Moral Identity Complexity and Incompleteness-Compensation:
Comparing Actors vs. Non-Actors

Bachelor Thesis
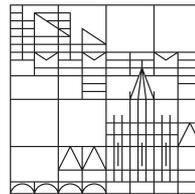
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May 2020, Konstanz, Germany

Abstract

Despite of drama and role-play being a widespread and popular interest, the amount of research about the effects of role-play on humans is limited. Nonetheless, research in this domain can provide insightful perspectives on various aspects of the human self. This thesis puts three theories on different angles of the self in context with each other and investigates the effect of frequent acting on individuals. Therefore, the present experiment was conducted in German with an overall sample of 97 participants, consisting out of actors and non-actors. Stages of the experiment included questionnaires assessing self-complexity and moral identity, two scene tasks, one to induce incompleteness and another one to measure the incompleteness compensation. Both samples were then analytically compared to each other. Results showed support for the hypothesis that actors have a higher complexity in terms of their moral identity than non-actors. Furthermore, the hypothesis that high self-complexity is positively correlated to less incompleteness compensation across roles is not being supported by the findings of this thesis. Lastly, it was hypothesized that in comparison to non-actors, actors compensate incompleteness less across roles. Due to an unsuccessful manipulation, this prediction could not be fully investigated. However, it is partly supported by our findings, because sample (actor, non-actor) was found to be a significant predictor for moral behavior. The present study was conducted in a one-participant-at-a – time between group design.

Zusammenfassung

Trotz der hohen und allgemeinen Beliebtheit von Schauspiel ist die Menge an Forschung über den Zusammenhang von Schauspiel und dem menschlichen Selbst begrenzt. Nichtsdestotrotz kann dieser Blickwinkel eine wertvolle Herangehensweise bieten, um das menschliche Selbst in unterschiedlichem Licht zu erforschen. Die aktuelle Bachelorthesis verknüpft drei Theorien über das menschliche Selbst und untersucht den Effekt von Schauspiel auf das menschliche Selbst im Kontext von moralischen Entscheidungen. Hierfür wurden insgesamt 97 Versuchspersonen, bestehend aus Schauspielelenden und Nicht-Schauspielenden für diese Studie rekrutiert. Das Experiment umfasste einen Fragebogen zur Erhebung der Self-Complexity und Moral Identity, zwei Schauspielaufgaben, um Incompleteness experimentell zu erzeugen und zu messen. Daraufhin wurden die beiden Sample-Gruppen miteinander verglichen. Dabei konnte festgestellt werden, dass Schauspielende eine höhere Self-Complexity hinsichtlich ihrer Moral Identity im Vergleich zu Nicht – Schauspielenden aufwiesen. Darüber hinaus konnte bei der Testung der zweiten Hypothese kein signifikanter Zusammenhang zwischen einer hohen Self- Complexity und einer geringeren Kompensation eines Incompleteness-Gefühls gefunden werden. Zuletzt wurde getestet, ob Schauspielende ein Incompleteness-Gefühl über Rollen hinweg geringer kompensieren als Nicht-Schauspielende. Diese Hypothese konnte aufgrund der ineffektiven Manipulation nicht ausreichend getestet werden. Dennoch ergaben weitere Analysen, dass die Stichprobe (Schauspielende, Nicht-Schauspielende) als ein signifikanter Prädiktor für moralisches Verhalten gefunden werden konnte. Die aktuelle Studie wurde in Einzelerhebungen mit einem Between-Group Design durchgeführt.

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1. Introduction

Engaging in theater and acting has been an ancient and popular activity for humans. The first theater where the famous Greek comedies and tragedies were performed was the Theater of Dionysus at Athens. It was built in the 6th century B.C. when the first documented actor, Thespis, was said to star in the very first acting competition. The Theater of Dionysus persisted for more than 400 years and became an epicenter of Athenian culture (Brown, 2001). Ever since, acting became an essential part in lots of cultures and the entertainment industry picked up the trail. From own observations, I can state that nowadays, drama and acting is a well - known and widely spread activity throughout the population. A theater or film production involves many people and combines different disciplines such as writing a piece, directing it, (stage) design, cut, producing, make-up and costume design, lighting and, of course, acting. Although, acting is popular, research about the effects acting has on humans, is rare. Nonetheless, prior research by Goldstein (2011) showed up a connection between social - cognitive skills in adolescents and their involvement in acting classes. Results from further studies by Goldstein (2010) showed that children who were involved into acting classes gained empathy and expression of emotion over a year in comparison to children involved in other art classes.

Additionally, a series of more recent research has highlighted beneficial effects of acting on identity formation and the self. Bowman and Lieberoth (2018) state that role-play can have beneficial effects on human development. Just as many animals, human children were found to practice role-play to train vital skills and explore different social identities (Stenros & Montola, 2010). For adolescents, role play was found helpful for providing a

direction for identity formation (Carnes, 2014). These studies show that exposure to role-play has a positive effect on the formation and development of different aspects of the self.

In order to investigate what kind of influence role-play has on individuals, this thesis puts three theories about the human self in context to each other and explores the effect of frequent acting on the self. Therefore, in this study a sample of actors were tested on self-complexity, moral identity and symbolic-self completion and compared to a sample of non-actors. The social context of those investigations was established by adding the social roles "friend" and "family member" to the experiment and involving the domain of moral decisions, particularly because moral behavior has appeared to be omnipresent in everyday life situations. In the following I will expand on the underlying theories.

1.1.   Self – Complexity

With attempts to capture the concept of the self, research about the complexity of the self arouse. While early psychological concepts seeking to investigate self- complexity described the self as a relatively unitary entity, later psychological research advanced by regarding the self as a rather dynamic concept (Woolfolk et al., 1995).

1.1.1. The Self

The self can be defined as a "cognitively represented […] complex structure that develops to help organize vast amounts of self-relevant knowledge and is evoked to process information about the self" (Linville, 1985, p. 95). As reported by Linville (1985), prior research by Gergen (1971), Gordon (1968), James (1892) and Sullivan (2001) gives support to the concept of individuals thinking of the self in terms of different aspects. For example, an individual might construct the knowledge about themselves along the category of their social roles (e.g. friend, mother, lawyer, tennis player) or along their interpersonal relationships (e.g. supporter, nurturer, colleague and competitor) (Linville, 1985).

The identification with the own self may include more detailed knowledge about specific events and behavior ("I worked 6 hours on a manuscript today") or generalizations such as "I am a hard worker" (Linville, 1985). Such generalizations can manifest in the form of "traits (extravert), roles (researcher, father), physical features (slim), category membership

(male, black), behavior (jogger), abilities (analytical), preferences (vegetarian), goals (professional success), autobiographical recollections (summers at the lake), and relations with others (loyal friend)" (Linville, 1985, p. 96).

1.1.2. *Self-Complexity as a Dynamic Concept*

Markus and Wurf postulated in 1987 that, firstly, the self cannot be explored as a unitary entity. Moreover, prior research had assumed that the self only reflects self-relevant behavior. Markus and Wurf (1987) addressed this issue by postulating that it not only reflects behavior, but also functions as a motivation for actions. Consequently, they argue next that the self's functioning depends on various factors just as the self-motives being served or the present social situation. Thirdly, Markus and Wurf (1987) theorized that the self may not be revealed solely through apparent actions but through subtle variations in behaviors, moods and self-esteem.

In addition, research has contextualized the self within a social-cognitive context as a "manifold, dynamic system of constructs - a constellation of cognitive schemas" (Woolfolk et al., 1995, p. 1108). Cognitive self-schemas were assumed to be "summaries and constructions of past behavior that enable individuals to understand their own social experience and to organize a wide range of information about themselves" (Markus et al., 1982, p. 38) and thus serving as a kind of systematical frame structures for individuals' self-concepts.

1.1.3. *Different Self-Complexity Operationalizations over Time*

Following up on the notion that the self is not a unitary entity, but rather a system consisting out of various elements, research about the complexity of the self has refined. As described by Woolfolk and colleagues (1995), there have been different self-complexity measures over time.

Following the repertory grid methodology by Bieri, (Bieri, 1955) self-complexity can be described as "the degree to which one's personal constructs are differentially applied in the description of oneself and other people" (Woolfolk et al., 1995, p. 1108). Thus, whether an individual is scoring high on self-complexity depends on how many social roles are under investigation and how much difference there is within an individual acting out different social

roles; i.e. how much the self-identity in social role A differs from the self-identity in social role B.

Later and more relevant for the present thesis, Linville has done an array of insightful research about self-complexity (Linville, 1985, 1987). She defines high self-complexity as "representing the self in terms of a greater number of cognitive self-aspects and maintaining greater distinction among self-aspects" (Linville, 1987, p. 663). In 1985 her findings showed that the lower self-complexity the greater were the swings in affect and self-appraisal that participants experienced after a failure or a success experience, and also swings in overall affect variability over a period of 2 weeks (Linville, 1985). Additionally, in 1987 she found out that greater self-complexity can function as a cognitive buffer against the pathogenic influence of life-stress and the resulting diseases (Linville, 1987).

1.1.4. The H-Index as a Measure of Self-Complexity

For operationalizing self-complexity Linville used the H statistic, a measure of nominal scale dispersion used in information theory (Woolfolk et al., 1995). She required participants to sort attributes into self-aspect groups that are important for the individuals' sense of self. Then, she conceptualized H as "the index of the number of independent dimensions underlying these self-aspects" (Woolfolk et al., 1995, p. 1108) of a person's sense of self. While assigning the attributes to the self-aspect groups, each of all the possible group permutations were possible. For example if an individual formed three self-aspect groups (Group 1, Group 2, Group 3) he or she was able to assign one attribute to either one of those groups (Group 1, Group 2 or Group 3), to two groups simultaneously (Group 1 and 2, Group 1 and 3, Group 3 and 2), to all of the groups (Group 1 and 2 and 3) or to no group.

