess the ability to perform well on a task. The pool shark, for example, is a confident sandbagger.

Understating skills and abilities. People can sandbag by claiming that they do not possess the intellectual, athletic, or social abilities necessary to perform well. Similarly, they can sandbag by claiming to lack the knowledge, skills, training, or experience needed to perform well. Thus, rather than overtly demonstrating inability through strategic failure, the sandbagger may instead simply claim inability prior to performance. Lou Holtz, the former Notre Dame football coach, is widely known for this form of sandbagging. For example, prior to a difficult stretch of games in the 1993 season, Holtz stated, “We’re not a good enough football team to play the people we have to play” (Hoffer, 1993). At the time, Holtz's Fighting Irish football team was 5-0 and was ranked 4th in the country.

A closely related form of sandbagging that can be used in competitive settings involves artificially inflating expectations for the performance of your opponent. In other words, a sandbagger may exaggerate the skills and abilities of an opponent to reduce expectations for the performance of the sandbagger. The difference between sandbagging by claiming inability and sandbagging by claiming high levels of ability for an opponent may be seen as analogous to the differences between self-handicapping and what Shepperd and Arkin (1991) term “behavioral other-enhancement.” Whereas self-handicapping involves creating impediments to performance, behavioral other-enhancement involves creating competitive advantages for an opponent. The self-handicapper hopes that this advantaging of an opponent will protect against negative ability attributions should he or she lose to the opponent. Thus, just as self-handicappers may serve their attributional goals by focusing on either their own performance obstacles or their opponents' performance advantages, sandbaggers may serve their goal of reducing performance pressure by focusing on their own inabilities or their opponent's abilities.

Predicting poor performance. Although strategic failure and claims of inability may successfully reduce audience expectations, there are some potential costs to these forms of sandbagging. Intentional failure is a less appealing option when each performance is highly valued, and

claims of inability may pose a threat to self-esteem if carried out for extended periods of time. A less extreme and perhaps more common type of sandbagging involves the simple prediction of performance at a level lower than the sandbagger has performed in the past. This strategy may be particularly useful when the audience has no information about past performance. Because evidence of a prior success may be seen as an accurate predictor of future performance, the sandbagger's performance predictions may be less credible when the audience is aware of previous performances. If an audience has no prior performance information on which to base expectations, however, the sandbagger's prediction of a performance level below his or her previous performance may successfully lower audience expectations. This strategy may be attractive because it lacks the difficulty of intentionally failing or the potential damage to self-esteem of overt statements of inability. The current research is designed to explore this form of sandbagging.

Individual Differences in Sandbagging

Despite the potential benefits of sandbagging, there are also some potential costs. First, hypothesis confirmation processes may lead an audience with low performance expectations to seek evidence of poor performance (cf. Snyder & Swann, 1978) or to even behave in ways that might elicit poor performance from the sandbagger (i.e., a self-fulfilling prophecy) (Darley & Fazio, 1980; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977). Second, a sandbagger may run the risk of coming to believe her or his negative self-presentation and perform poorly as a result (cf. Rhodewalt & Agustdotir, 1986). And third, exceeding audience expectations to a great degree can lead to judgments that the sandbagger is manipulative or dishonest. For some, these potential costs may outweigh the potential benefits of sandbagging. We would argue, therefore, that only some individuals are drawn to sandbagging as a self-presentational strategy. Who, then, is likely to find sandbagging a tempting alternative? First, as implied in our discussion of performance pressure, those individuals who are particularly sensitive to or dislike performance pressure are likely to sandbag. There are a number of individual difference measures that may be related to this tendency. For example, Baumgardner and Brownlee's (1987) research would suggest that individuals high in social anxiety are more sensitive to high audience expectations and performance pressure. Similarly, individuals with low self-esteem are more vulnerable to threats and stressful events than are individuals with high self-esteem (cf. Spencer,

Josephs, & Steele, 1993). Therefore, the threat of high audience expectations may lead to discomfort for those with low self-esteem and cause them to engage in sandbagging as a way to reduce such discomfort. Dispositional self-consciousness (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975) may also be related to an individual's discomfort with performance pressure. Individuals high in public self-consciousness are concerned about how an audience may evaluate them. These people may thus be more sensitive to the expectations of others.

A second potential factor in an individual's tendency to sandbag is his or her conception of the potential self-presentational benefits of sandbagging. Some individuals may feel that audience evaluations will be higher if they can surpass the expectations of the audience, whereas others may feel that setting high goals will be seen as a positive characteristic, even if they do not achieve those goals. Based on this analysis of the tendencies that may lead to sandbagging, we undertook the creation of a new scale designed to identify individuals likely to sandbag.

The Current Research

The goal of the current set of studies is to demonstrate that sandbagging occurs in evaluative settings, to create a measure that will identify those individuals who are likely to engage in sandbagging, and to identify some of the social determinants of sandbagging.

Study 1 presents data on the reliability and convergent validity of the newly created Sandbagging Scale. In Study 2, we present evidence of the predictive validity of the Sandbagging Scale and explore the role that performance pressure and audience expectations play in sandbagging. We test the hypothesis that people with higher scores on our scale will be more likely to sandbag when they are experiencing performance pressure. In Study 3, we examine the role that audience information about past performance plays in sandbagging. We test the hypothesis that individuals will be less likely to sandbag when they know that the audience has information about the individual's past performance on the task in question.

STUDY 1

Study 1 was undertaken to create and validate the Sandbagging Scale. Twenty-five items designed to measure the tendency to sandbag were included in a packet of questionnaires and distributed to introductory psychology students. Included in the packet of questionnaires were scales that shared some conceptual overlap with the sandbagging construct. The scales included the Self-Consciousness Scale, which includes subscales measuring public self-consciousness, private self-consciousness, and

social anxiety (Fenigstein et al., 1975); the Janis-Field Scale, which is a measure of self-esteem (see Eagly, 1967); and the Self-Handicapping Scale (Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982; Rhodewalt, 1990). We predicted that sandbagging would be positively related to self-handicapping, self-consciousness, and social anxiety and negatively related to self-esteem.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 485 participants (194 men and 291 women) were drawn from four separate undergraduate introductory psychology courses. Participants received extra course credit for completing the packet of questionnaires.

