

# Self-Monitoring in Social Interaction: The Centrality of Self-Affect

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**ABSTRACT** In this review, we examine the role of self-monitoring in social interaction. We first note that the presumed ease with which self-monitors adapt to new social contexts is more apparent than real, being the self-conscious outcome of (1) high self-monitors' preference for clearly defined situations, (2) their use of scripts regarding typical situations, (3) their ability to formulate effective plans of action before social encounters, and (4) their ability to use other people's behavior as a guide. We then examine the strong motive of high self-monitors to express and evoke high levels of positive affect in their interpersonal relationships. Two recent unstructured dyadic interaction studies lead us to argue that the primary concern of high self-monitors during social interaction is to regulate their own self-affect through effective impression management. In this sense, it really is the self that is closely monitored whenever self-monitoring processes influence social interaction.

In this article, we draw upon the results of both older and newer studies to examine the correlates of individual differences in self-monitoring in social interactions. We begin by reviewing the results

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of an early dyadic interaction study by Ickes and Barnes (1977). Because this study was the first to illustrate certain themes that have characterized subsequent work in the area, an examination of its findings will help us set the stage for our review of the more recent research.

We then go on to consider what the research literature of the past 25 years has had to say about the role of self-monitoring in social interaction. We begin by noting the presumed ease with which high self-monitors seem to adapt to new social contexts. We then consider how this ease is more apparent than real, being the carefully calculated product of a number of more specific processes that require thought, effort, and emotional commitment. These processes include (1) the preference of high self-monitors for clearly defined situations, (2) their effective use of scripts regarding typical situations, (3) their ability to formulate an effective plan of action in advance of the social encounter, and (4) their ability to use other people's interaction behavior as a source of more immediate cues to further guide and refine their own words and actions. As we will see, although all of these elements were identified in the early theoretical statements of Snyder (1979, 1987), some of them have only recently been confirmed in the results of relevant empirical research.

In the next section of this article, we call attention to what we regard as a centrally important theme in this area of research: the various ways in which self-monitoring has been linked to the detection and expression of *affect* in social interaction. Citing specific examples from the literature, we note that high self-monitors have a strong motive to express and evoke a high level of *positive affect* in their relations with others, even if the positive feelings that are expressed in these interactions are at times more apparent than real.

In the final section of this article, we describe the results of two more recent studies of unstructured dyadic interaction that suggest that high self-monitors may be less concerned with the positive affect of their interaction partners than with their own positive self-affect. These findings lead us to argue—consistent with the “sociometer” theory of self-affect proposed by Leary and his colleagues (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995) and the process-oriented model of self-monitoring proposed by Hoyle and Sowards (1993)—that the primary concern of high self-monitors during social inter-

action might be to regulate their own self-affect through effective management of self in relation to other (i.e., through impression management). We conclude by suggesting that, contrary to the complaints by early critics that the construct of self-monitoring was misnamed (and should have been called “other monitoring” instead), it is indeed the self (and, more specifically, one’s own self-affect) that is closely monitored whenever self-monitoring processes influence social interaction.

### **ICKES AND BARNES'S (1977) DYADIC INTERACTION STUDY**

In what was perhaps the first in-depth study of the role of self-monitoring in dyadic interactions, Ickes and Barnes (1977) examined the initial interactions of 60 same-sex dyads (30 male-male and 30 female-female) using Ickes’s (1982, 1983) unstructured dyadic interaction paradigm. Having obtained the participants’ self-monitoring scores during an earlier pretesting, Ickes and Barnes arranged to have pairs of participants meet in the lab as strangers and interact while being unobtrusively videotaped. Following the videotaped interaction, the dyad members completed a postinteraction questionnaire in which they rated several different aspects of their interaction experience.

Although the participants had been recruited to permit their assignment into six different dyad types (HH, HM, HL, MM, ML, LL) based on high (H), moderate (M), or low (L) self-monitoring scores, most of the significant findings concerned the within-dyad rank of the dyad members as being the higher SM versus the lower SM member. With regard to their observed interaction behavior, the higher SM partners were more likely to speak first and to initiate subsequent conversation sequences following periods of silence. With regard to their perceptions of the interaction, the higher SM partners were rated by both themselves and their partners as having had a greater need to talk. In addition, the higher SM partners thought that they had been guided more by their partners’ behavior than vice versa, and they reported experiencing a significantly higher level of self-consciousness as well.

Finally, the degree of self-consciousness reported by the higher SM partners was significantly correlated with the number of periods of silence during the interaction ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ), whereas the degree

of self-consciousness reported by the lower SM partners was not ( $r = .20, p > .10$ ). Items on the postinteraction questionnaire measured the degree of self-consciousness in the other person's presence. It assessed self-consciousness in the colloquial sense of how anxiously self-aware the participants felt while interacting for the first time with a same-sex stranger.