For N being the number of aspect groups, there are 2^N possible permutations, meaning in this example there would be 8 possible ways to assign the attributes to one of the mentioned combination of categories. Woolfolk et al. refer to those combinations of categories as *unique group combinations* (UGCs). In our example there would be 8 UGCs of which 7 would contain attributes and one (the last UGC: "attribute sorted into no group") would not contain any. All UGCs that contain attributes are referred to as *attribute clusters*. Those attribute clusters are

implicit and should be distinguished from the self-aspect groups, particularly because attribute clusters consist out of self-aspect groups. The relation of attributes, self-aspect groups and UGCs is shown in Figure 1.
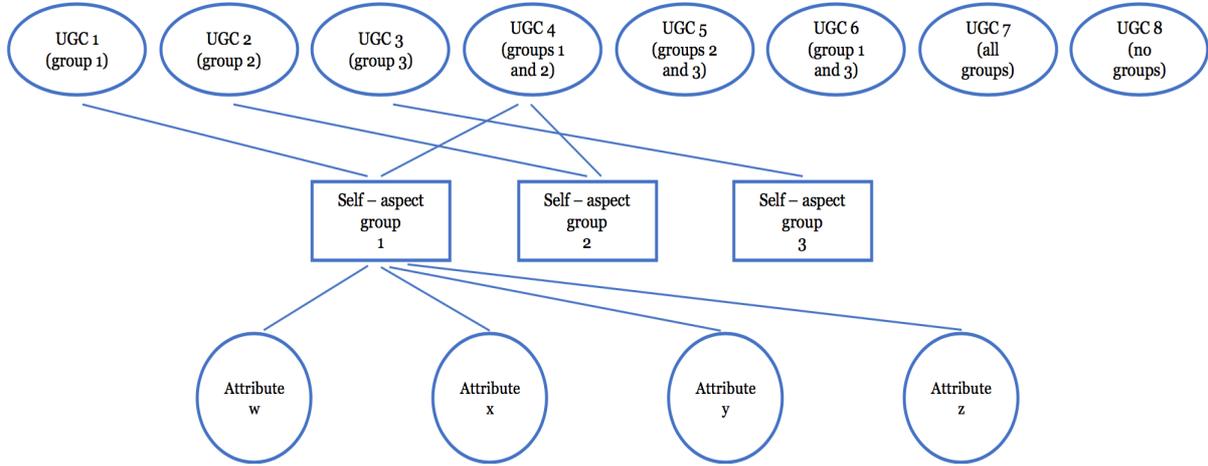
Figure 1. Example of a possible relation between attributes, self-aspect groups and UGCs with four attributes.

The formula for *H* is defined as follows:

$$H = log_2\, n - (\Sigma_i n_i\, log_2 n_i)/n \tag{1}$$

with n being the total number of self-descriptive attributes available for sorting. In the example in Figure 1 the number of attributes available for sorting would be 4. n_i stands for the number of attributes that appear in a given UGC. Following the formula's logic, *H* increases with an increasing number of UGCs containing attributes (attribute clusters).

1.2.   Symbolic Self – Completion

While the concept of self-complexity seeks to describe the structure and organization of the self, the theory of self-completion addresses the dynamics and interaction of the self with the surroundings.

1.2.1. *The Role of Self-Definitions*

Above I expanded on the complex system that is underlying the individuals' sense of self. Another underlying theory to the present study is the concept of symbolic self-completion. It describes different components people use to establish a self-identification. Those self–identifications or self- definitions can vary widely in dependence of the situation and the person. According to Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982), self-definitions are described as the "sense of oneself as having permanent qualities, which have implications for future behavioral and thinking patterns" (p.31). To establish those qualities for themselves individuals use symbols of completeness according to this self-definition in question. Thus, each self-definition is being attained by a set of symbols appropriate to it (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). For example, for a person that seeks to define him or herself as a runner, a symbol to attain this goal can be regularly showing up to training.

1.2.2. *The Process of Symbolic Self-Completion*

However, when the path to a desired identity is blocked, or when identity claims are in some way insecure, individuals experience their identities as *incomplete* and therefore will be motivated to *complete themselves* using other available symbols to define their desired identity (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982).

Interestingly, one and the same behavior can function as a symbol to some, while it is not related to their own self-definition for others. To determine whether a shown behavior is important for an individual's symbolic self-completion their reaction to incompleteness of their desired identity can be observed. According to Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) after failure of self-symbolizing, meaning after not being able to reach the desired identity with the chosen symbol, an individual will be more intent to retrieve from symbolizing through the primarily chosen behavior and would rather compensate this incompleteness by pursuing an alternative symbolic evidence for their self-definition.

In the upper example, the person choses to define themselves as a runner by regularly going to training. Now, the person cannot attend trainings anymore, because of a shift in their work schedule, for example. Not being able to attend the trainings can make the person feel

incomplete, (because what kind of runner doesn't train?). To compensate for the so caused incompleteness, i.e. to complete themselves in their runner identity, the person may choose to symbolize their desired identity through other symbols, like buying running shoes or learning special facts about running. In order to not only attain this self-definition, but also make it visible for others, the person in the example may tell others extensively about the running facts he or she has learned or wear their trainers to work.

To perceive that others have acknowledged the individual's intended self-definition and act in a coherent way Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) call to *register* a symbol on others. In our example this would mean that other people would attribute the qualities of a runner to that person who tries to establish this self-definition and would act accordingly by e.g. asking the person for running advice. This adds social reality to the self-symbolizing process which is needed for individuals in order to work towards completing their social identity goals (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982).

In contrary, if a specific behavior is not important for the self-symbolizing process an individual will not feel incomplete, thus they will be less inclined to disengage from their primary behavior and substitute it with a different symbol to achieve completeness in their identity (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). In the example above, another person that does not care about identifying themselves as a runner, would not start wearying their trainers to work neither would they talk other peoples' ears off with facts about running after involuntarily missing the training.

Our first hypothesis for the present study arose from the two theories explained above. Assuming that higher self-complexity functions as a buffer against the maleficent influence of life stress, we hypothesized that higher self - complexity is positively correlated to less engagement in incompleteness compensation across roles. Thus, if individuals have a more complex identity, their social roles would be less overlapping or even not overlapping at all. If a person's different social roles do not overlap (as much), following the hypothesis, the individual will be less inclined to compensate the incompleteness in role A on another role B.

1.3.   Moral Identity

For the present study, morality and moral decisions were chosen as a domain because it appears to be widely present in everyday life situations. The concept of moral identity refers to what extent it is important for an individual to be a moral person (Hardy & Gustavo, 2011). In history there have been established multiple moral identity models.

1.3.1. *Blasi's Concept of Self*

Blasi's Model of Moral Identity attempts to explain the gap between moral reasoning and moral action (Blasi, 1983). It consists out of three essential components.

First, a moral judgement passes through a stage of a *responsibility judgement*. "The function of a responsibility judgment is to determine to what extent that which is morally good is also strictly necessary for oneself" (Blasi, 1983, p. 198). This way a person not only assesses whether an action is morally correct, but also, and more relevant for following through with the action, whether he or she is responsible for acting this certain way.

This judgement often emerges from the second essential component, the *moral identity* (Blasi, 1983). According to Blasi this moral identity "does not appear before a certain age and undergoes significant developmental changes" (Blasi, 1983, p. 201). It contains beliefs about to which extent being a morally good person is important for a person's self-definition, which again depends on the personality organization (Blasi, 1983, Hardy & Gustavo, 2005).

The third essential component of Blasi's Model of Moral Identity is *self-consistency* (Hardy & Gustavo, 2005). According to Blasi, humans tend to act in consistence with their own sense of self. If this sense of self, i.e. their identity, is based on moral beliefs, the aspiration for self-consistency functions as "the most important motivational spring" (Blasi, 1983, p. 197) when it comes to acting upon moral beliefs.

Further, Blasi hypothesizes that the strength, quality and degree of self-consistency is subject to individual variations, depending on different factors such as traits in one's personality, their degree of hierarchization and cohesiveness, the degree of sensitivity to inconsistency, or the degree of self-awareness (Blasi, 1983).

In summary, Blasi's Model of Moral Identity states that the decision towards moral behavior is based on three main components. The responsibility judgement determines whether a person feels responsible for acting 'morally correct'. This judgement might stem from a person's moral identity which contains beliefs about how important it is for an individual to act 'morally correct'. Thirdly, the self-consistency is the motivation to show moral behavior, because it seems to be a human need to act consistently with one´s identity.

1.3.2. *Moral Identity as Schemas*

In the beginning of the 21st century more theories about moral identity emerged. Those theories address the important role of schemas for moral identity. Fiske (2000) defines schemas as a non-verbal set of knowledge about other people, social situations, events, relationships and the self. "Schema theories assume that schemas generalize over instances, resulting in a mental abstraction stored in memory" (Fiske, 2000, p.158). Researchers who point out the link between schema theories and moral identity argue further that "moral identity may entail having morally relevant schemas readily accessible for social information processing" (Hardy & Carlo, 2011, p.213).

Moreover, it has been argued that these moral ideals and characteristics within a schema are specifically important for a person's sense of self and therefore cognitively easily accessible (Hardy & Gustavo, 2011). Consistently with Blasi's concept of moral identity (Blasi, 1983), there seem to be individual differences on how important 'morally good' behavior is and how accessible those schemas for moral behavior are in a certain situation (Aquino et al., 2009).

Various ways to think about moral identity as schemas have emerged. While for some moral identity refers to one particular moral schema that contains the idea about the self as a morally good individual, for others moral identity is about an array of various social schemas – one of which might be an individual's sense of self as a moral person (Hardy & Gustavo, 2011).

1.3.3. Trait and State Moral Identity

Theories discussed above conceptualize moral identity as something though developing over time and staying stable over situations – comparable to a personality trait. Other researchers have investigated to challenge this view. According to Monin and Jordan (2009), while peoples' identity stays rather stable on average, their sense of moral identity "fluctuates from moment to moment according to situational influences" (Monin & Jordan, 2009, p. 10).