Procedure

In mass testing sessions early in the semester, participants completed a survey that included questionnaires relevant to the current research and others used as screening measures for unrelated research. Participants were told that the questionnaires would be used to screen them for potential inclusion in other research later in the semester. A subsample of participants ($n = 130$) completed the Sandbagging Scale for a second time 6 weeks after completing the entire packet of questionnaires. These participants completed the Sandbagging Scale after one of their class sessions and received further extra credit. The questionnaires of interest in the current research included the Self-Handicapping Scale (Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982); the Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein et al., 1975); the revised Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale, which is a measure of self-esteem (Eagly, 1967); and 25 items designed to measure sandbagging. Items were generated in an attempt to represent the two hypothesized motivations for sandbagging (i.e., dislike of performance pressure and desire to exceed expectations) and to represent the behavioral tendency to sandbag. Items that would be endorsed by high sandbaggers were sought, as were items that would be endorsed by low sandbaggers. A 6-point Likert-type response scale was used; the scale was anchored by the terms *disagree very much* (1) and *agree very much* (6).

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

We examined the distribution of scores for each of the 25 items in the Sandbagging Scale. We summed the items in the Sandbagging Scale (reverse scoring negatively worded items) and computed item to total correlations. Thirteen items were eliminated because they either (a) had extremely low variance, (b) were not normally distributed, (c) had low correlations with other

items, or (d) had nonsignificant item to total correlations.

A total sandbagging score was computed for each participant by summing the participant's responses to the 12 remaining items in the Sandbagging Scale. The mean of the scale was 49.83 ($SD = 7.09$), and the median was 49.0. Scores ranged from 24 to 69. The scale was not significantly skewed ($skew = -.22$, $SE skew = .11$) or kurtotic ($kurtosis = .688$, $SE kurtosis = .69$). The mean score for men ($M = 50.61$, $SD = 6.98$) was significantly higher than the mean for women ($M = 49.31$, $SD = 7.14$), $F(1, 482) = 3.94$, $p < .05$. The distribution of the Sandbagging Scale scores was not substantially different for men and women.

Factor Analysis

The remaining 12 items were submitted to a confirmatory factor analysis using the LISREL 8 computer package (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993). Each item was constrained to load only on its associated factor. These factors were determined a priori based on the two hypothesized motivations for sandbagging (desire to reduce pressure and desire to exceed expectations) and the behavioral tendency to sandbag. Of the 12 items on the final scale, 6 were from the pressure factor, 4 were from the exceeding expectations factor, and 2 were from the behavior factor. The three factors were allowed to correlate. The covariance matrix for the 12 items was used as input for the analysis, which used the maximum likelihood method for parameter estimation. Results of this analysis suggest that the three-factor model provides an adequate fit for the data, $\chi^2(51) = 355.8$, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = .89. Factor loadings are reported in Table 1.

In addition to the three-factor model, one- and two-factor models also were fit to the data to ensure that the three-factor model provided the best fit. As discussed in Christiansen, Lovejoy, Szymanski, and Lang (1996), the one- and two-factor models are nested within the more general three-factor model and therefore the change in chi-square provides a test of whether the three-factor model is preferred. The fit of the single-factor model was significantly worse than that of the three-factor model, $\chi^2(54) = 774.3$, GFI = .77, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 418.5$, $p < .001$. Similarly, a two-factor model (with the two behavioral items allowed to load on the exceeding expectations subscale) fit significantly worse than the three-factor model, $\chi^2(53) = 477.3$, GFI = .86, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 121.5$, $p < .001$.

Internal Consistency and Reliability

The total 12-item Sandbagging Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .74$), the Pressure subscale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$), the Exceeding Expectations subscale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .68$), and the Behavior subscale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .64$) had adequate internal reliability. Eliminating any individual

TABLE 1: Study 1: Sandbagging Scale Items, Factor Loadings, and Item-Total Correlations

Scale Item	M	SD	Factor Loading			Item-Total Correlation
			1	2	3	
1. It's better for people to expect less of you even if you know you can perform well.	3.3	1.4	.58			.42
2. The less others expect of me the better I like it.	3.3	1.4	.73			.45
3. If I tell others my true ability, I feel added pressure to perform well.	4.5	1.2	.46			.52
4. The less others expect of me the more comfortable I feel.	3.8	1.3	.82			.52
5. I may understate my abilities to take some of the pressure off.	4.0	1.0	.54			.51
6. When someone has high expectations of me I feel uncomfortable.	4.0	1.2	.54			.37
7. I try to perform above others' expectations.	4.7	1.1		.28		.20
8. It's important that I surpass people's expectations for my performance.	4.4	1.1		.41		.27
9. I like others to be surprised by my performance.	4.7	1.0		.77		.37
10. I enjoy seeing others surprised by my abilities.	4.9	1.0		.80		.35
11. I will understate my ability in front of my opponent(s).	4.1	1.1			.71	.27
12. I understate my skills, ability, or knowledge.	4.0	1.1			.66	.26

NOTE: Participants responded to each statement on a 6-point scale. The scale was anchored with the following verbal descriptions: 1 (*disagree very much*), 2 (*disagree pretty much*), 3 (*disagree a little*), 4 (*agree a little*), 5 (*agree pretty much*), and 6 (*agree very much*). Item-to-total correlations are between each item and the overall Sandbagging Scale, and all are significant at or above the .001 level.

item would have reduced the reliability of the overall scale.

A comparison of total Sandbagging Scale scores for participants who completed the scale twice (6 weeks apart) suggested that the overall scale had good test-retest reliability, $r(129) = .69, p < .001$. Similarly, the Pressure, $r(129) = .70, p < .001$, Exceeding Expectations, $r(129) = .66, p < .001$, and Behavior, $r(129) = .51, p < .001$, subscales had adequate test-retest reliability. There were no significant gender differences in the reliability of the scales.

Convergent Validity

To assess the convergent validity of the Sandbagging Scale, correlations were computed between the total Sandbagging Scale, each of the subscales, and the other scales included in the questionnaire. Although a number of correlations reached significance, the effect sizes were relatively small, indicating that the Sandbagging Scale was tapping a construct independent of the other scales (see Table 2). The relationships among these constructs were interesting, however.

Self-Handicapping Scale. As predicted, sandbagging and self-handicapping were significantly related, $r(480) = .29, p < .001$ (see Table 2). The pressure, $r(482) = .34, p < .001$, and to a lesser degree, the behavioral aspects of sandbagging, $r(481) = .11, p < .02$, also were positively related to self-handicapping. The exceeding expectations subscale was not significantly related to self-handicapping.

Self-esteem. As predicted, the Sandbagging Scale was negatively correlated with the Janis-Field Scale, $r(475) = -.25, p < .001$ (see Table 2). Self-esteem was most negatively related to the Pressure subscale, $r(478) = -.32, p <$

.001, was not related to the Exceeding Expectations subscale and was somewhat negatively related to the Behavior subscale, $r(477) = -.15, p < .001$.