In the results of this early study, three themes were evident that would continue to emerge in subsequent studies relating self-monitoring to social interaction. The first theme is the greater motivation of the higher SM dyad members to make their interactions "work" (as evidenced by their feeling a greater need to talk and their actually initiating the conversation sequences more frequently). The second theme is the greater self-consciousness of the higher SM dyad members during the interaction (which presumably reflected their greater concern that the interaction should "go well" and their subjective search for strategies to help ensure that it would). The third theme, implicit in the Ickes and Barnes (1977) study but more explicit in studies we will consider later, concerns the attempts of high self-monitors to make their interactions "go well," not just as an end in itself but in order to enable the high self-monitors to achieve and sustain a relatively high level of positive self-affect while they are in the company of other people.

The second of these themes is likely to be the most controversial one. Some writers (Brown, White, & Gerstein, 1989), perhaps taking Snyder's (1979, 1987) metaphor of high self-monitors as "social chameleons" too literally, have assumed that high self-monitors can alter their self-presentation in different social situations as instantly, effortlessly, and unself-consciously as real chameleons can alter their physical coloration to match their physical environments. But even as far back as 1977, when Ickes and Barnes published their first study of the role of self-monitoring in unstructured dyadic interactions, there was evidence that high self-monitors were paying a greater price for their social performances than many commentators have implied. The high self-monitors in this study not only felt more obliged to get their conversations moving and to keep them moving, but they also felt increasingly self-conscious to the extent that the periods of silence in their conversations increased. In short, they were concerned that their interaction would go well, they acted to ensure that it would, and they reported being increasingly self-conscious to the extent that it didn't.

In the rest of this article, we explore this difference between the illusion or myth created by high self-monitors (that they can adapt easily, effortlessly, and unself-consciously to almost any social situation) and the reality that underlies this illusion (that high self-monitors have to pay a conscious emotional and cognitive price in order to do what they do). But before we review the larger body of recent findings that illuminate the reality, let us first consider a couple of findings that appear to substantiate the myth.

### **STUDIES CONDUCTED DURING THE PAST 25 YEARS**

#### *Studies of Cross-Cultural Adaptation*

The apparent ease with which high self-monitors can adapt to new and very different social contexts is most dramatically illustrated by studies of cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation. Using survey methodologies, two research teams have reported that high self-monitors can adjust more readily to new cultural contexts than low self-monitors can.

In the first of these studies, Harrison, Chadwick, and Scales (1996) asked 99 American expatriates who were currently living in Europe to complete self-report measures that were designed to assess their level of general, interaction, and work adjustment to the previously foreign cultures in which they now found themselves. The researchers found that the high self-monitors in their sample reported significantly better general and interaction adjustment to their host culture than the low self-monitors did.

In a conceptually similar study, Montagiani and Giacalone (1998) asked 35 employees of a U.S.-based international corporation and 77 undergraduates in an international management course to complete an impression management scale (partially constructed with items from the Self Monitoring Scale) along with two self-report measures of cross-cultural adaptability and interaction. These researchers also found that the high impression managers in their sample reported significantly better cross-cultural adaptability than the low impression managers did.

The obvious problem with both studies, of course, is that we don't know whether high self-monitors do, in fact, adapt more easily to different cultures or whether they simply present themselves that way. Lacking any objective measure of actual cultural adaptation,

we cannot afford to take the self-presentations of these highly motivated impression managers at face value.

Beyond that, there are even better reasons to be suspicious of the naïve belief that high self-monitors can casually and effortlessly adapt to whatever new social contexts they may find themselves in. As the results of the studies reviewed in the following sections indicate, high self-monitors appear to put a lot of thought and effort into their self-presentations, and there is evidence that they have a real emotional stake in the outcomes.

### *Studies of the Preference for Clearly Defined Situations*

If high self-monitors could easily and effortlessly adapt to virtually any social situation, what compelling reason(s) would there be for them to prefer situations that are clearly defined over situations that are not? None, as far as we can see. In fact, however, high self-monitors have displayed a consistent preference for clearly defined situations over more ambiguous ones in the two studies that have directly addressed this issue.

In the first of these studies (Snyder & Gangestad, 1982, Study 1), 125 undergraduate participants were given the choice of either entering or not entering a situation that would require them to behave in an extraverted way. What determined the choice of the high self-monitors was the “clarity with which the extraverted character of the situation was defined.” In contrast, what determined the choice of the low self-monitors was the degree to which they were actually extraverted by disposition.

In the second of these studies (Snyder & Gangestad, 1982, Study 2), high and low self-monitors were assigned a situation and then allowed to specify how it could be changed to increase their willingness to enter it. The transformed situations of the high self-monitors were relatively clearly defined, in contrast to those of the low self-monitors (whose greatest concern was to make the situations better “fit” their own dispositions).

Taken together, these findings indicate that high self-monitors are not indifferent to the kinds of new situations to which they will have to adapt. Instead, they display consistent preference for clearly defined situations, and they will attempt to clarify the situations in order to make them more appealing if given the opportunity to do so.

*Studies of the Use of Scripts for Typical Social Situations*

Obviously, an important reason why high self-monitors might prefer clearly defined situations to more ambiguous ones is that clearly defined situations are more likely to have well-defined social scripts associated with them. The availability of such well-defined scripts should make it easier for high self-monitors to plan and enact a self-presentation that is appropriate to the situation in question. If the greater adaptability of high self-monitors is the result of conscious thought and effort, as we have argued, then we should expect to see evidence that high self-monitors are more likely than low self-monitors to (1) describe interactions in terms of relevant social scripts and (2) use such scripts to accomplish their interaction goals.