1.3.4. Unitary and Complex Moral Identity

So far, mentioned researchers have been operationalizing moral identity as a unitary construct, yet more recent approaches have sought to address moral identity as a complex multidimensional structure with "multiple sub-identities reflecting individuals' various work and social roles" (Hannah et al., 2018, p. 2). Hannah et al.(2018) argue that an individual's moral identity can be fluid and is being adapted depending on the social role that is being activated within a person.

The content and structure of moral identity can be referred to as moral identity complexity. Hannah et al.(2018) argue further, that "the extent to which [individuals] construe themselves on a given moral attribute (e.g., honest) relative to another attribute (e.g., fair) varies" (p. 2) *across* social role identities, as well as *within* (Hannah et al., 2018). While previous research has shown that individuals show different ethical responses when different role identities are salient, it has not directly investigated why. Based on self-complexity theory Hannah et al. (2018) argue further that it may happen partly because moral identities differ across roles, meaning that an individual's moral identity in role A (e.g. daughter) may differ from his or her moral identity in role B (e.g. coworker).

Understanding moral identity can help understand, how individuals define themselves as moral beings and structure moral attributes within their self-concepts across various roles. Using the four categories *Benevolence, Justice, Obligation* and *Integrity* Hannah and colleagues (2018) investigated the multidimensionality of moral identity amongst other

things. "Results suggested that the four dimensions reflect a reasonable structure for the data within each role across all samples" (Hannah et al., 2018, p. 16).

In this study we aimed to investigate the link between self-complexity, symbolic self-completion and moral identity. We tried to connect those theories by researching and comparing the self-complexity of actors and non-actors in terms of their moral identity. Our three hypotheses put the theories into context with each other as follows.

1.4.   Self-Complexity and Moral Identity

Relying on the definition of self-complexity by Linville, high self-complexity can be described as "representing the self in terms of a greater number of cognitive self-aspects and maintaining greater distinction among self-aspects" (Linville, 1987, p. 663). Linking this definition with the theory of moral identity, we hypothesize that actors who are frequently exposed to role play and acting out a variety of different roles with different moral attitudes possess more cognitive self-aspects than non-actors. Consequently, we hypothesize that actors have a higher moral identity complexity due to their frequent exposure to role change and rehearsals that come along with frequent acting or occupationally working as an actor (H1).

1.5.   Self-Complexity and Symbolic Self-Completion

Furthermore, the definition of self-complexity implies for the present study that the higher the self-complexity of an individual, the less the individual construes themselves similarly across roles, meaning the two roles under investigation will be seen as different from another with varying attributes and hence those two identities will be very distinct within one individual. Connecting the self-complexity theory and the theory of symbolic self-completion, we hypothesize that the less an individual's social roles overlap, the less will the individual be inclined to compensate an experienced incompleteness in role A on another role B (H2).

1.6.   Self-Complexity, Symbolic Self-Completion and Moral Identity

Put together, we hypothesize next that actors who have a high self-complexity will compensate incompleteness less across roles in comparison to non-actors with a low self-complexity who will compensate incompleteness across roles more than actors (H3).

In summary, these three hypotheses evolved:

1. Actors have a higher moral identity complexity than non-actors.

2. High self-complexity is positively correlated to less incompleteness compensation across roles.

3. 1+2: In comparison to non-actors, actors compensate the incompleteness in role A less in role B.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

According to the Cambridge dictionary an actor is defined by "someone who pretends to be someone else while performing in a film, play, or television or radio programme" (*Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). For the present study it was of importance to recruit participants who are exposed to role-play on a regular basis, as well as participants who weren't associated with drama and acting at all. Overall, we recruited 97 participants, 46 actors and 51 non-actors, between the ages 17 and 57 (M=28, SD=10). Due to drop- out 7 participants had to be excluded from the analysis leaving a final sample size of 90 participants, 43 actors and 47 non-actors.

When asked, almost 21% of all actors indicated that they strongly agree with identifying themselves as actors. Nearly 40% agreed with identifying themselves as actors while 30% disagreed and 10% did not respond to the question. Overall, the sample consisted out of 28 males (31%) and 62 females (69%).

Participants in the actor sample were recruited in university theater groups and improv theater ensembles, the theater of Konstanz, the Konstanz Improv Theater, theater-related clubs outside and inside the university, as well as other improv theater groups in Konstanz and Singen. Non-acting participants were recruited through the university's experiment assignment platform "Sona". Participants were compensated with 8€ or 0,75 VPH at first. This was changed to 5€ or 0,5 VPH due to university experimental compensation regulations.

2.2. Design

For the present thesis a between-group-design was used. Out of two groups of participants (actors - non-actors), two conditions within each group (complete -incomplete) and two conditions each completeness/incompleteness group, 8 conditions resulted. An overview over the experimental design can be seen in Figure 2.
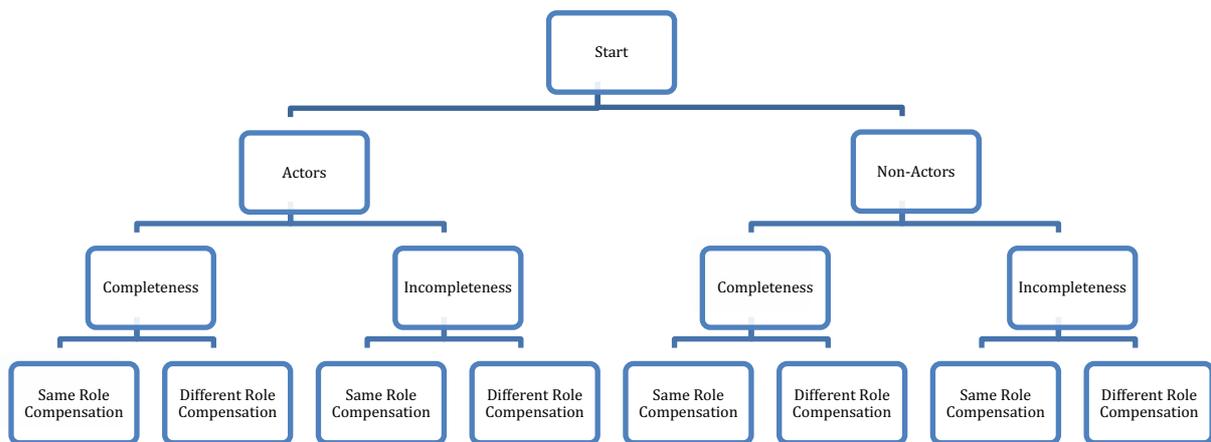
Figure 2. Experimental design conditions of the present study.

2.3. Material

The questionnaire was designed and implemented by using Qualtrics software, Copyright © 2020. An i-Pad was used to present the questionnaire, the scenarios and the tasks. The two written tasks were each noted on a blank sheet of paper that resembled a diary page by carrying the title "Dear diary, ..." This sheet is displayed in appendix G. The acting tasks were performed in front of the researcher and recorded on an audio clip.

2.4. Questionnaire Items

In stage 1 of the present experiment, a self-composed questionnaire, of overall 25 items, was used. The first part consisted out of Likert-scale questions. Items 1 and 2 inquired about whether participants have a stage school degree and whether they identify as actors.

Item 3 was included to measure the participants' identification towards the social roles in question (family member, friend). Item 4 aimed to measure the participants' self-assessment towards the complexity of their moral identity. Items 5 to 8 were adopted and translated from the moral identity questionnaire created and validated by Hannah and colleagues (2018).

In stage 2 of the questionnaire, the experimental manipulation followed. Participants were instructed to read a fictional scenario and empathize with the main character. The scenario was about the main character reacting nicely or unlikable in a social situation. While participants in the experimental group had to empathize with someone who fails to behave 'morally correct' in a situation with either a friend or their mother seeking help, participants in the control group empathized with a neutral more positive reaction in one of those two situations. In conclusion of the experimental design, the four possible different reactions resulted in four different scenarios: *1. Friend role, reaction induces completeness, 2. Friend role, reaction induces incompleteness, 3. Family member role, reaction induces completeness; 4. Family member role, reaction induces incompleteness*. These scenarios can be viewed in appendices A through D.

The two social roles investigated in this study go back to research by Hannah et al. (2018). They used four roles: co-worker, follower, son/daughter, and friend to research moral identity complexity. They selected these representative "as they establish a balance of work and social roles that were general enough to be held in common by all participants in the diverse samples"(Hannah et al., 2018, p. 10). For the current study, the two roles family member and friend were investigated, because they appeared to be most relatable for the current samples, particularly as the majority of participants were college students.

For stage 3, the Integrity – Related Scenario for the family member role by Hannah and colleagues (2018) was translated and used as is for the family member role and revised to compose an equivalent scenario for the friend role. Hence, at this stage, two different scenarios (one for each social role under investigation) were used. Both scenarios are displayed in appendices E and F. Each contained a moral quandary and asked the participants to imagine going to the grocery store in place of their parents or their friend, winning 2 000 € and

deciding how to proceed with the attained money. In each scenario, participants had to decide upon one of the three given more moral and less moral reactions, ranging from keeping the entire money to themselves to giving the entire amount away, and indicate the likelihood of themselves acting in each of those presented ways.

For stage 4, items were used to inquire about demographics and participants' exposure to acting. Moreover, the instrument developed by Aquino and Reed (2002) to measure the self-importance of moral identity was used to measure participants' commitment towards being a moral person. This way it could be ensured that the participants *haven't left the field* (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982), meaning that being a morally good individual is of some importance to them.

2.5.   Procedure

At start, the participant was welcomed by the experimenter and kindly asked to take seat. In stage 1 of the experiment, participants were asked to complete the first items of the questionnaire leading to the first scenario.