Self-consciousness. As predicted, the Sandbagging Scale was significantly related to public self-consciousness, $r(483) = .23, p < .001$, and significantly (although modestly) related to private self-consciousness, $r(480) = .12, p < .05$, and social anxiety, $r(480) = .15$ (see Table 2). The Pressure subscale was related to public self-consciousness, $r(485) = .17, p < .001$, and social anxiety, $r(485) = .20, p < .001$. Exceeding Expectations subscale was related to private self-consciousness, $r(481) = .17, p < .001$, and public self-consciousness, $r(484) = .23, p < .01$. The Behavior subscale was not strongly related to any of the self-consciousness subscales.

Discussion

The items included in the final version of the Sandbagging Scale demonstrated adequate internal consistency and test-retest reliability. In addition, the scale possessed good convergent validity when compared with the other scales we examined. The final scale was related to those scales that shared some conceptual overlap with sandbagging. For example, both self-handicapping and sandbagging are negative self-presentational strategies that are used prior to task performance, and these measures were positively correlated. Similarly, social anxiety and self-esteem are conceptually related to sandbagging in that individuals high in social anxiety or low in self-esteem are particularly likely to view performance situations as opportunities to fail, even when they possess the ability to perform well. Again, the relationships were in the expected direction, with social anxiety positively related to sandbagging and self-esteem negatively

TABLE 2: Study 1: Intercorrelations Among Sandbagging, Self-Handicapping, Self-Esteem, Private Self-Consciousness, Public Self-Consciousness, and Social Anxiety

	<i>Sandbagging</i>	<i>Self-Handicapping</i>	<i>Self-Esteem</i>	<i>Private Self-Consciousness</i>	<i>Public Self-Consciousness</i>	<i>Social Anxiety</i>
Sandbagging	—	.29** <i>n</i> = 480	-.25** <i>n</i> = 475	.12* <i>n</i> = 480	.23** <i>n</i> = 483	.15** <i>n</i> = 480
Self-handicapping		—	-.41** <i>n</i> = 476	.13* <i>n</i> = 480	.24** <i>n</i> = 482	.20** <i>n</i> = 482
Self-esteem			—	.02 <i>n</i> = 476	-.31** <i>n</i> = 478	-.63** <i>n</i> = 478
Private self-consciousness				—	.40** <i>n</i> = 482	.03 <i>n</i> = 482
Public self-consciousness					—	.25** <i>n</i> = 485

NOTE: Tabled values represent the Pearson's *r* value for the respective relationships. Different sample sizes reflect missing data. **p* is significant at the .05 level. ***p* is significant at the .001 level.

related to sandbagging. In all three cases, however, the correlation between sandbagging and the other constructs was moderate (self-handicapping was the variable most closely related to sandbagging but shared only 8% of its variance). Significant relationships in the expected direction also were found between sandbagging and public and private self-consciousness. Individuals high in public and in private self-consciousness were more likely to have higher scores on the Sandbagging Scale. Altogether, this pattern of results suggests that the Sandbagging Scale shares variance with those constructs that are conceptually similar but also possesses a large degree of unshared variance, indicating that it is tapping into a different construct than those measured by the other scales.

The results of Study 1 provide evidence of the reliability and the convergent validity of the Sandbagging Scale. The next two studies were undertaken to provide evidence of the predictive validity of the scale and to explore the social determinants of sandbagging.

STUDY 2

If sandbagging is done to reduce performance pressure and to enhance performance evaluations, then individuals should be most likely to sandbag when they are experiencing performance pressure. To test this hypothesis, we had participants who had already completed the Sandbagging Scale complete three practice trials on a computer game. Next, one half of the participants were told that an audience had high expectations for their performance (high pressure) and one half were told that the audience had lower expectations for their performance (low pressure). Participants were then asked to make a public prediction for how well they would perform during a test session. We hypothesized that high sandbaggers would predict worse performance

than low sandbaggers, but only in the high pressure condition, whereas low sandbaggers' performance predictions would be unaffected by performance pressure.

Method

Participants. Participants were 61 psychology students (18 male and 43 female) who participated to gain extra course credit. One participant was removed from the analyses due to failure to complete the dependent variables, leaving a total sample of 60 participants.

Procedure. A large pool of participants completed the Sandbagging Scale, the Janis-Field Scale, and the Self-Handicapping Scale during their regular class sessions early in the semester. A randomly ordered phone list was developed and potential participants were then recruited by phone to participate in a study on "video game performance." They were told that they were recruited based on their earlier completion of the mass testing questionnaires and that the experiment would involve playing a computer game and completing a brief questionnaire. The game *JezzBall* was used as the experimental task. In this game, players are faced with a number of balls bouncing around the screen and must use the computer's mouse in an attempt to capture balls in smaller and smaller blocks of the screen. This game was selected as the experimental task for two reasons. First, it is a relatively simple game that participants could grasp easily and perform immediately without extensive training. Second, although straightforward, it is a relatively uncommon game, so most participants would not have played the game prior to the experiment.

If they agreed to participate, participants were instructed to meet the experimenter at the Psychology Department's computer lab. On arriving to the experimental session, the experimenter told participants the following:

This study is designed to explore the relationship between video game performance and a newly identified ability that some researchers have called physical intelligence. Some people feel that physical intelligence is an important variable in allowing people to easily fit into social situations. In addition, preliminary research has indicated that physical intelligence may also be related to the status of the job that one will attain. In this experiment, I will attempt to estimate your physical intelligence based on your performance on a video game.

This cover story was designed to enhance participants' motivation to perform well on the game. After demonstrating how the game was played, the experimenter explained that the participant would be allowed to play three practice games prior to evaluation. The experimenter did not observe the participant while he or she played the practice games and did not express an interest in participant's practice performance. The participant was instructed to call the experimenter back to the computer when the three practice games had been completed.

After completion of the practice games, the experimenter stated that he or she needed to use the computer for a moment and asked the participant to move to another area and fill out a brief questionnaire. During this time, the experimenter surreptitiously noted the participant's three practice scores. When the participant returned, performance pressure was manipulated. Participants in the low performance pressure condition were told that while they were performing the final trial of the game, the experimenter would wait in another area of the room and that based on the participant's answers to questionnaires in the mass testing session, the experimenter expected he or she to perform at an average level on the game. Participants in the high performance pressure condition were told that the experimenter would observe them perform the final trial of the game and that their answers to the mass testing questionnaires suggested that they would do very well on the game. It is clear that by manipulating both the expected presence of an audience and the performance expectation of that audience, there is a potential confound in the performance pressure manipulation. However, it is also clear that both aspects of this manipulation are components of performance pressure. We felt that at this stage in our research, it was more important to ensure a powerful manipulation of performance pressure rather than to focus on one or the other aspect of performance pressure. For this reason, we chose to manipulate both expected presence of the audience and the expectations of the audience.

