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The Differentiation between "Normal" and Extraordinary High and Low Self-disclosure on the Background of Their Regulative Function for Self-Coherence

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**THE DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN „NORMAL”
AND EXTRAORDINARY HIGH AND LOW SELF-DISCLOSURE
ON THE BACKGROUND OF THEIR REGULATIVE
FUNCTION FOR SELF-COHERENCE**

A theoretical concept on self-disclosure (SD) discussed elsewhere in detail (Ophoff 1989) shall be sketched here briefly in order to give the frame for a pilot-study determined to check its empirical testability and fruitfulness of the concept.

Hormuth and Archer (1986) critically pointed out the „One-sided phenomenon orientation and the relative absence of theory” (p. 141, author’s translation) in SD-research.

For this reason a possible conceptual framework on the basis of self-research is suggested, which may be sufficiently inclusive as well as sufficiently specific and predicative.

Although up to now the self continues to be a working hypothesis which is not considered as final (Higgins and Bargh 1987), it should be worth the attempt to examine the rather trivial possibility whether or not SD-research could base its diverse partial concepts, single questions, operationalizations etc. on structures and functions of the „self” (after all the „self” gives the label to this field of research). The aim is to overcome its status as a pragmatic, perhaps useful collection of seemingly related questions, results, and theoretical sprinklings.

From the great abundance of structural differentiations concerning the self (Markus and Wurf 1987) we have extracted two widely consensual distinctions concerning the mode of experiencing aspects of the self. Four substructures or „poles” of the self are deducible from them.

One distinction can be made between those kinds of self-relevant experiences directly accessible to the individual himself and those subject to social mediation (see Greenwald and Breckler 1985, Filip and Frey 1987, Markus and Wurf 1987).

A second distinction is that between relatively enduring, generalized, or integrated characteristics of the self on the one hand, which evidently guarantee the identity and continuity of personal experience and behavior. On the other hand transitory, concrete, and observable actualizations subordinate to the former and more or less compatible with these (Filip and Frey 1987). Precisely, these are the differentiations outlined in a statement by Markus und Wurf (1987): „Both self-perceptions and others' reactions thus constitute feedback to the self-system. This feedback may be either congruent or incongruent with current or desired self images” (p. 326).

The two structural distinctions result in a two-dimensional model of self-structure. It is formal, as it is applicable to every feature or characteristic of the self.

This base model should be comprehended only as an exemplary, heuristic possibility. Numerous simplifications must still be tolerated until its „fruitfulness” has gained empirical support and the model can be elaborated: e.g. isolated examination of the self characteristics; „others” implied as homogeneous; simplified separation of „ego” and „alter”, which would