In stage 2, in the incompleteness condition participants underwent an induced incompleteness in one of the two social roles in question (family member, friend) by being asked to read a scenario, internalize the main character's 'morally incorrect' behavior, write a diary task as if the character was themselves and verbalize this 'morally wrong' content in a following improvised monologue scene. The diary and the scene task were derived from a scene format commonly used in improvisational theater where an improv player plays a scene acting out a diary entry. Participants in the completeness condition were asked to verbalize more neutral content empathizing with one of the two roles under investigation.

After the first scenario and the first scene task, a brief comprehension check followed, consisting out of two items asking to indicate what kind of scenario the participant has read, and a manipulation check inquired whether participants felt guilty within the social role made salient by the previous task.

Then, in stage 3 of the experiment, the compensation of the induced incompleteness was measured. Participants were presented the second scenario with the moral quandary

described above. Participants were asked to choose one of those presented reaction alternatives and to elaborate their feelings and thoughts towards the chosen reaction in a written diary task. In the following, participants were asked again to act out the monologue scene about their thoughts and feelings in this second scenario. Another brief comprehension check and manipulation check followed.

While in the same -role -compensation conditions participants were presented only one, either the friend role or the family member role, the different -role -compensation conditions used different roles between part 1 and part 2 (either friend scenario 1 - family scenario 2 or family scenario 1 - friend scenario 2). The order of roles in different -role - compensation conditions has been counterbalanced.

In stage 4 of the experiment, participants were asked to fill out the remaining items inquiring about demographics, participants' exposure to acting and the self- importance of moral identity. After completion, participants were reimbursed.

In Figure 3, a summary of each step of the experimental procedure with the according items is displayed.

Stage 1
Items 1-8:
Stage school degree, identification as actors, identification towards the social roles in question, moral identity complexity

Stage 2
Items 9 - 12:
Scenario 1, diary task, scene monologue task, comprehension check, manipulation check

Stage 3
Items 13 - 16:
Scenario 2, decision, diary task, scene manologue task, comprehension check

Stage 4
Items 17 - 25:
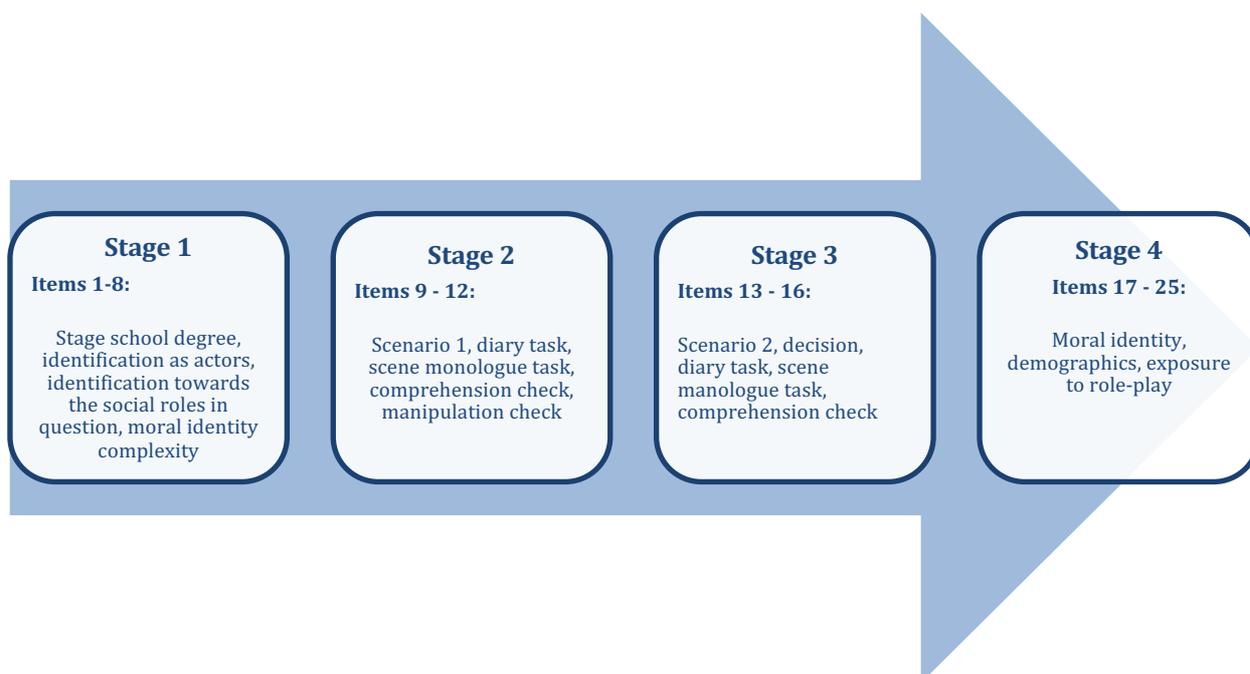Moral identity, demographics, exposure to role-play

Figure 3. The procedure and items of the present experiment.

2.6.   Data Preparation

This thesis is using the *H* index as a measure of moral self-complexity. To prepare the data for hypothesis testing, a self-complexity score was calculated for each subject based on research by Linville (1985). For these calculations the software R was used. A 4-point-Likert-Scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", was used to measure whether participants considered the given attributes as being descriptive of themselves in their social roles as a friend, family member, coworker and follower. Dichotomizing, this variable was assigned the value of 1 if participants indicated a 3 or higher in terms of whether they agree that the certain attribute (e.g. kindness) described them in each of the self-aspect groups (friend, family, coworker, follower). Otherwise, this variable was assigned 0. This way a matrix for each attribute resulted (Table 1).

Table 1

Example of attribute matrix for the attribute "reliable" with the four attribute groups.

Participant #	Family Member	Friend	Co-worker	Follower
1	1	1	1	1
7	0	1	1	1
36	0	0	1	0

Note. 1 = "reliable" was chosen to be a suited description for the participant in the social role, 0 = "reliable" was not chosen to be a suited description for the participant in the social role

In the following, out of all possible combinations between the four attribute groups (family member, friend, co-worker, follower), 16 UGCs (Woolfolk et al., 1995) resulted. All possible UGCs of this study are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Content of all 16 UGCs resulting of the combinations after sorting all attributes into attribute groups.

UGC #	Family Member	Friend	Co-worker	Follower
Contain 1 Attribute Group				
1	x	o	o	o
2	o	x	o	o
3	o	o	x	o
4	o	o	o	x
Contain 2 Attribute Groups				
5	x	x	o	o
6	x	o	x	o
7	x	o	o	x
8	o	x	x	o
9	o	x	o	x
10	o	o	x	x
Contain 3 Attribute Groups				
11	x	x	x	o
12	o	x	x	x
13	x	o	x	x
14	x	x	o	x
Contain 4 Attribute Groups				
15	x	x	x	x
Contain 0 Attribute Groups				
16	o	o	o	o

Note. x = UGC contains attribute group, o = UGC does not contain attribute group.

In the next step, a matrix for each attribute with the corresponding UGCs was composed. For an example of the matrix for the attribute "reliable", please refer Table 3.

Table 3

Example of matrix for the attribute "reliable" and the corresponding UGCs.

Participant #	UGC 1	UGC 2	UGC 3	...	UGC 10	UGC 11	UGC 12	UGC 13	UGC 14	UGC 15	UGC 16
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
36	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
56	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Note. 1 = "reliable" was chosen into UGC, 0 = "reliable" for not chosen into UGC.

After, all matrices were summarized across all attributes, and final UGCs were built. In each cell this matrix contained the sum of UGCs over attributes and participants ($\Sigma_i n_i$). Table 4 displays an example of the final UGC matrix.

Table 4

Example of final UGC-Matrix.

Participant #	UGC1	UGC 2	...	UGC16
1	UGC $1_{attribute1}$ $^{part.1}$ + UGC $1_{attribute\ 2}$ $^{part.1}$ + ... + UGC $1_{attribute8}$ $^{part.1}$	UGC $2_{attribute1}$ $^{part.1}$ + UGC $2_{attribute\ 2}$ $^{part.1}$ + ... + UGC $2_{attribute8}$ $^{part.1}$		UGC $16_{attribute1}$ $^{part.1}$ + UGC $16_{attribute\ 2}$ $^{part.1}$ + ... + UGC $16_{attribute8}$ $^{part.1}$
2	UGC $1_{attribute1}$ $^{part.2}$ + UGC $1_{attribute\ 2}$ $^{part.2}$ + ... + UGC $1_{attribute8}$ $^{part.2}$	""	""	""

In the next steps the following *H* index formula

$$H = log_2\, n - (\Sigma_i n_i\, log_2 n_i)/n \qquad (1)$$

was applied, and a self-complexity score was calculated for each participant.

3. Results

For the following analyses, the SPSS software was used.

3.1. Hypothesis 1: Actors Have a Higher Moral Identity Complexity than Non-actors

To analyze hypothesis 1, the assumptions for a t-test have been tested visually and analytically. The data plot showed a non-normal distribution of self-complexity scores across the two samples and a Kolmogorov – Smirnoff – Test with $p < 0.001$ confirmed that a non-normal distribution of self-complexity scores within the samples can be assumed. Additionally, a positive Levene-Test of $F = 6.25$, $p= 0.014$ indicated that the assumption of equal variances between the two sample groups (actors, non-actors) has been violated as well. However, as reported by Bortz & Schuster (2010), the t-test seems to be relatively robust against violations of the assumptions. For this reason, an unequal variances one-tailed t-test was performed. On average, participants from the actors' sample had a higher moral-identity complexity - index ($M = 1.16$, $SE = 0.69$) than participants from the non-actors' sample ($M = 0.85$, $SE = 0.83$). In a one-tailed t-test, this mean difference of 0.3, BCa 95% CI [-0.21, 0.63], was significant $t(87) = 1.88$, $p = 0.032$. It represented a small sized effect of $d= 0.39$. Significant differences in moral identity complexity between the same-role- and different-role-compensation groups as well as between participants who were exposed to a friend scenario versus participants who were exposed to a family member scenario were not found.