After the pressure manipulation, participants were told, "In addition to your performance on this critical trial, I will use your responses on this questionnaire to

help me evaluate your physical intelligence. Please complete the questionnaire and return it to me when you have finished." The crucial item in this questionnaire asked participants to predict the score they would achieve on the final trial of the game. After participants completed the questionnaire, the experimenter glanced over their answers and participants were then allowed to complete the final trial of the game. After completing the game, participants completed a postexperimental questionnaire that included items measuring the degree of pressure they felt to perform well, their anxiety level prior to completing the critical trial, the level of performance expected by the experimenter, and their own performance expectation. After completing this scale, they were debriefed, thanked for their participation, and excused.

Results

Preliminary analyses. Preliminary examination of the data revealed one extreme outlier in the practice game performance (her score was 7 standard deviations above the mean), so she was removed from all further analyses.

As a manipulation check, participants were asked to state whether the experimenter had expected them to perform at a low level, an average level, or a high level on the experimental task. No participants thought that the experimenter had low expectations for their performance. Overall, 88% of participants accurately recalled the experimenter's expectations.¹ Given the categorical nature of these data, we ran a 2 (expectation: average/high) \times 2 (pressure: low/high) chi-square analysis. There was a highly significant main effect for pressure, $\chi^2(1) = 39.31, p < .001$. Participants in the high pressure condition were more likely to report that the experimenter had high expectations than average expectations, whereas participants in the low pressure condition were more likely to report that the experimenter had average expectations than high expectations for their performance. This manipulation check provides evidence that the manipulation was successful.

As a secondary manipulation check, participants were asked after the experiment to report on a 7-point scale how much pressure they felt during the experiment. A *t* test comparing the high and low pressure groups showed no significant difference, $t(57) < 1$. The means, however, were in the predicted direction ($M = 4.23$ for the low pressure group and $M = 4.79$ for the high pressure group).²

We found that neither the Sandbagging Scale, Self-Handicapping Scale, nor Janis-Field Self-Esteem Scale scores were significantly correlated with the practice game scores. Furthermore, the practice performance of participants in the two pressure conditions was not significantly different.

We also tested for gender differences in practice performance, predicted performance, and the individual difference variables. There were no significant gender effects, so gender was excluded from subsequent analyses.

Predicted performance. We regressed predicted performance on sandbagging scores, a dummy-coded variable representing the performance pressure condition (average/high), and a term representing the Sandbagging \times Pressure Condition interaction. Each participant's best score on the practice tests was entered as a covariate. The overall regression was highly significant (adjusted $R^2 = .92$), $F(4, 53) = 162.96$, $p < .001$. The covariate was significant ($\beta = .98$, $p < .001$). Neither the sandbagging term nor the pressure terms were significant. Consistent with the hypothesis, however, the interaction term was significant ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .008$). In the high pressure condition, participants with higher sandbagging scores predicted lower scores than did the participants with lower sandbagging scores. This was not the case when pressure from expectations was absent. The partial correlation between sandbagging scores and predictions (controlling for practice score) was significant when pressure was present, partial $r = -.43$, $p < .01$, and nonsignificant when pressure was absent, partial $r = .31$. To illustrate the interaction, we dichotomized sandbagging scores and ran a 2 (sandbagging: low/high) \times 2 (pressure: low/high) ANCOVA, where predicted score served as the dependent measure and the best practice performance score was used as a covariate. The means for this analysis are in Table 3. Note that predicted scores are lowest in the condition where sandbagging scores are high and performance pressure is high.

As a whole, the analyses suggest that although participants scoring higher on the Sandbagging Scale did predict lower test scores than did participants who scored lower on the Sandbagging Scale, the effect was present only in the high pressure condition.

Self-esteem and self-handicapping. Both self-esteem, $r(59) = -.31$, $p < .02$, and self-handicapping, $r(57) = .55$, $p < .01$, were significantly related to sandbagging. To provide evidence that the sandbagging construct is functionally distinct from self-esteem, the regression described above was rerun and self-esteem was added as a predictor. Adding self-esteem did not significantly change the R^2 and self-esteem was not a significant predictor. Furthermore, including self-esteem as a predictor did not significantly reduce the significance of the sandbagging or the Sandbagging \times Pressure interaction terms. Similarly, when the original regression was rerun with self-handicapping added as a predictor, self-handicapping did not significantly affect the R^2 . Self-handicapping was not a significant predictor, and self-

TABLE 3: Study 2: Predicted Final Game Performance (Adjusted for Highest Practice Game Score) as a Function of Sandbagging and Performance Pressure

Performance Pressure	Sandbagging		Total
	Low	High	
Low	9,366 _a <i>SD</i> = 17,619 <i>n</i> = 15	10,110 _a <i>SD</i> = 8,551 <i>n</i> = 15	9,738 <i>n</i> = 30
High	10,426 _a <i>SD</i> = 13,744 <i>n</i> = 16	5,094 _b <i>SD</i> = 8,398 <i>n</i> = 12	7,760 <i>n</i> = 28
Total	9,896 <i>n</i> = 31	7,602 <i>n</i> = 27	8,783 <i>n</i> = 58

NOTE: Tabled values are participants' predicted final game performance adjusted for their highest practice game score. As would be expected, given the significant interaction term in the regression, the interaction here is significant, $F(1, 53) = 10.28$, $p < .002$. Different subscripts represent means different at the .01 level by tests for simple main effects. In the current study, participants' best practice scores ranged from 545 to 69,851.

handicapping did not diminish the significance of the interaction term. The analyses provide evidence that the shared variance between sandbagging, self-handicapping, and self-esteem is not driving the effects of sandbagging on predicted performance.

Discussion

Study 2 provides evidence of the predictive validity of the Sandbagging Scale. People with higher scores on the Sandbagging Scale predicted significantly lower scores on the task, but only when performance pressure was high. When participants were not directly observed by the experimenter and the experimenter expected only average performance, sandbagging scores were unrelated to performance predictions. This pattern of results is consistent with the notion that sandbagging is a self-presentational strategy used to reduce audience expectations and performance pressure.

The pattern of results also suggests that sandbagging, although related to self-esteem and self-handicapping, is different from those constructs. Participants' performance predictions were predicted by scores on the Sandbagging Scale, and this was not attenuated when scores on the Self-Handicapping Scale or the Janis-Field Scale were included as predictors.