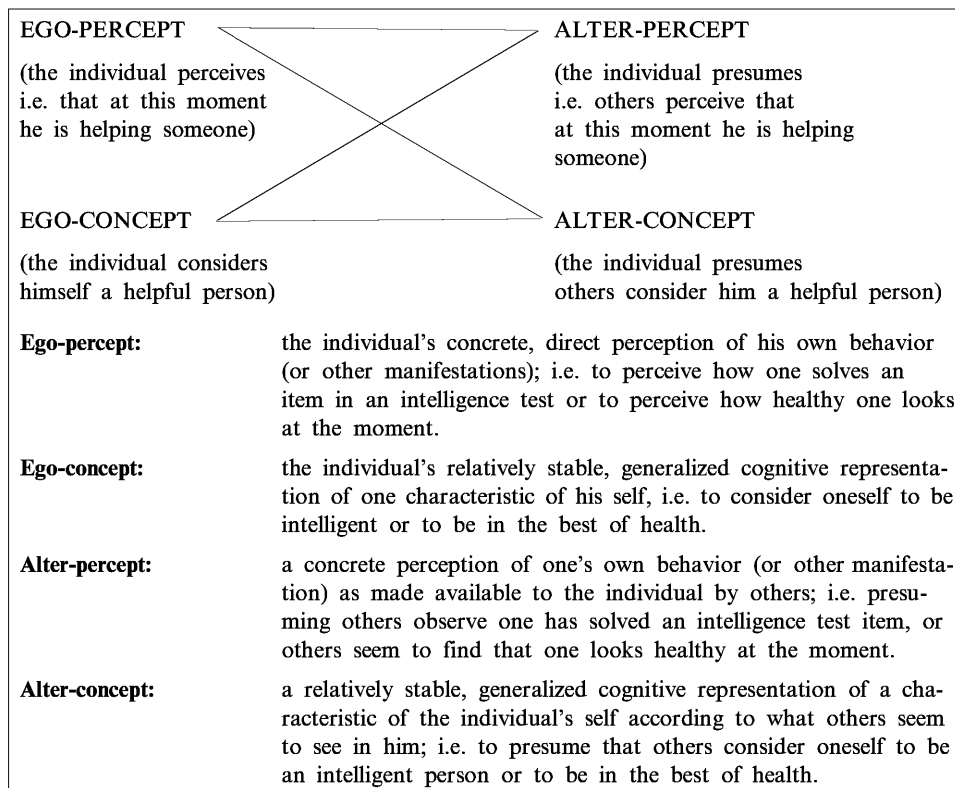


Fig. 1. Basic Model of the Formal Self-Structure with Regard to the Self's Modes of Experience

otherwise be unnecessarily complicated, for example by symbolic-interactional concepts such as „internal audience” or „internal reference group” (see Baumeister 1982, Tetlock 1985) and many more.

Concerning the functional, dynamic aspect of the self, which we call self system, an optimal congruity between all four poles could be assumed to be the simplest definition of its coherency. In case of intolerable incongruity between at least two of the poles, a regulative process is postulated for the purpose of restoring sufficient congruity.

Formally our conceptual frame most resembles a conception presented by Higgins, Klein, and Straumann (1985): The authors differentiate among (partly other) domains of the self as well. Discrepancies (incongruities) among these are supposed to elicit emotional states. However, the authors stick to the area of emotions and neither deal with the cognitive and behavioral consequences of the discrepancies in general nor with SD in particular.

These, however, are central topics of our model. Within the postulated regulative process, three functional areas are differentiated and serve as an heuristic guideline (see Greenwald and Pratkanis 1984):

1. Emotions which signalize the threat or fact of congruity loss and which prevent further enhancement of incongruence (i.e. coming to a „standstill” when feeling ashamed). As presteps to thinking (see Scherer 1985, Gelm 1987) they initiate cognitive measures for coping with the incongruity.

2. Cognitive procedures that either represent cognitive coping strategies (i.e. self-serving biases, discrimination of others; see Filip and Frey 1987, p. 37) or prepare reparative actions (i.e. SD-decisions).

3. Actions for the purpose of incongruity-reduction. In connection with social comparison processes, Filip and Frey (1987) e.g. name adaptation to reference persons or influencing them (p. 33) as two forms of discrepancy-reduction. (In this partial process the primary functional location of SD is postulated).

These broadly formulated areas now have to be specified with regard to the process and the role played by SD.

Disturbances of the self's coherence, i.e. incongruities within the self system represent the starting point.

1. At least in certain cases these incongruities can be experienced so strongly, that intensive emotions set in. There is some theory as well as empirical evidence that feelings of shame and the like are of special relevance to self-regulation (see, for example, Lynd 1961; Lewis 1971; Izard 1972, 1977; Zimbardo 1974). Their central function can be outlined in Izard's (1972) words: „In some situations shame and shyness may serve as frontrunners, motivating the individual to cover and withdraw the extended or exposed self before more serious threat elicits the very toxic emotion of fear” (p. 392).

Accordingly, we would expect that less or no SD will occur (what we call non-self-disclosure, NSD) in this phase of the process.

