The Goals of Self-Presentation: External or Internal Rewards

Tohoku Psychologica Folia
1992, **52**, 59-66

THE GOALS OF SELF-PRESENTATION: EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL REWARDS

By
FUKUSHIMA OSAMU (福島 治)[1]
(*Tohoku University*)

Avoidance of costs and self-consistency were assumed as the goals of self-presentation. In the present study subjects were placed in a situation in which self-presentation consistent with their self-concepts were expected to produce some costs. It was hypothesized that the subjects who anticipated large costs would present themselves in a manner that enabled them to avoid the costs, but those who were aroused of self-awareness would present themselves consistently with their self-concepts. However, these hypotheses were not supported and there were found some problems in the manipulation of self-awareness. In the place of its manipulation, individual difference in private self-consciousness was used in the reanalysis of the data to examine the effects of self-awareness upon self-presentation. It was found that privately low self-conscious subjects varied self-presentation depending on the anticipated costs, while privately high self-conscious subjects did not.

Key words: self-presentation, avoidance of costs, self-consistency, self-awareness

INTRODUCTION

Strategic self-presentations and their goals

According to Jones and Pittman(1982), strategic self-presentation is to manipulate one's impression on others for increasing his or her own social power. However, recent researchers assumed that it is used not only to increase social power but also to achieve one's personal goals in general (e.g., Doherty & Schlenker, 1991; Kowalski & Leary, 1990).

Then, what are the goals which people try to achieve by self-presentation? A class of goals the past research has examined is to gain 'external' reward, such as social power, better evaluation by others, avoidance of costs. For example, Baumeister and Jones(1978) indicated that subjects who knew a target person had a bad information about them attempted to impress good aspects of themselves on the person to correct the bat images. Their behavior was interpreted as an attempt to improve the target's appraisal of them for the purpose of making their future interaction being smooth. In other wards, they tried to gain a kind of social reward from the target person.

Kowalski and Leary(1990) found the strategic self-presentation whose goal was avoidance of costs imposed by the experimenter. In their research, subjects were placed in the situation which they had to impress a socially undesirable, 'poorly-adjusted', image on the experimenter in order to avoid the costs. This study is notable in respect of exploring the use of negative impression for achieving a personal goal.

1. Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts and Letters, Tohoku University, Kawauchi Aobaku, Sendai 980, Japan.

It is clear from these studies that people select and edit information about themselves in each social situation and they strategically give them to others to gain external rewards.

Self-Consistency and Self-Presentation.

However, self-presentations should not only be regarded as behavior for seeking external rewards. Swann(1987) stressed that people are trying to create their psychological environments, both the internal and external worlds, in the way which the environments could verify their self-concepts. According to his self-verification theory, people are striving to make behaviors, including self-presentation, consistent with their self-concepts. Based on the theory, Schlenker and Weigold(1992) assumed that the self-consistency should be one of important motives for self-presentations. Leary and Kowalski(1990) took the same position when they reviewed the research on self-presentation and focused on self-concept as a determinant of self−presentation.

In contrast with the external reward, self-consistency can be called a 'internal' reward. It is assumed that the goal of self-presentation is not only to gain external reward but also to increase internal one.

The Conditions of Producing Self-Presentation toward the Goal

Because self-presentation is engaged in for gaining either external or internal reward, factors which facilitate each type of self-presentation have to be examined. Among them, we focused in the present study on avoidance of cost as external reward and self-consistency as internal reward.

A determinant of self-presentation whose goal is avoidance of cost is a simple one. It was predicted that the larger costs people anticipated, the more they would be engaged in self-presentations for avoiding the costs. This prediction was make on a well-known principle that people try to make their rewards as large as possible.

On the other hand, a determinant of self-presentation whose goal is self-consistency was derived from a theory of self-awareness. In their theory of control of behavior, Carver and Scheier's(1981) stated that the behavior becomes more consistent with a standard of correctness when it is made being salient by self-awareness. Furthermore, Buss(1980) stressed that there are private and public self-awareness. When private self-awareness is aroused, people's attention is directed toward private aspects of the self, such as attitudes, opinions, and feelings, but, when public self-awareness is aroused, it is directed toward public aspects of the self, such as appearance, and physical movements. Because self-concept is the definition of the self in one's mind, it can be regarded as an aspect of the private self. Thus, it was reasonable to assume that in the state of private self-awareness, self-concept is focused upon and the standard of correctness of behavior was made being salient. Based on this assumption, it predicted that subjects' self-presentation would be more consistent with their self-concept if they were given an opportunity of self-presentation in the state of private self-awareness.