3.2. Incompleteness

In the present experimental design, we aimed to induce incompleteness through scenarios where participants had to empathize with the main character reacting either 'morally incorrect' (incompleteness condition) or 'morally correct' (completeness condition). Whether the inducement of incompleteness has worked, is crucial for testing hypotheses 2 and 3. Therefore, before analyzing the hypotheses, the manipulation check has been analyzed.

3.2.1. *Manipulation Check*

In the experimental design, the item "I have a bad conscience because of acting this way" followed right after the scenario and the diary entry. It is coded with a 4-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree) and was used as a manipulation check. By applying a two-tailed unequal variances t-test for independent variables the manipulation check was analyzed and means between the two experimental conditions "complete" and "incomplete" were compared. A non-significant Levene-Test of $F = 0.004$, $p = 0.95$ suggests that the assumption of equal variances between the two experimental conditions is tenable. On average, participants in the incomplete condition seemed to have a worse conscience ($M = 2.54$, $SE = 0.17$) than participants in the complete condition ($M = 2.31$, $SE = 0.22$). However, this mean difference of 0.23, BCa 95% CI [-0.32, 0.77], was tested not significant $t(82) = 0.83$, $p = 0.42$.

3.3. Hypothesis 2: High Self-Complexity is Positively Correlated to Less Incompleteness Compensation Across Roles

We assumed that the degree of morality of a person's decision about how to proceed with the money in the moral quandary in scenario 2 can be used as a *morality index*. The degree of morality, indicated by the morality index, was derived from the two items that asked participants to choose the person that is entitled to the money and choose how to precede with the money in the second scenario. The latter item was coded as follows with 1 being the 'least moral' choice and 3 being the 'most moral' choice: 1 = Take the 2,000 € and do not tell your friend/parents about the contest, 2 = Do not tell your friend/ parents about the contest, but give them half of the value under the guise of something else, 3= Give the 2,000 € check to your friend/parents, insisting they take it.

To investigate hypothesis 2 a multiple linear regression was calculated to predict the morality index based on the completeness condition (complete vs. incomplete), the congruency condition (congruent vs. incongruent roles), the H index of self-complexity, all possible 2-way interactions and one possible 3-way interaction between the predictors.

First, the assumptions for a linear model have been tested. A normal Predicted Probability Plot has indicated some deviations from a normal distribution. The inspection of a scatterplot of the residuals shows that homoscedasticity cannot be assumed. A Durbin-Watson test of d= 1.62 indicates that the assumption of independent errors is not tenable. As shown in Tables 5 and 6, no significant regression equations were found.

In these analyses the variable "completeness" was coded -1 = incomplete, 1 = complete, while the variable "role congruency" was coded 1=same role condition, -1= different role condition.

In order to receive a relatively robust regression in spite of the small sample size and violations of regression assumptions, a bootstrap sample distribution was used. In Table 6 the 95% percentile confidence intervals, the standard errors and the p – values are based on 1000 bootstrap samples with a simple bootstrap approach.

Table 5

Omnibus test of the linear regression of incompleteness, role congruency and the H-index as predictors of self-completion compensation.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	4.54	7	.65	.61	.75
Residual	81.41	76	1.07		
Total	85.95	83			

Table 6

Linear model of predictors of self-completion compensation, with 95% confidence intervals reported in parentheses. Confidence intervals, standard errors and p-values based on 1000 bootstrap samples.

	b	*SE B*	*β*	*p*
(Constant)	1.94	.21		.001
	(1.507, 2.30)			
Completeness	-.05	.21	-.05	.80
	(-.49, .33)			
H-Index	.062	.17	.05	.68
	(-.26, .40)			
Role Congruency	-.34	.21	-.34	.10
	(-.81, .17)			
2-way Interaction: Completeness x Role Congruency	.05 (-.385, .433)	.21	.05	.81
2-way Interaction: Role Congruency x H-Index	.16 (-.18, .51)	.17	.21	.31
2-way Interaction: H-Index x Completeness	.04 (-.311, .33)	.17	.05	.82
3-way Interaction: H-Index x Completeness x Role Congruency	.02 (-.35, .34)	.17	.02	.61

Note. R = 0.23; adj. R^2= -0.34

3.4. Hypothesis 3: In Comparison to Non-actors, Actors Compensate Incompleteness Less Across Roles

3.4.1. A Model with Interactions

To investigate hypothesis 3, another multiple linear regression was calculated to predict the degree to which participants compensate their incompleteness (operationalized by the Morality Index) based on the induced incompleteness, the role congruency, the sample (actors

vs. non-actors), all possible 2-way interactions and one possible 3-way interaction between the predictors.

Therefore, the assumptions for a linear model have been tested. A normal Predicted Probability Plot has indicated some deviations from a normal distribution. The inspection of a scatterplot of the residuals and a Durbin-Watson test of $d=$ 1.75 indicate that the assumption of homoscedasticity and independent errors is not tenable. As displayed in Table 7 and 8, a model with interactions was not tested significant with $F(7,76) = 1.61$, $p = 0.146$ and an adjusted R^2 of 0.049. In this non - significant model, participants' predicted morality compensation is equal to 1.99 – 0.26(SAMPLE) – 0.13(ROLE CONGRUENCY) – 0.08(COMPLETENESS) + 0.06(COMPLETENESS x ROLE CONGRUENCY) - 0.08(ROLE CONGRUENCY x SAMPLE) + 0.06(SAMPLE x COMPLETENESS) + 0.12(SAMPLE x COMPLETENESS x ROLE CONGRUENCY).

Table 7

Omnibus test of the linear regression of incompleteness, role congruency and the sample with all possible interactions as predictors of self-completion compensation.

	Sum of Squares	*df*	**Mean Square**	**F**	*p*
Regression	11.09	7	1.58	1.61	.146
Residual	74.87	76	.99		
Total	85.95	83			

Table 8

Linear model with interactions of predictors of self-completion compensation, with 95% confidence intervals reported in parentheses. Confidence intervals, standard errors and p-values based on 1000 bootstrap samples.

	b	SE B	β	p	η^2
(Constant)	1.99	.14		.001	.79
	(1.71, 2.43)				
Completeness	-.08	.14	-.08	.55	.01
	(-.36, .17)				
Sample	-.26	.14	-.26	.05	.06
	(-.54, .00)				
Role Congruency	-.13	.13	-.13	.31	.02
	(-.39, .15)				
2-way Interaction:	.06	.14	.06	.67	.00
Completeness x Role	(-.20, .34)				
Congruency					
2-way Interaction:	-.08	.13	-.08	.52	.01
Role Congruency x Sample	(-.35, .19)				
2-way Interaction:	.06	.14	.06	.65	.00
Sample x Completeness	(-.20, .33)				
3-way Interaction:					
Sample x Completeness x	.12	.13	.11	.37	.01
Role Congruency	(-.15, .37)				

Note. Adj. R^2 = .049

3.4.2. A Model without Interactions

In a second model no interactions were included as predictors. A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict the degree to which participants compensate their incompleteness based on only the induced incompleteness, the role congruency and the sample. As displayed in Tables 9 and 10, a significant regression equation was found ($F(3,80)$ = 2.91, p = 0.04), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.07. Participants' predicted morality compensation is equal to 1.97 − 0.26 (SAMPLE) − 0.16(ROLE CONGRUENCY) − 0.09(COMPLETENESS). "Sample" was coded -1 = non-actor and 1 = actor. Results show that, in comparison, actors compensated incompleteness 0.26 times less than non-actors. "Sample" was found to be a significant predictor (p = 0.02) with a medium sized effect (η_p^2 = 0.06) on incompleteness compensation. "Role Congruency" (p = 0.15) and "Completeness" (p = 0.47) were found to be insignificant predictors for incompleteness compensation in this model.

Table 9

Omnibus test of the linear regression of incompleteness, role congruency and the sample as predictors of self-completion compensation.

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Regression	8.46	3	2.82	2.91	.04
Residual	77.49	80	.97		
Total	85.95	83			

Table 10

Linear model of predictors of self-completion compensation, with 95% confidence intervals reported in parentheses. Confidence intervals, standard errors and p-values based on 1000 bootstrap samples.

	B	*SE B*	*β*	*p*	η_P^2
(Constant)	1.97	.12		.001	.79
	(1.74, 2.18)				
Completeness	-.09	.12	-.08	.47	.01
	(-.36, .15)				
Sample	-.26	.11	-.26	**.02***	.06
	(-.47, -.06)				
Role Congruency	-.16	.11	-.13	.15	.02
	(-.38, .06)				

Note. Adj. R^2 = .07; * correlation is significant on a significance level of α < .05.

3.5.   Post-Hoc-Analyses

To shed light on possible reasons for the ineffective manipulation check, two post-hoc tests were calculated.

Firstly, the median of the bad conscience variable was calculated. Because the variable was coded as follows: 1 = feeling not guilty at all 2 = feeling not guilty 3 = feeling guilty 4 = feeling very guilty, a *Mdn* = 3 indicates a slightly right-skewed distribution. A completely successful manipulation would be apparent in control participants (completeness condition) responding below the median and experimental group participants (incompleteness condition) responding above. Based thereupon, data were sorted into cases by selecting participants with an effective manipulation check. This analysis left off a sample of 34 participants with a successful manipulation. Out of those 34 participants, 18 were in the control group and 16 in the experimental group. 18 of these were actors. Out of those actors,

11 (61%) were in the experimental condition. In the non-actors' sample 5 (31%) participants were in the experimental condition.

In a second post-hoc analysis, a linear regression was calculated with sample and completeness/incompleteness condition as predictors for bad conscience. Within this analysis no significant predictors of bad conscience could be found ($F(3,80) = 1.06$, $p = 0.37$).

4. Discussion

The objective of this thesis was to investigate the effect acting has on the human self. Therefore, a link between self-complexity, symbolic self-completion and moral identity was made and those constructs were compared between actors and non-actors.

