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Actor or victim of aggression:

Divergent perspectives -

divergent evaluations

Summary:

The present study investigated the general assumption of perspective-specific dissent between actor and victim in evaluating aggressive interaction. Four experimental designs were established to test the relation of evaluations between a) actor versus victim when judging a single act, b) initiator versus re-actor when judging action and re-action, and c) actor as well as recipient when judging own versus other's behavior. Results of 2x2 ANOVAs supported the hypotheses showing a consistently more favourable evaluation of identical actions by actors versus recipients with respect to the dependent variable "appropriateness". For the second dependent variable "aggressiveness" differences were not significant.

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ACTOR OR VICTIM OF AGGRESSION:

DIVERGENT PERSPECTIVES - DIVERGENT EVALUATIONS \*)

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In accordance with several propositions from different authors (cf. LEYENS, 1977; TEDESCHI, SMITH & BROWN, 1974; TEDESCHI, MELBURG & ROSENFELD, 1981; TEDESCHI, in press ) in the present study, aggression is conceived as a particular kind of social interaction instead of conceiving it as a kind of individual behavior (cf. MUMMENDEY, 1982 a,b ; MUMMENDEY, LINNEWEBER & LÖSCHPER, in press ; MUMMENDEY, BORNEWASSER, LÖSCHPER & LINNEWEBER, 1982).

As to describe social interaction in general as well as aggression in particular, the following characteristics are to be considered: An interaction involves (at least) two partners mutually perceiving and interpreting their respective behaviors. Thus, kind and process of interactions depends on both partners. Interactions take place in a particular social context and are extended in time. The respective interpretation and evaluation of behaviors by the interaction partners are oriented at rules and norms which are relevant in specific situations and broader social contexts (cf. HINDE, 1979; TAJFEL, 1972; NEWCOMB, TURNER & CONVERSE, 1965; GRAUMANN, 1979).

These more general facets applied particularly to aggression leads to the following specifications as described already in MUMMENDEY, LINNEWEBER & LÖSCHPER (in press , p.9): There are "two persons or social units, one person showing an action, another person realizing aversive stimulation, locating the cause of this in the first person; the first person perceives

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good reasons for showing this action, from her/his point of view altogether, the choice of this particular action was optimum as compared with her/his temporal and local circumstances, the net-balance shows this choice as personally appropriate according to the definition of the situation.

Opposite to the first person (i.e. the actor), the second person (i.e. the recipient) imputes to the actor that (s)he had had or should have had the choice between less aversive alternatives at her/his disposal in this situation, so that exactly that action performed would have been avoidable."

It is assumed that typically for an interaction to be aggressive the two partners disagree in evaluating a critical action in relation to its situational appropriateness, as a function of their interaction-specific position i.e. actor or recipient.

Because of the recipient's evaluation of the action as inappropriate and - if some additional criteria are met - as aggressive as well (cf. LÖSCHPER, MUMMENDEY, LINNEWEBER & BORNEWASSER, in prep.) the recipient feels to be justified to retaliate and to punish the actor for her/his inappropriate action; this means, the typical divergency between actor and recipient in evaluating the appropriateness of the critical action influences the further course of the interaction; as long as the divergency holds on, mutual punishing will continue and an escalation will be the special course of interaction (cf. MUMMENDEY, LÖSCHPER, LINNEWEBER & BORNEWASSER, in prep.).

Looking upon this divergency between actor and recipient in evaluating an action's appropriateness means to focus a characteristic of the interaction between two persons i.e. the relation between their respective judgments of an identical action. Thus, with the proposed divergency we are dealing with an interactional term to describe and analyse regularities of social interactions; we expect this to be a more promising approach towards research on social interactions than having interaction in mind but, however, using individual terms which are limited to the description of structures and / or processes at the individual's (cf. GRAUMANN, 1979, for the same argumentation in more detail).

There are already several hints from the literature postulating a divergency of causal attributions and evaluations between actor and observer (v.d. PLIGT 1981) between self and others (ZUCKERMAN 1979) or between actor and recipient of an aggressive action (FELSON 1981). Hypotheses concerning the divergency specific to typical positions in an interaction are not yet systematically derived and experimentally tested. The experiments to be reported below were conceptualized to test different hypotheses derived from several specifications of the more general assumption of a position-specific divergency in evaluating critical actions as appropriate and aggressive typical for aggressive interactions.

To make clear these specifications, the following considerations should be mentioned: The progress of an aggressive interaction can be described as the repeated change of the typical positions between the two interaction partners. In the first event (event 1) person A commits an action against person B; A is the actor and B is the recipient (or victim). B evaluates A's action as situationally inappropriate (may be "aggressive") and, therefore feels justified to commit a re-action against A. In this second event (event 2) of the interaction-sequence, A is now the recipient and B is the actor. A evaluates B's action now as inappropriate as compared with his/her precedent action which in his/her view had been appropriate.

