

SSSP

Springer
Series in
Social
Psychology

SSSP

Public Self and Private Self

Edited by
Roy F. Baumeister



Springer-Verlag New York Berlin Heidelberg
London Paris Tokyo

Roy F. Baumeister
Department of Psychology
Case Western Reserve University
Cleveland, Ohio 44106
U.S.A.

With 4 Figures

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Public self and private self.

(Springer series in social psychology)

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Self-presentation. 2. Self. I. Baumeister,
Roy F. II. Series.

BF697.5.S44P82 1986 155.2 86-1905

©1986 by Springer-Verlag New York Inc.

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1986

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be translated or reproduced in any form without written permission from Springer-Verlag, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10010, U.S.A.

The use of general descriptive names, trade names, trademarks, etc. in this publication, even if the former are not especially identified, is not to be taken as a sign that such names, as understood by the Trade Marks and Merchandise Marks Act, may accordingly be used freely by anyone.

Typeset by Publishers Service, Bozeman, Montana.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN-13: 978-1-4613-9566-9 e-ISBN-13: 978-1-4613-9564-5

DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4613-9564-5

Preface

Psychology has worked hard to explore the inner self. Modern psychology was born in Wundt's laboratory and Freud's consulting room, where the inner self was pressed to reveal some of its secrets. Freud, in particular, devoted most of his life to exploring the hidden recesses inside the self—hidden even from the conscious mind, he said. From Freud's work right down to the latest journal article on self-schemata or self-esteem, psychologists have continued to tell us about the inner self.

More recently, psychology has turned some of its attention to the outer self, that is, the self that is seen and known by other people. Various psychologists have studied how the outer self is formed (impression formation), how people control their outer selves (impression management), and so forth.

But how is the outer self related to the inner self?

There is an easy answer, but it is wrong. The easy answer is that the outer self is mostly the same as the inner self. Put another way, it is that people reveal their true selves to others in a honest and straightforward fashion, and that others accurately perceive the individual as he or she really is. Sometimes it works out that way, but often it does not. The issue is far too complex for the easy answer.

The terms "inner self" and "outer self" have several misleading meanings. They seem to imply that the psyche is layered like an onion, and that all visible action goes with the outer self while the inner self can never be glimpsed in action. Both implications are probably quite wrong. As a result, the inner-outer metaphor has fallen into disuse among most psychologists interested in the self. For this book, the terms "public self" and "private self" were preferred. The public self is the self that is manifested in the presence of others, that is formed when other people attribute traits and qualities to the individual, and that is communicated to other people in the process of self-presentation. The private self is the way the person understands himself or herself and is the way the person really is—even if other people fail to recognize it.

So: How is the public self related to the private self?

For this book I have invited leading theorists and researchers to answer that question. I told them we needed some new answers, some new ideas. Their responses fill

this book. Obviously, what's "new" is defined partly on the basis of what's "old," so let me take a moment here at the start to review what is old. There are two main sets of old ideas that concern us. This book is an attempt to break out of the tiresome stalemate of these two sets.

The first set of old ideas is psychology's effort to interpret everything in terms of inner processes, motivations, and goals, oblivious to the communicative aspect of the self. This set of ideas simply ignores self-presentation. For example, consider someone's reaction to a humiliating failure in front of three other people. A psychologist using this set of ideas would interpret the reaction in terms of the threat to the individual's self-esteem. The fact that the presence of the three others probably made a huge difference would not be considered. For another example, consider someone who denies that a persuasive magazine essay has changed his opinion. This denial would simply be interpreted as a failure of persuasion—ignoring the possibility that the person was trying to avoid *seeming* like a gullible, easily swayed person.

The second set of old ideas comprises most of the history of research on self-presentation. In it, people's behavior was seen as often guided by attempts to make a good impression on whoever happened to be there. Researchers in this tradition challenged the work done using the first set of ideas. They would choose some pattern of behavior that had been shown and discussed in terms of inner processes and motivations and show that that behavior changed or disappeared depending on whether the subject was alone or with other people. The implication was that if behavior changed depending on the presence or absence of others, then it was shaped by the desire to impress the others. This sort of result was obtained over and over.

Needless to say, these research findings of differences between private (alone) and public (with others) behavior were not universally popular. Many psychologists had spent their lives and staked their careers on theories about inner motives. They were less than delighted to be told that their theories were egregiously mistaken, that they had overlooked a (or even *the*) main cause. They could not dismiss self-presentation, but they did not have to like it. Self-presentation grew up as an all-purpose alternative explanation for many other theories. It was greeted and treated like a rude bastard relative at a family gathering.

Self-presentation was slow to develop its own body of theory, which is why this book is appearing in 1986 rather than 1976 or 1966. One reason for this slowness is that self-presentation researchers launched their careers by taking on other people's theories, such as dissonance (Tedeschi, Schlenker, & Bonoma, 1971), defensive attributions (Weary Bradley, 1978), self-esteem (Baumeister & Jones, 1978), or reactance (Baer, Hinkle, Smith, & Fenton, 1980). Self-presentation researchers were too busy attacking other theories to erect one of their own. Self-presentation was the perennial challenger, rarely or never the codified theory in its own right. But I think there are three other reasons for the slow development of self-presentation theory.