Consistent with this expectation, the results of two studies conducted by Douglas (1983) have revealed that high self-monitors are indeed more likely to describe interactions in terms of relevant social scripts, particularly those scripts that apply to typical, rather than atypical, interactions. Experimenters had participants view one of two videotaped interactions: One was portrayed as a typical first encounter; the second was characterized as highly atypical. After viewing the typical encounter, high self-monitors were able to generate more contextually appropriate behaviors based on situational information than low self-monitors were. No differences were found between high and low self-monitors in their responses to the atypical encounter. Although low self-monitors processed as much of the information as their counterparts, the high self-monitors used more of the information they acquired. The author concluded by suggesting that scripts are the mechanism that facilitates the social effectiveness of high self-monitors.

In a follow-up study, Douglas (1984) randomly assigned high and low self-monitors to either a participant perspective or an observer perspective and then asked them to describe either their own (participant perspective) or other people's (observer perspective) typical behavior in an initial interaction. The results indicated that, compared to the low self-monitors, the high self-monitors had a better understanding of the "scripts" that apply to initial interactions. Specifically, high self-monitors appeared to be more flexible and adept interaction partners because their scripted

understanding of contextually appropriate conversation was more extensive, more explicitly associated with interaction goals, and more contingent on sequence-specific events.

### *Studies of Planning for Social Encounters*

Viewed collectively, the studies by Douglas provide good evidence that high self-monitors have a better understanding of social scripts than low self-monitors do. But do high self-monitors also engage in more active planning and preparation of their impression management strategies than low self-monitors do?

According to the results of a study by Jordan and Roloff (1997), the answer is yes. In this study, 60 undergraduate students were randomly assigned to play either the role of a buyer or a seller in a simulated negotiation interaction. (The negotiators' level of self-monitoring was assessed using the seven-item self-presentation subscale of Lennox and Wolfe's (1984) Revised Self-Monitoring Scale.) The negotiation was structured so that the buyer and the seller could both make a profit, but the magnitude of one person's profit was clearly a (negative) function of the magnitude of the other's. Before the actual negotiation took place, the negotiators were asked to provide written plans describing in some detail exactly how they intended to achieve their profit goals.

The results revealed that the participants' self-monitoring scores were positively correlated with several aspects of their preparation to negotiate successfully, as well as with their actual success. Specifically, self-monitoring was positively correlated with the participants' prenegotiation commitment to their profit goal,  $r = .40$ ; with the degree to which they planned specific strategies of impression management,  $r = .29$ ; with the number of distinct strategies in their prenegotiation plans,  $r = .27$ ; and with the degree to which their profit goals were actually attained during the negotiation itself,  $r = .24$ .

Taken together, these findings do not support the view of high self-monitors as human "social chameleons" who effortlessly and automatically adapt to the demands of each new social situation they encounter. Instead, they support the contrasting view of high self-monitors as motivated impression managers who are willing to invest considerable thought and effort into planning the specific

strategies and forms of impression management they will use to accomplish their interaction<sup>1</sup> goals.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, there is evidence that high self-monitors are willing to invest not only thought and effort in their impression management plans; they are willing to make a monetary investment as well. In an important early study, Elliot (1979) asked high and low self-monitors to try to convince another person that they either favored the legalization of marijuana (an accurate impression) or that they opposed the legalization of marijuana (a false, or fabricated, impression). The participants expected to share a monetary bonus with the other person if she formed the intended impression of them. Elliot gave the participants a chance to improve their odds of successful impression management by allowing them to purchase information about the other person in advance of their discussion with her. He predicted and found that high self-monitors purchased significantly more information than low self-monitors and that this difference was greatest when the participant had to convey the fabricated impression that carried the greatest risk of being discredited.

### *Studies of Using Other People's Behavior as a Guide*

In addition to planning their actions more carefully before an expected social encounter begins, high self-monitors are more likely than low self-monitors to modify their actions within the interaction in order to better adapt to the changing dynamics of the situation.

1. As a general rule, high self-monitors should be more motivated than low self-monitors to try to make their interactions go well. However, there are undoubtedly exceptions to this rule. For example, high self-monitoring adolescents might be even more motivated than low self-monitoring adolescents to present an image of being autonomous, and even rebellious, in their interactions with their parents—and perhaps especially so when these interactions are witnessed by their peers. In cases such as this, the impressions that affectively matter most to the actors are not the ones that are directed at their immediate interaction partners. Instead, they are the ones that (1) are directed at the actors' peer reference group and/or (2) are needed to sustain an aspect of the actors' self-concept that has been challenged in the immediate interaction.
2. On the other hand, although Jordan and Roloff (1997) demonstrated that high self-monitors can plan their social interactions more carefully than low self-monitors, future research will be needed to determine if high self-monitors engage in this type of planning behavior habitually. We are indebted to an anonymous reviewer for adding this cautionary note.

Many studies, including the previously reviewed study by Ickes and Barnes (1977), have documented this tendency, which typically takes the form of using other people's behavior as a guide to one's own.

