
Self-Presentation and Legal Socialization in Society: Available Messages about Personal Tax Audits

Loretta J. Stalans

Karyl A. Kinsey

Research has shown that direct experience of legal authorities' unfairness or rudeness lowers unfairly treated individuals' support for legal authorities in general and fosters noncompliance with laws. Many people, however, get information about legal authorities and institutions indirectly through conversations with others. To highlight the possible ripple effects of specific enforcement contacts on the general population's support for authorities, we compare what taxpayers said happened in their tax audit interviews with what they tell other members of their social network. Because people are most concerned about others' image of them, this motivation for communication often weakens a bias toward negative messages. Our findings demonstrate that messages about fairness of decisionmaking, favorability of outcomes, and dignity more closely approximate the distribution of the sample of audited taxpayers' perceptions. We found support, however, for a bias toward negative messages in two situations: messages about instrumental quality and in the rare circumstance when taxpayers received undignified treatment and favorable outcomes. In this circumstance, the message does not have connotations for one's own image. We discuss the implications for legal socialization and the reservoir of societal support for legal authorities and institutions.

The beliefs of ordinary citizens about the effectiveness and fairness of law enforcement contribute to support for authority (Easton 1965; Levi 1988; Tyler 1990; Weber 1947) and to compliance with laws (Cohn & White 1990; Tyler 1990). Procedural justice research has examined the criteria people use to evaluate their encounters with authorities and how these evaluations af-

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fect individuals' own willingness to comply with authorities' decisions and laws (for a review see Lind & Tyler 1988; Tyler & Lind 1992). Evaluations of fairness and effectiveness may also influence other societal members' support for authorities and willingness to comply with laws (Cohn & White 1990; Kinsey 1992; Stalans 1992b; Stalans, Kinsey, & Smith 1991). Many people have no actual personal experience with law enforcement; for them, conversations with members of their social network¹ are the primary source of information about legal institutions and compliance norms (see Williams & Hawkins 1986; Levine & Tapp 1977; Stalans et al. 1991).² Until recently, empirical research on the content of conversations about encounters with authorities has been sparse (Bies & Moag 1986; Cohn & White 1990; Kinsey 1992; Stalans 1992c, 1993; Stalans et al. 1991; Tyler 1990). Indeed, most research on compliance has treated the content of communication as unproblematic, a virtual "black box" connecting the details of specific legal encounters to societal beliefs about enforcement.

Our empirical research reported here addresses the kinds of messages that people who have direct personal experiences with tax audits spread to other community members about tax auditors and tax audits. We, however, think the findings are applicable to other types of interaction with authorities because encounters between taxpayers and auditors during tax audits have several important features in common with other encounters between citizens and legal authorities. Procedural justice research conducted across many legal arenas has shown that several features of an encounter with authorities have important effects on citizens' evaluations of fairness and support for authorities. Dignity and decisionmaking fairness (i.e., neutrality) are important features across all interactions between authorities and community members (Lind & Tyler 1988; Tyler & Lind 1992). Whether authorities treat individuals with dignity conveys to individuals whether they are respected members of society (Tyler & Lind 1992).³ The importance of instrumental quality such as influence

¹ Here we use the terms "societal" and "community" to refer to effects at the group or social network level. We use "individual" to refer to effects at the individual level of analyses.

² In addition, communication about tax auditors may affect beliefs about and support for other legal authorities in certain situations. Stalans (1994a) found that respondents who had no direct experience with tax audits used conversations about police officers to form beliefs about the fairness and politeness of auditors (an unfamiliar authority); thus, communication about one authority group may affect beliefs about another unfamiliar authority group when individuals have no direct experience with the authority group.

³ As Tyler and Lind (1992:141; sources omitted) state:

Information about standing—i.e., status recognition—is often communicated to people by the interpersonal quality of their treatment by those in a position of authority. In particular, when one is treated politely and with dignity and when respect is shown for one's rights and opinions, feelings of positive social standing are enhanced On the other hand, undignified, disrespectful, or

over the decision (e.g., whether an authority negotiates or asserts a position) and timeliness on individuals' overall evaluations, however, varies across situations. For individuals' overall evaluations, influence over the decision is more important in dispute arenas such as trials than in nondispute arenas such as police stops (Tyler 1990), and timeliness is more important as the uncertainty about the outcome increases (Stalans & Smith 1992).

Because individuals communicate their evaluations, the same criteria shown to be important in evaluations of personal encounters in specific contexts (e.g., fairness, dignity, instrumentality) also may be central features of the messages spread through social networks. These messages may allow direct enforcement encounters to have effects on societal members who lack direct experience with authorities. We examine here the nature of messages spread through social networks by taxpayers who have been audited by a state income tax agency. We focus our conceptual argument and empirical tests at the group level of analysis, examining in particular the pool of messages available to community members, whether that pool more closely approximates the actual distribution of positive and negative aspects of legal encounters, and when the pool is biased toward messages that convey to others that the encounters are ineffective and unfair.⁴ We examine how the type of message, the audience, and alienation determine whether messages will be biased toward negative evaluations. We also examine the dispersion of different messages across the speaker's social network to assess the prevalence of different types of messages at the societal level. In the sections that follow, we first describe prior research on how communication affects compliance and then present our theoretical framework that delineates two main purposes of conversations: to manage impressions and to release frustrations. We then describe our sample and measures, test our hypotheses, and reflect on the implications of the patterns of communications that we find in our data.

impolite treatment by an authority carries the implication that one is not a full member of the group, and this is very threatening indeed."

Furthermore Cohn and White (1990) highlight that Goffman's (1967) model of the interaction ritual is embedded in all interactions and can be applied to the relationship between authorities and community members. Goffman argues that interactions are a ceremony based on mutual deference and demeanor.

⁴ We do not examine the role of talk with tax practitioners here, primarily because taxpayers are more likely to be the recipients rather than the communicators of tax enforcement information to tax experts.

I. Prior Research on Communication about Legal Institutions and Compliance Norms

A. Effects of Conversations on Individuals' Beliefs and Compliance Attitudes

Legal socialization theories (Easton 1965; Levine & Tapp 1977), social learning theories (e.g., Akers 1985), and deterrence theory (Geerken & Gove 1975) highlight the pivotal role of communication. Conversations about personal legal experiences may foster or reduce the reserve of societal support for authorities (Bies & Moag 1986), deter or exacerbate overall noncompliance among group members (Cohn & White 1990; Kinsey 1992; Stalans 1992c), and counteract media stories of the more extreme, negative aspects of legal institutions (Stalans 1993). Conversations with co-workers also provide realistic information that the likelihood of official detection and punishment is low (e.g., Ekland-Olson, Lieb, & Zurcher 1984; Mason 1987; Stalans et al. 1991). They also provide a means for people to sanction behaviors that violate social norms and to reinforce illegal behaviors that are consistent with group norms (Cohn & White 1990; Grasmick & Bursik 1990; Stalans et al. 1991; Williams & Hawkins 1986). A panel study of Long Island (NY) taxpayers buttresses the claim that communication affects attitudes toward compliance: Discussion about taxes with family members and peers was the most important predictor of change in the perceived likelihood of detection by tax agencies and attitudes about complying with tax laws (Steenbergen, McGraw, & Scholz 1992).

B. Available Messages at the Group Level

The content of conversations about legal experiences has been primarily assessed by asking respondents what they have heard from others (e.g., Kinsey 1992; Stalans et al. 1991; Stalans 1992c; Steenbergen et al. 1992). The apparent bias toward communication of messages about unfair decisions suggested by prior survey data (Kinsey 1992; Stalans 1992b) may have resulted from several methodological weaknesses in these studies. Reliance on survey reports of what people have heard from others confounds the transmission and availability of messages with the listener's attention, interpretation, and recall of messages (Stalans 1993; for a review of social cognition research see Fiske & Taylor 1991). People may selectively attend to information that confirms prior beliefs or rationalizes noncompliance behavior (Fiske & Taylor 1991); the concentration of an apparent bias toward stories about unfair decisions among noncompliant taxpayers (Kinsey 1992; Stalans 1992c) suggests support for selective attention. Moreover, people may be exposed to stories about fair

and unfair outcomes but recall more easily the stories about unfair outcomes; this effect is known as biased recall (Stalans 1993).

Alternatively, people who have encounters with authorities may be more likely to talk about unfair outcomes and to talk to a greater number of people. This process, which we call the catharsis hypothesis, suggests that biases arise because speakers selectively tell certain stories to release anger and frustration (Kinsey 1992). Survey data about what individuals have heard provides a very indirect test about what people tell others about their personal legal experiences (i.e., transmission). To examine the transmission process requires a different methodology, one that focuses on the experiences of people who have encountered authorities and that compares what these people believe about their own encounters with what they communicate to others. We compare what people said happened in their audits (i.e., their perceptions) with what they told others (i.e., messages).

II. Theoretical Framework

Our theoretical framework and hypotheses concern the communication of messages about law enforcement, specifically tax audits, and whether communication creates a favorable or unfavorable bias at the group level of analysis. We believe that communication has an important effect at the group level. Symbolic interactionists (Stryker & Statham 1985) and researchers studying the connection between social relations and ideology (Harrington & Merry 1988; Sarat & Felstiner 1988) assert that communication is the fabric of society because it allows people to construe a shared understanding of reality. Harrington and Merry (1988), for example, demonstrate how different factions of the reform movement for mediation reinterpreted the same symbol and came to share a common belief that consensual justice is a central feature of community mediation. Communicated messages often serve to create societal consensus about beliefs about how different authority groups *will* and *should* act toward citizens.