Besides looking at the positions of the actor and recipient changing from event to event, the focus may lie upon linkage between these events to a sequence. In event 1, A being actor and B recipient, A is initiator of the sequence; in event 2, B (now being actor) is re-actor.

If we refer to a single event, only, we differentiate between actor and recipient as perspectives in the interaction; if we refer to the temporal segmentation of the interaction, we differentiate between initiator and re-actor (or retaliator) as positions in the interaction.

Additional to these two specifications of the general divergency between interaction-specific perspectives a third one is considered to be relevant: Perceiving and evaluating an actor's be-

havior out of different position-specific perspectives means at the same time to perceive and evaluate one own's versus someone other's behavior. Whereas in the case of a single event the differentiation of perspectives between actor and recipient are identical with that of own versus other, in the case of the sequence of at least two events, the initiator as well as the re-actor evaluate own and other's behavior, respectively.

Three different experiments will be reported below which have been performed to test the following assumptions:

a) position-specific perspective

In an aggressive interaction actor and recipient differ in judging the normative appropriateness of the critical action and in defining it as aggressive, the recipient evaluates the action as less adequate than the actor and is more likely to define it as aggressive.

b) segmentation of the progress of the interaction

During the progress of an aggressive interaction, the typical positions of actor and recipient change between the persons involved; an action performed by actor I against recipient I may be followed by a re-action performed by actor II (re-actor) against victim II (former initiator). It is assumed that the respective actor and recipient differ in evaluating the critical action or re-action.

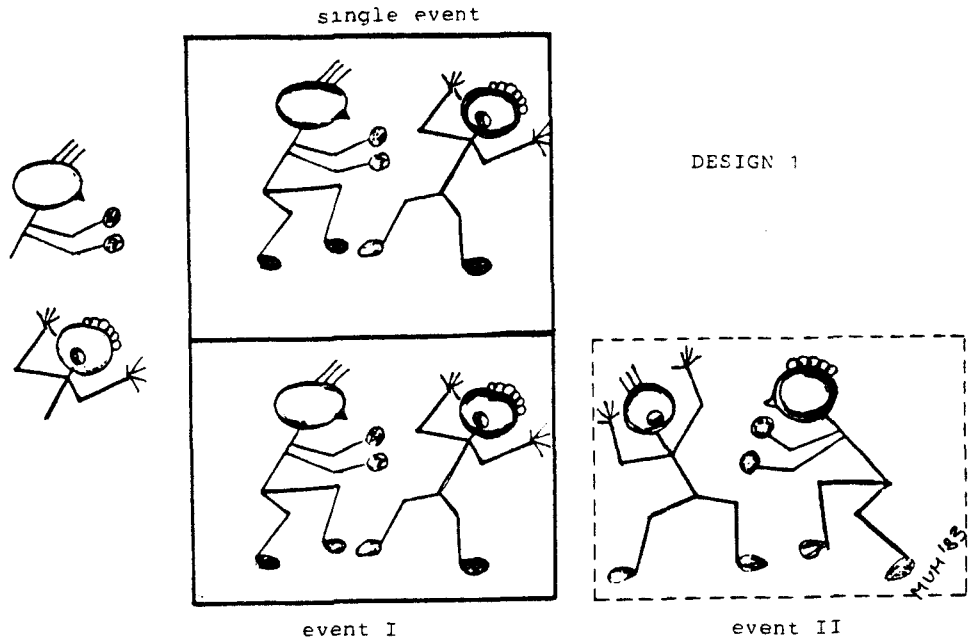
c) Evaluation of one's own versus someone other's action irrespective of whether an action or re-action is evaluated either by an initiator or by a re-actor, individuals evaluate their own actions as more appropriate and less aggressive than actions performed by others.

The hypotheses derived from these assumptions have been tested simultaneously by four different tests.

$\alpha = .05$  has been adjusted to  $\alpha^* = \frac{.05}{4} = .0125$

As subjects for all experiments served a sample of maximum 81 schoolboys of different types of school in Münster (age 13 to 16) being familiar with the setting and relatively similar to the pupils depicted in the video-films.

Fig.1: In design 1 Ss. in conditions actor vs. victim evaluate the actor's behavior in a single event vs. the first of two events.



Experiment 1

It is assumed that in judging critical actions concerning their situational appropriateness, in aggressive interactions a divergence between position-specific perspectives of actor versus recipient typically occurs. Within the context of attribution research, empirical evidence about a divergency between actors and observers is reported (v.d. PLIGT 1981). Especially behavior which is negatively evaluated and of low social desirability leads to divergences in attributions and evaluations provided by persons from different but interrelated positions.

