

Constructing Credibility: How Aggrandizement Helps Perform an Identity of Legitimacy and Self-Worth in a Creative Industry

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Abstract

This study contributes to an understanding of the role of aggrandizement in constructing a credible identity within an industrial context characterized by uncertainty and risk-taking, the popular music industry. Specifically, this paper focuses on the extent to which creative personalities draw on real and imaginary justifications to portray themselves as having attained greater success than they have actually achieved in order to construct a credible identity both to themselves and to others. As a positive self-illusion lends psychological benefits as well as the means to achieving self-fulfilling high performance, we conclude that aggrandizement may enhance the individual's performance both professionally and personally. Although the extant literature highlights how positive self-illusions can influence identity construction, the role aggrandizement plays in this process within a creative context does not appear to have been researched.

Keywords: aggrandizement, identity construction, self-illusion popular music, music industry, creative industries

David Schreiber is an Assistant Professor and Chair of the Creative & Entertainment Industries program at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. His research interests include decision-making practices within music

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Alison Rieple is Professor of Strategic Management at the University of Westminster and Director of IDEaS, WBS' Innovation Design Entrepreneurship and Strategy Research Group. After leaving university (with a degree in music) Alison worked in the probation service, latterly running a probation hostel for serious male offenders. Clearly a glutton for punishment, she left to do an MBA and then a PhD at Cranfield University. Since then she has worked for the University of Westminster, for nine years as Director of Research at Harrow Business School. She was appointed a Professor in 2002.

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