We start with a basic assumption of the group-value model (Lind & Tyler 1988): Taxpayers share aspects of their personal enforcement experiences with others because they value participating and belonging to social groups. Interpersonal communication is analogous to a "game" (Higgins 1981; Higgins, Fondacaro, & McCann 1981; Kraut & Higgins 1984) in that speakers and listeners are active participants who follow rules and social norms of conversations (e.g., Grice 1975; Higgins 1981). Speakers, for example, try to avoid providing information that listeners already have and listeners assume that speakers are not being redundant (Grice 1975).

We assume that communication is purposive behavior. Speakers plan their messages and modify both messages and goals as new information is obtained during the course of the interaction (Hobbs & Evans 1980). In particular, people communicate about their experiences with legal authorities to achieve several goals (Higgins 1981; Kraut & Higgins 1984). In accordance with a long tradition of research on symbolic interactionism (e.g., Cohn & White 1990; Goffman 1959, 1967; Stryker & Statham 1985), we assume that a speaker's goals include understanding how the speaker is perceived and attempting to project a favorable image (Stryker & Statham 1985).

A. Two Conversational Goals and Their Hypotheses

According to symbolic interactionism, communication is important because of the information and the impression of the speaker that it conveys (Goffman 1959:243; for recent supportive research on impression management see Fiske & Taylor 1991). We label this the "impression management perspective." The impression management hypothesis is that negative messages will be communicated only when they may not discredit the speaker's honesty or integrity and that, other things being equal, positive messages will be communicated to boost self-image. Furthermore, the pool of available messages at the societal level will more closely approximate the distribution of perceived experiences of audited taxpayers rather than be skewed toward negative messages. According to Goffman's (1959) impression management perspective, most individuals are insecure about their self-image and the image they convey to others. Because of this insecurity, individuals may desire to discuss their experiences. Because negative messages sometimes can be framed to protect the speaker's image and speakers desire communication to ease insecurities, the impression management hypothesis also predicts that both the positive and negative perceptions of individuals will similarly affect whether taxpayers decide to talk at all about their audit or to refrain from telling others.

The absence of significant differences between the distribution of audited taxpayers' evaluations and their messages to others will be consistent with the impression management hypothesis but, nonetheless, cannot provide convincing support for it. The logic of significance testing precludes the possibility of proving the null hypothesis. The impression management hypothesis, however, can be restated and more rigorously tested using conventional statistical theory. The restated impression management hypothesis is: After controlling for the effects of noticing negative features, taxpayers who noticed positive aspects will be more likely to talk about their audit than will those who did not notice any positive aspects. The null hypothesis, which

supports a catharsis interpretation, is: After controlling for the effects of noticing negative features, noticing positive features will not have a significant effect on whether taxpayers talk.

Alternatively, people are affective beings and may share stories about their legal experiences to release frustration; thus, negative messages will predominate (e.g., Kinsey 1992). We label this the “catharsis hypothesis.” We propose that impression management takes precedence over catharsis and shapes what people reveal about their audit experience and how they frame the message. Thus, we argue that there is a strong desire to project a positive image of oneself, which moderates any bias toward negative messages that may result from “catharsis.”

B. When Speakers Desire to Manage Impressions

Whether impression management matters to speakers depends on several contextual features of the interaction and the personal experience. In the following paragraphs, we examine three factors that may determine when impression management is a primary concern: (a) whether prior experiences with authorities have alienated an individual; (b) the type of message being conveyed; and (c) the audience to whom the speaker conveys the message.

Some prior research suggests that both impression management and catharsis may be important motives when speakers have been alienated by authorities who provide favorable outcomes but undignified treatment. For example, Stalans (1992b) found that most students heard a similar amount about polite professors as about rude professors, but students who received rude treatment and favorable grades heard substantially greater number of stories about rude professors than about polite professors. Several studies also find that people who are rudely treated see the process as more unfair when they receive favorable outcomes than when they receive unfavorable outcomes (Stalans 1992b; Stalans & Smith 1992; Tyler 1988). We hypothesize that taxpayers will be more likely to talk about unfairness when they receive favorable outcomes and undignified treatment because under such circumstances taxpayers can project an image of integrity and honesty; this hypothesis and prior research suggest an interaction between dignity and outcome favorability. Insecurity as well as anger can serve as an impetus to communicate that the auditor “challenged their integrity” but that they are honest taxpayers. The combination of rude treatment and favorable outcomes is fairly rare in tax audits, but when it happens, it conveys unambiguous information about an auditor’s disrespect for the taxpayer and may be seen as undeserved (Stalans 1992b). Moreover, taxpayers who are both rudely treated and receive unfavorable outcomes may refrain from talking about the rudeness be-

cause they fear that listeners will infer that they were dishonest tax cheats undeserving of respect.

Whether impression management matters also depends in part on the type of message being conveyed. The impression management hypothesis should apply when a speaker is describing aspects that can imply something about the speaker's own character and behavior, and should not apply when a speaker describes aspects that do not have connotations for the speaker's own image. Messages about instrumental quality such as the auditor's competence, efficiency, and flexibility do not have connotations for the speaker's own image; thus, the impression management hypothesis should not apply to messages about these qualities. Because messages about instrumental quality lack information about the speaker, catharsis of anger will predominate and will produce a skew toward a greater number of negative messages about untimely, inflexible, and incompetent auditors than about timely, flexible, and competent auditors.⁵

By contrast, messages about outcome favorability, the dignity accorded to the speaker, or the fairness of the official during the encounter can imply something about the speaker's character and behavior; thus, we hypothesize that the distribution of messages will more closely approximate the distribution of evaluations for outcome favorability, dignity, and decisionmaking fairness, which is the impression management hypothesis. What can positive and negative messages about these aspects imply about the speaker's own character? Unfavorable outcomes may convey dishonesty whereas favorable outcomes may convey honesty. Undignified treatment and unfair decisionmaking may imply that the individual is a disrespected member of society and may have deserved the rude or biased decisionmaking because of past behavior or behavior during the audit. Taxpayers may tell others that they were accorded dignity and fair decisionmaking so that listeners will know that they are respected and valued members of society (Lind & Tyler 1988), especially when taxpayers are insecure about either others' image of them or their standing in society.

Both positive and negative messages about outcome favorability, dignity, and decisionmaking fairness thus imply something about the speaker's own character. To boost their self-image, individuals will readily talk about favorable outcomes, dig-

⁵ Since the auditor and tax agency are held responsible for instrumental quality, taxpayers need not worry about the negative implications of talking about incompetent, inefficient, or inflexible auditors on their own image. Social norms of bureaucratic rationality suggest that professionals *should* be competent and efficient (Weber 1947). Professional norms also do not differ for legal authorities such as police officers and auditors. The majority of taxpayers (66%) said they wanted an efficient auditor. These data come from our preaudit interview of taxpayers; the question asked taxpayers to rank the first, second, and least important characteristic they wanted in their auditor among four characteristics: efficient, caring, informal, objective.

nified treatment, and fair decisionmaking. When describing unfavorable outcomes, undignified treatment, and unfair decisionmaking, according to impression management speakers must be careful to deflect negative implications about their own character. As Goffman (1959:251) asserts: "In their capacity as performers, individuals will be concerned with maintaining the impression that they are living up to the many standards by which they and their products are judged." Speakers may manage listeners' impressions either by withholding messages that might project a less favorable image or by framing messages that present a negative image in a way that places blame on the situation or on the authorities involved in the interaction being described.

Individuals insecure about their own image sometimes may choose to frame a negative message rather than withhold it. Two hypotheses can be tested to assess whether impression management is a concern when taxpayers convey messages about unfavorable outcomes, undignified treatment, and unfair decisionmaking. Given the uncertainty about the correct solution for many tax issues, taxpayers can discuss unfavorable outcomes and still project an image of integrity and honesty by providing an explanation (e.g., the tax laws were confusing or the auditor was unknowledgeable). Thus, the first hypothesis that provides evidence for impression management is: Taxpayers who have tax issues in which the correct solution is less certain will be more likely to discuss an unfavorable outcome than will taxpayers who have tax issues in which there clearly is a correct solution. Second, taxpayers may frame these messages by attributing blame to incompetent auditors; thus, we predict taxpayers who talk about unfavorable outcomes, unfair decisionmaking, and undignified treatment will be more likely also to discuss negative instrumental quality than will taxpayers who talk about favorable outcomes, fair decisionmaking, and dignified treatment.

Standing alone, the fact that people who talk about unfair decisionmaking or undignified treatment also talk about instrumental quality can support either impression management or catharsis. The two motives, however, can be distinguished. Catharsis suggests that most angry people who mention instrumental quality will talk about another negative feature, and most angry people who mention undignified treatment (or other features) will talk about another negative feature, assuming that anger leads to elaboration of details irrespective of the dimension (e.g., instrumentality, dignity, fairness). By contrast, impression management suggests that when people talk about negative instrumental quality, they may not elaborate by discussing other aspects such as undignified treatment, but when people talk about undignified treatment, they will more often discuss instrumental quality to deflect blame from their own character or behavior. We hypothesize that after controlling for respondents' anger

about the audit, when individuals talk about undignified or unfair treatment, they will be more likely to talk about negative instrumental quality.