Hypothesis 1: Perspective-specific divergency

In an aggressive interaction the recipient evaluates the actor's critical behavior as more inappropriate and aggressive

than the actor himself does. This divergency is expected irrespective of the action presented as an isolated event or the beginning of a sequence.

### Design

In a 2x2 factorial design the influence of the variable "PERSPECTIVE" (levels "recipient" and "actor") and "SEGMENT" ("single event" versus "first of two events") on the judgment of the actor's behavior as "appropriate" and "aggressive" is tested. The experimental cells included 10, 30, 8 and 33 subjects. It is necessary to add to the variable "PERSPECTIVE" a second factor "SEGMENT" in this experiment because any confoundation between aspects of the mere single event or action itself and aspects of the temporal progress i.e. the event representing the beginning of a sequence followed by the re-action should be avoided. It is assumed that the postulated divergence between actor and recipient when evaluating the critical action with respect to appropriateness and aggression occurs irrespective of it's location in the temporal progress of the interaction. This means, only a main effect of the variable "PERSPECTIVE" upon the dependend variables is expected.

Stimulus material

The critical action to be evaluated consisted of short videotaped episodes depicting various interactions between two male pupils at school. The videotapes of these episodes were produced in a real school setting with male pupils at the age of the respective subjects (13 - 16 years) engaged as actors. Six scenarios based upon verbal reports of typical field-specific aggressive interactions between pupils, which have been gained in a former study (note 1). Every episode first presents the specific context within the interaction takes place e.g. pupils entering the schoolyard, the school-building, then the classroom. Afterwards, the two opponents are shown having a short and harmless argument, pushing each other when they together enter the classroom, laughing and shouting at each other. Special attention was paid to the demand not to present one of the opponents neither as initiator or "aggressor" or superior to the other. After this kind of introduction, the two interrelated events followed: First, one of the two pupils performed an either verbal or physical attack against the other pupil. The resulting harm from the recipient e.g. pain, shame, broken book etc. was explicitly depicted.

For the experimental condition "single event" the presentation of the videotape stopped here. For the other conditions, after a short intermezzo with showing other pupils in the classroom, the teacher writing something on the blackboard signaled the passage of some time. Then, the new actor (former victim) engaged in a similar (nearly identical to the first event) attack against his opponent. After inflicting the same amount of harm to the new recipient the episode finished.

To support the manipulation of the factor "PERSPECTIVE" the presentation of the critical episodes was preceded by the presentation of the target person sitting in the library and working with some schoolbooks. Additionally to the visual presentation of the person, verbal instructions to take over the respective perspective of the presented person were given: the similarity to the subject was emphasized, opportunity to become acquainted with the stimulus person should be given, the subject was instructed to empathize with the stimulus per-



son and to imagine as vividly as possible his feelings and emotions during the following episodes.

#### Independent variables

In the experimental conditions representing the two levels of "SEGMENT" the following judgments are compared:

In level 1 a single critical action is presented and judged which is neither preceded nor followed by other actions.

In level 2, the event to be evaluated is followed by a second critical event (re-action by the recipient in event 1).

In both levels of "SEGMENT", identical i.e. actor's behavior is to be evaluated.

As to the conditions "PERSPECTIVE", a procedure used in studies on actor-observer-divergence (cf. REGAN & ZOTTEN, 1975; GOULD & SIEGEL, 1977; ZUCKERMAN 1979 for a review) was used: "PERSPECTIVE" is thus operationalized by the emphatical perspective taking of the respective persons depicted in the stimulus material. Level 1 "actor" thus means that subjects evaluate the critical action out of the empathically taken perspective of the actor depicted in the stimulus material. Level 2 "recipient" means the empathically taken perspective of the recipient.

#### Dependent variables

Subjects were asked to evaluate the depicted action with respect to its amount of situational-normative appropriateness and aggressiveness. Seven-point bipolar rating scales with the indications "appropriate - inappropriate" and "aggressive - non aggressive" were used. All subjects irrespective of their interactional position (as empathized) evaluate the actor's behavior.

#### Procedure

Subjects were recruited by advertisement in a local newspaper; they got a small amount of money for their participation.

For each session, two or three persons were together with the experimenter in the experimental room. Experimenter first read

the general instruction:

"In a few moments you will see on the monitor a short episode of everyday life at school. Then you will see two pupils interacting with each other. They are of the same grade but not especially close friends. Before it starts, one of the schoolboys is introduced to you. You have to take over this boy's perspective i.e. to look at the following events with his eyes. You will see twice the following events; please watch carefully and try to catch everything that happens."