4.1. Differences in Self-Complexity between Actors and Non-Actors

The first prediction of this study was that actors have a higher moral identity complexity than non-actors. Our results support this hypothesis and show that, on average, actors had a significantly higher self-complexity index (H index) than non-actors.

Research on the link between self-complexity and role play is scarce. However, this finding goes in line with previously mentioned research by Bowman and Lieberoth (2018), Stenros and Montola (2010) and Carnes (2014) who state that role-play can have beneficial effects on human development in terms of social role development and identity formation. In accordance, positive effects of role -play on adults were also found in the domains of problem solving, identity exploration, increased self-awareness (Meriläinen, 2012), the development of critical ethical reasoning and awareness of social issues (Simkins, 2010).

4.2. High Self-Complexity as a Predictor for Incompleteness-Compensation

Secondly, we predicted that high self-complexity is positively correlated to less incompleteness compensation across roles. This hypothesis is not supported by our results. This may be due to several reasons.

4.2.1. *Manipulation Check*

We assume that one of the reasons was a failed manipulation check. A two-tailed t-test showed no significant difference in the feeling of incompleteness between controls and the

experimental condition participants of the present experiment, indicating that there must have occurred problems with the manipulation check. The manipulation for this experiment was designed based upon prior research. It consisted out of three tasks: 1. Reading the incompleteness inducing scenario, 2. Being asked to identify with the main character's reaction and writing down feelings and thoughts in a diary entry, 3. Acting an improvised monologue scene based off the noted feelings and thoughts.

The scene task was specifically included to, firstly, add social reality to the process of identification with the main character from the scenario. Additionally, it was meant to intensify the induced incompleteness (only in the experimental group) and put the feeling of incompleteness into a social context by adding the interaction with the study conductor who was also functioning as an audience. As mentioned before, according to Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) social reality is needed for individuals to work towards completing their social identity goals. "It becomes crucial for the individual to sense the existence of a social reality in order to make psychological progress toward completing the self-definition" (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982, p. 62). The diary writing task was aimed to have a positive impact on internalizing and memorizing the feeling of incompleteness, based on results by Klein and Boal (2001) that found out that expressive writing had positive effects on working memory.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID -19 pandemic safety measures, large parts of the written and audio data of the diary and acting tasks could not be accessed. Yet, the qualitative analysis of some of the written and acting tasks revealed that for some participants, the incompleteness compensation process may have taken place earlier than expected, which is during the second (diary task) or third task (monologue acting task) of the manipulation or it didn't take place at all. Expressions like "I don't know why my mother is calling me, I know nothing about computers anyway" suggest that participants may have attributed their failure to act 'morally correct' to the external cause of just not having enough competence instead of attributing it to internal causes and feeling incomplete, as suggested by the scenario. This goes in accordance with attribution theory research results stating that personal failure is rather

attributed on external factors whereas success is rather attributed on internal ones (Harold & Michela, 1980).

Another reason for a failed manipulation check may be the specificity of the actors' sample and of the manipulation. On the one hand, most actors are very unfamiliar with psychological experiments. This became clear during the experiments and led to several interposed questions between the tasks. On the other hand, non-actors may not have been acquainted to the concept of role-play and therefore were neither used to identifying with a character in a fictive scenario, nor to improvising a monologue. Thus, some confounding effects such as in the Evaluation Apprehension Theory by Henchy and Glass (1968) and in the Social Facilitation Theory by Zajonc and Sales (1966) may have been activated. Henchy and Glass (1968) found out that the mere presence of an audience, which is being perceived as evaluative, socially facilitates the *dominant response* and inhibits the *subordinate response* in an individual. In other words, when participants thought of their performance to be evaluated by the researchers, they were more likely to enhance in previously acquired skills and more likely to diminish in skills they were less familiar with. For the present study, this may have been a confounding effect for participants having difficulties with the unfamiliar study setting, potentially leading them to expressing more socially desirable content in their monologues.

Eventually, the manipulation may be indicated unsuccessful because of an ambiguous wording and thus a low content validity of the manipulation check itself. It consisted out of the item "I have a bad conscience because of acting this way" following right after the first incompleteness inducing monologue task. Before answering this item, some participants were unsure about whether their task was to answer the item as if they still acted like the main character in the scenario, or to answer as themselves.

4.3. Sample as a Predictor for Incompleteness Compensation

Lastly, it was hypothesized that in comparison to non-actors, actors compensate incompleteness less across roles. This prediction is partly supported by the findings of this

study. In a linear model without interactions the sample (coded: actor = 1, non − actor = -1) was found to be a significant predictor of incompleteness compensation across and within roles.

However, regarding the fact that the manipulation has not been successful, it can be assumed that the found effect exists independently of the manipulation. Incompleteness compensation was measured with a morality index, derived from the two items that asked participants to choose who is entitled to the money and how to precede with the money in the second scenario (1 = Take the 2,000 € and do not tell your friend/parents about the contest, 2 = Do not tell your friend/ parents about the contest, but give them half of the value under the guise of something else, 3= Give the 2,000 € check to your friend/parents, insisting they take it). Based on research by Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982), we assumed that incompleteness compensation can be operationalized by measuring how 'morally correct' participants decide after having experienced incompleteness in their moral identity.

After finding out that the moral correctness of the participants' decision in this experiment did not depend on whether they felt incomplete in their moral identities prior to the decision, it seems reasonable to suppose that actors decided to behave 'less morally correct' than non-actors, independently from whether they had felt incomplete in beforehand.

4.4.   Sample as a Predictor for Moral or Immoral Behavior

Regarding the large amount of research about acting being associated with enhanced social skills like openness, extraversion and agreeableness (Nettle, 2006), this implication is somewhat surprising. However, an array of research supports the implication that actors make 'less moral' decisions than non-actors. Goldstein and colleagues (2009) found out that actors are skilled at Theory of Mind, but not empathy. In their study, actors showed higher social sensitivity skills than non-actors and were rather able to infer concrete mental states underlying interactions in presented video clips. At the same time, actors did not show any enhanced empathy skills in comparison to non-actors. This latter finding was replicated under

use of overall two different measures of empathy. In fact, in comparison, psychology students showed a significantly higher average empathy score than actors.

4.4.1. Theory of Mind and Empathy

That Theory of Mind skills can be present without empathy has also been shown in earlier research. In psychological literature, the understanding of Theory of Mind is often referred to as "detecting of mental states and the decoding of those states - both recognizing agency and intentionality and determining what the agent's intention is" (Goldstein, 2010, p. 8). While Theory of Mind skills require the cognitive ability to understand others' emotions and take another's perspective, empathy can be defined as the ability to actually feel what the other person is feeling (Goldstein, 2010). Thus, these two concepts must be considered as separate and independent from each other. This has also been shown by prior research on psychopaths (Mealey, 1995) and bullies (Bosacki & Wilde Astington, 1999). As cited by Goldstein, bullies and psychopaths, for example, are strong in cognitively anticipating the emotions of their victims but fail to actually feel those emotions themselves. This ability seems to make them successful in manipulating others.

4.4.2. Theory of Mind and Acting

Based on research by Goldstein et al. (2009) it can be assumed that the fact that actors are highly skilled on Theory of Mind is associated with their frequent exposure to role play. In rehearsals actors often face different characters in various roles. At times they have to impersonate characters they do not identify with or even ones they find repulsive because of a conflict between their own moral beliefs and the beliefs of the character. Thus, a well-developed Theory of Mind skill can help analyze a character and get to the bottom of its beliefs in order to be able to act out a personification. This observation can be found in research by Noice in 1991. Noice (1991) stated the following:

"Professional actors generated an immense number of explanations during the course of studying the play script. Many of these were concerned with explaining *why* a

character said a particular line or *what* a character meant when he said that line. Thus, a component of a professional actor's expertise seems to consist of formulating questions about the text and then explaining them in terms of the character's overall motivation or intention in the scene" (p. 451).

Analyzing our third hypothesis we found out that actors seemed to decide 'less morally' than non-actors, independently from whether they had felt incomplete prior to the decision. The findings mentioned in the latter paragraphs support this result and can give some sort of explanation for this somewhat unexpected finding in spite of a non-effective manipulation check.

4.4.3. *Sample as a Predictor for Bad Conscience*

To shed light on possible reasons for the ineffective manipulation check, two post-hoc tests were calculated. In the first descriptive post-test, participants with a successful manipulation check were identified. This analysis revealed an overall slight tendency for participants to indicate that they felt guilty about acting the way the main character acted in the first scenario. In the second post-test, a linear regression with sample and completeness/incompleteness condition as predictors for the bad conscience variable was calculated. Results showed no significant equation. This implies that sample didn't have an effect on the effectiveness of the manipulation and supports the claim that the problems occurring with the manipulation check may lie in the manipulation itself.

4.5. **Further Strengths and Limitations**

Some further limitations can be found in the experimental design. The material of the present study allowed it to conduct the experiment anywhere outside of the sociopsychological lab. This was a major strength of the experiment that allowed us to adjust to the specificity of the sample of actors and recruit participants during, before and after rehearsals and shows. On the other hand, the fact that all non-actors participated in the social psychological lab and all actors participated in rehearsal- or theater -associated rooms, made it difficult to control for potential confounders in the surroundings. Even though we tried to control for the room

setup and other circumstances, possible confounding variables may be interruptions by others, different light situations and room features (e.g. the presence of lots of mirrors in the dressing rooms, no tables or chairs backstage), different preceding situations (e.g. some actors participated right after performing on stage, some during/after/before rehearsal, while others came in specifically for participation) and a varying positions of researcher and participant in the room.

Furthermore, most of the times it was not possible to keep a double-blinded design. Because several interposed questions arose during the participation of actors, most of the times it was not possible for the researcher to stay blind towards the experimental condition. Simultaneously, the researcher also functioned as an audience for when participants presented their improvised monologues, most of which also revealed the experimental condition the participant was in.