Purpose of the Present Study and Hypotheses

In the present study we assumed avoidance of cost as external reward and self-consistency as internal reward, and we attempted to examine effects of rewards on subjects' self-presentation. For this purpose, subjects were placed in a situation in which these goals were incompatible, that is, in which self-presentations consistent with their self-concepts were expected to produce some costs. There were three levels of costs(high, middle, low). In order to make their self-concepts being salient, the half of the subjects were given a task which assumed to arouse their private self-awareness(aroused group), while the other subjects were given another task which was not assumed to arouse their self-awareness(not aroused group).

The following hypotheses were made for the self-presentations of subjects in these situations. (1) The larger the cost was, the more subjects would present themselves in nonconsistent with their self-concepts. (2) The subjects who were given a task arousing their private self-awareness would present themselves in more consistent with their self-concepts than those who were given another task. To examine these hypotheses, we conducted two factorial experiment with a 3 (cost: high, middle, low) × 2 (private self-awareness: aroused, not aroused) design.

Method

Subjects: The subjects were Japanese university students in an introductory psychology class of the Tohoku University. The present experiment which consisted of for sessions was conducted in the class. A week after the first session, the remaining sessions were carried out. Ninety-nine students(76 males and 23 females) participated in every session, and thus the data of them were analyzed.

Pre-Presentation Measurement of Self-Concepts: First, the experimenter explained the subjects of the ostensible purpose of the present study as an investigation of people's images of their own selves. Then, he give the subjects a questionnaire which included fifteen items of self-concepts and the Japanese version Self-Consciousness Scale (Sugawara, 1984).

In this measurement, we attempted to find the experimental traits, which were commonly valued by the majority of subjects as parts of their self-concepts, and presentation of which would incur costs in the self-presentation session. The subjects were presented with the following 15 trait items such as "warm", "independent", "friendly", "excellent at human sciences", "broad-minded", "excellent in natural sciences", "neatly", "calmness", "sincere", "strong-minded", "scientific", "literary", "cheerful", "deliberate", and "masculine". The subjects were asked to rate the extent to which each trait characterize their self-concepts on a 7-point scale ranging "Not at all (1)" to "Absolutely characterize (7)". Then, they were asked to rate certainty with which they answered to each item and to rate importance of those traits to them.

Because the subjects were students of the courses of physical and technological sciences, two traits, "excellent in natural sciences" and "scientific", were highly valued as self-concept dimensions. These items had the first and second rankings of all the items (M=5.26 and 4.98, respectively). The ratings of certainty for these items were also very high(M=5.49 and

5.18). These results assured that most of the subjects rated these traits as characterizing their self-concepts. Although the ratings of importance for these traits were not higher than the other traits, we chose them as the experimental trait on which the subjects' self-presentation would be measured in the presentation session.

Manipulation of Costs: A week later, the experimenter met the same subjects in the class and told of the results of the pre-presentation measurement that most of them had self-image of "excellent in natural sciences and scientific." Then, he randomly gave the subjects three kinds of booklets, which were distinguished from one another by color marks (red, blue, or green) on the face sheet. The experimenter explained that as a part of the self-image research, he wanted to select thirty students among them for another intensive study, who had especially high "excellent in natural sciences and scientific" self-image, and that the intensive study consisted of three sections, into each of which 10 students would be assigned. The experimenter told that there sections were different in research methods and in the time required to the participants: long interview (2 hours), short interview (15 minutes), and short questionnaire (several minutes). The time constituted the costs in self-presentation.

For the selection, the subjects were randomly divided into three groups based on the color marks of the booklets. After directing the subjects' attention to the color marks, the experimenter told that 10 students selected from the red groups would be applied to the long interview, 10 students selected from the blue group would be applied to the short interview, and 10 students selected from the green group would be administered to a short questionnaire.

Activation of Private Self-Awareness: Then, the experimenter asked the subjects to carefully read the instructions written on the first page of the booklet and to perform the task on the page. There were two different tasks. A half of the subjects of each group were given the WAI(Who Am I Test), in which they were asked to give 10 descriptions of their own self within 2 minutes. It was introduced for activating the subjects' private self-awareness. The other subjects in each group were given the figure drawing task in which they were asked to draw simple figures as many as possible within 2 minutes. It was the non-activation condition.

On the next page, every subject was given the free association task in which they were asked to freely report words or phrases occurring to them for 3 minutes. It was used to check the private self-awareness manipulation.

Self-Presentation Session: The third page was to measure the subjects' self-presentation on the experimental traits. They were asked to rate two items, "excellent in natural sciences" and "scientific", on a 7-point scale.

A month later, the subjects were debriefed in the class of the true purpose of the present study and of that the intensive study was actually not carried out.

