

# Dynamic of Aggressive Behavior at the Context of Reflective Process

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**Abstract**—The paper which is dedicated to describing the effect made by the “significant other”, presents the new model of interrelation between self-reflection, the “significant other” phenomenon and aggression. Tendencies of direction and type frustration response developments in detail are discussed. New results have been received through designing of the original experiment. It is based on modifications of the “Picture – Frustration Study” test by S. Rosenzweig.

**Keywords**—Reflection, reflective process, aggression, aggressive reactions, “significant other”

## I. INTRODUCTION

PEOPLE playing an important role in our lives guide us from earliest days to late maturity. Their opinion, support, attention and care become fundamental for normal forming and development of personality and its successful socialization. Such “significant others”, even when away from us, often remain beside us as an image, as an “introject” influencing our behavior. In a choice situation we often unconsciously make a decision that would be approved or made by the “significant other”. Such personalities become an integral part of our psychic life and determine reactions, turning into our inner observer in self-reflection process.

This paper presents the model of interrelation between self-reflection, the “significant other” phenomenon and aggression. Today aggression is the most common reaction to frustrating situations when mental resources are drained out and personality can't control its negative emotions. Both the person blaming and shaming itself for aggression and the people surrounding feel the harmful consequences of this kind of reaction.

Thereby in the work the question of possible ways to reduce the aggression level given self-reflection and the conception of the significant other are discussed. According to this, the *problem of research* is the following: is there reflection with presence of the “significant other” at degree and nature of aggressive behavior influence. Let's proceed to defining the *keyterms*.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

With reference to Artur Rean's works [1] we determine aggression as any activity which cause or can cause damage

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(physical or moral) to a man, a social group or an animal. Thus aggressiveness is the person's quality which is expressed in the aggressive readiness. Also we rest upon the A. Karpov's theory [2] and term reflection as the psychic process of psyche's own self-perception and analysis, helping to understand other peoples' psychic peculiarities.

Moreover, as the process self-reflection can be described as the condition when the subject of reflection has activated ability of self-observation, watching and analyzing its behavior as if from outside, through the eyes of some other person. This other person is a primarily significant person for you, who becomes a part of you, your inner observer. Thus, we term self-reflection as the process with the condition of the inner observer put into action.

Here appears another fundamental concept of the work – the “significant other”.

“Significant other” is the personality that is ideally represented in another personality and it influences the latter, changes it emotional, motivation and semantic spheres [3]. In the 1930-s, Harry Sullivan first introduced the term “significant other” [4], but this work was based on the Multisubjective theory by V.A. Petrovsky [5], [6]. There are two important ideas. The first one is his concept of interindividual influence of subjectness. It means that the image of significant person is developed in the process of co-operation and it influences the subject. The second one is about ideal “significant other”. According to this, the ideal image of personality, his “introject” is active even after contacts with this personality and is perceived as a part of the subject.

Now let's move on to the *conceptual model* of work which is based upon the V.A. Petrovsky's ideas.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The presence of “significant other” introject is activated by another person's physical or imaginary appearance (through the thoughts about it, its image). It intensifies subject's reflecting process, increases aggression control and thus socially approved peaceful reaction develops. So as a result lower frequency of aggressive behavior and bursts of anger appear.

According to this, the *hypothesis of research* is the following: if reflection is actualized by “significant other” presence, then the frequency of aggressive reaction occurrence is lower.

Here are some main ideas about investigation procedure. The “Picture – Frustration Study” test by S. Rosenzweig (in V.V. Dobrov's modification [7]) is taken as a basis.

Participants try to forecast answers of the characters displayed on standard test pictures. Then the image of “significant other” is added to the pictures, and participants are asked to evaluate the situation again (*figures 1-3*).

If the answers differ greatly and impulsive reactions are frequent, then it indicates decrease in level of aggressive behavior. Moreover, an increase in “need-persistence” type of aggression indicates the development of more peaceful reaction.

Five stories presented on the pictures illustrate adult characters in frustration situations: a mother meets her son returning home late at night again (1) (*figure 1*); a janitress discovers a boy who has made a mess on the floor (2); a father has recognized about his daughter’s five bad marks (3); a mother holds her daughter to go to sleep (4); a teacher remarks a girl upon writing-off (5).

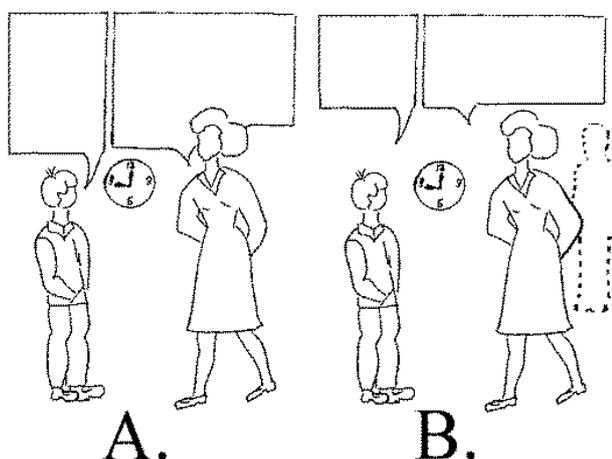


Fig. 1 An example of investigation pictures (frustration situation with adult character)

Two frustration situations are about adolescents, peers of participants: a girl incidentally put a spot to her friend’s dress (6), one girl asks another why she hasn’t friends (7) (*figure 2*). Here it may be noted that participants are adolescents, pupils of a Moscow high school. Adolescents can identify themselves with both peers and adults, so they successfully complete with task of the investigation.