Another potential limitation of this study can be found within the selection of participants. The actors' sample was composed of actors with systematically varying backgrounds and levels of professionality, ranging from classical and improvisational university theater clubs over professional and non-professional improvisational theater ensembles, to professional classical theater actors. These systematic variations resulted out of the overall difficulty to recruit actors for psychological experiments. Thus, a selection bias may have been added to the sample and have had an effect on the external validity and generalizability of our findings.

Additionally, limitations in the measures of the questionnaire exist as well.

Firstly, as mentioned above, most measures in this thesis were adopted and translated from research by Hannah and colleagues (2018) and Aquino and Reed (2002). For the purpose of this thesis, translations were made by the researchers themselves. This may have been a potential limitation, since the translations were not validated in prior pilot studies. This may have reduced the cultural fit of the questionnaire, as well as led to a slightly altered meaning of the translation in comparison to the original scales.

Secondly, our measures for self-complexity and moral identity were based off self-reports that generally may be prone to errors of recollection or social desirability response bias. Moreover, according to Kihlstrom et al. (2003) as described by Hannah et al. (2018), self-identity "is thought to be the vastest set of knowledge structures individuals possess" (Hannah et al., 2018, p. 27). Even though, the present thesis was trying to measure the construct of self-identity complexity as broadly as possible within the limited resources available, the chosen characteristics for the identity complexity task can be regarded as partly representative, but not necessarily exhaustive. In addition, the fact that only two social roles were under investigation (family member, friend) can be seen as a limitation as well.

4.6.   Future Research Opportunities

Amongst other things, this thesis opens up lots of new questions and opportunities for future research.

Firstly, when comparing actors and non-actors it would be beneficial to control or randomize various backgrounds actors come from. Not only there seems to be a difference between improvisational and classical theater actors, but also within classical acting there are two major approaches of teaching acting that lead to different research outcomes concerning empathy. According to Goldstein et al. (2009), while *Method* actors are taught to use emotional memory to actually feel the characters' emotions, *Technique* actors accept emotions only when they occur, instead of trying to evoke them. If this difference has an impact on empathy skills among actors, it would also be beneficial to investigate whether those differences have an effect on the moral identity of self-complexity.

Secondly, it would be beneficial to validate the questionnaire in pilot studies and design a cultural-fitted experiment with the most relatable characteristics and more social roles to assess self-complexity. In fact, it would be interesting to conduct a cross-cultural experiment. By conducting this study with cultures characterized by different ideas of individualism and collectivism, culture as a predictor for moral identity self-complexity among actors and non-actors may be added to the model.

Additionally, to minimize the potential biases connected to the method of self-reports, it would be best to include a measure of the perception of others. However, it must be acknowledged that a study design including a questionnaire for another person in the participant's close surroundings would be quite effortful. Alternatively, including an item measuring self-report deviance would also help minimize the biases.

Furthermore, calculating the morality index in a different way may lead to different results. An alternative way of statistical testing could include calculating the morality index with an overall sum over the different roles in question or summing up only those scores that are associated with the one specific role of each condition. As a next step, the interaction between the incompleteness condition and the differently calculated moral identity index can be calculated and included into the model.

Moreover, it would be highly interesting to tie in with previous research by Linville (1987) about the stress and disease buffering function of high self-complexity and investigate whether, based off our findings, actors tend to be better equipped against pathogenic influences of life-stress and resulting diseases. This could also open up new directions in counseling, psychotherapy and the conception of trainings in different business contexts.

Lastly and most importantly, it would be beneficial for future research to enhance the effectiveness of the experimental manipulation. This could be done in various ways. First of all, more control over external factors before and during the experiment can be added. Secondly, a more direct inducement of incompleteness can be chosen. According to Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) an effective way to induce incompleteness in an experimental setting can be achieved by imposing "an experimental symbolic lack on the person" (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982, p. 42). This can be accomplished, for example, by interrupting participants amid a description of their self in one of the social roles under investigation or by showing participants how much they differ from the prototype of a good friend or family member (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). The latter suggestion could be implemented by including an ostensible self-test about whether participants are good friends or good family members. After completing the test, participants in the experimental condition could receive a false feedback

telling them that they scored low. This could lead to a more effective manipulation; even though, it must be taken into account that the participants' feeling of being deceived might be an ethical issue as well a statistical confounder. As an alternative, incompleteness can be measured without a manipulation by working with already existent incompleteness within the sample (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Including items that would ask participants about whether they already feel incomplete in one of the social roles in question could be such a measure. In this case, response biases as confounding factors must be considered.

5. Conclusion

In the present thesis, the effect of frequent role-play on the human self was investigated. Three hypotheses concerning this connection were tested and a sample of actors and a sample of non-actors were compared. In this regard, our findings support the hypothesis that actors have a higher moral identity complexity than non- actors. Evidence for the second hypothesis predicting that high self-complexity is positively correlated to less incompleteness compensation across roles could not be found. Lastly, the sample was found to be a significant predictor for moral behavior, even though an unsuccessful incompleteness manipulation leaves open questions about whether the sample can also predict incompleteness compensation behavior. In order to broaden and deepen the body of knowledge about the effect of role - play on various aspects of the human self, it would be beneficial for future research to work with a more effective inducement of incompleteness and minimize potential biases. Furthermore, it would be highly interesting to investigate other ways of operationalizing moral behavior and exploring the effect of role-play on the resilience towards pathogenic influences of life-stress.

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7. Appendices

Appendix A: Scenario 1: Friend Role, Incompleteness Condition

Bitte lies dir folgendes Szenario durch:

Du hast eine arbeitsreiche und stressige Woche hinter dir und hast endlich einen Nachmittag freie Zeit, um etwas entspanntes zu unternehmen. Du freust dich schon seit Tagen darauf und hast geplant, einen Spaziergang in der Sonne zu machen und dann zuhause gemütlich einen Film anzuschauen. Dafür hast du schon ein paar Snacks besorgt und einen Film ausgesucht.

Während du gerade dabei bist, den vielversprechenden Vorspann des Filmes anzuschauen, ruft eine gute Freundin von dir an und erzählt, dass ihr Partner gerade die Beziehung beendet hat. Umständlich schildert sie, wie unfair die Trennung verlief wie traurig sie sich gerade fühlt, und dass sie jetzt auf gar keinen Fall alleine sein möchte. Sie fragt, ob du zu ihr kommen und ihr bis zum nächsten Tag Gesellschaft leisten kannst.

Du bist etwas genervt. Deine Freundin braucht dich ständig wegen irgendwelcher Kleinigkeiten und sie ist immer so übertrieben dramatisch. So hast du dir deinen einzigen freien Nachmittag in der Woche nicht vorgestellt. Auch musst du am nächsten Morgen wieder früh raus. „Vermutlich kommen die beiden eh wieder zusammen", denkst du.

Kurzerhand erfindest du eine Ausrede und sagst, dass du „leider" nicht bei ihr vorbeikommen kannst. Daraufhin verabschiedest du dich von ihr, und schaust den Film weiter. Im Verlauf des Abends versucht dich deine Freundin noch ein paar Mal zu erreichen, obwohl du schon ganz klar gesagt hast, dass du nicht kannst. Du ignorierst ihre Anrufe und Nachrichten. „Ziemlich aufdringlich" findest du, und schaltest dein Handy schließlich in den Flugmodus.

Bitte nimm dir kurz Zeit, um dir deine Gefühle und Gedanken in dieser Situation vorzustellen.

Es ist wichtig, dass du dich gut in die Situation hineinversetzen kannst und es dir so lebhaft vorstellst, wie möglich.

Wenn du so weit bist, gib der Versuchsleitung Bescheid.

Appendix B: Scenario 1: Friend Role, Completeness Condition

Bitte lies dir folgendes Szenario durch:

> *Du hast eine stressige Woche hinter dir und hast heute einen Nachmittag freie Zeit, um etwas entspanntes zu unternehmen. Du hast geplant, einen Spaziergang in der Sonne zu machen und dann zuhause gemütlich einen Film anzuschauen. Dafür hast du schon ein paar Snacks besorgt und einen Film ausgesucht.*

> *Während du gerade dabei bist, den Film zu starten, ruft eine gute Freundin von dir an und erzählt, dass ihr Partner gerade überraschend die Beziehung beendet hat. Sie erzählt dir auch, wie unfair die Trennung verlaufen ist, und wie traurig sie sich gerade fühlt, und dass sie jetzt nicht gerne alleine wäre. Sie fragt, ob du zu ihr kommen und ihr bis zum nächsten Tag Gesellschaft leisten kannst.*

> *Du hättest zwar nicht erwartet, dass dein Nachmittag so verlaufen wird, aber du bist auch froh, dass du für deine Freundin da sein kannst. Dafür sind Freunde schließlich da. „Sie muss das wirklich nicht alleine durchstehen", denkst du. Seit Wochen schon geht es ihr nicht gut und zusammen habt ihr bisher immer alles durchgestanden. Du sagst ihr, dass du gleich vorbeikommen wirst. „Danke, ich bin so froh, dich zu haben", sagt sie. Ihr legt auf, du packst deine Tasche, und machst dich auf den Weg zu ihr.*

Bitte nimm dir kurz Zeit, um dir deine Gefühle und Gedanken in dieser Situation vorzustellen.

Es ist wichtig, dass du dich gut in die Situation hineinversetzen kannst und es dir so lebhaft vorstellst, wie möglich.

Wenn du so weit bist, gib der Versuchsleitung Bescheid.

Appendix C: Scenario 1: Family Role, Incompleteness Condition

Bitte lies dir folgendes Szenario durch:

Du hast eine arbeitsreiche und stressige Woche hinter dir und hast endlich einen Nachmittag freie Zeit, um etwas Entspanntes zu unternehmen. Du freust dich schon seit Tagen darauf und hast geplant, einen Spaziergang in der Sonne zu machen und dann zuhause gemütlich einen Film anzuschauen. Dafür hast du schon ein paar Snacks besorgt und einen Film ausgesucht.