Result and Discussion

Manipulation Check: A week later the experiment, the subjects were asked to rate how cooperative they would be and how troublesome they would feel if they were selected as subjects of the intensive study. A 3(costs) × 2(private self-awareness) ANOVA revealed no

significant difference among the three cost conditions for the ratings of either cooperativeness and troublesome. However, an unexpected main effect of private self-awareness was obtained, indicating that the subjects in the private self-awareness condition rated compared with the subjects in the control condition, that they would be less cooperative ($F(1,80)=4.41$, $p<.05$; $M=5.73$ and 6.66) and more feel troublesome ($F(1,80)=7.39$, $p<.01$; $M=5.49$ and 4.42).

It is difficult to interpret these unexpected results of the manipulation of self-awareness. There might have been some sampling bias in personality factors between the conditions. The fact that the manipulation of costs was not successful and the manipulation of private self-awareness produced the unexpected effects made us very careful in interpreting the following results.

In order to check the manipulation of private self-awareness, the responses to the free association task were scored based on Greenberg and Pyszczynski(1986). Each sentence, phrase, and word were judged of whether it involved reference to self. The number of self-referent responses divided by the total number of responses was the score of self-awareness. Two trained raters independently judged responses of 40 subjects randomly sampled from all subjects. The scores given by the two raters were highly correlated($r=.92$). The scores of all of the subjects were given by the senior rater. An ANOVA of these score revealed that the subjects in the self-awareness condition gave significantly more self-referent responses than those in the control condition ($F(1,93)=19.17$, $p<.001$; $M=.68$ and $M=.39$). Thus, the manipulation of private self-awareness was successful. However, as noted above, there might have been some sampling bias between these conditions. The aroused group was less cooperative and more troublesome than the control group. In the present experimental situation, this bias served to offset the self-consistency motive. In other words, in the aroused condition two opposing factors worked on subjects' self-presentation. This makes it difficult to interpret the result.

Self-presentation measures: The subjects rated themselves two times on the items of "excellent in natural sciences" and "scientific." The pre- and post- presentation measurement were regarded as the subjects' self-presentation. Assuming that the subjects' ratings at the pretest represented their self-concepts, the negative or positive scores were interpreted that they negatively or excessively presented themselves inconsistently with their self-concepts. If the two ratings were even, the subjects presented themselves consistently with their self-concepts.

A correlation coefficient of the self-presentation of "excellent in natural sciences" and "scientific" scores was not significant($r=.10$). This means that the experimental treatments differently influenced on the subjects' self-presentation on these traits. A possible reason for it may that the experimenter so emphasized "excellent in natural sciences" as the criterion of selection for the intensive study that the subjects might have been strongly motivated to present themselves on the trait. Therefore, these self-presentation scores were separately analyzed.

An ANOVA with cost × private self-awareness was sparately performed on these scores. For "excellent in natural sciences", only a main effect of costs was significant ($F(2,93)=3.17$, $p<.05$). The subjects in both the high and low cost conditions presented themselves in the

negative manner ($M = -.323$ and $M = -.303$), compared with those in the intermediate cost condition ($M = .125$). These results mean that the subjects tried to avoid short questionnaire as well as long interview, and that short interview was most acceptable. No other effect was found for this score ($Fs < 1$). For "scientific" trait, no significant effect was found ($Fs < 1.3$). Consequently, these results did not give clear support to our hypotheses.

The costs were found to effect the subjects' self-presentation in only one of the two measures. The negative self-presentation was observed to occur not only in the highest cost condition, but also in the lowest cost condition. It implies that the manipulation of cost had some problems.

Although the manipulation of private self-awareness succeeded, it engendered a sampling bias between the private self-awareness and control conditions. And the bias can serve to offset the effect of private self-awareness on the self-presentation aming at self-consistency, and so we must discuss appropriateness of the manipulation of the private self-awareness.

First, did WAI arouse only the private self-awareness among the subjects? Buss (1980) pointed out that there were two kinds of self-awareness, private and public self-awareness. The private self-wawreness is aroused by facing mirror, self-reflection, or writing a diary, while the public self-awareness is aroused by a video camera or observers. Because WAI is the task which make subjects think about themselves, it is more similar to self-reflection or writing a diary than being observed by other people or a video camera. Based on the discussion, we should say that WAI led subjects to private self-awareness. However, the present study had no direct for which kinds of self-awareness was aroused by WAI. There is still a possibility that WAI aroused the public self-awareness and social standards (such as 'how other people act in this situation').

Second, even if WAI aroused the private self-awareness and self-concept became salient, the subjects might have focused their attention to their cooperative image rather than scientific one.

Because of this possibility, it is difficult to decide which kinds of self-awareness was aroused by WAI and which kinds of standards was made salient. That no effect of private self-awareness on the self-presentation was found may have been caused not only by the sampling bias but also by the manipulation of self-awareness.