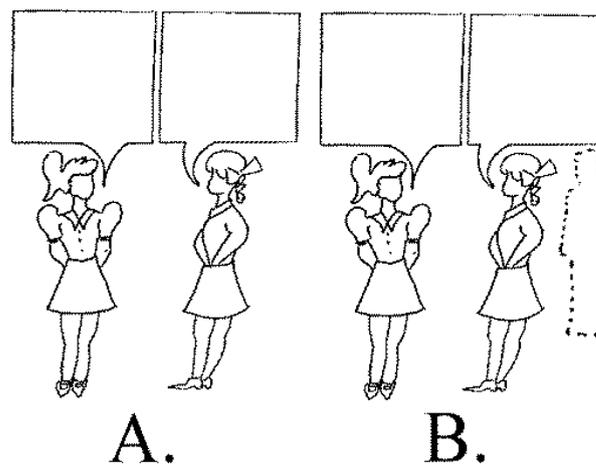


Fig. 2 An example of investigation pictures (frustration situation with adolescent character)

Investigation was held in February 2011. Thirty six Moscow scholars of 15-17 years old took part in it. Statistical method of angular transformation of Fisher ( $\phi^*$  criterion) was used for data handling. Let’s consider *the results of investigation*.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Investigation results about direction of reactions demonstrate a reduction of extrapunitive in the situations mentioned above: situation one, two, three, five and six. According to this, statistical criterion  $\phi^*$  observational is 1,694 (1); 2,338 (2); 2,807 (3); 2,234 (5) and 2,447 (6) when  $\phi^*$  critical is 1,64 ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) and 2,31 ( $p \leq 0,01$ ).

At the same time, reduction of extrapunitive reactions is accompanied by increase of impulsive reactions' frequency of occurrence in situation one and two ( $\phi^*$  observational - 3,016 and 1,841). In the third situation impulsive and intro-punitive reactions increase simultaneously: for impulsive reactions  $\phi^*$  observational is 1,816 and for intro-punitive reactions  $\phi^*$  observational is 1,816. And in the fifth situation impulsive and intro-punitive reactions increase simultaneously too, but the level of statistical significance of differences is not reached ( $\phi^*$  observational - 0,632 and 1,452 ). So situation three with father and his daughter demonstrates more statistically significant differences at the direction of reactions (*figure 3*). In the situations with adolescents (number six and seven) intro-punitive reactions' frequency of occurrence change. In the sixth situation intro-punitive reactions increases ( $\phi^*$  observational – 3,292) instead of extrapunitive reactions which number decreases ( $\phi^*$  observational – 2,447). In the seventh situation another tendency takes place. Reduction of intro-punitive reactions is accompanied by increase of impulsive reactions' frequency ( $\phi^*$  observational - 2,796 and 2,397).

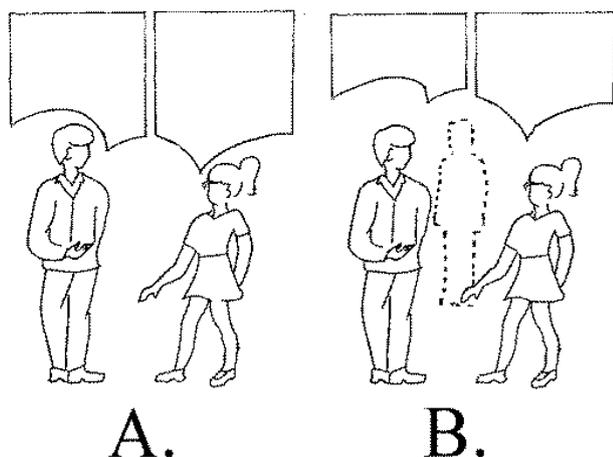


Fig. 3 An example of investigation pictures (frustration situation with adult character)

Such type of aggressive reactions as “ego-defense” statistical significantly decreases in situations three ( $\varphi^*$  observational – 2,962). Also “obstacle-dominance” and “need-persistence” types increase in it, but the level of statistical significance of differences is not reached ( $\varphi^*$  observational - 1,201 and 1,816).

In the first situation “obstacle-dominance” and in the forth situation “need-persistence” type of reactions increase ( $\varphi^*$  observational – 2,481 and 1,79). In other situations they don't statistically significant change. So the developments of the type of reactions are in the situations with adult characters.

It is to be noted that we consider “ego-defense” reactions decrease and “need-persistence” reactions increase for the pointers of aggressive behavior reduction. These are adequate responses characteristic, an ability of the severities permissive person. But also increase of “obstacle-dominance” reaction as a counter to “ego-defense” type is the sign of more peaceful responses, because updating of obstruction idea is more constructive than an attacking others or self-condemnation.

Thus, confirmation of the research hypothesis is emphasized by *important conclusions*. “Significant other” phenomenon activates reflecting process. If reflection is actually stimulated by “significant other” presence, it conduces to aggression amplification and manifestation of socially approved peaceful reaction. All that has an impact on the direction and the type response in frustrating situations. On the first hand, quantity of extrapunitive reactions decreases and intro-punitiveness increases. On the other hand, such type of responses as “ego-defense” type decreases, but other types, such as “obstacle-dominance” and “need-persistence” achieve momentum.

## V. CONCLUSION

The paper investigation indicates importance of understanding “significant other” presence for aggression prevention. According to this, peaceful reaction of an aggressive person may appear after anticipating that a

significant person evaluates his or her behavior. Thus, influence of “significant other” phenomenon is estimated as psychotherapeutic factor, and helps in development of socially approved response. Furthermore, knowing of more subtle interrelations between self-reflection, the “significant other” and aggression helps to understand the structure of psychical reality more precisely, which gives an opportunity to find dysfunctions, their reasons and ways to correct them.

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