Während du gerade dabei bist, den vielversprechenden Vorspann des Filmes anzuschauen, ruft deine Mutter an und sagt, sie glaubt, einen Virus auf dem Laptop zu haben. Sie erzählt dir umständlich, dass sie schon allerlei Maßnahmen versucht hat und dass sich ein Fenster auf dem Bildschirm einfach nicht schließen lässt und sie nicht an die Dateien in ihrer Cloud rankommt. Dramatisch schildert sie dir auch, dass jetzt wahrscheinlich alle Dateien für immer verloren seien, wenn nicht sofort und „ganz dringend" etwas unternommen werden würde.

Sie hat gegoogelt, wie man Dateien trotzdem noch wiederherstellen kann und bittet dich dringlich, dir jetzt sofort ein paar Stunden Zeit zu nehmen, um das Prozedere Schritt für Schritt mit ihr am Telefon durchzugehen.

Du bist etwas genervt. Deine Mutter fragt dich so oft wegen irgendwelcher technischen Dinge, die sie nicht versteht. Und sie ist auch immer so übertrieben dramatisch. Letztes Mal, als es „ganz dringend" war, hätte es noch Ewigkeiten warten können. So hast du dir deinen einzigen freien Nachmittag in der Woche nicht vorgestellt. „Das wird jetzt sicher wieder Stunden dauern", denkst du. „Warum kann sie sich nicht endlich einmal professionelle Hilfe für ihren PC holen? Warum muss sowas immer an mir hängen bleiben?". Auch hast du deinen Laptop schon heruntergefahren.

Kurzerhand erfindest du eine Ausrede und sagst, dass du „leider" gerade nicht helfen kannst, weil du etwas Wichtiges erledigen musst. Daraufhin verabschiedest du dich von ihr, und schaust den Film weiter. Im Verlauf des Abends versucht dich deine Mutter noch ein paar Mal zu erreichen, obwohl du schon ganz klar gesagt hast, dass du nicht kannst. Du ignorierst ihre Anrufe und Nachrichten. „Ziemlich aufdringlich" findest du, und schaltest dein Handy schließlich in den Flugmodus.

Bitte nimm dir kurz Zeit, um dir deine Gefühle und Gedanken in dieser Situation vorzustellen.

Es ist wichtig, dass du dich gut in die Situation hineinversetzen kannst und es dir so lebhaft vorstellst, wie möglich.

Wenn du so weit bist, gib der Versuchsleitung Bescheid.

Appendix D: Scenario 1: Family Role, Completeness Condition

Bitte lies dir folgendes Szenario durch:

Du hast eine arbeitsreiche und stressige Woche hinter dir und hast einen Nachmittag freie Zeit, um etwas Entspanntes zu unternehmen. Du freust dich schon seit Tagen darauf und hast geplant, einen Spaziergang in der Sonne zu machen und dann zuhause gemütlich einen Film anzuschauen. Dafür hast du schon ein paar Snacks besorgt und einen Film ausgesucht.

Während du gerade dabei bist, den Film zu starten, ruft deine Mutter an und sagt, dass sie glaubt, einen Virus auf dem Laptop zu haben. Sie erzählt dir, dass sie schon allerlei Maßnahmen versucht hat und dass sich ein Fenster auf dem Bildschirm einfach nicht schließen lässt und sie nicht an die Dateien in ihrer Cloud rankommt. Sie schildert dir auch, dass jetzt wahrscheinlich alle Dateien für immer verloren seien, wenn nicht sofort etwas unternommen werden würde.

Sie hat gegoogelt, wie man Dateien trotzdem noch wiederherstellen kann und bittet dich, dir jetzt direkt ein paar Stunden Zeit zu nehmen, um das Prozedere Schritt für Schritt mit ihr am Telefon durchzugehen.

Du hättest zwar nicht erwartet, dass dein Nachmittag so verlaufen wird, aber du bist auch froh, dass deine Mutter auch bei solchen Dingen auf dich zukommt. Du weißt, dass es ihr etwas schwerfällt, sich bei PC-Problemen zurechtzufinden. Auch hörst du in ihrer Stimme, dass sie frustriert und verzweifelt ist.

Es tut dir leid, dass sich deine Mutter in dieser Situation befindet. Sie hat bisher sorgfältig auf die Sicherheit ihres PC geachtet. „Vermutlich werde ich auch einige Stunden brauchen", denkst du. Aber so wie sich deine Mutter anhört, braucht sie jetzt definitiv eine Pause. Schließlich bist du froh, für sie da zu sein. „Später, wenn ich fertig bin, kann ich den Film immer noch weiterschauen", denkst du. Du sagst ihr, dass du ihr gerne hilfst, fährst deinen Laptop hoch, und beginnst, dich mit dem Problem auseinanderzusetzen. „Danke, ich bin so froh, dich zu haben!" sagt sie.

Bitte nimm dir kurz Zeit, um dir deine Gefühle und Gedanken in dieser Situation vorzustellen.

Es ist wichtig, dass du dich gut in die Situation hineinversetzen kannst und es dir so lebhaft vorstellst, wie möglich.

Wenn du so weit bist, gib der Versuchsleitung Bescheid.

Appendix E: Scenario 2: Family Member Role

Im Folgenden wirst du ein zweites Szenario sehen.
Dieses Szenario hat nichts mit dem ersten Szenario zu tun.
Es ist eine ganz andere, neue Situation.

Bitte lies dir folgendes Szenario aufmekrsam durch.

> *Du bist bei deinen Eltern zu Besuch. Du bist knapp bei Kasse (nicht durch eigenes Verschulden). Deine Eltern sind gut finanziell abgesichert. Heute wollten sie in den Supermarkt fahren, um Einkäufe für ein großes Familienfest zu erledigen. Als sie gerade auf dem Weg sind, erhalten sie einen wichtigen Anruf, der eine Weile lang ihre Aufmerksamkeit erfordert. Deswegen fragen sie dich, ob du an ihrer Stelle einkaufen gehen kannst. Sie geben dir die Einkaufsliste und das Geld für die Einkäufe.*

> *Als du im Supermarkt gerade dabei bist, die Einkäufe zu bezahlen kommt der Manager auf dich zu und informiert dich darüber, dass du der einhunderttausendste Kunde in dieser Filiale bist und überreicht dir einen Geldpreis in Höhe von 2 000 €. Er fragt dich auch, ob du damit einverstanden bist, dass ein Foto von dir gemacht und zusammen mit deinem Namen in der Zeitung und im Internet abgebildet wird. Er informiert dich auch darüber, dass wenn du nicht einverstanden bist, weder dein Foto noch deine Identität in der Öffentlichkeit erscheinen.*

Bitte gib bei jeder Alternative an, **wie wahrscheinlich es ist, dass du, wie folgt, reagieren würdest**. Bitte gehe davon aus, dass du nur diese 3 Handlungsoptionen hast.

1	2	3	4	5
Sehr unwahrscheinlich	Eher unwahrscheinlich	Weder noch	Eher wahrscheinlich	Sehr wahrscheinlich

__ Die 2 000 € annehmen und den Eltern nichts über den Gewinn erzählen.

__ Den Eltern nichts über den Gewinn erzählen, aber ihnen die Hälfte (1 000 €) unter einem anderen Vorwand zukommen lassen (z.B. um für einen zukünftigen Urlaub zu bezahlen, oder mit einem teuren Geschenk).

__ Die 2 000 € an die Eltern geben und darauf bestehen, dass sie es annehmen.

Appendix F: Scenario 2: Friend Role

Im Folgenden wirst du ein zweites Szenario sehen.
Dieses Szenario hat nichts mit dem ersten Szenario zu tun.
Es ist eine ganz andere, neue Situation.

Bitte lies dir folgendes Szenario aufmekrsam durch.

> *Du bist bei deinem besten Freund zu Besuch. Du bist knapp bei Kasse (nicht durch eigenes Verschulden). Dein bester Freund ist gut finanziell abgesichert. Heute wollte er in den Supermarkt fahren, um Einkäufe für euere gemeinsam organisierte große Party am Abend zu erledigen. Als er gerade auf dem Weg ist, erhält er einen wichtigen Anruf, der eine Weile lang seine Aufmerksamkeit erfordert. Deswegen fragt er dich, ob du an seiner Stelle einkaufen gehen kannst. Er gibt dir die Einkaufsliste und das Geld für die Einkäufe.*
>
> *Als du im Supermarkt gerade dabei bist, die Einkäufe zu bezahlen kommt der Manager auf dich zu und informiert dich darüber, dass du der einhunderttausendste Kunde in dieser Filiale bist und überreicht dir einen Geldpreis in Höhe von 2 000 €. Er fragt dich auch, ob du damit einverstanden bist, dass ein Foto von dir gemacht und zusammen mit deinem Namen in der Zeitung und im Internet abgebildet wird. Er informiert dich auch darüber, dass wenn du nicht einverstanden bist, weder dein Foto noch deine Identität in der Öffentlichkeit erscheinen.*

Bitte gib bei jeder Alternative an, **wie wahrscheinlich es ist, dass du, wie folgt, reagieren würdest**. Bitte gehe davon aus, dass du nur diese 3 Handlungsoptionen hast.

1	2	3	4	5
Sehr unwahrscheinlich	Eher unwahrscheinlich	Weder noch	Eher wahrscheinlich	Sehr wahrscheinlich

___ Die 2 000 € annehmen und dem besten Freund nichts über den Gewinn erzählen.

___ Dem besten Freund nichts über den Gewinn erzählen, aber ihnen die Hälfte (1 000 €) unter einem anderen Vorwand zukommen lassen (z.B. um für einen zukünftigen Urlaub zu bezahlen, oder mit einem teuren Geschenk).

___ Die 2 000 € an den besten Freund geben und darauf bestehen, dass sie es annehmen.

Appendix G: Writing Sheet for Diary Tasks

VPNr: _____

Liebes Tagebuch,

. . .