To study the interactions between a salesperson and a customer, Fine and Schumann (1992) systematically assigned participants who were high versus low in self-monitoring (SM) to one of these roles to create four different dyad types: (1) high SM seller/low SM customer, (2) high SM seller/high SM customer, (3) low SM seller/low SM customer, and (4) low SM seller/high SM customer. Each seller/customer pair then participated in a 30-minute business interaction in which the seller attempted to get the customer to purchase the product or service in question. Following this interaction, the sellers completed a postinteraction questionnaire in which they rated different aspects of the sales interaction, including the benefits they expected to accrue from it.

The authors predicted that high SM sellers would have the most favorable view of the interaction when they were paired with low SM customers, because the "attitude and behavior consistency of a low self-monitor provides clear direction to the high self-monitoring [seller], who seeks cues from the [customer] to guide behavior." And this is essentially what they found; high SM sellers reported significantly better outcomes in interactions with low SM customers than in interactions with high SM customers, reporting more cooperative and friendly relationships and expecting greater benefits to result. Although these results do not provide direct evidence that high SM sellers could better use the behavior of low SM customers as a guide, the indirect support they lend to the hypothesis is at least consistent with this interpretation. On the other hand, given the perfect confound between the roles of seller and customer in the Fine and Schumann (1992) study, the results of this study do not provide a compelling test of the hypothesis that high self-monitors are generally more likely to use other people's behavior as a guide than are low self-monitors.

Better evidence for the hypothesis comes instead from a study of self-disclosure reciprocity that was conducted by Schaffer, Smith, and Tomarelli (1982). In this study, the participants, whose self-monitoring scores had previously been measured, followed the lead of a confederate in disclosing personal information in four topic areas. Because the confederate always spoke first, "presenting either highly intimate or nonintimate information in response to all topics," the researchers were able to measure the extent to which

the research participants responded in kind. The results revealed that the high self-monitors were indeed more likely to use the cues provided by the confederate's self-disclosures as guides to their own. Specifically, they were more likely than the low self-monitors to reciprocate three aspects of the confederate's self-disclosures: their intimacy level, their emotionality, and their descriptive content.

It appears, then, that the self-presentations of high self-monitors are neither effortless nor unstudied, as misinterpretations of the "social chameleon" metaphor sometimes suggest. Instead, the results of studies conducted during the past 25 years reveal high self-monitors to be motivated and thoughtful impression managers who seem to be well aware that they can apply their skills best in (1) clearly defined situations that (2) enable them to use typical social scripts to (3) formulate effective action plans in advance of the social encounter and to (4) fine-tune their presentation within the interaction by using other people's behavior as a guide.

#### *The Evocation and Expression of Positive Affect in Social Interaction*

Early in the history of the research on self-monitoring, writers such as Snyder (1974, 1979) and Lippa (1978) noted the strong emphasis that high self-monitors appeared to place on the evocation and expression of positive affect in their social interactions.

Related research conducted during the past 25 years has reinforced these early observations by providing further evidence of the centrality of positive affect to the interaction style of high self-monitors. For example, Turner (1980) reported the results of two studies that related individual differences in self-monitoring to the production of humor. In the first study, the participants were challenged to write witty captions to 12 single-panel cartoons under a 5-minute time constraint and then deliver a 3-minute comedic monologue with only 30 seconds of advance preparation. An analysis of judges' ratings of these productions revealed that the cartoon captions and the impromptu monologues of the high self-monitors in the study were significantly more humorous than those of the low self-monitors. Hence, under clear demands, high self-monitors were able to produce more humorous cartoon captions and monologues in order to achieve the goals of the experiment.

In the second study, Turner created mixed-sex groups whose members discussed how best to identify and target for layoffs the

least qualified among a set of public school teachers. When the groups were asked at the end of these discussions to report on which of their members had made the most humorous remarks, the high self-monitors were named significantly more often, despite the fact that they were outnumbered in these groups by the low self-monitors. Taken together, the results from both studies suggest that high self-monitors are more adept than low self-monitors at strategically using humor and wit to evoke positive affect in others. The finding from the second study is important in its implication that high self-monitors make more humorous remarks spontaneously as well as in response to task instructions.

The results of more recent studies complement these findings by revealing that high self-monitors not only *evoke* more positive affect in others but also *express* more positive affect in their social self-presentations. For example, in a study by Levine and Feldman (1997), same-sex dyads composed of a high and a low self-monitor (all previously unacquainted) were videotaped during 10-minute interactions. By random assignment, one member of each dyad (the presenter) “was either told to get their partner to think they were competent, get their partner to like them, or were given no goal for the conversation.” When all of the videotapes had been made, 110 undergraduate judges were asked to view a collection of brief videoclips of the presenters’ behavior and rate them on several affect-relevant dimensions.

As expected, the rated happiness of the presenters was significantly greater for the high self-monitors than for the low self-monitors. The high self-monitors also displayed less negative emotion than the low self-monitors (and were also more successful in creating the desired impressions of competence and likeability in the respective assigned-goals conditions). In general, the Levine and Feldman (1997) data provide strong support for Snyder’s (1974, 1979) and Lippa’s (1978) claim that high self-monitors express more positive affect in their self-presentations than low self-monitors do, even when effective impression management is the goal of both types of individuals.