STUDY 3

Study 2 provides evidence of the predictive validity of the Sandbagging Scale and also implicates the reduction of performance pressure as a potential explanation for sandbagging behavior. Another situational determinant of sandbagging may be an audience's access to information about the sandbagger's past performance. Prior

performance often is indicative of the level of performance one might expect in later situations (cf. J. J. Seta & Hassan, 1980). Because evidence of past performance may be seen as a predictor of future performance, the sandbagger's prediction of a lower score may influence an audience less than when such past performance is unavailable. If the sandbagger believes that the audience knows that the sandbagger has performed well in the past, then the sandbagger runs the risk that predictions of lower performance in the future will be perceived as disingenuous. In short, information regarding past performance may be seen by an audience as a more accurate basis for expectations, making sandbagging a less desirable strategy. Thus, we hypothesized that high sandbaggers will sandbag only when an audience has no knowledge of their prior performance.

Study 3 was undertaken to provide further evidence of the predictive validity of the Sandbagging Scale and to examine the influence of prior performance information as a situational determinant of sandbagging. Participants who had already taken the Sandbagging Scale completed a practice intelligence test, made a public prediction about their future performance, and then took a second test that would be evaluated by an audience who had either no knowledge or specific knowledge about the participant's performance on the practice test. To broaden the applicability of the sandbagging construct to other performance domains, we selected a verbal test as the experimental task. Participants completed tests composed of synonym problems that were similar to, but easier than, those used in the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). We hypothesized that high sandbaggers would be more likely to sandbag, but only when the audience was unaware of their prior performance levels. When the audience has access to prior performance information, we hypothesized that all participants would predict performance near their known ability level.

Method

Participants. Sixty-nine introductory psychology students (31 male and 38 female) participated in the study to receive extra course credit. Eight participants were excluded due to missing data.

Procedure. In large group testing sessions, potential participants were given a packet of questionnaires that included the Sandbagging Scale, the Self-Handicapping Scale, and the Janis-Field Self-Esteem Scale. These students were eligible to participate in the second phase of the study.

Participants were led through the experiment in groups of between 12 and 20. On arriving at the experimental session, participants were told that the study was part of a nationwide evaluation of a new test of verbal

intelligence. Furthermore, the experimenter explained that because this test would be used to measure verbal intelligence, the test developers were interested in how people would evaluate intelligence based on an individual's test performance. Therefore, participants were told that half of them would be taking the new test and the other half would be evaluating the performance of these test-takers. Each participant was then randomly paired with another participant and they exchanged names on a sheet of paper provided by the experimenter. Care was taken to ensure that the paired participants did not know one another. To increase the degree to which participants wanted to receive good evaluations from their partners, they were told that after the test was completed and the evaluation was made, they would be reunited and work together on another verbal task. In addition, participants were told that they might be contacted later in the semester to work together with their partners again.

Participants were then separated, half going to another room and half remaining in the original room. Participants in both rooms were told that they had been randomly chosen as the group to take the test and that their partners would be evaluating them. Thus, all participants believed that they were being evaluated by their partners. The test was described as a synonym test in which the test-taker must identify which of four alternatives was the word with the closest definition to a target word. A sample question with the correct answer was noted on a chalkboard. Participants were asked if they had any questions about the test or about the type of questions on the test.

The experimenters then distributed a practice test. Participants were given 8 minutes to complete the 30 synonym questions on that test (pretesting had shown that this was more than enough time to complete the test). The items on the test were designed to be relatively easy. This allowed participants to gain a degree of confidence in their performance prior to the final test. After completing the practice test, participants corrected their tests while the experimenter read the correct answers aloud. Participants then noted the number of test questions they correctly answered on the front of their practice tests and returned the tests.

After completing the practice test, participants were asked to answer questions on a "prediction sheet." Participants were told that the prediction sheet and their scores on the final test would be passed on to their evaluators to help them judge the participants' verbal intelligence. The prediction sheet allowed for the manipulation of prior performance knowledge. For some participants, the first question on the prediction sheet asked them to note their score on the practice test. For others, this question was not included. Participants were

asked to predict how many (out of 30) they thought they would get right on the final test. After participants completed the prediction sheet, the experimenter collected those sheets and left the room, ostensibly to give the prediction sheets to the participants' partners. The final test was then distributed and participants were allowed to begin working on that test. After completing the final test, participants were thanked for their participation, debriefed about the true purpose of the experiment, and excused.

Results

Preliminary analyses. We asked participants in the prior performance condition to write their practice scores on a prediction sheet. Participants in the no-prior-information condition were not asked to include their practice score on the prediction sheet. As a check of this manipulation, we examined all the prediction sheets and noted whether participants in the prior information condition appropriately noted their practice test scores. Only one participant did not complete the prediction form accurately. This participant exaggerated her practice test score and was therefore excluded from all further analyses. Thus, the manipulation of prior performance information was successful.

The distribution of the practice test scores was negatively skewed. We performed a natural log transformation in an effort to normalize the distribution of the variable. We then tested for practice test performance differences for the participants in the two information conditions. The groups were not significantly different, $F(1, 56)$, $p < 1$, *ns*. We also found that neither the Sandbagging Scale, Self-Handicapping Scale, or the Janis-Field Self-Esteem Scale scores were significantly correlated with the practice test scores. Finally, we tested for gender differences in practice performance, predicted performance, and the individual difference variables. Because there were no significant gender effects, gender was excluded from subsequent analyses.

Predicted performance. We regressed the predicted scores on Sandbagging Scale scores, a dummy-coded term indicating the prior performance information condition, and a term representing the Sandbagging \times Prior Performance Information interaction. Practice scores also were entered and served as a covariate. The overall regression was significant, $F(4, 54) = 63.73$, $p < .001$ (adjusted $R^2 = .60$). The covariate was significant ($\beta = .786$, $p < .001$). The prior performance information condition term was not significant ($\beta = -.06$, $p = ns$) but the sandbagging term was significant ($\beta = -.27$, $p < .03$). Participants with higher sandbagging scores predicted worse task performance than did participants with lower sandbagging scores. Consistent with prediction, there was a significant interaction ($\beta = .20$, $p < .03$). The partial

correlation between sandbagging scores and predictions (controlling for practice score) was greater when prior performance information was absent, partial $r = -.45$, $p < .01$, than when prior information was present, partial $r = -.001$, *ns*. As a means of illustrating this interaction, we performed a median split on the sandbagging scores and ran a 2 (information: absent/present) \times 2 (sandbagging: low/high) ANCOVA (controlling for practice scores). The means for this analysis appear in Table 4. Note that predicted scores are lowest for participants in the high sandbagging and no-prior-information cell. As a whole, the analyses suggest that participants scoring higher on the Sandbagging Scale predicted lower test scores, but only when prior performance information was absent.

To illustrate the extent of sandbagging, we calculated the difference between each participant's practice and predicted scores. These difference scores are shown in Table 5. Negative values indicate predictions lower than practice scores. Positive values indicate predictions higher than practice scores. Notice that participants scoring higher on the Sandbagging Scale predicted scores lower than their practice tests (i.e., they sandbagged), and this was most pronounced when prior performance information was absent.