Experimenter then switched on the monitor and taperecorder. First the target person was shown sitting alone at a desk in the library working with some books. Simultaneously the soundtrack of the tape played the following text:

"Please try to imagine that you are now this person. You are MICHAEL, an 8th grade schoolboy. When you will watch the film following in a few minutes, you will see how you will have an argument with your classmate THOMAS. You are not especially close friends but classmates since a long time. Thus, you should look upon these events with the eyes of MICHAEL whom you just see here. Please imagine how you feel in this situation and what the other boy is doing to you. When the film is over, you will have to evaluate the behavior of the two schoolboys. We will ask you some questions about this afterwards. You will see the film now, and please don't forget: You are MICHAEL now, you experience everything that happens the same way as MICHAEL does."

One videotaped episode was randomly chosen out of the five different ones and played twice. At the end, subjects were asked to answer the written questions representing the dependent measures and manipulation checks.

#### Manipulation checks

Equivalence of the different scenarios concerning the dependent measures and additionally the perceived amount of harm and negative intent was tested in a pretest; the results showed that except one scenario being deviant which then was elimi-

nated, all other five scenarios were equivalent. Checks of the manipulation of the variable "PERSPECTIVE" were tried although it is already known from the literature on actor-observer divergences that there are difficulties to prepare adequate measures. In the present study, a combination of direct and indirect measures was used: A free recall of the depicted episodes was contentanalyzed with respect to whether it was told in the first person (the one of whom the perspective should have been taken over) versus neutral point of view. Then the subjects were asked whether they consider themselves as having taken the perspective successfully; and third, measures of differences between self and other's evaluations concerning selected positive and negative attributes were considered. The manipulation of "PERSPECTIVE" is judged to be successful if the respective stimulus person is overestimated to the disadvantage of the opponent. Results reported below only include subjects for whom the manipulation was effective in the sense described above.

### Results

An 2x2 analysis of variance for independent groups with the variables "PERSPECTIVE" (actor; recipient) and "SEGMENT" (single event; first of the two events) was performed for the dependent measures "APPROPRIATENESS" and "AGGRESSION".

Only for appropriateness, main effect of "PERSPECTIVE" was significant,  $F(1,77) = 13.445$ ,  $p < .0005 < 1\%$  (cf. table 1), revealing that subjects in the condition "actor" evaluate "their" action as more appropriate than in the condition "recipient" (means were 3.69 and 5.12 respectively).

Table 1

Mean ratings of inappropriateness (1)<sup>1</sup> and aggression(2)<sup>2</sup> (N=81)

PERSPECTIVE	SEGMENT			
		single event		first of two events
Actor	1	3.20	} n= 10	3.86
	2	2.30		3.33
Recipient	1	4.26	} n= 8	5.24
	2	2.50		2.50

<sup>1</sup> high values for appropriateness mean high inappropriateness  
<sup>2</sup> low values for aggression mean high aggressiveness

Neither for aggression nor for appropriateness, any further significant main effects or interaction effects were obtained.

Interpretation

Results support Hypothesis 1 and show that an (aggressive) action is evaluated as less appropriate and tends to be evaluated as more aggressive by the recipient than by the actor himself. This divergency between actor and recipient occurs irrespec- tive of the subjects having informations only about an isola- ted single act or additionally about the re-action performed by the recipient as well. The assumption of a divergency in evaluating the appropriateness of a critical action typical to position-specific perspectives within an aggressive interaction is supported by these results.

Experiment 2

In real life, aggressive interactions usually are extended in time and not finished with a single event. During such an in- teraction, participants change their positions from actor to recipient and vice versa. If a critical action is judged as

aggressive and inappropriate by its recipient (s)he feels justified to retaliate and to attack the actor from the first event by performing a re-action. The idea of reciprocity seems to function as a crucial norm regulating the progress of aggressive interactions (cf. GOULDNER, 1960; LAGERSPETZ & WESTMAN, 1980). Studies performed by TEDESCHI and coworkers (BROWN & TEDESCHI, 1976; KANE, DOERGE & TEDESCHI, 1972; STAPLETON, JOSEPH & TEDESCHI, 1978) as well as CARPENTER & DARLEY (1978) point out that from an observer's perspective hostile and aggressive behavior is judged morally less reprehensible, more adequate and less aggressive if this behavior is interpreted as defensive re-action or retaliation towards a prior attack or provocation as compared to an offensive first attack provided that the retaliation is perceived as proportionate to the attack.

Hypothesis 2 concerns aspects of the course of an aggressive interaction: It is assumed that the perspective-specific divergency of evaluations will occur irrespective of whether the evaluated critical act presents an initiative action or a re-action during the aggressive interaction.