A follow-up dissertation study by Levine (1999) produced highly similar results. In this study, the participants were interviewed while playing the role of job applicants (Study 1). By random assignment, they were instructed to try to emphasize either competence or in-gratiation (or were given no such instruction) during their “job

interview.” Subsequent ratings of their performance by trained judges revealed that the high self-monitors were perceived to be significantly happier and less anxious (and also more competent and hireable) than the low self-monitors were. These results are obviously consistent with those of earlier studies in revealing the greater expression of positive affect in the self-presentations of high versus low self-monitors.<sup>3</sup>

Such expressions cannot always be taken at face value, however. For example, when Mill (1984) asked high and low self-monitors “to submit a 3-min segment of an audiotape that best demonstrated his/her empathic expression in a dyadic interaction,” raters judged the high self-monitors’ tapes to be significantly less empathic and genuine (i.e., “phonier”) than the low self-monitors’ tapes. Similarly, when Simpson, Gangestad, and Biek (1993) asked raters to evaluate the videotapes of participants who were answering questions posed by an extremely attractive opposite-sex interviewer, they found that the high self-monitors were judged as being significantly more “phony” than the low self-monitors were.<sup>4</sup>

These findings raise the possibility that the affectively positive and sympathetic self-presentations of high self-monitors may be exaggerated to such an extent that they run the risk of being perceived as insincere. Perhaps high self-monitors are so strongly motivated by the desire to evoke and express positive affect that they can “go overboard” and thereby undermine the very same positive moods and impressions that they are working so hard to sustain.

3. Of course, other personality variables can also underlie the desire for affectively positive interaction experiences, and thereby moderate the general “main effect” influence that self-monitoring exerts in this regard. For example, all high need-for-approval individuals may desire affectively positive interaction experiences, but only those who are also skilled impression managers (i.e., high self-monitors) may be able to engineer them reliably.

4. These findings also raise the intriguing question of whether high self-monitors might exhibit more pronounced displays of negative affect (e.g., righteous indignation) in situations in which such displays are normatively appropriate and desirable from an impression-management standpoint. In terms of the sociometer model described below, the display of such negative affect at the “public” level might actually help high self-monitors to better sustain the experience of positive self-affect at the “private” level.

## THE CENTRALITY OF POSITIVE SELF-AFFECT

So far, we have talked about positive self-affect as it is *intersubjectively expressed* in the public realm of one person's interaction with another. Obviously, however, positive self-affect is also *subjectively experienced* as a psychological state that occurs more or less often in each of the participants during the course of a given interaction. It is now time for us to link the public expression of positive self-affect with the private experience of positive self-affect in order to explain why this emotional state may be of central importance to the psychology of self-monitoring. The theoretical frameworks that are of greatest relevance to our argument are the sociometer theory of self-affect proposed by Leary and his colleagues (Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Leary, Haupt, Strausser, & Chokel, 1998; Leary et al., 1995) and the process-oriented model of self-monitoring proposed by Hoyle and Sowards (1993).

### *Leary's Sociometer Theory of Self-Affect*

Leary and his colleagues have proposed that transient feelings of self-affect (or "state self-esteem" in their parlance) may be best interpreted as serving the function of a sociometer:

According to *sociometer theory* . . . the self-[affect] system itself is a subjective monitor or gauge of the degree to which the individual is being included and accepted versus excluded and rejected by other people. Because inclusion in social groups and relationships is essential for physical and psychological well-being, human beings presumably evolved a fundamental motive to maintain a minimum degree of connectedness with other people—a "need to belong." (Ainsworth, 1989; Barash, 1977; Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 1290)

[A self-affect] control mechanism may have simultaneously evolved for monitoring the quality of one's relationships vis-à-vis inclusion and exclusion. (Leary et al., 1998, p. 1290, brackets ours)

When applied to self-monitoring, the sociometer view of self-affect suggests that *high self-monitors* have "sociometers" that are particularly sensitive to the apparent effectiveness of their own self-presentations.

If the self-presentation of a high self-monitor appears to have the desired effect on his or her interaction partner(s), that is, it elicits words and actions that indicate acceptance and validation of the self-presentation, then high self-monitors will experience this sense of acceptance and validation in the form of positive self-affect (although often, according to Leary et al., 1998, “at a nonconscious or preattentive level”). On the other hand, if the self-presentation of a high self-monitor does *not* have the desired effect on his or her interaction partner(s), that is, it elicits words and actions that indicate rejection and dismissal of the self-presentation, then high self-monitors will experience this sense of rejection and dismissal in the form of negative self-affect (again, often at a preattentive level).

In contrast, the sociometer view of self-affect would suggest that *low self-monitors* have sociometers that are relatively *insensitive* to the apparent effectiveness of their own self-presentations.<sup>5</sup> This view of the low self-monitor makes a great deal of sense if, as the self-monitoring literature suggests, low self-monitors devote comparatively little thought and planning to their self-presentations, simply “being themselves” instead. The reduced sensitivity of low self-monitors to the kind of impression they are creating should result in a modulated or “dampened” sociometer—one that is responsive only to fairly intense levels of social feedback (i.e., acceptance and inclusion on the one hand or rejection and exclusion on the other hand). Thus, whereas a subtle change in voice tone might be sufficient to signal acceptance to a high self-monitor (thereby resulting in a state of positive self-affect) and a lifted eyebrow might be sufficient to signal rejection (thereby resulting in a state of negative self-affect), a broad smile or an angry glare might be needed to evoke the corresponding reactions in a low self-monitor.