The audience to whom the message is directed also may determine whether impression management prevails, and produces a distribution of messages that more closely approximates the distribution of audited taxpayers' evaluations. Stalans (1992c) found that taxpayers who reported past tax compliance heard a similar amount about polite and impartial auditors and about rude and biased auditors, but taxpayers who admitted tax non-compliance heard a greater number of stories about rude and biased auditors than stories about polite and impartial auditors. These survey data about what respondents have heard suggest that speakers may share stories with listeners who will be sympathetic to their view. Some groups may be more sympathetic to tax cheating than are others. Stalans et al. (1991:133) found that "individuals who talked with co-workers were less likely to feel guilty about tax cheating, and perceived less of a problem if they did cheat on their taxes and others found out than were individuals who indicated that they did not exchange information with co-workers." By contrast, Stalans et al. found that communication with family members about tax issues increases the likelihood of feeling guilty and increases the perceived fairness of tax laws; they concluded that family members serve as moral agents who attempt to increase our compliance with tax laws, whereas co-workers are less supportive of tax compliance.

Based on this prior research and the impression management perspective, we assume that the desire to present an image of honesty and integrity should be stronger when taxpayers speak to family members than when they speak to co-workers and distant acquaintances such as letter carriers and strangers.⁶ We also base this assumption on the belief that people desire to impress those they are closest to and respect the most. We thus predict that when people talk to co-workers and distant acquaintances, they are more likely to discuss unfair and undignified treatment than when they talk to family members and close friends. We also will test which messages are more dispersed across social networks by examining the number of groups (e.g., family members, co-workers, friends, and others) who were told a message; this examination provides an indication of the distribution and availability of messages at the societal level.

⁶ The effect of source type depends strongly on the speakers' perceptions of listeners' attitudes toward compliance and perception of them. Many co-workers may provide information that they do not condone aggressive tax avoidance or tax cheating, whereas some family members may reveal that they condone such action. We unfortunately do not have direct information about the attitudes or perceptions of the listeners and thus can only provide tentative tests of the effects of audience on transmission of messages.

III. Data Collection and Measurement

A. Respondents

The sample of audited taxpayers was drawn from four of the field offices of the Oregon Department of Revenue (DOR). These offices cover a major metropolitan area, a smaller metropolitan area, and a rural region. The four offices performed about 70% of the audits done statewide and provided a good mix of taxpayers' economic and social circumstances while allowing efficiencies in minimizing expenses in data collection.

To assure confidentiality about which taxpayers were selected for the study, we randomly selected a 90% sample of taxpayers to whom these four offices sent audit notices in 1990. Of these, two-thirds were contacted for a preaudit interview and a postaudit interview; the remainder were sampled only for the postaudit interview. The response rate for taxpayers' completion of the post-audit interview was 73%, with 145 completing both pre/post interviews and 113 completing only the post interview.⁷ Seventeen respondents were not asked what they told others about their audit because they did not personally participate in their audit and did not discuss the audit with their representative. For another 5, data were missing on one or more variables. The final sample size was 237.

The majority of taxpayers are white (99.1%), married (76%), and male (61%). Education is represented as a three-level ordinal variable: 0 = dropout or high school graduate (29.4%); 1 = some college or technical training (33.2%); and 2 = a bachelor's or higher degree (37.4%). The age of our respondents is rather restricted with only 8.1% under 35 ($M=49.8$; $S.D.=11.5$). To assess the effects of repeat audit experiences, we combined the number of previous IRS and DOR audits. Two dummy-coded variables represented repeat audit experience, with no prior experience serving as the baseline group: 1 = one prior audit (38.2%); 1 = two or more prior audits (24.9%). A dummy-coded variable assessed whether a tax practitioner was involved in the audit: 0 = not involved (51.5%) and 1 = involved (48.5%). For answers to three questions asking taxpayers after their audit whether they were irritated, resentful, or angry about the audit process, a dichotomous measure represented respondents' negative emotions: 0 = no negative emotion, and 1 = at least one of the three.

⁷ In calculating the response rate, we excluded those who had moved and whose new telephone number or address could not be located through several sources, those who had moved out of the sampling areas, those whose audits were still uncompleted 18 months after the end of our sampling period, and those whose audits were dropped by the DOR after the initial contact.

B. Coding of Perceptions and Communication about the Audit

Perceptions of the Audit

Respondents were asked several open-ended questions about their audits. At the beginning of the interview before any closed-ended questions about the audit process, they were asked: (a) What are your general impressions of how the audit was conducted and how things were decided? (b) What were your impressions of the auditor—how did the auditor behave? They also were asked several other open-ended questions about the audit, but most of our perceptual data were elicited in the first two questions. Based on procedural justice research (Lind & Tyler 1988; Sheppard & Lewicki 1987), two researchers⁸ developed a conceptual scheme to code these qualitative responses, using the context of the statement to determine the meaning. Two researchers separately coded 81 interviews to check on inter-rater reliability. All categories showed substantial inter-rater agreement (kappa coefficients ranged from .78 to 1.00). Separate summary measures were constructed across all coded concepts to assess negative impressions and positive impressions. Summary measures also were constructed separately for dignity, decision-making fairness, and instrumental quality (see Table 2 below for the percentage in each level of a category).

The Nature of Talk

If respondents talked to others about their tax audits, they also were asked: "What have you told others about the audit?" The same coding scheme described for perceptions of their audit was used to code messages about the audit to ensure that the categories for perceptions and messages had the same meaning. We used responses to other open-ended questions to code messages when respondents stated they told others everything that happened or in those rare instances when a response had several plausible interpretations. After the instructions and initial training period, the first author and a research assistant separately coded 60 interviews to check on inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater reliabilities for the coded concepts were high (kappas ranged from .77 to 1.00). From the codings of the aspects discussed with others, several summary measures were constructed. The measures for each category are dummy coded to capture the valence, whether it has positive or negative connotations from the perspective of citizens. For example, the concept of dignity is represented with two measures with "did not discuss" serving as the comparison group and coded as 0 in both: (a) 1 = discussed

⁸ Kent Smith and Loretta Stalans collaborated in the development of the coding scheme.

dignified treatment; and (b) 1 = discussed undignified treatment. (See Table 1 below for a description of the percentages for each level of a category.)

The following paragraphs briefly describe the coding scheme for each category. If respondents did not mention a category and/or discuss a concept with others, these nonresponses were noted.

Dignity. Dignity represents a pure relationship concern because it captures the interpersonal quality of the encounter and is not confined to the decisionmaking part of the process (Bies & Moag 1986; Lind & Tyler 1988). Dignified treatment was coded if respondents mentioned that the auditor treated them politely, courteously, friendly, cordially, not hostilely, respectfully, or was concerned about the taxpayers' needs. Undignified treatment was coded if respondents mentioned that the auditor was rude, insulting, hostile, or belligerent toward the taxpayer or that the auditor assumed the taxpayer was dishonest before obtaining information from the taxpayer.

Fairness of decisionmaking. Whereas dignity focuses on the interpersonal interaction, fairness of decisionmaking focuses on the neutrality of the authority. Decisionmaking fairness was coded if respondents mentioned that the auditor had treated them fairly, was impartial or objective. Unfairness was coded if respondents mentioned the auditor was biased, was more concerned about generating revenue, was unfair toward certain groups (e.g., small businessman), or that the process was unfair. Examples of statements were: "I was fairly treated by the auditor." "We told them it was fair and not as awful as expected. . . . We did have to come up with some extra money." "I let them know that they are unfairly targeting small businesses."

Instrumental quality. Instrumental features of the audit concerned the financial and material cost and benefits of the audit and those aspects of the process closely connected to the favorability of the outcome such as control over decisionmaking and competence of the decisionmaker. Statements about auditors' knowledge about tax laws and bookkeeping, about how the audit wasted the taxpayers' time and money, about the timeliness of the audit process, and about the amount of influence taxpayers had over the decisions were coded as instrumental features.

Outcome favorability. For outcome favorability as a feature of the audit, we used respondents' self-reported outcome in response to a closed-ended question and a logarithmic transformation of the actual outcome of the audit. We assumed that the more money paid to the government, the more unfavorable the outcome. Whether respondents told others that they owed additional taxes, had no change to their return, or received a refund was coded from the open-ended question.

C. Convergent and Discriminant Validity of Perceived Features of the Audit

We examined whether the perceived features of the audit (instrumentality, dignity, fairness of decisionmaking, and self-reported outcome favorability) coded from responses to open-ended questions were distinct concepts that had convergent and discriminant validity (Campbell & Fiske 1959). Kendall's tau-*c*'s were used to examine convergent and discriminant validity.⁹ Convergent validation means that a concept correlates highly with other relevant variables with which it should theoretically correlate (Campbell & Fiske 1959). Discriminant validity means that a concept does not significantly correlate with variables that are theoretically different. Convergent and discrimination validation determine whether a concept is measuring what it purports to measure.

Table 1 presents evidence of convergent and discriminant validity for the four concepts. It presents Kendall's tau-*c* correlations for relationships between the coding of perceived negative features and measures of conceptually relevant variables using closed-ended scales. (See the appendix for a description of the closed-ended measures.) Supporting convergent validity, the measure of instrumental competence was moderately related to several conceptually relevant measures including the actual length of the audit (tau-*c*=.34), rated timeliness (tau-*c*=.30), process control (tau-*c*=.28), and perceived efficiency (tau-*c*=.51). These moderate relationships demonstrate adequate convergent validation. The measure of instrumental competence also was moderately related to perceived satisfaction with treatment and auditors' effort to be fair but showed weaker discriminant validity in that it was moderately related to perceived rapport with the auditor (tau-*c*=.26) and outcome fairness (tau-*c*=.27), though these relationships are much weaker than the more conceptually relevant variable of perceived efficiency (tau-*c*=.51).