2. Subsequent (or more complex interdependent) cognitive processing ensues under the protection of the defensive stabilizing function of such emotions, which prevent an enhancement of incongruity. Cognitive operations alone may be sufficient in making incongruities more tolerable. Nonetheless, whether this suffices or not, SD/NSD decisions as well as other behavioral decisions are unavoidably a part of cognitive processing.

3. Accordingly, SD/NSD behavior and other supplementary or complementary behaviors serving self-regulation will occur.

Our conceptual frame suggests that SD has its primary functional location in the third process component and is planned, together with other cognitive coping-strategies, in the second one.

NSD, as important as SD, is postulated to occur with strong, acute, maybe dangerous incoherence of the self. It is defined for the present as a degree of SD which is lower than usual for the individual in relation to the situation, addressee, topic, etc.

One of the main functional tasks of SD is supposed to be the validation or reassurance of the self-system, especially of the ego-concept-pole; further the prevention of incongruity-emergence from external conditions; and not at least, in the case of existing intolerable incongruities, the re- or new balancing of the self-structure.

Referring to the first and second task a form of SD is demanded, which we call „normative SD”. This is, in contrast to the „regulative SD” (which has been regarded up to this) of an intensity and form that is in the range and under the control of social norms and expectations. I.e., it is of typical amount and type for the individual and adapted to the situation, addressee, etc. Its function is mainly to avoid the emergence of incongruities in a rather consolidated, integer self-system and thus make „regulative SD/NSD” unnecessary.

An initial pilot study, along with a second one dealing with a somewhat different question, should test the empirical fruitfulness and testability of the model, especially of the following theoretical assumptions: A functional distinction was made between „normative” and „regulative” SD/NSD. The „normative” SD/NSD should preserve the status quo of a relatively integer, coherent self-system. This means its type and extent are primarily determined by external factors such as the situation, the addressee of SD, etc. It is controlled by social norms and expectations and serves to prevent incongruities. „Regulative” SD/NSD, on the other hand, either exceeds or stays below the „normal” measure and is primarily triggered from within by an unacceptable proportion of incongruity in the self-system. By means of a process of regulation, an attempt is made to reduce this incongruity:

NSD as transitory withdrawal, a kind of „standstill” for the purpose of limiting damage and preventing more disregulation of the self-system before its regulation can be planned and carried out.

SD along with other measures, serves this regulation, for example, by pursuing a discussion for cathartic purposes, by trying to influence others, etc. Accordingly, the questions posed by the pilot study are:

a) do different levels of SD/NSD correspond with incongruences of different quantity, and quality (poles) in the self-structure?

b) are these different levels of SD/NSD (and possibly incongruences) associated with specifics of the regulative process: with different degrees of familiarity to the addressee(s) of SD, different degrees of involvement concerning the topics, with the significance of the SD and its modifying effect on the inner balance of the individual, etc.?

In accordance with the pilot character of the study, a self-exploratory procedure was first used to examine the field more closely. A sample of 21 psychology students from Giessen between the age of 19 and 30 years, of which 8 were male, received the following tasks in a repeated measures design:

1. Firstly they were asked to recall one situation each from the recent past in which they disclosed a „normal” amount of information, „very much”, and „very little or no” information on themselves (in each case as compared to what each subject considered to correspond with his own specific nature and habits) to project themselves into that situation again and then give a written description of it.

2. Then SD had to answer four questions referring to incongruities between the postulated substructures „ego-concept”, „ego-percept”, „alter-concept”, and „alter-percept” (a prerequisite in the model, a dependent variable in the experiment) corresponding to the varying degrees of SD/NSD.

Finally, six questions which addressed aspects of the postulated regulative process (in the model the conceptual frame for the functions of SD/NSD, dependent variables in the experiment) as they are listed under topic b. above, had to be answered.