### *Hoyle and Sowards's Process Model of Self-Monitoring*

Like Leary's sociometer theory, Hoyle and Sowards's (1993) process model of self-monitoring also assigns an important role to self-affect

5. A plausible alternative view is that low self-monitors are just as sensitive as high self-monitors to the apparent effectiveness of their own self-presentations but use self-verification rather than social appropriateness as the standard by which they judge effectiveness. We are indebted to guest editor Christopher Leone for suggesting this possibility, as well as those expressed in footnotes 1, 3, and 4, above.

(or self-esteem). Hoyle and Sowards's view is closer to Snyder's (1979, 1987) view of self-monitoring, however, in assuming that the self-affect experienced by high self-monitors typically results from a different kind of comparison than that which influences the self-affect experienced by low self-monitors.

For high self-monitors, positive self-affect should result when they perceive their behavior as matching their current situational standard of social appropriateness, whereas negative self-affect should result when they perceive their behavior as failing to matching this standard. For low self-monitors, however, positive self-affect should result when they perceive their behavior as consistent with their baseline self-concept and their habitual style of behaving, whereas negative self-affect should result when they perceive their behavior as inconsistent with these stable aspects of self. Thus, high self-monitors should tend to experience the most positive self-affect when they are appearing to be "the right person in the right place at the right time," whereas low self-monitors should tend to experience the most positive self-affect when they are just being "my usual self."

Future research should explore these alternative views of the role of self-affect in the self-monitoring process. Is the self-affect of high self-monitors simply more reactive to the perceived social appropriateness of their behavior than is the self-affect of low self-monitors, as Leary et al.'s (1995) sociometer theory would imply? If so, then evidence for this difference would take the form of greater variability in the self-affect of high self-monitors across the interaction sequence. Or, alternatively, might the self-affect of high and low self-monitors be equally variable but linked to perceived social appropriateness only for high self-monitors and linked to perceived self-consistency only for low self-monitors, as the views of Snyder (1979) and Hoyle and Sowards (1993) would imply? These are important questions for future research to address.

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE CENTRALITY OF SELF-AFFECT IN RECENT DYADIC INTERACTION STUDIES**

For the present, however, we wish to focus not on the differences between these theoretical perspectives but on their common assumption that perceived changes in self-affect might help both high and

low self-monitors to regulate their behavior in social interactions. Indeed, we think that viewing self-affect as a likely regulating mechanism will help us understand and appreciate the significance of the findings from two of the more recent studies of the role of self-monitoring in unstructured dyadic interactions: the research studies conducted by Stinson (1989) and by Graham (1994).

### *Similarities and Differences in the Two Studies*

Both of these studies used an expanded version of the unstructured dyadic interaction paradigm that was first developed by Ickes and Barnes (1977). And, just as Ickes and Barnes had done, Stinson (1989) and Graham (1994) studied the initial interactions of same-sex dyads by unobtrusively audio- and videotaping the dyad members' spontaneous interaction behavior before asking them to respond individually to a series of postinteraction questionnaire items. However, immediately after each interaction had been videotaped (and before the dyad members were asked to complete the postinteraction questionnaire), both Stinson and Graham seated the dyad members in separate cubicles and asked them to view a separate copy of the videotape of the interaction in which they had just participated. Their task during this viewing was to use a start/pause control to stop their copy of the tape at each point during the interaction at which they remembered having had a specific thought or feeling and then to record the content of that thought or feeling on a standard coding form.

After all of the data had been collected, trained raters coded several behaviors of interest from the videotapes of the dyad members' interactions. These behaviors included the frequency and duration of the each dyad member's speaking turns, partner-directed gazes, smiles and laughter, and expressive gestures. In addition, a different set of trained raters coded the content of the specific thoughts and feelings each dyad member had reported. They then used these data to create summary measures of the percentage of each dyad member's reported thoughts and feelings that indicated a positive or negative perception of self (positive and negative self entries), a positive or negative perception of the interaction partner (positive and negative partner entries), a perception of some other person(s) (other entries), or a perception of some aspect of the environment (environment entries).

Stinson (1989) and Graham (1994) conducted their studies in the same laboratory suite, using virtually identical procedures. Their studies were also similar in that Stinson and Graham obtained self-monitoring scores for all of their participants in the general departmental pretesting that took place before any of their dyadic interaction data were collected. Another point of similarity was that half of the participants in both studies were same-sex friends, whereas the remaining participants in both studies were same-sex strangers. An important difference, however, was that the Stinson study included only pairs of male friends and pairs of male strangers, whereas the Graham study included pairs of male friends, pairs of female friends, pairs of male strangers, and pairs of female strangers.