Supporting convergent validity, undignified treatment was moderately related to satisfaction with treatment, perceived rapport, and perceptions of auditors' motives. Discriminant validity

⁹ The formula for Kendall's tau-*c* is:

$$\tau_c = C - D / .5 \{N^2 [(m-1)/m]\}.$$

C is the number of concordant pairs and *D* is the number of discordant pairs. *N* is the total number of units in the contingency table; *m* is the number of rows or columns in the table, whichever is smaller. Kendall's tau-*c* assumes ordinal-level measurement and was chosen over gamma because gamma underestimates the total number of pairs and overestimates the relationship between two ordinal measures. Gamma also does not adjust for the number of rows and columns, and thus the theoretically maximum correlation varies according to the distribution of the measures. The *m* expression in the Kendall's tau-*c* formula adjusts for the number of rows and columns. Because Kendall's tau-*c*'s are insensitive to the marginals of the variables, the theoretical true maximum correlation for all variables is the same and is 1.00 (Kendall & Gibbons 1990). Kendall's tau-*c* generally is used when the number of rows and columns differ.

Table 1. Relationship between Perceived Features of Audit and Other Conceptually Relevant Measures: Construct Validation (Correlations Are Kendall's Tau- c)

Perceived Features	Negative Instrumentality	Undignified Treatment	Unfair Decisions	Unfavorable Outcomes
Objective timeliness of decision	.34***	.05 ^{NS}	.17**	.29***
Perceived timeliness of decision	.30***	.10 ^{NS}	.13*	-.01 ^{NS}
Perceived control over the process	-.28***	-.11 ^{NS}	-.22**	-.09 ^{NS}
Perceived efficiency	-.51***	-.23***	-.34***	-.18**
Satisfaction with treatment	-.50***	-.33***	-.33***	-.22**
Auditor tried hard to be fair	-.41***	-.28***	-.44***	-.31***
Perceived rapport	-.26**	-.24**	-.18**	-.12 ^{NS}
Perceived outcome fairness	-.27**	-.18 ^{NS}	-.35***	-.72***

Two-tailed probability: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ ^{NS} $p > .04$

between negative instrumentality and undignified treatment is supported: Undignified treatment was unrelated to conceptually irrelevant concepts such as objective timeliness, rated timeliness, process control, and outcome fairness. Discriminant validity between undignified treatment and perceived unfair decisionmaking is also supported based on the expected differences in relationships of these measures to several central closed-ended measures. Unfair decisionmaking was more strongly related to outcome fairness (tau- $c = -.35$) and auditor's effort to be fair (tau- $c = -.44$) than was undignified treatment (tau- c for outcome fairness = $-.18$, $p < .20$; tau- c for effort = $-.28$, $p < .01$). Self-reported outcome favorability was strongly related to rated outcome fairness (tau- $c = -.72$). These findings provide some support for the convergent and discriminant validity of the measures of perceived features created from the responses to the open-ended questions.

The relationship among the concepts coded from open-ended questions (instrumentality, dignity, decisionmaking fairness) also supports the assertion that these measures are distinct. Undignified treatment was modestly related to unfair decisionmaking (tau- $c = .24$, $p < .001$) and negative instrumentality (tau- $c = .22$, $p < .001$). Undignified treatment was unrelated to outcome favorability, fair decisionmaking, and positive instrumentality (range of tau- $c = -.04$ to $.08$). Unfair decisionmaking was modestly significantly related to outcome favorability (tau- $c = -.18$), negative instrumentality (tau- $c = .28$), dignified treatment (tau- $c = -.18$), fair decisionmaking (tau- $c = -.21$), and positive instrumentality (tau- $c = -.10$). Dignified treatment was unrelated to fair decisionmaking and positive instrumentality. Fair decisionmaking and positive instrumentality were modestly related (tau- $c = .22$, $p < .01$).

D. Dependent Variables: Messages about Tax Audit and Dispersion

The dependent variables are whether taxpayers talked about the audit, the content of their message, the diffusion across networks, as well as the frequency of talking to others. Respondents were asked: "Now that the audit has been completed, have you discussed the audit or the outcome with anyone—even just a little bit?" A dichotomous variable assessed whether the audit was discussed with others: 0 = no (24.9%; $N=59$); 1 = yes (75.1%; $N=178$). If respondents answered they had told others about their audit, they were asked: "How many people altogether have you talked to about the audit?" ($M=2.98$; $S.D.=1.48$; $N=174$). Because respondents cannot provide accurate point estimates of frequency (Tversky & Kahneman 1974), we collapsed the variable into four categories: (a) 1 or 2 persons (23.0%); (b) 3 or 4 persons (16.7%); (c) 5 to 6 persons (23.6%); (d) 7 to 11 persons (12.6%); and (e) 12 or more persons (24.1%). Respondents also were asked whether they had talked to each of four sources: (a) family members (yes coded as 1=85.1%); (b) friends or neighbors (yes coded as 1=70.9%); (c) co-workers (yes coded as 1=58%); and (d) other people (yes coded as 1=58.6%; 33.3% missing). A count of the number of sources served as a measure of the diffusion of the message across the social network ($M=1.81$; $S.D.=1.38$). For the content of the message, separate dummy-coded variables, with "did not talk" serving as the baseline, were constructed for positive messages (dignified treatment, positive instrumentality, fair decisionmaking, and favorable outcomes) and negative messages (undignified treatment, negative instrumentality, unfair decisionmaking, and unfavorable outcomes).

IV. Results

The results are presented in four sections. The first shows how individuals frame negative messages that are more threatening to their self-image in a way that deflects away negative implications from their own character and behavior. The second section examines the hypotheses about the *overall* bias or lack of bias in the messages when compared with the overall distribution of taxpayers' evaluations of their audit experiences. The hypotheses are first tested separately for each of the four aspects using chi-square analyses and then are tested across the entire sample using logistic regression on the dependent variable of whether taxpayers either talked or did not talk about their audit. The third section examines whether taxpayers who are rudely treated are more likely to talk about unfairness and negative features of the audit when they receive favorable outcomes than when they receive unfavorable outcomes. The fourth section examines which messages are more diffused throughout the social network, and

whether audience determines in part whether impression management is a primary concern.

A. Framing Messages to Protect Self-Image

When speakers talk about unexpected or negative events, listeners are likely to ask why the unexpected or negative event occurred (Pyszczynski & Greenberg 1981; Wong & Weiner 1981). We first examine the relationship among different features of talk to test whether taxpayers convey messages that project a favorable image of themselves. The information that is most threatening to the speaker is information about undignified treatment or unfair decisionmaking—because this information implies that the auditor believes the taxpayer is an unimportant member of society (e.g., Tyler & Lind 1992). To shift the focus away from their own standing, taxpayers may emphasize that the auditor deviates from professional norms by being either incompetent or inefficient. By providing listeners with explanations that locate the problem in the auditor's disposition or ability, speakers can control the interpretation of the message (e.g., Bies & Moag 1986; Brockner, Dewitt, & Grover 1990; Weiner et al. 1987).

Our data support that speakers frame messages to manage listeners' impressions of them. To address whether speakers who talk about unfair or undignified treatment attempt to deflect negative implications for their own image by framing the message around the auditor's incompetence, we used logistic regression. The dependent variable is whether speakers talked or did not talk about negative instrumental quality. The control variables are ones that have significant a zero-order relationship with the dichotomous measure of talking about negative instrumental quality: the number of issues raised, the number of meetings with the audit, respondents' education, and respondents' anger about the audit experience. After controlling for these variables, we tested the two dichotomous measures representing whether respondents talked or did not talk about unfair decisionmaking or about undignified treatment. Supporting catharsis, respondents who were angry about the audit experience were 3.87 times more likely to talk about negative instrumentality than were respondents who were not angry (coefficient = 1.35, $p < .01$). The other significant control variable was the number of issues raised, with a greater number of issues raised increasing the likelihood of talking about negative instrumental quality (coefficient = .87, $p < .02$). After controlling for catharsis (i.e., respondents' anger) and the other control variables, both talking about unfairness and talking about undignified treatment significantly predicted talking about negative instrumentality. Respondents who talked about undignified treatment were 3.73 times more likely

to talk about negative instrumentality than were other respondents (coefficient = 1.31, one-tailed $p < .05$). Respondents who talked about unfair decisionmaking were 3.39 times more likely to talk about negative instrumentality than were other respondents (coefficient = 1.22, one-tailed $p < .024$).¹⁰

Thus, after controlling for catharsis, we found that individuals who talked about unfair decisionmaking or undignified treatment still were more likely to frame their messages around the auditor's incompetence, which is consistent with impression management. If catharsis was the only motive operating, taxpayers who talked about negative instrumental qualities should also be more likely to discuss unfair decisionmaking or undignified treatment, assuming that anger leads to an elaboration of negative details. That is, catharsis assumes a bidirectional relationship between discussing two negative aspects, whereas impression management assumes a unidirectional relationship with a discussion of unfair or undignified treatment requiring an explanation such as the auditor's incompetence but a discussion of the auditor's incompetence requiring no explanation. Most respondents who talked about negative instrumental quality (57.1%) did not discuss either the dignity or fairness of treatment. This finding is consistent with the impression management perspective that individuals do not need to frame messages about negative instrumental quality because these messages do not have connotations for the speaker's own image.