One reason concerns the conceptual organization of social psychology. Social psychology is a field dominated by dependent variables. Ask a social psychologist what he or she studies, and the answer will tend to be a dependent variable, such as atti-

tude change, aggression, attraction, helping, impression formation, and so forth. Self-presentation, however, is usually studied as an independent variable, as a comparison between public and private situations. Many people were surprised when in 1982 I published a review of research on self-presentation. They hadn't realized that there was so much. One reason for that is that social psychologists group things according to dependent variables, but my review was based on an independent variable. Thus, the area of self-presentation is out of step with the way social psychologists tend to think. Like those few other research areas that are defined by an independent variable (e.g., self-awareness), it has tended to remain outside the mainstream.

A second reason for the slow development of self-presentation theory concerns its status in personality research. Unlike social psychology, personality tends to feature independent variables. A personality researcher will describe his or her work in terms of independent variables such as self-esteem, locus of control, depression, and self-monitoring. Self-presentation might have fit in well in personality, and indeed some of the chapters in this book explore self-presentation in relation to personality. But this has been slow to happen due to the unfortunate way self-presentation got started. The first major book on self-presentation, at least in the modern period, was E. Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). Goffman was a sociologist, and like most sociologists he was dubious and skeptical of personality. In Goffman's world, people were actors who might change masks but could never really remove them. The idea of self-presentation became associated with Goffman, and the antipathy between his ideas and personality theory precluded any substantial personality-oriented work in self-presentation.

The third reason for the slow development of self-presentation theory is that it is out of step with the current academic fashions. There are two main aspects to human behavior, motivation and cognition. Fashions in psychological theory have shifted emphasis between these two. In the 1940s, for example, motivation was dominant. Drive theory attempted to synthesize psychoanalytic theory and animal research, both of which were heavily motivational. Only the "New Look" in perception provided some exciting ideas regarding human cognition. In the past decade, however, the pendulum has swung far the other way. Social psychology and even personality are full of cognitive processes and models, while motivation is downplayed. Self-presentation, however, is basically a neo-drive theory, emphasizing motivation over cognition. The reason people behave differently in public than in private is they *care* about how others regard them: They are motivated to make a good impression. This motivational basis is not easily disguised by focusing on their cognitive processes. For example, one might look at what thoughts the self-presenter wants the other person to think about him or her, but these are rarely surprising. The self-presenter wants others to think him competent, likable, and perhaps virtuous. In short, self-presentation is a motivational construct in a field that is dominated by cognitive constructs. In this respect, too, it is out of step.

Once again, then: How is the public self related to the private self?

The field is overdue for some good answers to this question. There are the old, easy answers, and there is ample evidence that those answers are inadequate.

Research has now established (to nearly everyone's satisfaction, I presume) that there is a difference between purely inner processes and self-presentational motives. The public self is no longer mistaken for the private self, but, in severing the old, false links between public self and private self, researchers have begun to act as if the two selves are completely unrelated. We have divested ourselves of many wrong ideas about how public self and private self are related, and so we are ready to examine that relationship with a newly open mind. To work, then . . .

References

- Baer, R., Hinkle, S., Smith, K., & Fenton, M. (1980). Reactance as a function of actual versus projected autonomy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *38*, 416-422.
- Baumeister, R. F. (1982). A self-presentational view of social phenomena. *Psychological Bulletin*, *91*, 3-26.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Jones, E. E. (1978). When self-presentation is constrained by the target's knowledge: Consistency and compensation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *36*, 608-618.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Anchor Books.
- Tedeschi, J. T., Schlenker, B. R., & Bonoma, T. V. (1971). Cognitive dissonance: Private ratiocination or public spectacle? *American Psychologist*, *26*, 685-695.
- Weary Bradley, G. (1978). Self-serving biases in the attribution process: A re-examination of the fact or fiction question. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *36*, 56-71.

Contents

1. Private and Public Experiences and the Self	1
<i>James T. Tedeschi</i>	
Public and Private Psychological Events: Definitions	2
The Self as Object: The Impact of Public Behavior on Self-Theory	3
Self as Agent: The Relationship of Private Cognitions to Public Behavior	11
Private and Public Manipulations in Laboratory Experiments	15
Conclusions and Implications	17
2. Self-Identification: Toward an Integration of the Private and Public Self	21
<i>Barry R. Schlenker</i>	
Self-Identification	22
Motives Reconsidered: Desired Identity Images	24
Private and Public Behavior Reconsidered: Audiences	26
The Influence of the Private Self on Self-Presentations	32
The Influence of Self-Presentations on the Self-Concept	36
Summary	55
3. Four Selves, Two Motives, and a Substitute Process Self-Regulation Model	63
<i>Roy F. Baumeister and Dianne M. Tice</i>	
Two Motives	63
Four Selves	64
Self-Regulation and Substitute Process	69