Reanalyses of the data: There were individual differences in the inclination of two private self-awareness, that is tendency of focusing attention on private aspects of the self (Fenighstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). The trait is called as self-consciousness. It is possible to reanalyze the data to examine the effects of private self-awareness upon self-presentation by using the individual differences in the place of the manipulation of self-awareness. The persons who are high in this trait tend to focus their attention to their self-concepts and to set them as a standard of behavior. Thus, it is possible to predict that the privately highly self-conscious subjects would present themselves in the way more consistent with their self-concepts than the low self-conscious ones.

Dividing the subjects into the high and low private self-consciousness (PRSC) groups, a 2 (cost; two hours v.s. fifteen minutes) $\times$ 2 (PRSC; high v.s. low) ANOVA was performed for

the self-presentation scores of the "excellent in natural sciences". The reason for that the costs were only two interview conditions was that the questionnaire condition was regarded as quite different from the interview conditions in quality of the costs. The failure in the manipulation of costs might have been caused by confusing these different costs. In the reanalyses, thus, the quality of costs was simplified. Further, "scientific" score was not used in the reanalyses because of incorrespondence with the instruction.

For "excellent in natural sciences", the effects of PRSC ($F(1,62)=5.40$, $p<.05$) and of its interaction with the costs ($F(1,62)=5.76$, $p<.05$) were significant. Further, a main effect of costs was marginally significant ($F(1,62)=2.98$, $p=.058$). Table 1 shows the means of self-presentation scores. As can be seen in it, the interaction of costs × PRSC represents the two main effects, that is, the low PRSC subjects more negatively presented themselves in "excellent in natural sciences" image when they anticipated long time interview than when they anticipated short time interview ($p=.05$). However, the high PRSC subjects did not change their self-presentation between these cost conditions. In short, the means of self-presentation in Table 1 suggest the main effect of PRSC did not indicate that the high PRSC subjects presented themselves in more consistent with their self-concepts than the low PRSC subjects. At the end, these reanalyses of the data revealed that self-presentation of the low PRSC subjects varied depending on the anticipated costs, though the high PRSC ones did not show the tendency.

Table 1. Means of self-presentation score: 'excellent in natural sciences' image

Private self-consciouness	Anticipated cost	
	Two hours	Fifteen minutes
High	−.177(17)	−.177(17)
Low	−.471(17)	.467(15)

Note. The greater the absolute score indicate that the more subjects presented themselves inconsistently with their self-concepts. Numbers in parentheses are cell sizes.

Conclusion

In this study, the hypotheses of self-presentation were not supported because of some problems in the manipulation of costs and of self-awareness, but it was found that the privately low self-conscious persons varied self-presentation depending on the anticipated costs, though the privately high self-conscious persons did not. With a limitation of the reanalysis, this finding supports the theoretical prediction that the privately high private self-conscious persons behave consistently with self-concepts independently of situational conditions. However, it was not clear whether the privately high self-conscious persons presented themselves in more consistently with their self-concepts than the low private self-conscious person. Since self-

consciousness or self-focus is a key concept for self-presentation research, we must do a more elaborated experiment by improving the manipulation of self-awareness.

References

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.

Buss, A. H. **1980** *Self-consciousness and social anxiety.* San Francisco: Freeman.

Carver, C. S. & Scheier, M. F. **1981** *Attention and self-regulation: A control theory approach to human behavior.* New York: Springer-Verlag.

Doherty, K. & Schlenker, B. R. **1991** Self-consciousness and strategic self-presentation. *Journal of Personality*, **59**, 1-18.

Fenighstein, A., Scheier, M. F., & Buss, A. H. **1975** Public and private self-consciousness: Assessment and theory. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, **43**, 522-527.

Greenberg, J. & Pyszczynski, T. **1986** Persistent high self-focus after failure and low self-focus after success: The depressive self-focusing style. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **50**, 1039-1044.

Jones, E. E. & Pittman, T. S. **1982** Toward a general theory of strategic self-presentation. In J. Suls(Ed.), *Psychological perspectives on the self* (Vol.1, pp.231-262). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Kowalski, R. M. & Leary, M. R. **1990** Strategic self-presentation and the avoidance of aversive events: Antecedents and consequences of self-enhancement and self-depreciation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, **26**, 322-336.

Leary, M. R. & Kowalski, R. M. **1990** Impression management: A literature review and two-component model. *Pyschological Bulletin*, **107**, 34-47.

Schlenker, B. R. & Weigold, M. F. **1992** Interpersonal processes involving impression regulation and management. *Annual Review of Psychology*, **43**, 133-168.

Sugawara, K. 1984 An attempting to construct the self-consciousness scale for Japanese. *The Japanese Journal of Psychology*, **55**, 184-188.

Swann, Jr. W. B. **1987** Identity negotiation: When two roads meet. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **53**, 1038-1051.

(Received November 10, 1992)
(Accepted January 20, 1993)