Self-esteem and self-handicapping. As in the prior studies, both self-esteem, $r(59) = -.35$, $p < .01$, and self-handicapping, $r(59) = .34$, $p < .01$, were significantly related to sandbagging. To provide further evidence that the sandbagging construct is functionally distinct from self-esteem, the regression described above was rerun and self-esteem was added as a predictor. Adding self-esteem did not significantly change the R^2 and self-esteem was not a significant predictor. Furthermore, including self-esteem as a predictor did not significantly reduce the significance of the sandbagging or the Sandbagging \times Prior Performance Information interaction terms. Similarly, when the original regression was rerun with self-handicapping added as a predictor, self-handicapping did not significantly affect the R^2 . Self-handicapping was not a significant predictor, and self-handicapping did not diminish the significance of the sandbagging or the interaction terms. These analyses provide evidence that the shared variance between sandbagging, self-handicapping, and self-esteem was not driving the effects of sandbagging on predicted performance.

Discussion

The results from Study 3 provide additional evidence of the predictive validity of the Sandbagging Scale. When asked to predict their performance on an upcoming test, participants who scored higher on the Sandbagging Scale predicted significantly lower test performance, but only when the audience did not have access to their

TABLE 4: Study 3: Predicted Final Test Performance (adjusted for practice performance) as a Function of Sandbagging and Prior Performance Information

Prior Performance Information	Sandbagging		Total
	Low	High	
Absent	26.8 _a <i>SD</i> = 2.24 <i>n</i> = 11	24.8 _b <i>SD</i> = 2.45 <i>n</i> = 19	25.8 <i>n</i> = 30
Present	25.9 _a <i>SD</i> = 2.97 <i>n</i> = 15	26.0 _a <i>SD</i> = 2.68 <i>n</i> = 14	26.0 <i>n</i> = 29
Total	26.4 <i>n</i> = 26	25.4 <i>n</i> = 33	25.9 <i>n</i> = 59

NOTE: Tabled values represent the mean predicted scores adjusted for practice test performance. As would be expected, given the significant interaction term in the regression, the interaction in this analysis was significant, $F(1, 54) = 5.55, p < .03$. Different subscripts represent means different at the .01 level by tests for simple main effects.

TABLE 5: Study 3: Difference Between Predicted Scores and Practice Test Scores as a Function of Sandbagging and Prior Performance Information

Prior Performance Information	Sandbagging		Total
	Low	High	
Absent	.55 <i>SD</i> = 2.07 <i>n</i> = 11	-1.53 <i>SD</i> = 1.47 <i>n</i> = 19	-.77 <i>n</i> = 30
Present	-.60 <i>SD</i> = 1.55 <i>n</i> = 15	-.50 <i>SD</i> = 1.91 <i>n</i> = 14	-.55 <i>n</i> = 29
Total	-.12 <i>n</i> = 26	-1.09 <i>n</i> = 33	-.66 <i>n</i> = 59

NOTE: Tabled values represent the mean difference between participants' predicted scores and their practice test scores.

prior performance. These effects were not attenuated when controlling for participants' self-handicapping and self-esteem scores. This pattern of results suggests that the Sandbagging Scale explains a portion of the variance in sandbagging behavior not explained by the Self-Handicapping Scale or the Janis-Field Scale.

In addition, the pattern of results is consistent with the notion that sandbagging is a self-presentational strategy used to manipulate audience expectations and reduce performance pressure. Compared to the condition in which prior performance information was available, participants scoring higher on the Sandbagging Scale understated their performance expectations to a significantly greater degree when no prior performance

information was available. Because having access to prior performance information can significantly influence audience expectations, sandbagging should have the greatest effect on such expectations when this information is lacking.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Performance pressure is a potentially debilitating problem for those being evaluated by an audience. The results of previous research suggest that under some circumstances, increasing performance pressure leads to "choking under pressure" (cf. Baumeister, 1984; Baumeister et al., 1985). However, little research has addressed the question of what individuals may do to systematically reduce the amount of performance pressure they feel. The results of the current research suggest that some individuals, namely high sandbaggers, actively attempt to reduce performance pressure through strategic self-presentation. The Sandbagging Scale proved to be a reliable and valid predictor of this tactic. The current set of studies also identifies two situational determinants of sandbagging: Sandbaggers were more likely to understate their expected performance when performance pressure was high and when they believed that an audience had no knowledge of their prior performance. These results suggest that sandbaggers are very strategic when it comes to using sandbagging. Only when their low performance predictions could reduce audience expectations did people attempt to sandbag their audience.

Knowledge of prior performance and performance pressure are likely not the only situational factors that influence sandbagging. For example, a history of sandbagging with an audience may influence the usefulness of sandbagging in the future. Once an audience has witnessed an individual sandbag, the audience is less likely to be affected by the sandbagger's subsequent claims of inability and will instead maintain high expectations for the sandbagger's performance. Sandbaggers may realize this and reduce their sandbagging with people who have more personal experience with them. In this way, sandbagging may prove beneficial only as a short-term self-presentational tactic rather than as a long-term strategy.

Another variable likely to influence sandbagging is the value that the sandbagger places on the audience's opinion of the sandbagger's performance. It seems likely that performance pressure occurs only when the opinion of the audience is valued; therefore, sandbagging may be more likely to occur the more highly this opinion is valued. Finally, the expertise of an audience in evaluating performance may influence a sandbagger's strategy. The current research examined lowered performance predictions as a form of sandbagging. When an audience is very familiar with the range of performance possibili-

ties on a given task, the sandbagger may choose to sandbag by simply stating that he or she expects to perform poorly rather than by making a specific performance prediction.

One potential weakness in the current set of studies is that they did not examine in-depth the cognitive or affective processes that may underlie sandbagging. Future research should attempt to address the different cognitive or affective experiences of sandbaggers in performance settings that may lead them to choose different self-presentational strategies. One example of this type of research would be to examine potential differences between high and low sandbaggers in their construal of the performance situation. Low sandbaggers may construe performance situations (particularly those in which pressure is high) as exciting opportunities to demonstrate their ability, whereas high sandbaggers may view the same performance situations as unfortunate opportunities to acquire a negative identity (cf. Heaton & Sigall, 1989). Thus, low sandbaggers may view pressure situations as desirable and welcome, whereas high sandbaggers may attempt to avoid such situations whenever possible. Physiological arousal may play a role in this process. A number of studies indicate that arousal increases prior to and during an important performance (Gellatly & Meyer, 1992; Kahneman, 1973; Levenson, 1983). Furthermore, as performance becomes imminent, negative thoughts are more prevalent than when performance is distant (Gilovich, Kerr, & Medvec, 1993). If the high sandbagger views pressure situations as unfortunate opportunities to acquire a negative identity, then this arousal and concern may be experienced as negative affect, which the individual attempts to reduce by predicting lower performance levels than can be achieved. In contrast, if the low sandbagger attributes preperformance arousal to excitement or positive anticipation, then he or she would feel no need to reduce that arousal and might not make lower performance predictions. Results of some recent research support the idea that high and low sandbaggers experience pressure situations differently. Gibson and Sachau (1997) found that prior to performance, high sandbaggers reported significantly higher levels of anxiety. Furthermore, when anxiety was statistically controlled, the significant difference in predicted scores between high and low sandbaggers was attenuated to nonsignificant levels. These results suggest that high sandbaggers may indeed engage in their self-presentational strategy to regulate affect. Studies that directly manipulate arousal should further explicate the relationship between affect, arousal, and sandbagging.