HYPOTHESES

1. In the case of „normal” SD (as opposed to „much” and „little/no” SD), it is expected:

1.1. That the incongruences experienced in the self-system are of a lesser degree;

1.2. That less inner necessity and intensity prevail concerning the regulative process. This means that:

- the factors that trigger SD are a more external nature,
- the topics are less taken to heart,
- the addressee(s) of SD is less familiar,
- SD is less important for the own inner state of well-being and has less effect on the state of inner balance.

2. In the case of „much” or „little/no” SD (for which the abbreviation „NSD” will be used in the following), on the other hand, it can be expected:

2.1. That incongruities in the self-system are larger under „much” SD (at least at the onset of a SD-situation, during the course of which the incongruities may be reduced);

2.2. That, with respect to the regulative process referring to the self-system, more inner necessity and intensity are prevalent.

2.2.1. Concerning „much SD”, this implies the opposite of the statements listed under 1.2 (internal triggering, topics of more concern, etc.).

2.2.2. Regarding NSD, the parameters relevant to the regulative process are somewhat different, partly because of their different functional location during the regulative process, and partly because the same questions (as in SD), require a „transformed” or quasi „inverse” answer in the case of NSD (see below):

- the factors evoking NSD likewise are internal while at the same time the triggers for SD will be of a more external nature. (Since the subject is motivated not to disclose himself, only external triggers can cause him to disclose to a small extent.);

- the topics which he does not disclose are those of personal concern; therefore, that information which he does disclose, SD, will be of less personal importance;

- the term non-disclosure (NSD), in a more specific sense, implies that one’s addressee is a familiar person to the extent that the degree of SD really can remain below a „normal” level. Disclosing nothing at all or only a little to strangers would therefore be „normal” SD-behavior. At best, it could be called NSD in a purely descriptive sense. This results in a rather ambiguous hypothesis: According to how the subjects have understood the treatment „describe a situation with »little/no« SD”, they will either – in the trivial case – respond that they were not familiar with their addressee or, adhering to the more confined definition of NSD, they will report a quite close relationship;

- under the NSD condition, that which remains unspoken is important for the inner state of well-being. On the other hand, that which is spoken and inquired will therefore represent less important conversation;

– the latter will also little effect upon inner balance, since NSD actually serves the purpose of preventing incongruities from increasing by way of withdrawal and „standstill”. Therefore it cannot at the same time help reduce incongruence.

A more detailed explanation is needed to determine why the hypotheses pertaining to the condition „much” SD differ from those pertaining to „little/no” SD (both in contrast to „normal” SD). On the one hand, NSD (operationalized as „little/no” SD) has a different location and manner of functioning in the postulated process of regulation (see above): It is a possible first step preventing only an increasing of dysregulation. On the other hand, due to of the comparability of conditions, the same questions are asked under „much” SD and „little/no” SD, questions referring to SD, namely, but not to NSD. Therefore under the NSD-condition they have a quasi inverse answer-logic (see p. 10, results on hypothesis 2.2.2): The information they provide on NSD remains covert and can only be deduced from overt information about SD. The latter is complementary to NSD and therefore closer to „normal” SD, from which, however, it differs functionally. An example should explicate these somewhat complicated relations:

If the disclosure-conversation under the NSD-condition turns out to be insignificant and without important consequences for the inner balance/unbalance, then this would conform to the assumption of the model. Specifically non-disclosure is important for a defensive „standstill” and for preventing a further increase of incongruence, whereas that which is spoken and disclosed must be unimportant and can therefore have no consequences for the regulation of the inner balance. If, on the other hand, the same results appear under the „normal” SD-condition, then this corresponds with the expectation: when a state of relatively undisturbed self-coherence prevails, a moderate form of SD will be practiced (i.e. a conversation of little significance with few consequences for the inner balance). The aim is just to meet the disclosure-norms and expectations appropriate to the situation and partner involved and in order not to let incongruences arise as a result of norm violation.

RESULTS

Inferential statistics were conducted for the three dependent groups with the Friedman-Test. Paired comparisons were tested with the t-Test for dependent samples.

