

**Fusing Apples and Oranges:
A Rejoinder to Carver & Scheler and to
Fenigstein**

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ABSTRACT A simple parable is introduced that serves as an analogy to the private/public self-focus distinction. The analogy elucidates that the reliability of the effects observed by the private/public research direction is not the focus of the Wicklund and Gollwitzer critique. Rather, the critique questions the validity of the explanations offered. More importantly, the analogy implies the conclusion that construing social dependency as an issue of self-focus does injustice to both the social dependency and self-focus concepts.

A sample of the more poignant explorations into what has been called "public and private self-awareness and self-consciousness" was brought to light in our preceding discussion. Our sample dealt especially with studies that most clearly showed the more central, often-cited effects, that is, crossover type interactions or interaction-like data patterns. The reliability of these effects did not appear to be a problem. Actually they seem readily producible, a point to which the frequency of such effects in the journals attests. Rather, our central concern, which hangs closely together with Lewin's objection to explaining by means of categories, is with the question of how these effects need to be understood.

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A Parable

Let us suppose that a team of psychologists has been studying the effect of preparation for a certain task on actual performance outcome. For years they have documented a reliable, easily produced phenomenon: Subjects are given a finger maze problem of moderate complexity, having first been trained differentially in solving finger mazes. Some subjects are given very little training (which the researchers refer to as having acquired a "low performance readiness"), while other subjects receive many trials of prior practice (i.e., they acquire a "high performance readiness"). The researchers consistently find a monotonic positive relation between the amount of performance readiness and quality of maze performance.

When conducting their experiments the psychologists recognize that their dependent variable (performance outcome) is also affected by subjects' anxiety. They observe, for instance, that the presence of a threatening social stimulus (e.g., evaluative onlookers) tends to interfere with performance on the finger maze. The psychologists then begin to vary subjects' evaluation anxiety and observe a reliable suppression effect on maze performance.

Because both phenomena interest the psychologists, they start thinking about the possibility of integrating them within the same theoretical framework. Clearly, an increase in the first concept ("performance readiness") improves performance, whereas an increase in the second concept ("evaluation anxiety") worsens performance. Although one would think that this necessitates maintaining the conceptual distinction originally employed, our researchers find a way to fuse the two concepts. Since the second process seems to be set in gear by the presence of evaluative others, they relabel it "public performance readiness," and to keep the distinction between the two facets of the research clear, the first concept is specified by adding "private"—hence "private performance readiness."

The psychologists then try to amass empirical support for their new conceptualization. One group of subjects is given the high versus low "private" performance readiness manipulation (differential training), and not unexpectedly, it is found that high "private" performance readiness leads to better maze performance. The other group of subjects is given the high versus low "public" performance readiness manipulation (one-half of them are confronted with an evaluative audience), and not surprisingly, it is found that high public performance readiness produces

decrements in maze performance. They continue by constructing a scale that measures "private performance readiness" (i.e., one's tendency to prepare for performance tests) and a second scale that assesses "public performance readiness" (subjects' tendency to worry about evaluation by others). Employing these two scales in their research, the researchers manage to replicate the interaction-like pattern obtained in their experiments, and now start to become convinced that the differentiation of two types of performance readiness is valid and necessary.

A Formalized Description of this Approach

In more formal language, one can reduce the approach described to a number of instructions that should result reliably in crossover interactions:

1. Locate a process (X) in which increments in a certain class of variables (V_1) lead to increases in some given dependent variable (DV).
2. Locate a second process (Y), in which increments in a class of different variables (V_2) lead to decreases in the same dependent variable (DV).
3. Change the name of "Y" to "X-Type II," and to keep the nomenclature homogeneous, specify "X" to read "X-Type I."
4. Argue that the opposing pattern of results for X-Type I and X-Type II is evidence for the necessity of distinguishing between X-Type I and X-Type II.

We would not charge the proponents of the private/public distinction with having followed such a strategy. However, our previous discussion implies that the outcome of their endeavors and the outcome of our researcher's efforts suffer from the same shortcomings. In the following we shall elaborate on this point.

Social Dependency Labeled as Self-Focus

The "public/private" research direction continues to avow that both processes, that is, self-focused attention as well as those we have called social dependency, are self-awareness processes. Yet at the same time the research findings continue to verify the second of the two processes as irrelevant to the self. Thus, there is a conflict of directions: Whereas the "public" research is conducted so as to maximize the presence of social dependency effects by eliminating the possibility of self-focused attention, the researchers invariably infuse such social dependency phenom-

ena with "self-awareness" (the "public" variety). Several illustrations follow:

1. Although the "public" scale correlates either zero or negatively with an accepted index of self-directed attention (Carver & Scheier, 1978; Hoover et al, 1982), the public/private researchers continue to maintain that the "public" scale measures self-focus.

2. The "public" scale correlations with such concepts as "other-directedness" and "sociability" indicate that a person high on this scale is susceptible to the evaluations and wishes of others in the immediate environment. There is never any discussion of the "public" person's resisting such social pressures; rather, the person is seen as guided solely by others' evaluations or dictates, and not as guided by the person's own self-aspects. Nonetheless, the effects associated with the "public" scale are called "self"-focus effects.