#### Method

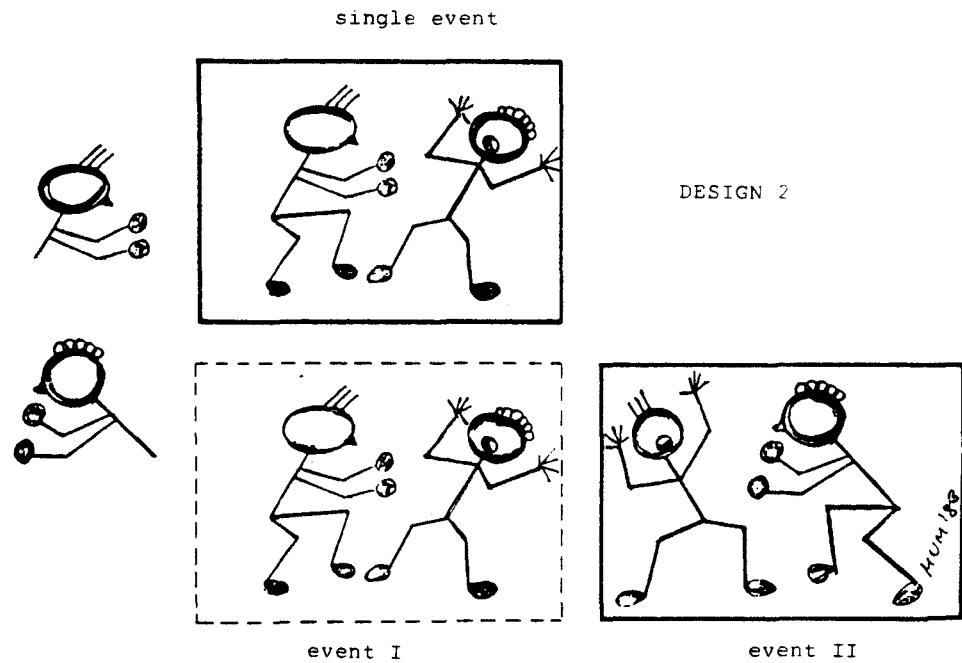
To test hypothesis 2, it is distinguished between first and second event. In each event, there is an actor and a recipient of an aggressive interaction; in event I, the actor at the same time is the initiator (of the sequence or interaction); in event II, the former recipient is now actor and at the same time re-actor if referred to the course of interaction.

#### Design a

In a 2x2 factorical design the effect of the variables "POSITION" (initiator versus re-actor) and "SEGMENT" (single event versus second of two events) on the evaluation of the respective action as appropriate and aggressive is tested. According to the results of experiment 1, the condition "first of two events" can be substituted by the condition "single event".

The experimental cells included 10 , 30 , 8 and 33 subjects. According to hypothesis 2, an interaction effect between "POSITION" and "SEGMENT" is expected: Each actor will evaluate the critical action as more appropriate and less aggressive than each recipient, i.e. the differences between judgments provided by initiator versus re-actor will turn round from event I to event II (cf. figure 2).

Fig.2: In design 2 Ss. in conditions initiator vs. re-actor evaluate the actor's behavior in a single event vs. the second of two events.



For stimulus material, procedure, dependent variables and manipulation checks see Experiment 1.

Independent variables

Analogous to the operationalization of "PERSPECTIVE" in experiment 1, the variable "POSITION" was manipulated by instructing subjects to be emphatic with the respective stimulus persons depicted in the videotaped introduction and episode. Subjects in the experimental condition "initiator" should take over the perspective of actor in event I and recipient in event II in the experimental condition "re-actor" the perspective of recipient in event I and re-actor in event II has to be taken over. As to "SEGMENT", in the experimental condition "single event" subjects evaluate the action in one single event, in the experimental condition "second of two events" a sequence of two events is shown and the second of them is evaluated.

Results

A 2x2 analysis of variance for independent groups with the variables "POSITION" (initiator; re-actor) and "SEGMENT" (single event; second of two events) for both dependent measures was performed.

The only result nearly reaching significance was for SEGMENT X POSITION interaction on the appropriateness measure,  $F(1,77) = 4, 897$ ;  $p < .030 < 15\%$ . Table 2 presents the mean ratings for appropriateness and aggression for each of the four experimental groups.