In creating the Sandbagging Scale, we reasoned that some individuals may feel that exceeding an audience's expectations may lead to a more positive evaluation. This

suggests that after contrasting a performance with a lower standard, the audience may view the performance more positively. Another possibility, however, is that sandbagging may create negative expectations that the audience may then attempt to confirm (Darley & Fazio, 1980; Snyder, 1984) or that can carry over to other attributes (e.g., the halo effect) (Cooper, 1981). The current research did not examine how sandbaggers are evaluated by an audience. Future research should attempt to clarify when claims of inability would lead to expectation contrast or expectation assimilation.

Although we outline a number of different strategies available to the sandbagger, the current research used only performance predictions as a measure of sandbagging. Future research should attempt to identify under what conditions a sandbagger would choose to claim inability, claim low levels of training or skill, or intentionally fail. Any of these strategies may successfully reduce audience expectations. It may be, however, that these strategies are not equal in the eyes of the sandbagger. As noted earlier, intentional failure and claiming inability both have potential costs to the sandbagger. But if predicting lowered performance is unavailable as a potential strategy, the sandbagger may fall back on one of these other methods to manipulate audience expectations. Interestingly, self-handicapping may also successfully lower audience expectations. Even though the self-handicapper's goal may be to prevent negative attributions after a performance, the handicap may also reduce audience expectations prior to performance. Thus, if the opportunity arises, the high sandbagger may use a claimed handicap in an attempt to manipulate audience expectations. As shown in the current research, however, the reverse is not true. That is, individual differences in self-handicapping do not predict sandbagging. Given that the goal of the self-handicapper is to manipulate the attributions that follow a performance, the sandbagging strategies outlined in this research would not serve that purpose. Each sandbagging strategy could potentially lead to the negative ability attribution that the self-handicapper is attempting to avoid.

Beyond the evaluative contexts examined in the current research, it also would be instructive to more fully examine sandbagging in competitive situations. Sandbagging in these situations may have benefits beyond the pressure reduction benefits identified in the current research. For example, Shepperd and Socherman (1997) found that low Machiavellians used sandbagging in an attempt to prompt an opponent to exert less effort for the upcoming competition. Note that the goal of reducing an opponent's effort does not rule out the possibility that sandbagging in competitive settings also could occur in the service of reducing performance pressure. Both goals may be served through the same

behavior in these settings. Despite these potential advantages, sandbagging in competitive settings does present some potential drawbacks. Although performance pressure and opponent effort may be reduced, the sandbagger may fail to receive clear positive evaluations if he or she is victorious. By sandbagging an opponent, the sandbagger risks the potential attribution that victory was due not to high levels of ability but instead to reduced effort on the part of the opponent.

Additional research also is needed to examine the prevalence of sandbagging in real-world settings. For example, it might be useful to examine how high and low sandbaggers set sales, performance, or budget goals and how these goals influence subsequent performance and performance evaluation. Some research suggests that performance pressure may play a role in such goal setting. For example, Hinsz (1992) showed that knowledge of an upcoming evaluation (which may increase pressure) led to setting lower performance goals. It would be interesting to note if this effect was driven primarily by high sandbaggers. The classroom is another real-world arena in which it may be useful to study sandbagging. Many students feel pressure prior to important class-related performances, and they may sandbag to reduce that pressure. It is our view that sandbagging is a relatively ubiquitous self-presentational strategy and that by examining the operation of this strategy in work, school, and other real-world settings, we will be able to further delineate the ways that sandbaggers function and how various social and situational variables influence the sandbagger.

In conclusion, we view sandbagging as one of a large number of self-presentational options that may be used in conjunction with an important performance. Sandbaggers claim to expect worse performance than is warranted by their past performance. Others may claim to expect outstanding performance due to high ability (self-promotion), claim to have put little effort into preparing for the performance (self-handicapping), or claim to have prepared thoroughly for the performance. Each of these strategies may become appealing under different circumstances. Although a great deal of research has examined self-handicapping (cf. Higgins et al., 1990) and some research has examined self-promotion (cf. Godfrey, Jones, & Lord, 1986; Holtgraves & Srull, 1989), to our knowledge no research has addressed high effort claims as a self-presentational strategy. By viewing sandbagging as one of several strategies available to a potential self-presenter, it is our hope that future research can more accurately identify other strategies and the similarities and differences among strategies. In this way, we may be able to move toward a more thorough model of the hows, whens, and whys of self-presentation surrounding performance.

NOTES

1. Removing those participants who did not correctly identify the experimenter's expectation does not appreciably alter the results of the experiment. When doing so, the interaction effect remained significant. Therefore, these participants were retained in the main analyses reported for Study 2.

2. The timing of the measurement of this variable may have ensured that we would not identify the expected pressure effects. By asking this question at the end of the experiment, we allowed any preperformance pressure to dissipate. Furthermore, by allowing the participants an opportunity to sandbag, the high sandbaggers may have successfully reduced the pressure induced by the manipulation through their sandbagging self-presentations. Therefore, we feel that the lack of significant results associated with this manipulation check does not provide evidence that the manipulation itself failed.