Another alternative explanation for the finding that taxpayers who talked about unfair decisionmaking and undignified treatment were more likely to discuss negative instrumental aspects is consistency arising for a need for cognitive closure; that is, respondents who discuss one negative aspect are more likely to discuss another negative aspect. The consistency explanation, however, also predicts that those who discuss one positive feature are more likely to discuss another positive feature. This part of the explanation receives little support in our data. Only eight respondents discussed positive instrumental features. We performed a chi-square test that crossed talked (1) or did not talk (0) about fair decisionmaking with talked (1) or did not talk (0) about positive instrumental features. Positive instrumental features were discussed by 10.5% of respondents who talked about

¹⁰ The univariate tests also were supported. A chi-square crossing the three-category measure of talked about fairness of decisionmaking with the two category measure of talked (1) or did not talk (0) about negative instrumental features was significant ($\chi^2(4)=13.86, p < .007$, Cramer's $V=.26$). Consistent with managing impression, 50% of the taxpayers who discussed unfair decisionmaking discussed negative instrumental quality compared with 10.5% of the taxpayers who discussed fair decisionmaking and 17% of those who did not discuss fairness. Moreover, 55.6% of the taxpayers who discussed undignified treatment also talked about negative instrumental features compared with 9.7% of those who discussed dignified treatment and 19.6% those who did not discuss dignity, ($\chi^2(4)=9.58, p < .05$, Cramer's $V=.23$).

fair decisionmaking and 3.8% of those who did not ($\chi^2(1)=.57$, $p<.45$). Similarly, 6.5% of respondents who talked about dignified treatment and 4.1% of those who did not also talked about positive instrumental features ($\chi^2(1)=.01$, $p<.92$). Moreover, most respondents who discussed fair decisionmaking or dignified treatment did not mention instrumental features, which is inconsistent with the consistency explanation.¹¹

Further supporting the impression management purpose, explicit messages placing blame on someone for the negative outcome also occurred but were infrequent. A few respondents (4.5%) admitted that they had made a mistake such as a math error; these explanations also served to inform listeners that they were not intentionally cheating. Some respondents (3.9%) blamed the error and having to pay more on their tax preparer or representative. Two respondents blamed someone else.

A discussion of unfavorable outcomes also may imply intentional tax evasion; thus, respondents who discuss unfavorable outcomes, according to impression management, should provide explanations. Because of the uncertainty about the correct solution for some tax issues, taxpayers with these issues can reveal unfavorable outcomes without damaging their honesty and integrity. We test the hypothesis that taxpayers were more likely to talk about unfavorable outcomes when the uncertainty about the correct solution was high than when it was low. Auditors rated the unusualness, complexity, and ambiguity of the tax issues in each audit using a 1–5 scale where 1 = not at all and 5 = very.¹² The measures of complexity and ambiguity of tax issues did not have significant univariate relationship with whether individuals talked about unfavorable outcomes. A chi-square test crossing unusualness of tax issues with the dichotomous measure of talked (1) or did not talk (0) about unfavorable outcomes was significant ($\chi^2(2)=6.39$, one-tailed $p<.02$). A greater percentage of taxpayers who had highly unusual tax issues (52.2%) or moderately unusual tax issues (55.6%) talked about an unfavorable outcome compared with taxpayers who had common tax issues

¹¹ A chi-square analysis revealed a modest relationship between talking about fairness of decisionmaking (did not talk, talked about fairness, talked about unfairness) and dignity (did not talk, talked about dignified treatment, talked about undignified treatment) ($\chi^2(4)=7.87$, two-tailed $p<.098$). Respondents who discussed fair decisions were more likely to discuss dignified treatment (36.8%; $N=7$) than were those who discussed unfair decisionmaking (11.1%; $N=2$) or those who did not discuss fairness (5.6%; $N=1$). Two people who discussed fairness talked about undignified treatment (10.5%) compared with one person who discussed unfairness (5.6%) and six people who did not talk about fairness (4.5%), which are not significant differences. This test thus reveals some support for consistency of evaluations in that respondents who talked about dignified treatment were more likely to talk about fair decisionmaking. However, 71% of respondents who discussed dignified treatment and 66.7% of respondents who discussed undignified treatment did not talk about fairness of decisionmaking.

¹² To remove outliers, we created a three-level variable by collapsing the two end points into the adjacent category. Because this analysis focuses on talking about unfavorable outcomes, only individuals who paid more taxes were included in this test.

(27%). This relationship suggests that taxpayers may discuss unfavorable outcomes when they can attribute it to lack of knowledge about the tax law or an unclear tax law. However, a chi-square test crossing the three category variable of talking about outcome favorability (did not talk, talked about favorable outcome, and talked about unfavorable outcome) with the three-category level measure of talking about instrumental quality suggested that most taxpayers did not attribute an unfavorable outcome to the auditors' incompetence ($\chi^2(4)=.90, p<.92$).

Although the support for framing messages about unfavorable outcomes is much weaker than the support for framing messages about undignified and unfair treatment, these findings have provided evidence for how concerns about managing listeners' impressions shape how speakers frame negative messages that are more threatening to their self-image. After controlling for respondents' anger, we found that speakers were still significantly more likely to discuss messages about unfair and undignified treatment by attributing this treatment to the auditor's incompetence. Moreover, consistent with impression management, taxpayers often did not elaborate on their messages about negative instrumental quality. A pure catharsis perspective cannot completely account for this pattern of findings.

B. Overall Bias in Communication about Personal Audit Experiences

Table 2 summarizes and compares the distributions of the valence of taxpayers' perceptions about their audits to what they told others. The catharsis hypothesis is supported for instrumental features: Only 12.9% who noticed a positive instrumental aspect of the process talked about it compared with 36.3% who noticed a negative instrumental aspect and discussed it ($\chi^2(1)=5.83, p<.005$, one-tailed). The catharsis hypothesis is further supported using the quantitative scale of timeliness as a measure of respondents' perceptions (see appendix). Fewer respondents who believed that the timeliness of the auditor's decisions was about right (14.4%) or just a little too long (20.0%) talked about it compared with those who believed that it took far too long (42.9%) ($\chi^2(2)=12.50$, one-tailed $p<.001$).

While a bias toward negative messages was supported for instrumental messages, it received no support for messages about the favorability of the outcome, which was the most often-discussed topic, with 33% mentioning it.¹³ To test whether the dis-

¹³ All but two respondents coded as having a poor outcome actually paid more money. All but two respondents coded as having a good outcome actually had no change in their audit. The four taxpayers who misreported based their answers on different facts of the audit. The two taxpayers who reported a favorable outcome when the audit report indicated that they owed more money answered in terms of the appeals hearing which the taxpayers won. The two taxpayers who reported an unfavorable outcome when the audit report indicated no change in the audit had changes in their audit that indicated more

Table 2. Comparison of Evaluation of Personal Experience and What Was Told to Others

Category	Mentioned in Interviewed		% Talked		
			Told Others		Of Those Who Noticed
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	%
Total talk					
Did not notice/discuss	28	11.8	93	39.2	
Only Positive	95	40.1	57	24.1	
Only Negative	36	15.2	58	24.9	
Both good and bad	78	32.9	7	3.0	
Neutral valence			21	8.9	
Outcomes					
Did not notice/discuss	3	1.2	161	67.9	
No Change, refund	96	40.5	29	12.2	31.2
Paid more money	138	58.2	47	19.8	34.6
Dignity					
Did not notice/discuss	88	37.1	197	83.1	
Dignified	111	46.8	31	13.1	27.9
Undignified	39	16.5	9	3.8	23.7
Instrumental					
Did not notice/discuss	126	53.2	194	81.9	
Positive	31	13.1	8	3.4	12.9
Negative	80	33.8	35	14.8	36.3
Fairness of decisionmaking					
Did not notice/discuss	127	53.6	199	84.0	
Fair	62	26.2	19	8.0	30.6
Unfair	48	20.3	19	8.0	39.6

tribution of talk about outcomes is similar to the distribution of actual outcomes in the audit, we performed a chi-square test crossing whether they talked about outcomes with the actual outcome of their audit. No significant bias in communication about the outcome emerged: 34.6% of those who paid more money and 31.2% of those who had no change or received a refund told others about the outcome ($\chi^2(1)=.28, p<.59$). The finding that similar proportions of taxpayers who received a poor or good audit outcome will talk to others about the outcome suggests that audits will have at most a weak or nonexistent general deterrence effect at the societal level. For example, the general public will hear about the same number of stories of people having to pay additional taxes (59%, based on distribution of outcome) as they will hear stories about audited taxpayers having no change on the return or a refund (41%). This finding is consistent with other research which suggests that individuals obtain realistic assessments of the likelihood of official detection from stories spread through social networks (Kinsey 1992; Stalans et al. 1991; Williams & Hawkins 1986). Moreover, taxpayers generally reveal the outcome in general terms of having no change or owing an

money owed but were canceled out by other errors in their favor; the ambiguity of choosing between "no change in the audit" and "owed more money" may have created the discrepancy.

additional tax liability. Some respondents did reveal the exact amount owed or qualified the amount owed with such adjectives as "minimal"; most, however, did not. Even if respondents who owed more money revealed the amount owed, those who told others about the outcome paid about the same amount ($M=\$1,763.65$; $S.D.=\$336.78$) as did those who did not talk and had an additional tax liability ($M=\$1,943.83$; $S.D.=\$440.45$, $t(125)=.32$, $p<.75$).¹⁴ The implication of a weak or nonexistent general deterrence effect, however, depends on the distribution of the outcomes. If auditors were more successful at either selecting returns that contain errors or detecting errors in the audited returns and closing at least 75% of the audits with some amount owed, the support for impression management hypothesis suggests that general deterrence would be more substantial.