For the latter, the given $\hat{\alpha}$ -values are underestimated since the point in question is multiple comparisons. A correction, however, does not seem necessary as most of these values lie far below $\hat{\alpha} = .05$, and at least in the case of ep-ap, a one-sided test could have been conducted, that would halve $\hat{\alpha}$.

On Hypothesis 1.1 and 2.1:

As expected, with „normal SD” the incongruences are smaller in all four pole combinations than with „little/no” SD, but significant only in the case of ep-ap. On the other hand, the differences between „normal SD” and „much SD” are small and in one case, ac-ec, tend towards greater incongruence with „normal SD”.

This unexpected absence of differentiation seems to suggest a methodological „exhaustion”: In the investigation, it was neglected to refer the questions sufficiently specific to the onset of SD, especially in the case of „much SD”. Consequently, this could have led to incongruence reduction and the leveling of existing differences. The subjects probably preferred to report on the later, more regulated state, as it was the more pleasant one. Two results speak in favor of such a process:

1. The greatest incongruence occurred in the ego-alter-concept comparison (ec-ac) under „little/no” SD as well as „normal” SD, this as opposed to „much” SD, which in this combination of poles does not differ from the remaining combinations. In contrast to the treatment „little/no SD”, „much SD” shows significantly less incongruity in all four cases, a trend also observed when compared to „normal SD”.

At first glance the considerable incongruences found in the ac-ec comparison do conform to the model in as far as with regard to these poles, which are defined as stable over time, there is little possibility of reducing the experienced incongruity on a purely cognitive basis, e.g. attributing it to the special situation, to chance or unsystematic error. Accordingly, only with „much SD” (within the context of the instructions that were time-related but not adequately specified) existed the far-reaching possibility of going beyond cognitive processing and of pursuing incongruence reduction by SD. Not only does the given possibility speak in favor of this, but also the indicators for regulation (questions 5–9) suggest that this has actually been realized (increased involvement with the topics, increased importance of the conversation for the inner well-being, more change of inner balance, conversation partners who are more familiar, and more internal triggering factors).

2. Under the treatment „much SD” as compared to the other two treatments, the variance is reduced in all 8 pairs, especially in the ec-ac comparison (not tested statistically).

It can hardly be a ceiling effect, since the ratings can all be found in the middle section of the response scale. It therefore seems plausible that

the variance could have become restricted as follows: Within the treatment „much SD”, and only here, did those subjects showing especially great incongruities have the chance to reduce these with the help of extensive SD. For those subjects having less incongruities to begin with, this was neither necessary nor even possible to the same extent. Consequently, variance was decreased.

On Hypothesis 1.1 and 2.2:

All five of the „regulation-indicators” belonging to these hypotheses received different responses in the expected manner. In the case of „much” SD as opposed to „normal” SD:

- the triggering factors are of a more internal character,
- the topics provoke more personal involvement,
- the addressees are more familiar
- the conversation is more important to the inner state of wellbeing,
- the conversation has greater effect upon inner balance.

On Hypothesis 2.2.2:

At first glance, ratings for the treatment „little/no SD” are similar to those for „normal SD”. They altogether differ significantly from „much SD”. This does include one major exception: Familiarity with the SD-partner is rated as average, just as under „much SD”, whereas under „normal SD” the partner was rated as „less familiar” on the average. This circumstance, along with the peculiarities of the questions explained in hypothesis 2.2.2 concerning their meaning and responses when they were presented under the treatment „little/no SD”, justifies speaking of a far reaching verification of the hypotheses which were postulated for this treatment (the concluded assumptions and at the same time the postulates from the model concerning NSD are noted in parentheses):

- SD (as it occurred, and as it was addressed by the questions) was more likely to be evoked by external factors (just because by internal factors defensive NSD was preferred);
- the topics which were actually disclosed accordingly contained less involvement than under „much SD” (due to the fact that those topics close and corresponding to inner determination are precisely those which were not disclosed but rather avoided);
- the conversation was less important to the inner state (because it was only a substitute for or an attempt to elude the important, undisclosed information);
- therefore the conversation had less effect upon the inner balance (because the attitude was a defensive one and did not admit SD with cathartic, persuasive, or other regulative effects).