4. Self-Presentation and Self-Evaluation: Processes of Self-Control and Social Control	75
<i>Robert M. Arkin and Ann H. Baumgardner</i>	
Social Control and Personal Control	76
An Organizational Schema	80
Self-Promotion and Self-Concept	87
Summary and Conclusions	92
5. On the Convergence of Public and Private Aspects of Self	99
<i>Abraham Tesser and Janet Moore</i>	
The Self-Evaluation Maintenance (SEM) Model	99
Public Versus Private Self-Evaluation Maintenance	101
On the Convergence of the Public Self and the Self-Concept	103
The Dilemma in Creating a Positive Impression	104
Cognitive Loads and Convergence on Public Self and Self-Concept	107
The Self-Concept Constrains the Public Self	108
The Public Self Constrains the Self-Concept	110
External Constraints on the Public Self and the Self-Concept	112
Summary	113
6. Self-Presentation and the Phenomenal Self: On the Stability and Malleability of Self-Conceptions	117
<i>Frederick T. Rhodewalt</i>	
A Process Model of Self-Presentation and the Phenomenal Self	118
The Phenomenal Self in Social Interaction	128
Individual Differences in the Effects of Self-Presentation on the Phenomenal Self	132
Conclusion	138
7. Striving for Specific Identities: The Social Reality of Self-Symbolizing	143
<i>Peter M. Gollwitzer</i>	
The Subjective Conceptions of Identity Goals	143
The Motivational Basis of Identity-Related Striving	149
Social Implications of the Unique Motivational Basis of Self-Symbolizing	151
Conclusion	157
8. Competence and Excuse-Making as Self-Presentational Strategies	161
<i>George I. Whitehead, III and Stephanie H. Smith</i>	
Self-Image-Maintaining Strategies in Public and Private	162
Maintaining Self-Image Through Judgments of Similarity and Social Comparison	163

Maintaining Self-Image Through Beneffectance	166
Maintaining Self-Image Through Projection	170
Gender	173
Conclusion	174
9. A Socioanalytic Interpretation of the Public and the Private Selves ..	179
<i>Robert Hogan and Stephen R. Briggs</i>	
Socioanalytic Theory	180
Research Problems	181
Caveats	184
10. The Causes and Consequences of a Need for Self-Esteem:	
A Terror Management Theory	189
<i>Jeff Greenberg, Tom Pyszczynski, and Sheldon Solomon</i>	
Empirical Support for a Need for Self-Esteem	189
A Terror Management Theory of the Need for Self-Esteem	196
Conclusion	206
11. Depression: A Self-Presentation Formulation	213
<i>Martha G. Hill, Gifford Weary, and Joan Williams</i>	
Overview of Contemporary Cognitive and Interpersonal Models of Depression	215
Depressive Self-Presentation	218
Empirical Evidence for Self-Presentation in Depression	220
Depressive Self-Presentation and the Reactions of Others	234
Summary and Conclusions	235
12. Epilogue: The Next Decade of Self-Presentation Research	241
<i>Roy F. Baumeister</i>	
Effects of Self-Presentation on the Inner Self	241
Audiences and Relationships	242
Cognition and Self-Presentation	243
Convergence of Public and Private Selves	244
Control	244
Multiple Forms of Self-Presentation	244
Conclusion	245
Author Index	247
Subject Index	255

Contributors

Robert M. Arkin, Department of Psychology, University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, Missouri 65211, U.S.A.

Roy F. Baumeister, Department of Psychology, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio 44106, U.S.A.

Ann H. Baumgardner, Department of Psychology, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061, U.S.A.

Stephen R. Briggs, Department of Psychology, University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74104, U.S.A.

Peter M. Gollwitzer, Max-Planck-Institut für Psychologische Forschung, 8000 München 40, West Germany.

Jeff Greenberg, Department of Psychology, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721, U.S.A.

Martha G. Hill, Department of Psychology, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210, U.S.A.

Robert Hogan, Department of Psychology, University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74104, U.S.A.

Janet Moore, Department of Psychology, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602, U.S.A.

Tom Pyszczynski, Department of Psychology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514, U.S.A.

Frederick T. Rhodewalt, Department of Psychology, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112, U.S.A.

Barry R. Schlenker, Department of Psychology, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32601, U.S.A.

Stephanie H. Smith, Department of Psychology, Indiana University Northwest, Gary, Indiana 46408, U.S.A.

Sheldon Solomon, Department of Psychology, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York 12866, U.S.A.

James T. Tedeschi, Department of Psychology, State University of New York at Albany, Albany, New York 12222, U.S.A.

Abraham Tesser, Department of Psychology, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602, U.S.A.

Dianne M. Tice, Department of Psychology, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08544, U.S.A.

Gifford Weary, Department of Psychology, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210, U.S.A.

George I. Whitehead, III, Department of Psychology, Salisbury State University, Salisbury, Maryland 21801, U.S.A.

Joan Williams, Department of Psychology, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210, U.S.A.