For dignity, instrumental quality, and fairness, chi-square tests used data only for respondents who noticed these features during the audit. When comparing spontaneous perceptions with communicated messages, it is important to control for whether the concept is noticed (Stalans 1992a), because those who did not mention the concept in describing the audit to the interviewer are much less likely to have discussed it with others. The distribution of dignity told to others is similar to the distribution of impressions about dignity: 27.9% who noticed dignified treatment talked about it and 23.7% who noticed undignified treatment talked about it ($\chi^2(1)=.26$, $p<.61$). To check on the robustness of the results using the sample that directly interacted with the auditor, a chi-square analysis also was performed on the quantitative closed-ended measure of interpersonal rapport and whether respondents discussed dignity. This analysis revealed a trend toward not talking about dignity when taxpayers believed they had poor rapport with the auditor. Taxpayers who had poor rapport were less likely to discuss dignity in their conversations (10.5%) than were those who had good rapport (22.7%) ($\chi^2(1)=2.75$, $p<.10$).

When fairness of decisionmaking was a salient concept, respondents were equally likely to tell others about fair decisionmaking (30.6%) and unfair decisionmaking (39.6%) ($\chi^2(1)=.96$, $p<.33$). We used the distributive justice scale derived from Likert ratings to check on the robustness of the results. A chi-square analysis crossing the collapsed distributive justice scale with whether respondents talked about the fairness of decisions revealed that respondents who perceived unfair decisions (20.7%), those who were neutral about fairness (10.0%), and those who perceived fair decisions (17.2%) were equally likely to discuss this perception ($\chi^2(2)=1.96$, $p<.37$).

¹⁴ We also performed an analysis using the natural logarithmic transformation, and the results did not differ from those presented.

The absence of significant differences between the distribution of audited taxpayers' evaluations of dignity, decisionmaking fairness, and outcome favorability and their messages to others is consistent with the impression management hypothesis but nonetheless cannot provide convincing support for it. The logic of significance testing precludes the possibility of proving the null hypothesis. The impression management hypothesis, however, can be restated and more rigorously tested using conventional statistical theory. The restated impression management hypothesis is: After controlling for the effects of noticing negative features, taxpayers who noticed positive aspects will be more likely to talk about their audit than will those who did not notice any positive aspects. The null hypothesis, which supports a catharsis interpretation, is: After controlling for the effects of noticing negative features, noticing positive features will not have a significant effect on whether taxpayers talk.

To test the impression management hypothesis, we performed a hierarchical logistic regression on whether taxpayers talked or did not talk about their audit. First, we tested the demographic and experiential characteristics of taxpayers (education and prior audit experience) that had significant zero-order correlations. Repeat audit experience was the only significant variable: Those with two or more audit experiences were less likely to talk about their audit than were those with no audit experience (logistic coefficient = -1.95 , odds of talking = $.14$, $p < .001$). Those with one prior audit experience were less likely to talk than those with no prior audit experience (logistic regression = -1.04 , odds = $.35$, $p < .02$). After controlling for the other variables, we found that education was not related to talking (coefficient = $.16$, $p < .47$).

Supporting the impression management hypothesis, we found that both noticing positive and noticing negative features individually predicted whether taxpayers revealed their audit experience to others. Taxpayers who noticed a negative feature were 3.33 times more likely to talk than were taxpayers who did not notice a negative feature (coefficient = 1.20 , $p < .001$). Controlling for the significant effect of noticing a negative aspect, we found that taxpayers who noticed a positive aspect were 3.00 times more likely to talk about their audit than were taxpayers who did not notice a positive aspect (coefficient = 1.10 , $p < .004$). These findings provide additional and more convincing evidence that taxpayers are likely to talk about both positive and negative features. The fact that both positive and negative noticed aspects predicted whether people talk about their audit supports the idea of countervailing forces at the individual level and suggests that the overall pool of available messages may *not* be biased toward negative information at the societal level.

C. When Negative Features and Unfairness Are Discussed

We examine here which features of the audit predict when people will talk about negative features and when they will talk about unfair treatment. We did not limit the sample in this analysis to those who spontaneously mentioned a negative feature of the audit, because almost all respondents who mentioned only positive features in response to open-ended questions also provided some negative evaluation in closed-ended measures such as timeliness, efficiency, process control, outcome fairness, or interpersonal rapport. Thus, when both closed-ended and open-ended measures are considered, most of the sample can be considered to have mixed impressions about their audits. We did not include closed-ended measures as predictor variables because they are conceptually and empirically related to the open-ended measures and are poorer predictors of talk. We used the dichotomous self-reported measure of outcome favorability in the reported analyses.¹⁵ For all other features coded from the responses to open-ended questions, we included two dummy-coded variables, one positive and one negative, with “not noticing the concept” serving as the baseline category. For example, for fairness of decisionmaking, there are two measures: (a) 1 = noticed unfair decisionmaking and (b) 1 = noticed fair decisionmaking. When both measures are included in the equation, a significant effect for one of the dummy variables indicates a change compared with the category of not noticing the concept. Before testing the conceptually relevant measures, we included demographic and experiential variables only when these variables had significant zero-order correlations with the dependent variable; only two variables met this criteria: respondents’ age and whether a tax practitioner represented the taxpayer.

We first examined which audit qualities made people more likely to talk about any negative feature of the audit. The dependent variable was dichotomous: 0 = did not talk or talked about positive features and 1 = talked about negative features. Table 3 presents the unstandardized coefficients and odds ratios for the logistic regression equation with and without the interaction between outcome favorability and dignity. While Table 3 presents the results for the entire sample, the substantive findings do not differ if the sample is limited to those who talked about the audit, and the dependent variable thus distinguishes between those who talked about positive features and those who talked about negative features.

Because the direct effects are unaffected by whether the interaction is included in the equation, we will discuss the equation

¹⁵ If the continuous measure of outcome favorability is used, the interaction effect is much stronger. The direct effect on talked about unfairness, however, is not significant, whereas the direct effect on talked about any negative aspect is similar to that reported.

Table 3. Predictors of Whether Talked about Any Negative Feature (Unstandardized Coefficient, Change in Odds)

Variables	Talked about Negative Aspect			
	Without Interaction		With Interaction	
	<i>b</i> (1)	Change in Odds (2)	<i>b</i> (3)	Change in Odds (4)
Constant	.89 ^{NS}		1.10 ^{NS}	
Represented	.14 ^{NS}	1.15	.17 ^{NS}	1.18
Age of respondent	-.04 ^{****}	0.96	-.04 ^{****}	0.96
Favorable outcome	-1.47 ^{****}	0.23	-2.08 ^{****}	0.13
Fair decisionmaking	.36 ^{NS}	1.44	.37 ^{NS}	1.44
Unfair decisionmaking	.79 ^{NS}	2.19	.92*	2.50
Undignified process	.12 ^{NS}	1.13	-.77 ^{NS}	0.46
Dignified process	-.83 ^{**}	0.44	-.85 ^{**}	0.42
Negative instrumental features	1.59 ^{****}	4.87	1.56 ^{****}	4.74
Positive instrumental features	.97 ^{**}	2.63	1.10 ^{**}	3.00
Increment under favorable outcome: Undignified process			2.62 ^{**}	13.71
Model χ^2		75.37 ^{****}		82.86 ^{****}
Degrees of freedom		9,203		10,202
% correctly classified no talk		85.40%		83.94%
% correctly classified talked		64.47%		63.16%
Total % correctly classified		77.93%		76.53%
% of sample who talked		35.20%		35.20%

NOTE: Cols. (1) & (3): unstandardized coefficients; cols. (2) & (4): change in odds of talking about a negative feature. Odds above 1 indicate an increase in the odds of talking and odds below 1 indicate a decrease in the odds of talking.

One-tailed probability: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .025$ *** $p < .01$ **** $p < .001$
^{NS} $p > .05$

that includes the interaction. When respondents noticed instrumental features, they were more likely to talk about some negative aspect, regardless of whether the instrumental features were positive or negative. Those who noticed negative instrumental features were 4.74 times more likely to talk than those who did not notice instrumental features. Similarly, those who noticed positive instrumental features were 3 times more likely to discuss a negative aspect. Respondents who received favorable outcomes and those who received dignified treatment were less likely to discuss a negative feature of their audit.

Respondents are cautious about exposing potential aspects of their encounter that may cast them in an unfavorable light. When respondents noticed lack of dignity in their treatment or noticed unfair decisionmaking, they were *not* more likely to talk about negative features. This null finding is consistent with symbolic interactionism and the view of communication as a game in which participants attempt to project a positive image of themselves. Many individuals may avoid a discussion of these negative features because such a “performance” is difficult to both manage and handle emotionally (e.g., Goffman 1959). These null

findings, moreover, are in direct conflict with the catharsis hypothesis (e.g., Kinsey 1992).

Further supporting the impression management hypothesis, the interaction between rude treatment and favorable outcome is significant: Respondents who believed the audit was undignified and received a favorable outcome are almost 14 times more likely to discuss a negative aspect than are respondents with other combinations of interpersonal treatment and outcome favorability. The means of this interactive effect, however, indicate that taxpayers who receive a favorable outcome are less likely to discuss a negative aspect when they do not notice dignity or receive dignified treatment ($M=.08$) than when they receive undignified treatment ($M=.62$). Respondents who receive unfavorable outcomes discuss negative features both when they do not notice dignity or receive dignified treatment ($M=.44$) and when they receive undignified treatment ($M=.64$). Respondents who receive undignified treatment thus are equally likely to talk about some negative aspect, but they may talk differently about unfairness. The next analysis addresses this issue.