Table 1

Means, Standard-Deviations and Significance-Levels for the 5 Step Incongruity-Ratings for Questions Referring to Aspects of SD in the Regulative Process and for Sureness in the Ratings

Question	Treatments			Significance-levels		
	normal SD	much SD	little/no SD	Friedman-T $\hat{A} =$	T-Test $\hat{A} =$	n = normal m = much ln = little/no
1. ep-ap	x 2,38 s 1,32	2,33 1,11	3,00 1,26	0,13	0,034	nSD/lnSD
2. ap-ac	x 2,29 s 1,19	2,62 1,16	2,81 1,21	0,39		
3. ec-ac	x 2,81 s 1,03	2,33 .73	3,14 1,11	0,02	0,10 0,005	nSD/mSD mSD/lnSD
4. ec-ep	x 2,29 s 1,23	2,14 1,20	2,43 1,36	0,56		
5. Involvement in topics (1 = very much)	x 3,14 s 1,28	1,38 .50	2,57 1,25	0,0001	0,0001 0,0001 0,13	nSD/mSD mSD/lnSD nSD/lnSD
6. Importance of talk (1 = very imp.)	x 3,29 s 1,10	1,57 .75	3,29 1,19	0,0001	0,0001 0,0001	nSD/mSD mSD/lnSD
7. Triggering factors (1 = completely internal, 5 = compl. external)	x 2,33 s .97	3,76 1,00	2,33 1,11	0,0003	0,0001 0,0001	nSD/mSD mSD/lnSD
8. Consequences of talk (1 = no cons.)	x 2,14 s 1,01	3,19 1,03	2,10 1,00	0,008	0,002 0,001	nSD/mSD mSD/lnSD
9. Familiarity of the other (1 = very high)	x 4,05 s 0,59	3,05 1,16	3,00 1,38	0,01	0,002 0,001	nSD/mSD nSD/lnSD
10. Sureness in the ratings (1 = very sure)	x 2,05 s 0,67	1,95 0,50	2,33 0,97	0,59	0,13	mSD/lnSD

– At the same time, contrary to „normal SD” and equivalent to „much SD”, the addressee was more familiar. (That is why NSD in the restrictive sense could even be addressed to him. It was NSD especially for this addressee which he needed in order to keep his composure and guard against further revealment and „disregulation” of the self’s shaken balance).

Once again it should be pointed out that this „interpretation” of the answers became necessary as a result of the following dilemma: On the one hand, in order to have comparable conditions over all treatments, the same questions had to be posed. On the other hand, these questions related

to SD could not directly be applied to the accompanying circumstances of NSD. Therefore, these had to be partially concluded, thus allowing a comparison with the assumptions of the model.

One objection must still be taken into consideration: The fact that sureness in the ratings was estimated to be somewhat greater and more homogenous (descriptive) under the condition „much” SD could give reason to assume that stereotyped ratings might have been reported here. More specifically, it is possible that subjects thought that the condition „much” SD automatically meant involvement in topics, familiarity of the addressee, internal triggering factors, etc. This was not controlled for, but even if this objection proved true, subjects would still have ascribed a function to SD similar to the one postulated in the model. And it can be presumed that this would have a self-fulfilling effect by means of its cognitive representation, not only in the experimental situation.

The results obtained with the more explorative and less stringent methods of a pilot study show that, on the whole, the exemplary assumptions introduced by the model are not falsified and do deserve further investigation.

Methodological shortcomings became evident, especially the insufficient specification of a temporal reference point for the question (especially under „much” SD).