3. The "public" scale correlates with the so-called "private" scale. It is assumed that the variance shared by these two scales is attributable to self-focus (Buss, 1980; Carver & Scheier, 1981). It would follow that if the common variance of these two scales were partialled out in the course of using the "public" scale (as was done by Froming & Carver, 1981, and by Smith & Greenberg, 1981), the resulting effects should be free of any possible mediation of self-focus. Nonetheless, Froming and Carver as well as Smith and Greenberg describe the effects as owing to self-focus ("public") in any case.

4. A variety of observations that document certain kinds of social dependency (one can refer to these as conformity, sensitivity to others' perspectives, concern with impressing others, or wanting to be accepted) are regarded as validating evidence for the "self-focus" qualities of the "public" scale. But why must the scale be said to measure self-focus, when it obviously measures one's readiness to be responsive to others, as demonstrated in recent studies by Fenigstein (1984), Franzoi and Brewer (1984), Hass (1984) and others? One has at least as much basis for arguing that the accumulated research validates the 7-item "public" scale as a social dependency scale.

Non-Self Becomes the Public Self

Almost by definition, social dependency requires an absence of autonomy and thus an absence of a strong or salient internalized standard for behavior. To the extent that such a standard is nonexistent or ineffectual, the person is then necessarily more subject to external sources of influ-

ence. To study social dependency more thoroughly, one would want to know more about (a) the relative absence of a basis for behaving autonomously, and (b) the character of the external social pressure.

Instead of examining either of these elements and thus bringing more understanding to social dependency phenomena, the public/private researchers have transformed the absence of autonomy (i.e., an absence of a self that would bring forth autonomous behavior) into the presence of a "public" self. The less self that people manifest in autonomous behavior, the more self ("public") is imputed. But transforming the absence of a self into the existence of a "public" self requires some conceptual acrobatics:

1. Given that conformity or social reactivity requires the relative absence of a self-standard that would lead to autonomy, conceiving of *self*-based conformity implies a very different conceptualization of self.

2. This different kind of self is named the "public" self, and is defined as one's appearance and overt behavior (Buss, 1980, p. 27) or overt behavior, mannerisms, stylistic quirks and expressions (Scheier & Carver, 1983, p. 126). These, then, are the "public" self components.

3. One's body, external appearance, and overt behavior, however, cannot very well embody standards or predispositions for behavior. How is it, then, that attention directed to the "public" self instigates behavior? The answer to this question is circumvented by use of the Aristotelian approach, consisting here of ascribing to certain scales or manipulations "public-self" effects, by definition. Thus, for example, Fenigstein (1979) ascribed "public-self" effects to the presence of a mirror.

If one notices that the alleged public self fails to contain any sort of behavior-guiding components, then the use of the term "self" to fuse the two research domains (self-awareness and social dependency) becomes questionable. Perhaps the questionable quality of this endeavor can be addressed by means of imbuing the public self with some sort of content. An example of one such effort is seen below.

The Public Self Receives Standards

By couching the fusion of two processes in the language of control theory Carver & Scheier (1985) attempt to deal with the problem. According to this control theory model, one refers to the contents of the two "selves" as two different types of principles (i.e., standards or goals), that serve as steering mechanisms for behavior. The "private" self is said to contain "private" standards, the "public" self to contain "public"

standards. This characterization of the contents of the two selves breaks quite radically with the original definition of the two selves (Buss, 1980; Scheier & Carver, 1983). The original public self was said to consist of "observables," while *unobservable* self-aspects—such as standards for behavior—were deposited into the "private" self (Carver & Scheier, 1981, p. 46). The contents of this revised "public" self are now unobservable, as they are standards for behavior, and as such, should be accessible only through "private" self-focus, given the assumptions of Carver and Scheier (1981) and Scheier and Carver (1983).

This point notwithstanding, the Carver and Scheier reformulation proceeds to bring attention to "public" standards by means of the usual list of "public" manipulations and "public" scale. But to do this contradicts the private/public theoretical assumption. The researcher's purpose should now be that of bringing the person's attention solely to the "private" self—that is, to the source of all ("public" and "private") standards. Needless to say, one again fails to find any hint of an account of the process by which the two classes of attention inducers and scales have their intended effects. In short, why should "public" inducers activate only "public" standards and "private" inducers activate only "private" standards?

Conclusion

Independent of how the "public/private" dichotomy has been handled, there has been a conspicuous neglect of translating the theoretical statement into corresponding operationalizations. Although the private/public researchers have defined the "public and private" selves on a conceptual level (through observability), the conceptual plane is then *replaced* by standard lists of scales or manipulations that do not reflect the psychological conceptualization (observable vs. not observable). Indeed, the scales and manipulations are imbued with a semantic essence which, by definition, makes for "public" and "private" effects. This neglect of the organism's psychological functioning is what Lewin had in mind in charging that the Aristotelian mode of explanation finds it adequate to group organisms into empirical categories, and then to refer to those categories as the explanation.

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