Table 2  
Mean ratings of inappropriateness<sup>1</sup> and aggression<sup>2</sup> (2) (N=81)

POSITION	SEGMENT			
		single event (action)		second of two events (re-action)
Initiator	1	3.20 <sup>b</sup>	n=10	4.63 <sup>a</sup>
	2	2.30 <sup>c</sup>		2.97 <sup>c</sup>
Re-actor	1	4.62 <sup>ab</sup>	n=8	3.82 <sup>ab</sup>
	2	2.50 <sup>c</sup>		2.97 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>1</sup> high values for appropriateness mean high inappropriateness

<sup>2</sup> low values for aggression mean high aggressiveness

Means with the same superscripts do not differ significantly according to Sheffé-tests at  $p < .05$ . (Superscripts a + b refer to the first dependent variable, c to the second dependent variable).

Interpretation

The interaction effect for SEGMENT x POSITION as expected from Hypothesis 2 was supported by the present results only for the dependent measure "appropriateness". A look at individual comparisons reveals the direction of difference between initiator's versus re-actor's evaluations is in accordance with expectations. Besides that, it is interesting to see that the initiator evaluates the re-action to his (initiated) action as more inappropriate than his own hostile attack (3.20 versus 4.63,  $p < .05$ ). This is contrary to assumptions derived from research on norms of reciprocity or retaliation which would expect retaliation being evaluated as less inappropriate than initiated provocation.

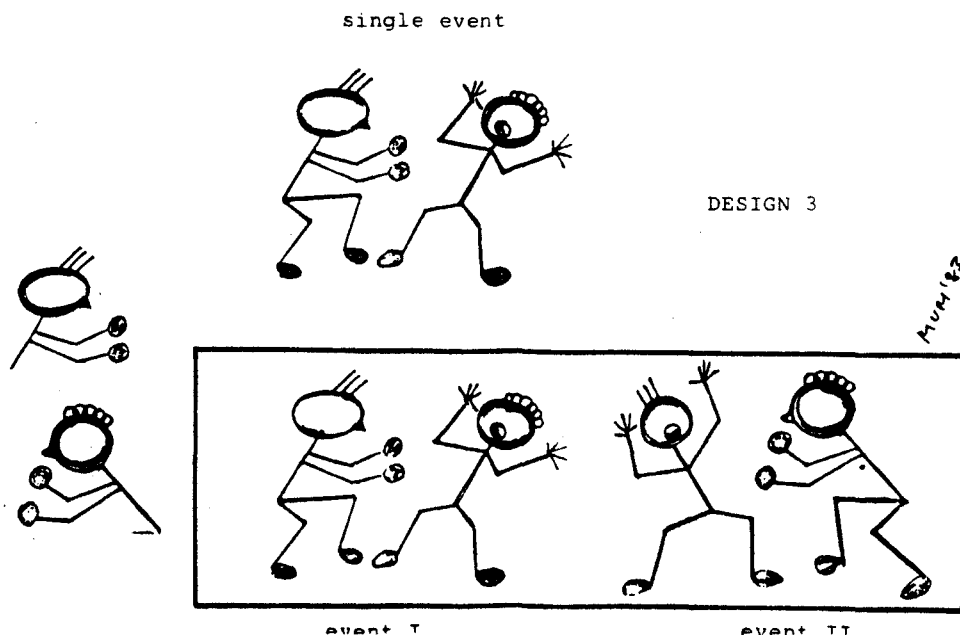
Design b

POSITION (initiator; re-actor) and SEGMENT (action; re-action) formed a 2x2 factorial design with repeated measures on the last variable.

SEGMENT was operationalized by evaluating the first of two events i.e. the initiate action (action) and then the following second event (re-action). The experimental cells contained 30 + 33 subjects.

Dependent measures procedure and manipulation checks were identical with those before.

Fig.3: In design 3 Ss. in conditions initiator vs. re-actor evaluate the actor's behavior in the first and the second of two events.





Results

A 2 (POSITION) x 2 (SEGMENT) analysis of variance with repeated measures on the last factor was performed for both dependent measures. Table 3 presents the mean ratings of appropriateness for each experimental group.

Table 3

Mean ratings of appropriateness (1) and aggression (2) (N=63)

POSITION		SEGMENT		
		action	re-action	
Initiator	1	3.83 <sup>a</sup>	4.63 <sup>ab</sup>	n=30
	2	3.33 <sup>c</sup>	2.97 <sup>cd</sup>	
Re-actor	1	5.24 <sup>b</sup>	3.82 <sup>a</sup>	n=33
	2	2.50 <sup>d</sup>	2.97 <sup>cd</sup>	

Means with the same superscript do not differ significantly according to Sheffé- test at 0 .05 (at least), superscripts a + b refer to the first dependent variable, c + d to the second one, only).