Since the definition of „little/no” SD also lacked specificity, it was left to the subjects to choose between a harmless, social norm-fulfilling form of NSD with a less intimate conversation partner or NSD in the restricted sense with a more familiar person. Results do speak more in favor of the occurrence of the latter: The familiarity of the conversation partner was rated the same as with „much” SD and higher than with „normal” SD.

It should be noted, that the present investigation provided a relatively conservative, impeded model test, the type of which we could call correlational: Incongruities of self-structure together with characteristics of the regulative process (e.g. familiarity with the addressee) might provide a sufficient but not necessary and exclusive condition for SD/NSD and its changes, and did not preclude other influencing factors. Thus the variation of incongruities and regulative characteristics correspondent to the variation of SD/NSD might have to override potential other determinants of SD/NSD, and did so in agreement with the model-assumptions.

A more implicative model test requires the reverse procedure, namely experimental conditions in which the incongruities have to be manipulated and SD/NSD together with other components of the regulative process are dependent variables.

As an example for this sort of procedure another pilot study (see Ophoff 1989) should be mentioned here at least in terms of its main features and results.

This study posed the following general question: do the regulative mechanisms pertaining to the self-system (with their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components) differ, depending on which combination of poles (ego-concept/ego-percept vs. ego-concept/alter-percept) is affected by incongruence and how pronounced (more vs. less) this incongruence is? And more specifically: Under the given conditions (independent variables) do the proportion of shame and shame-like emotions in particular, the absolute degree of SD and NSD decisions and their relation to each other, does finally SD/NSD behavior (dependent variables) differ?

A quasi-experimental, field-related procedure was chosen with a 2×2 factorial design: Following a given example, the subjects had to describe four personally experienced situations in which incongruences within the self-system occurred between the poles mentioned above and in the two intensities. (Of course, the instructions were not formulated in terms of the model). The descriptions were content analysed (ratings) and supplemented by systematic questions (5-step ratings).

Two randomized samples of 17 and 23 psychology students, male and female, were included. Each group worked at one of the two qualities of incongruence, with permuted intensity of incongruity. In accordance with the basic model, a number of hypotheses were tested which can only be summarized here:

1. Under the influence of more intensive incongruity (m.i.i. vs. 1. (ess) i.i.) the postulated partial functions of the regulative process are activated more strongly: more intensive emotions, especially shame and related feelings; more cognitive processing, especially more SD-decisions, which are considered more essential; more SD-behavior or at least a more unequal distribution of NSD vs. SD; the latter being more likely when faced with a person closer to oneself.

2. Concerning ego-concept vs. alter-percept-incongruity (e-a-i), as compared to ego-concept vs. ego-percept-incongruity (e-e-i), the following is predicted: Increased occurrence of alter-directed emotions (i.e. anger instead of shame), responsibility and causes attributed rather to others than to oneself; a relative redistribution of decisive reasons favoring SD instead of NSD, (because, as a result of alter participating in the incongruence publicity already prevails and perfect NSD is no longer possible); accordingly, SD, in proportion, is found more often in behavior than NSD. SD will have more of an offensive function directed outwards towards persons less close on one hand and greater in number on the other. The reason for the latter is: Already one alter may be sufficient to compensate for an e-e-i. At least one additional addressee is required for revalidation of the ego-concept, where alter is the reasons for the incongruence and is only held in balance by a first addressee.

The results largely verify the hypotheses. In some aspects, they are prolific in generating hypotheses for later investigation and point out methodological precautions to be taken in the future.

The regulation process subsequent to the inferred qualities and intensities of incongruence was divided into the following subareas:

1. Emotions:

1.1. In the abundance of accompanying and resulting emotions (8 out of 12 alternatives and a rest-category were marked), as was expected, shame, embarrassment, painfulness were predominant; but to about the same degree anger, annoyance, aggressiveness as well. Significant treatment differences, however, could not be identified.