REFERENCES

- Baumeister, R. F. (1984). Choking under pressure: Self-consciousness and paradoxical effects of incentives on skillful performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *46*, 610-620.
- Baumeister, R. F., Hamilton, J. C., & Tice, D. M. (1985). Public versus private expectancy of success: Confidence booster or performance pressure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *48*, 1447-1457.
- Baumgardner, A. H., & Brownlee, E. A. (1987). Strategic failure in social interaction: Evidence for expectancy disconfirmation processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *52*, 525-535.
- Berglas, S., & Jones, E. E. (1978). Drug choice as a self-handicapping strategy in response to non-contingent success. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *36*, 405-417.
- Brickman, P., & Seligman, C. (1974). Effects of public and private expectancies on attributions of competence and interpersonal attraction. *Journal of Personality*, *42*, 558-568.
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (1981). *Attention and self-regulation: A control theory approach to human behavior*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Christiansen, N. D., Lovejoy, M. C., Szymanski, J., & Lang, A. (1996). Evaluating the structural validity of measures of hierarchical models: An illustrative example using the social problem-solving inventory. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *56*, 600-625.
- Cialdini, R. B., & DeNicholas, M. E. (1989). Self-presentation by association. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *57*, 626-631.
- Cooper, W. H. (1981). Ubiquitous halo. *Psychological Bulletin*, *90*, 218-244.
- Darley, J. M., & Fazio, R. H. (1980). Expectancy confirmation processes arising in the social interaction sequence. *American Psychologist*, *35*, 867-881.
- Eagly, A. H. (1967). Involvement as a determinant of response to favorable and unfavorable information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology Monographs*, *7*, (3, Pt. 1).
- Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M. F., & Buss, A. H. (1975). Public and private self-consciousness: Assessment and theory. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *43*, 522-527.
- Frey, D. (1978). Reactions to success and failure in public and private conditions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *14*, 172-179.
- Gellatly, I. R., & Meyer, J. P. (1992). The effects of goal difficulty on physiological arousal, cognition, and task performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *77*, 694-704.
- Gibson, B., & Sachau, D. A. (1997, May). *Mood of high and low sandbaggers in performance settings*. Poster session presented at the 69th annual meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago.
- Gilovich, T., Kerr, M., & Medvec, V. H. (1993). Effect of temporal perspective on subjective confidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *64*, 552-560.
- Godfrey, D. K., Jones, E. E., & Lord, C. G. (1986). Self-promotion is not ingratiating. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *50*, 106-115.
- Gould, R., Brounstein, P. J., & Sigall, H. (1977). Attributing ability to an opponent: Public aggrandizement and private denigration. *Sociometry*, *40*, 254-261.

- Heaton, A. W., & Sigall, H. (1989). The "championship choke" revisited: The role of fear of acquiring a negative identity. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 19*, 1019-1033.
- Higgins, R. L., Snyder, C. R., & Berglas, S. (1990). *Self-handicapping: The paradox that isn't*. New York: Plenum.
- Hinsz, V. B. (1992). Social influences on goal choices of group members. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 22*, 1296-1317.
- Hoffer, R. (1993, October 11). Poor Lou. *Sports Illustrated, 79*(15), 84-86.
- Holtgraves, T., & Srull, T. K. (1989). The effects of positive self-descriptions on impressions: General principles and individual differences. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 15*, 452-462.
- Jones, E. E., & Berglas, S. (1978). Control of attributions about the self through self-handicapping strategies: The appeal of alcohol and the role of underachievement. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 4*, 200-206.
- Jones, E. E., Gergen, K. J., & Jones, R. G. (1963). Tactics of ingratiation among leaders and subordinates in a status hierarchy. *Psychological Monographs, 77*, (3, Whole No. 566).
- Jones, E. E., & Pittman, T. S. (1982). Toward a general theory of strategic self-presentation. In J. Suls (Ed.), *Psychological perspectives on the self* (Vol. 1, pp. 231-262). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Jones, E. E., & Rhodewalt, F. (1982). *The Self-Handicapping Scale*. (Available from Frederick Rhodewalt, Department of Psychology, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT)
- Joreskog, K. G., & Sorbom, D. (1993). *LISREL 8 user's reference guide*. Chicago: Scientific Software.
- Kahneman, D. (1973). *Attention and effort*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Levenson, R. W. (1983). Personality research and psychophysiology: General consideration. *Journal of Research in Personality, 17*, 1-21.
- Miller, R. S., & Schlenker, B. R. (1985). Egotism in group members: Public and private attributions of responsibility for group performance. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 48*, 85-89.
- Murphy, K. R., Balzer, W. K., Lockhart, M. C., & Eisenmann, E. J. (1985). Effects of previous performance on evaluations of present performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 70*, 72-84.
- Norem, J. K., & Cantor, N. (1986a). Anticipatory and post hoc cushioning strategies: Optimism and defensive pessimism in "risky" situations. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 10*, 347-362.
- Norem, J. K., & Cantor, N. (1986b). Defensive pessimism: Harnessing anxiety as motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 1208-1217.
- Rhodewalt, F. (1990). Self-handicappers: Individual differences in the preference for anticipatory self-protective acts. In R. Higgins, C. R. Snyder, & S. Berglas (Eds.), *Self-handicapping: The paradox that isn't*. New York: Plenum.
- Rhodewalt, F., & Agustdottir, S. (1986). Effects of self-presentation on the phenomenal self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*, 47-55.
- Schlenker, B. R., & Leary, M. R. (1982). Audiences' reactions to self-enhancing, self-denigrating, and accurate self-presentations. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 18*, 89-104.
- Seta, C. E., & Seta, J. J. (1995). When audience presence is enjoyable: The influences of audience awareness of prior success on performance and task interest. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 16*, 95-108.
- Seta, J. J., & Hassan, R. K. (1980). Awareness of prior success or failure: A critical factor in task performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39*, 70-76.
- Shepperd, J. A., & Arkin, R. M. (1991). Behavioral other-enhancement: Strategically obscuring the link between performance and evaluation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*, 79-88.
- Shepperd, J. A., & Socherman, R. E. (1997). On the manipulative behavior of low Machiavellians: Feigning incompetence to "sandbag" and opponent. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72*, 1448-1459.
- Siegal, M. (1992). The effect of rater expectations on the evaluation of a hypothetical subordinate. *Journal of Psychology, 126*, 453-463.
- Snyder, M. (1984). When belief creates reality. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 25, pp. 67-114). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Snyder, M., & Swann, W. B. (1978). Behavioral confirmation in social interaction: From social perception to social reality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36*, 1202-1212.
- Snyder, M., Tanke, E. D., & Berscheid, E. (1977). Social perception and interpersonal behavior: On the self-fulfilling nature of social stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35*, 656-666.
- Spencer, S. J., Josephs, R. A., & Steele, C. M. (1993). Low self-esteem: The uphill struggle for self-integrity. In R. Baumeister (Ed.), *Self-esteem: The puzzle of low self-regard* (pp. 21-36). New York: Plenum.
- Stires, L. K., & Jones, E. E. (1969). Modesty versus self-enhancement as alternative forms of ingratiation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 5*, 172-188.
- Zanna, M. P., Sheras, P. L., Cooper, J., & Shaw, C. (1975). Pygmalion and Galatea: The interactive effect of teacher and student expectancies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 11*, 279-287.

Received February 3, 1997

Revision accepted October 20, 1998