The only significant result was for the POSITION x SEGMENT interaction for appropriateness  $F(1/61) = 9,79$ ;  $p < .0027 = < 1\%$ . Differences between cell means show initiators evaluating the initiative action as more appropriate and less aggressive than recipients do (3.83 versus 5.24,  $p < .01$ ; 3.33 versus 2.50,  $p < .05$ ). Although not significant differences between cell means show a tendency for reactors evaluating the re-action as the re-action as less inappropriate than initiators do (3.82 versus 4.63).

Interpretation

As results from design 1 already revealed, results obtained by the present design support again the assumptions proposed in Hypothesis 2: Actor and recipient diverge in evaluating the appropriateness of a critical behavior occurring during an aggressive interaction. They do this irrespective of whether the critical actions represents an initiative action or a re-

tailing re-action. Re-actors evaluate actor's behavior of which they were recipients as more inappropriate than their following re-action; although not reaching significance, differences between evaluations by initiators for initiative action as compared with the following re-action show in the reverse direction.

In any case, initiators evaluate their initiative action as more positive than the re-actors evaluate their re-action as more positive than initiators do.

### Experiment 3

The two experiments reported above were concerned with aspects of the general divergency between actor and recipient in aggressive interactions when judging identical behavior from different perspectives typical for this kind of interaction (actor-recipient ; initiator- re-actor). The assumption underlying the third experiment means additionally to those above that irrespective of the interrelated positions in an interaction, there will be a divergence in evaluating own versus others behavior.

### Hypothesis 3 self-others-divergency

Irrespective of position in an aggressive interaction sequence one's own behavior is evaluated as more appropriate and less aggressive than someone other's behavior.

### Method

#### Design

A 2x2 factorial design with the variables POSITION (initiator; re-actor) and PERSON (own behavior; other's behavior) with repeated measures on the second variable was planned to assess effects on appropriateness- and aggression-ratings as dependent measures. The experimental cells contained 30 and 33 subjects. Manipulation checks, procedure, dependent variables and POSITION as experimental condition were established as in experiment 2. Experimental condition "PERSON" was operationalized

by instructing subjects to evaluate first the initiator's and re-actor's behavior. Thus, initiators evaluate first own and second other's behavior, re-actors evaluate other's behavior first and own behavior second.

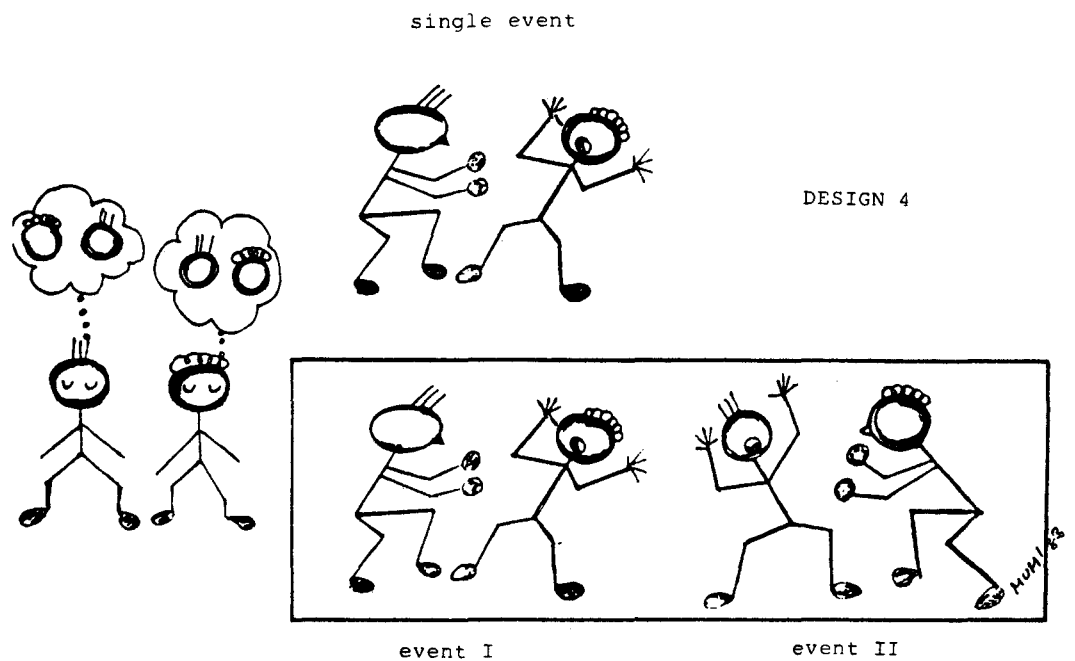


Fig.4: In design 4 Ss. in conditions initiator vs. re-actor evaluate own and other's behavior.

### Results

A 2(PPOSITION) x 2(PERSON) analysis of variance with repeated measures on the last factor was performed for both dependent variables. Table 4 presents the mean ratings of appropriateness and aggression for each experimental group.