1.2. An unexpected, but nonetheless heuristically interesting result was the following detail: There was one exception to the trivial finding that all emotions were rated to be more intensive during the original situation than at the time of their inquiry: „Embarrassment” was rated more frequently and higher in rank under e-a-i with regard to the time of survey. Under the supplementary assumption that it is a kind of SD when „confessing” an incongruence to the researcher during the inquiry, the explanation becomes obvious that this current e-a-i incongruence specifically potentiates the depicted one. Although an artefact of the experimental technique this outcome can be interpreted as conforming with the model in a very specific way.

2. Cognitive Processing:

2.1. According to the outcome expected, more coping thoughts arose under m.i.i. than under l.i.i..

2.2. As expected, pure cognitive coping obviously is not sufficient under m.i.i. SD decisions become necessary, and – such are the findings – far more SD-decisional thoughts occur than under l.i.i. (in the case of intensive affect sometimes they seem to be „skipped over”: for example statements such as „I couldn’t think.”, „I had to talk about it.”).

2.3. Of the coping thoughts, self-justifications and accusations predominated under all treatments. Under the qualitative condition that an alter was involved in the incongruity (a-a-i), coping directed at the alter in the form of an accusation occurred about twice as often as under the ego-internal incongruity (e-e-i).

2.4. The quality of the incongruity also determines the direction of the SD-decisional thoughts: With e-e-i the number of thoughts against SD predominate; with e-a-i an approximate equal distribution prevails. This conforms to the plausible expectation that, if possible, the attempt will be made to regulate ego-internal incongruences more economically without SD

(which is full of risks). If however an alter plays a part in the incongruence, then it has already become „public”, and the consideration of ego-internal coping therefore becomes more unlikely.

3. Behavior:

3.1. Corresponding with 2.4, NSD was predominant under e-e-i, while SD predominated under e-a-i (mainly in the case of l.i.i., however). If the incongruence is particularly distinct (m.i.i.), the tendency to turn toward SD as a means of regulation is altogether stronger (and this is more persistent under e-a-i).

3.2. Under m.i.i. SD tended to be directed at addresses that were closer. This also corresponds with the principles of economizing (more common presuppositions) and risk prevention (benevolence and intimacy are more likely).

3.3. With e-a-i the number of SD-addresses was almost double that under e-e-i. This not only falls in line with economizing and risk prevention. Even more specifically, it evokes the question whether or not different functions of SD take effect here: Under m.i.i. and e-e-i, its main function seems to be an exchange with a confidant, under e-a-i, it may primarily serve social-influence and validation (see hypothesis 2).

3.4. Under m.i.i. more socially relevant characteristics are reported as contents of incongruity, under l.i.i. more achievement-oriented attributes. This needs further examination and explanation.

METHOD CHECK

1. The inter-rater-objectivity regarding the categories of content analysis (ratings) was

about 80%; regarding the formalized inquiry it was nearly perfect.

2. The subjective certainty of the ratings on a five-point scale was rated on the average as

almost „fairly certain” (3.7 of maximum 5).

3. It can be regarded as a treatment check that the intimacy of the experiences described

was judged to be greater under m.i.i. than under l.i.i.; likewise that in the descriptions

of m.i.i. stronger quantifiers emerged (i.e. „I am very ambitious.”):

Very distinctive

characteristic should be better suited to experiencing incongruities.

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**REGULACYJNE FUNKCJE SAMOUJAWNIANIA W KONTEKŚCIE ZACHOWANIA
SPÓJNOŚCI OBRAZU SIEBIE**

Regulacyjna funkcja samoujawniania w kontekście spójności obrazu siebie jest podstawowym problemem tego artykułu. Założono, iż różnica pomiędzy normanym i odbiegającym od normy poziomem samoujawniania wpływa na postrzeganie spójności obrazu siebie przez jednostki. Weryfikacji poddano dwie grupy hipotez. Rezultaty badań w znacznym stopniu potwierdziły hipotezy. Ponadto umożliwiły postawienie nowych problemów badawczych i wykazały poprawność metodologiczną podejmowanych badań.