Although neither the Stinson (1989) study nor the Graham (1994) study had originally been designed to examine the role of self-monitoring, we realized when we were asked to write this article that it would be possible to reanalyze the data from these two studies in order to examine self-monitoring as the major predictor variable. An important difference between these studies and the earlier study by Ickes and Barnes (1977) was that low, moderate, and high-SM participants had been preselected and systematically paired to create the desired dyad types in the Ickes and Barnes study, whereas the participants in the Stinson and Graham studies were more or less randomly paired with respect to their self-monitoring scores.

### *Data Analyses and Results*

We sought to turn this apparent disadvantage to an advantage by using the Actor/Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) to analyze the data for these two studies (Campbell and Kashy, 2002; Kenny, 1996). In APIM, the empirical interdependence of the dyad members' responses is first assessed and is then used in the estimation of three conceptually distinct effects: an *actor effect* (which, in this case, tests the effect of the actor's own self-monitoring score on the actor's criterion measure), a *partner effect* (which tests the effect of the partner's self-monitoring score on the actor's criterion measure), and the *actor  $\times$  partner interaction effect* (which tests whether the influence of the actor's self-monitoring score on the actor's criterion measure is significantly moderated by the partner's self-monitoring score, after controlling for the actor and partner main effects). The Satterthwaite approximation, which is used to estimate the degrees

of freedom that are available for the observed level of dyadic interdependence, arrives at a number that is somewhere between the number of dyads and the number of individuals, with the consequence that the degrees of freedom will vary across different analyses and may even be fractional (cf. Campbell & Kashy, 2002). Effect sizes were calculated using the formula for  $\hat{f}$  specified by Cohen (1988), which uses a function of the difference among means to determine practical significance.

When we used APIM to analyze all of the behavioral and thought/feeling criterion measures that were common to the two studies, we found statistically significant effects for one—and only one—of these criterion measures: the percentage of positive-self entries (i.e., the percentage of each dyad member's thoughts and feelings that indicated a positive perception of self). In the data for the Stinson (1989) study, we found that four effects were significant for this measure: (1) a main effect for the type of relationship (friends vs. strangers),  $F(1, 41.8) = 7.82, p < .01, \hat{f} = .28$ ; (2) a two-way interaction of actor's self-monitoring  $\times$  type of relationship,  $F(1, 42.6) = 8.67, p < .01, \hat{f} = .28$ ; (3) a two-way interaction of partner's self-monitoring  $\times$  type of relationship,  $F(1, 42.6) = 7.25, p < .02, \hat{f} = .25$ ; and (4) a three-way interaction of actor's self-monitoring  $\times$  partner's self-monitoring  $\times$  type of relationship,  $F(1, 41.8) = 8.13, p < .01, \hat{f} = .20$ .

Even more remarkable, in the data for the Graham (1994) study, we again found that the same four effects were significant for the percentage of positive-self entries measure: (1) a main effect for the type of relationship (friends vs. strangers),  $F(1, 54.2) = 6.18, p < .02, \hat{f} = .23$ ; (2) a two-way interaction of actor's self-monitoring  $\times$  type of relationship  $F(1, 54.6) = 7.16, p < .01, \hat{f} = .25$ ; (3) a two-way interaction of partner's self-monitoring  $\times$  type of relationship,  $F(1, 58.7) = 5.84, p < .02, \hat{f} = .23$ ; and (4) a three-way interaction of actor's self-monitoring  $\times$  partner's self-monitoring  $\times$  type of relationship,  $F(1, 57.7) = 6.76, p < .02, \hat{f} = .16$ .

Because over 20 different criterion measures were tested in each of these studies, it is exceedingly unlikely that, by chance alone, the only significant effects obtained in each study would be found for the same criterion variable (the percentage of positive self-focused thoughts and feelings) and would emerge for the same four effects. Strangely, however, when we estimated the means for these four effects and attempted to see whether they took the same form in both

the Stinson (1989) and the Graham (1994) data sets, we found that they did not. In fact, for each of the four significant effects, the pattern of means was somewhat different in the two data sets, with the ordering of two or more means being reversed for each of the four significant effects.<sup>6</sup>

### *A Proposed Interpretation*

Is there any meaningful way to interpret these results? Or do the data simply not lend themselves to a coherent interpretation? We think that a meaningful interpretation of these results can be made, but it is one that must necessarily acknowledge both the cross-study consistencies and the cross-study inconsistencies that we observed.

The cross-study consistencies, as noted earlier, are undeniably remarkable. In two conceptually similar studies conducted in the same lab by different female experimenters who used essentially the same methodology, we found significant effects for self-monitoring for one—and only one—of the more than 20 criterion variables that were measured. And this uniquely sensitive criterion measure was the *same* measure in both studies: the percentage of positive self-focused thoughts and feelings that the dyad members reported. Even more remarkable, in both studies the same four types of significant effects were found: (1) a main effect for the type of relationship (friends vs. strangers), (2) a two-way interaction of actor's self-monitoring  $\times$  type of relationship, (3) a two-way interaction of partner's self-monitoring  $\times$  type of relationship, and (4) a three-way interaction of actor's self-monitoring  $\times$  partner's self-monitoring  $\times$  type of relationship. These similarities are striking, and are so unlikely to have occurred by chance alone, that they demand a serious attempt at explanation.