We also used logistic regression to test our hypotheses of an interaction between outcome favorability and interpersonal treatment on whether taxpayers discussed an auditor's unfair decisionmaking or treatment toward them. The dependent variable was whether respondents talked (coded as 1) or did not talk (0) about either fairness of decisionmaking or dignity of the process. Both decisionmaking fairness and dignity are normative concepts that are closely related to individuals' evaluations of the overall fairness of the process (Lind & Tyler 1988). For this analysis, we used only respondents who noticed unfair decisionmaking or an undignified process or provided a rating of 3 or less on the quantitative scale of outcome fairness or procedural fairness.¹⁶ The hypothesized interaction between undignified treatment and a good outcome (created by multiplying the two dummy-coded variables together) was tested after controlling for all direct effects. Table 4 presents the unstandardized coefficients and change in odds of talking about unfairness.

Not surprisingly, people were more likely to talk about unfairness when they noticed unfair decisionmaking than when they did not. Supporting concern about one's own image, in the equation without the interaction term, we found that taxpayers who received favorable outcomes are 4.16 times more likely to talk about unfairness than are those who received unfavorable outcomes. The equation including the interaction also shows support for the interactive hypothesis: Respondents who experienced an undignified process but received a good outcome (no

¹⁶ The results for the interactive effect did not differ appreciably if the entire sample is used. With the entire sample, the direct effect of outcome favorability, however, is not significant.

Table 4. Predictors of Whether Talked about Unfair Treatment (Unstandardized Coefficients, Change in Odds)

Variables	Talked about Unfair Treatment			
	Without Interaction		With Interaction	
	<i>b</i> (1)	Change in Odds (2)	<i>b</i> (3)	Change in Odds (4)
Constant	2.02		1.81	
Age	-.04*	.95	-.06*	.94
Represented	.39	1.48	.42	1.52
Favorable outcome	1.43*	4.16	.21	1.24
Fair decisionmaking	.47	1.61	.50	1.66
Unfair decisionmaking	2.43****	11.39	2.86****	17.54
Undignified process	.71*	2.03	.06	1.06
Dignified process	-.12	.88	-.09 ^{NS}	.91
Negative instrumental features	1.26*	3.53	1.36*	3.90
Positive instrumental features	.78	2.18	1.05	2.87
Increment under favorable outcome: Undignified process			2.72*	15.25
Model χ^2	36.57***		39.53***	
Degrees of freedom	9,90		10,89	
% correctly classified no talk	89.61%		90.91%	
% correctly classified talked	47.83%		47.83%	
Total % correctly classified	80.00%		81.00%	
% of sample who talked	30.00%		30.00%	

NOTE: Cols. (1) & (3): unstandardized coefficients; cols. (2) & (4): odds of talking.
One-tailed probability: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .025$ *** $p < .01$ **** $p < .001$

change or a refund) were 15 times more likely to talk about unfairness than were all other respondents. Providing further clarification of this interactive effect, respondents who noticed undignified treatment as indicated by the interaction talked more about unfairness when they received a favorable outcome ($M=.67$) than when they received an unfavorable outcome ($M=.36$). Respondents who did not notice dignity or noticed dignified treatment talked about unfairness as much when they received a favorable outcome ($M=.22$) as when they received an unfavorable outcome ($M=.11$). These results indicate that taxpayers are especially more likely to convey unfairness when they perceive undeserved rudeness directed personally toward them that can more easily be attributed to the disposition of the authority (Stalans 1992b).

D. Diffusion of Messages about Audits through the Social Network

We also examined which messages were diffused more widely across respondents' social network using the dependent variable of number of relationship groups (i.e., family members, co-workers, friends, others) told about the audit; this measure indicates the availability of messages at the societal level and the dispersion of messages across the social network. Ordinary least squares re-

gression was performed. For each concept of talk (e.g., dignity), two dummy-coded measures represented the concept with “did not talk” about the concept serving as the baseline category. A significant effect for one of the dummy-coded measures thus indicates that there is a significant difference for the group coded as 1 (e.g., talked about undignified process) compared with those who did not talk about the concept.¹⁷ Four control variables had significant zero-order correlations with the dependent variable and were entered first in the equation. Table 5 presents the unstandardized coefficients, zero-order correlations, and the percentage of variance explained by a predictor after controlling for all other predictors. After controlling for the contextual features of the audit, we found that only messages about an undignified process were more diffused through the social network. This effect accounted for 5.91% of the variance in number of groups told about the audit. Those who talked about an undignified process told a greater number of groups in their social network ($M=3.67$; $S.D.=.50$) than did those who did not talk or talked about dignified treatment ($M=2.35$; $S.D.=1.01$). On the surface, this effect appears to be inconsistent with the impression management hypothesis, but an examination of the content of the messages indicates that it is not. All but two of the nine who talked about an undignified process told others that the auditor “challenged their integrity” and framed their message to deflect implications from their own image by claiming either that they did nothing wrong or that the auditor was incompetent. For example, one respondent quit her job because of the stress of the audit and was never told why she was audited. She had to pay an additional \$95. This respondent stated:

I needed to get rid of the animosity, the fury inside of me. It seems like \$95 isn't enough to quit a job. I needed to tell people so they'd know what a bad thing this was and how I wasn't involved in something illegal. It was so trivial. But I had to pay for it.

From this quote, two purposes of conversations are apparent: (a) catharsis and (b) managing the impression of others. When integrity is challenged, catharsis is okay because it aids impression management—anger as authenticity.

Are the results inconsistent with the impression management hypothesis that the distribution of messages will be similar to the distribution of perceived experiences? This question requires the answer to two questions: (a) Is the likelihood of talking about dignified treatment similar to the likelihood of talking about undignified treatment? (b) How many people do speakers tell about dignified treatment compared with undignified treatment. We

¹⁷ Positive instrumental messages are not tested because only eight respondents talked about this feature of their audit process.

Table 5. Relationship between Message and Number of People Told (Unstandardized Coefficient, Correlations)

Variables	<i>b</i> (1)	τ (2)	% Unique Variance Explained (3)
Intercept	3.38		
Age	-.01**	-.25**	2.43%**
No. of meetings	.04**	.26**	2.19%**
No. of issues raised	.17	.12*	1.10
Taxes are too high	.10	.14*	1.66%
Message			
Good outcome	.23	-.02	.63%
Bad outcome	.07	.00	.09%
Fair decisionmaking	-.08	-.00	.06%
Unfair decisionmaking	.24	.14*	.43%
Negative instrumental aspect	.23	.24**	.74%
Dignified process	.16	-.01	.36%
Undignified process	1.08***	.31***	5.91%***
R^2 adjusted	.17****		
ANOVA $F=3.83$ **** (df=11, 141; S.E.=.90)			

NOTE: Col. (1): unstandardized regression weights; col. (2): correlations; col. (3): percentage of variance explained after controlling for all other variables.

Two-tailed probability: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .025$ *** $p < .01$ **** $p < .001$

found that people are similarly likely to talk about dignified and undignified treatment. The number of relationship groups told is a very indirect measure of how many people were told about the audit. A regression analysis also was performed using the number of people told about the audit as the dependent variable. After controlling for age, number of meetings with the auditor, number of issues raised in the audit, and taxpayers' belief about whether their taxes are too high, we found that no messages were significantly related to estimated number of people told. Two messages had significant zero-order correlations with number of people told: (a) messages about undignified treatment ($r = .15$, $p < .05$); and (b) messages about negative instrumental features ($r = .20$, $p < .01$). These significant relationships are quite modest and are due to correlations with third variables (age, number of meetings with auditor, and number of issues raised).

Thus, the available messages about dignity at the group level may be biased toward undignified messages for certain groups such as those with complex audits (as indicated by the significant relationship with number of meetings) but not for society as a whole. To test our hypothesis that individuals who talk to co-workers and acquaintances are more likely to discuss unfair or undignified treatment than those who do not, we employed a combined measure of talk about unfair or undignified treatment with 0 = did not discuss either and 1 = talked about either unfair or undignified. The combined measure was used to enhance the power of the test given the measurement error in how we mea-

sure audience since we do not know the attitudes or perceptions of the co-workers. We conducted separate chi-square tests for each of the four sources (family, friends or neighbors, co-workers, and others—primarily acquaintances). Discussion of unfair and undignified treatment did not vary by whether respondents talked to family members or friends and neighbors; of course, 85% of our sample spoke to family members and 71% spoke to friends or neighbors. By contrast, 19.8% of individuals who talked to co-workers discussed unfair or undignified treatment, whereas only 8.2% who did not talk to co-workers discussed unfair or undignified treatment ($\chi^2(1)=4.47$, one-tailed $p<.015$). Similarly, a greater percentage of taxpayers who talked to distant acquaintances discussed unfair or undignified treatment (29.3%) than did those who did not (12.2%) ($\chi^2(1)=4.07$, one-tailed $p<.02$). These findings support prior research (Stalans et al. 1991; Stalans 1992c) and suggest that individuals learn from co-workers and distant acquaintances information that undermines willingness to comply, such as that a significant proportion of auditors are biased and rude.¹⁸

V. Conclusions

This study provides several pieces of empirical evidence to suggest that taxpayers who talk about their tax audits attempt to manage listeners' impressions of them. First, messages about undignified process and unfair decisionmaking, which imply that an individual is not a respected and respectable societal member, are more likely to be cast as a product of the auditors' incompetence, inefficiency, or inflexibility, even after respondents' anger about the audit experience is taken into account. In contrast, the less threatening and image-boosting messages about dignified treatment and fair decisionmaking are not framed as representing the auditors' ability or disposition. Second, taxpayers who had poor rapport with the auditor were less likely to discuss the dignity of the audit with others than were taxpayers who had good rapport. Third, taxpayers who received undignified treatment were more likely to discuss negative features and to discuss unfairness when they received a favorable outcome than an unfavorable outcome. Fourth, taxpayers who perceived that the auditor was challenging their integrity spread their message about undignified treatment by the tax agency across their social networks, but also framed the message to deflect the issue from their own standing in society. Fifth, taxpayers were more likely to discuss unfavorable outcomes when the tax issue was unusual and hence less understandable than when the tax issue was common.