Table 4

Mean ratings of appropriateness (1)<sup>1</sup> and aggression (2)<sup>2</sup> (N=63)

PERSON	POSITION	
	initiator n = 30	re-actor n = 33
own behavior	1 3.83	3.82
	2 3.33	2.97
other's behavior	1 4.63	5.24
	2 2.97	2.50

<sup>1</sup> high values for appropriateness mean high inappropriateness

<sup>2</sup> low values for aggression mean high aggressiveness

The only significant result was a main effect of PERSON on the appropriateness ratings,  $F(1/61) = 10,08$ ,  $p < .0024 < 1\%$ , revealing that own behavior is evaluated as much more appropriate than other's (means were 3.82 and 4.95 respectively).

Interpretation

Results support the assumptions made in Hypothesis 3: There is a divergency in evaluations of own behavior as compared with that of someone else occurring during an aggressive interaction. Irrespective of whether the action to be evaluated pretends a first provocation or a second retaliation to the first instigators as well as retaliators evaluate their own behavior as more adequate, less aggressive i.e. more positive than the behavior of the interaction partner.

Discussion

The experiment described above provides some evidence for the more general assumption of a dissent in evaluations of aggress-

sive actions between people typically holding complementary perspectives when engaged in aggressive interactions. It could be shown that this dissent results when evaluating a single event as well as more events linked together in an aggressive interaction. The dissent turned out to be independent of the critical act being a first attack or a following retaliation. As demonstrated in experiment 2, an initiator of an aggressive interaction even evaluates his own behavior as more appropriate than the following re-action directed against himself which he apparently provoked. Irrespective of the course of interaction both of the persons involved evaluate their own behavior as more appropriate than the same behavior performed by the other one.

Although results from all experiments consistently show in the direction expected by the different hypotheses, apparently the evaluation of an action as "aggressive" seems to be less un-animous or sensitive to the influence by the experimental conditions than evaluations concerning the appropriateness of that action. Maybe that the course of aggressive interactions is more directly determined by appropriateness judgements than by the former ones (cf. LÖSCHPER et al. in prep.)

The general assumption of an actor-recipient dissent has been established as one crucial point within the conceptualization of aggression as particular kind of social interaction provided by the present authors. The experiments present a first step to demonstrate the occurrence of this dissent. According to the results it seems to be a rather stable effect which is not influenced or weakened by normative effects e.g. the retaliation-norm usually known from aggression research literature. Up to now there are rather consistent results reported pointing to differences in evaluating provocations versus retaliations. According to the present results these results should be made relative to the particular interaction-specific perspective from which this evaluation is given.

These former results on the interpretation and evaluation of aggressive events seem to have implicitly established the recipient's perspective only, or an outside observer's empathic-

zing with the recipient or victim.

Conceiving aggression as social interaction, however, means to include both perspectives of the participants involved. It means at the same time to exceed the definition of aggression by criteria which only aim at a single action of one individual like producing injury or harm and "intentionally committed" and to include typicalities of the special relation between actor and victim with respect to the critical actions linked together in the temporal sequence of interaction. One of those typicalities seems to be that the actor and recipient have a dissent about evaluating the respective actor's behavior. This dissent may produce something like a slope of respective perceptions of inappropriate actions which gives speed or energy for the development of an escalative progress of an aggressive interaction: With orientation at norms and expectations concerning suitable behavior in a certain situation, the recipient of a critical action perceives and evaluates this action as violating a norm and inappropriate; (s)he feels instigated and justified to pay back to get even with the opponent. Now the new victim feels to be attacked and mistreated, the direction of the dissens has changed at the same time the change of positions in the interaction and so on.

After providing evidence for the occurrence of the postulated dissen further research should be concerned with the analysis of antecedent conditions or process resulting in the phenomena described. There are different directions or possibilities to continue thinking: There could be position-specific differences in selecting or weighting informations about persons and/or situations and surrounding context which then lead to differences in the judgement of appropriateness of a particular action. Especially disagreements in the perception of avoidability of a harmful action-consequence and dependent from that inferences of harmful intent may be of particular importance.

Some analogies are seen in those verbal strategies which should provide socially explanations for situations perceived

as predicaments (cf. TEDESCHI & RIESS, 1981) like excuses or justifications. These strategies apparently have the function (if successful) to resolve a dissent of evaluation between actor and observer or recipient and to convert the observer's negative evaluation into a positive and accepting one which then is consistent with the actor's own evaluation of the action or situation. The analysis of the differential application and success of these strategies in correspondence with differential features of the predicamental situation or event could provide hints for a more detailed analysis of essential characteristics of an actor-recipient divergence of evaluations in an aggressive interaction.

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