¹⁸ We also conducted chi-squares tests on source type and messages about outcome favorability; none of these chi-squares were significant.

These findings suggest that concern about one's own image and standing in society constrains and molds the stories people will tell others about personal encounters with authorities.

Our research, however, does not provide direct evidence of how concern about one's own image shapes the way people discuss their own personal experiences with authorities. Future research should examine how demographic variables (e.g., social class, race, and gender) and personal variables (e.g., self-esteem, insecurity, and affect intensity) shape how individuals frame their conversations about their personal experiences with authorities. If our conceptual argument is correct, the impression management hypothesis may have particular significance for individuals or groups who are insecure about their standing or have a significant stake in presenting a positive image (Tyler & Lind 1992). For example, individuals who know they are discriminated against or individuals with few legitimate ties to the community (poor, unemployed, and limited social support) may have less motivation to project a positive image. The implications of this research will speak directly to the literature on false consciousness and how expectations about how authorities will treat citizens may vary by social class, ethnic group, and gender.

We have also illustrated how enforcement encounters with a small percentage of societal members can have ripple effects on the general population's beliefs about and support for legal institutions and authorities. While the catharsis effect of sharing anger produces a skewness toward a greater number of negative messages about authorities (e.g., Kinsey 1992), the impression management hypothesis suggests that the catharsis effect will be weakened or eliminated when the content of the message has connotations for the speaker's own image. In support of the impression management hypothesis, we found that the distributions of experiences and messages are similar for messages about dignity, decisionmaking fairness, and outcome favorability—features with implications for compliance with laws. Because the majority of messages about dignity and decisionmaking fairness are about dignified treatment and fair decisionmaking, the overall effect of interpersonal communication reinforces listeners' earlier acquired support for authorities and beliefs that authorities will treat them fairly and with dignity. Procedural justice research suggests that people believe that they will be treated fairly even though others are discriminated against; this belief is called an illusion of "personal justice" (Crosby 1982; Tyler 1990). Messages told by those who have direct experience with tax auditors may not overwhelm listeners' belief in personal justice. Consistent with research on interpersonal communication about crime stories (Stalans 1993), our findings suggest that stories about personal experiences that spread through social networks often provide a fair representation of the audit process and serve to

correct media portrayal of auditors as primarily rude, punitive, and unfair.

We found a bias toward negative messages only in situations where the attribution of blame to the tax agency was unproblematic for the speaker's image (e.g., instrumental features and personal experiences that combined positive outcomes with rude treatment). Because messages about the instrumental quality do not implicate the speaker's own character or behavior, taxpayers are significantly more likely to talk about negative instrumental features than positive ones; the distribution of these messages therefore does not reflect the perceived experiences of audited taxpayers. The finding that taxpayers who believe auditors have challenged their integrity spread their message of this undeserved undignified treatment throughout their social network also supports the catharsis hypothesis and the associated negativity bias. Messages about presumed guilty until proven innocent thus may be more prevalent at the societal level than messages about presumed innocence until proven guilty.

While our datum provides a useful picture of what people tell others about their personal experiences in a tax audit, it relies on only one method for examining the information available in social networks and to specific individuals. Observational methods may yield richer data on the give and take in communication. It is also clear that a complete understanding of the messages available at the group level must include information about the diffusion of media stories through social networks. Future research should also address "local cultures" or local social networks. People may selectively seek out others who hold opinions similar to their own and thus be exposed to a biased distribution of stories. For example, Ekland-Olson et al. (1984) found that drug dealers decrease interactions with family members, presumably to avoid informal sanctions, as they become more involved with their occupation.

Future studies should examine the robustness of these results across legal arenas and attempt to understand further the diffusion of information about specific legal proceedings. The past decade of research on taxpayer compliance suggests potential generalizability beyond the tax context; more similarities than differences are observed between models of tax cheating and other illegal behaviors. Research finds that perceptions of unfairness tend to undermine norms of compliance (Kinsey & Grasmick 1993). Studies also find similar results for tax cheating as for other illegal behaviors relating to the role of moral evaluations and perceptions of formal legal sanctions (Minor 1978; Grasmick & Bursik 1990; Grasmick & Scott 1982; Tittle 1980). However, the influence of informal sanctions is more mixed for tax compliance than for other illegal behaviors (Kinsey 1986; Stalans, Smith, & Kinsey 1989). We suspect this occurs for two

reasons: (a) the legally mandated privacy of enforcement limits the amount of information that is available which can serve as an exogenous method of social control (Kinsey 1986); and (b) our findings show that the information revealed about outcomes will often indicate that the tax agency could not find noncompliance if it existed. Because of individuals' control over the transmission of messages, our results may be more generalizable to everyday enforcement encounters such as those examined by Tyler (1990) which are usually not publicized or communicated to others by the enforcement agency.

The connection between objective features and subjective impressions of legal encounters also merits closer examination (Lind et al. 1990; Tyler 1988). Some research suggests that those who have direct contact with authorities may use their prior expectations to interpret authorities' actions and thus provide others with a distorted view of what actually happened (e.g., Lind et al. 1990; Stalans 1994b). The amount of distortion, however, is unclear. People often accurately perceive their situation: for example, audited taxpayers and auditors agreed 85% of the time about the amount of interpersonal rapport between them during the audit (Stalans & Smith 1993). Thus, how authorities actually act toward citizens often may be conveyed in messages that are diffused through the social network and that can provide more realistic portraits of specific legal arenas' procedures and decisionmaking.

In summary, a further empirical examination of information gleaned from personal experiences and conversations can provide a better understanding of the basis for adults' knowledge about and attitudes toward legal authorities, institutions, and laws. Empirical evidence for the assumed power of early socialization is surprisingly scant and does not account well for the enormous changes in the legitimacy of public institutions observed over the past three decades (Lipset & Schneider 1983). The data in this study suggest that adults may acquire more knowledge, and perhaps attitudes as well, from contemporary stories about specific legal experiences told to them by family, friends, and co-workers.

Appendix

Measures of Audit Features

Objective Timeliness: The actual number of days from the initial contact to the auditor's report of the findings from the audit ($M=140.68$; $S.D.=126.82$; range = 10 to 624).

Perceived Outcome Favorability: Taxpayers indicated their final outcome of their audit: no change (36.3%), a refund (4.7%), or owed more money (59.0%). One variable represented outcome favorability: 0 = owed more money; 1 = no change or a refund.

Actual Outcome Favorability: We obtained from the auditors' report sent to the Department of Revenue a measure of the actual amount owed. This measure is the sum of the amount owed or refunded across all years. Those who received refunds (5%) were recoded to 0; 40% of the sample either received a refund or had no change in the amount owed ($M=\$1,241.15$ owed; median = $\$168$; range = $\$0-\$27,667$; S.D.= $\$3,078.97$). To correct for outliers, a natural logarithmic transformation was performed after adding 0.5).

Measures from Closed-ended Questions

Responses are made on five-point scales where 1 = "not at all" and 5 = "very." The end points of "none at all" and "a great deal" are used when questions asked the respondent about "how much" of some quality.

Perceived Timeliness: "What's your feeling about the time you waited for the auditor to make a decision?" Responses are on a five-point scale where 1 = far too short; 3 = about right; 5 = far too long. Because of skewness, the variable was recoded to a three-point scale with 1-3=1; 4=2; and 5=3 ($M=1.42$; S.D.=.71; $N=215$).

Process Control: "How much control did you have over the scheduling of meetings and the overall pace of the audit?" This question was asked only when respondents handled the audit alone ($M=3.82$; S.D.=1.16; $N=112$).

Perceived Efficiency. Respondents were read a list of adjectives and rated the auditor based on how he/she acted during the audit. This item represents their rating of the term, "efficient" ($M=4.01$; S.D.=1.16; $N=169$).

Satisfaction with Treatment: "How satisfied are you with the way you were treated by the auditor during the audit?" ($M=4.19$; S.D.=1.21; $N=169$).

Auditor's Effort to Be Fair: "How hard do you think the auditor tried to be fair to you?" ($M=3.99$; S.D.=1.27; $N=210$)

Perceived Rapport: "All things considered, how well did you and the auditor get along on an interpersonal level?" Due to extreme skewness, a dichotomous dummy-coded measure was created with "poor rapport" equal to responses of 1-3 (22.4%) and "good rapport equal to responses of 4 or 5 (77.6%).

Perceived Outcome Fairness: The mean of two items formed a reliable scale ($r=.81$; $\alpha=.89$; $M=3.58$; S.D.=1.52): (a) "How fair do you think the financial outcome of the audit was?" (b) "How satisfied are you with the financial outcome of the audit?"

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