On the other hand, the cross-study differences in the patterns of means for these effects must also be taken into account. The challenge, then, is not only to account for why the significant effects were specific to the percentage of self-entries measure (and why they were further specific to the four types of effects described above)

6. Our attempts to interpret the differing patterns of results across the two studies were frustrated by the fact that neither of the data patterns lent itself to an intuitively plausible and compelling interpretation. Accordingly, we present no specific interpretation of the data pattern for either study, but instead offer the more speculative and general interpretation provided below.

but also to account for why the cross-study patterns of means for these effects all differed to some extent.

Our account, which is obviously highly speculative at this point, proposes that the positive self-entries measure was indeed a uniquely sensitive measure in these studies. We further suggest that the sensitivity of this measure reflects the unique role that self-affect (and, particularly, positive self-affect) is presumed to play in the regulation of social behavior, according to the theories proposed by Leary et al. (Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Leary et al., 1998; Leary et al., 1995) and by Hoyle and Sowards (1993). Indeed, we argue that self-affect is sensitive to many co-acting sources of influence in ongoing social interaction, including (1) the type of relationship involved (e.g., friends vs. strangers), (2) the general context in which the interaction takes place (e.g., the nature of the situation as defined by the experimenter), (3) the more stable dispositional standards that presumably impose account for the relative consistency of the self-presentations of low self-monitors, and (4) the more fluctuating and unstable situational standards of social appropriateness that presumably account for the relative inconsistency of the self-presentations of high self-monitors.

We propose that all of these influences affected the self-affect of the dyad members in the Stinson (1989) and Graham (1994) studies by means of a sociometer mechanism of the type that Leary and his colleagues have described. And we further propose that the resultant effects of these combined influences on self-affect were, in turn, evident in our aggregated measure of the percentage of positive, self-focused thoughts and feelings that the dyad members reported. Accordingly, we see evidence in the positive-self entries data of the influences of the type of relationship, the actor's own level of self-monitoring, the partner's level of self-monitoring, and the moderating effects of either the actor's and/or the partner's self-monitoring on one or more of these "main effect" influences.

How would we go on to account for the cross-study differences in the patterns of the means for the four significant effects? By proposing that the two experimenters (Stinson and Graham), whether they intended to or not, conveyed a sufficiently different view of the nature of the situation that the high and low self-monitors in their studies were led to evaluate the appropriateness of their behavior in terms of somewhat different standards—standards that, in retrospect, are difficult, and perhaps impossible, to specify.

If the reader feels frustrated with the incompleteness of this highly speculative account, we must acknowledge the validity of that feeling. We are, to a large extent, working inductively here, “retrofitting” contemporary theoretical ideas to the results of studies that were not designed to test these ideas. Yet we feel that the outcome of this exercise is nonetheless important because it (1) further implicates positive self-affect as a potential sociometer mechanism, (2) directly links positive self-affect to self-monitoring influences in a way that has not been documented before, and (3) suggests that the precise nature of these linkages can be articulated in the results of future studies in which the standards for appropriate behavior can either be clearly identified or manipulated experimentally.

In other words, we think that the present findings are important because they direct us to pay far more attention to the central role that self-affect might play in the self-monitoring processes that take place during ongoing social interaction. More specifically, these findings converge with the earlier findings of Leary and his colleagues in suggesting that self-affect acts as a kind of sociometer that helps to modulate the behavior of both high and low self-monitors, though for potentially different reasons and in potentially different ways.

If these speculations turn out to be true (i.e., validated in the findings of future research), they might serve as an ironic counterpoint to the claim by some early critics that the construct of self-monitoring was misnamed (and should have been called “other monitoring” instead). For if future studies also find the direct links between self-monitoring and self-affect that emerged in the dyadic interaction studies of Stinson (1989) and Graham (1994), there might be a good empirical reason to claim that it is indeed the self (and, more specifically, one’s own self-affect) that is closely monitored whenever self-monitoring processes influence social interaction. We offer the strongest encouragement for research of this type.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The results of one of the earliest studies relating self-monitoring to social interaction (Ickes & Barnes, 1977) suggested three themes that have continued to emerge in subsequent studies. The first theme is the greater motivation of the higher SM dyad members to make their interactions “work.” The second theme is the greater self-consciousness of the higher SM dyad members during the interaction. The third

theme concerns the attempts of high self-monitors to make their interactions “go well,” not just as an end in itself but in order to enable the high self-monitors to achieve and sustain a relatively high level of positive self-affect while they are in the company of other people.

In the present article, we have reviewed the results of several studies that reinforce and elaborate these themes. Taken together, the results of all of these studies—old and new—argue against taking Snyder’s (1979, 1987) metaphor of high self-monitors as “social chameleons” too literally by assuming that high self-monitors can alter their self-presentation in different social situations as instantly, effortlessly, and unself-consciously as real chameleons can alter their physical coloration to match their physical environments.

Instead, the results of these studies have consistently revealed that high self-monitors act self-consciously to manage the impressions they create and that they devote substantial cognitive and emotional resources to their social performances. Specifically, there is evidence that high self-monitors are more concerned than low self-monitors that their interactions will go well, they are more likely to act to ensure this outcome, and they are more likely to become self-conscious when this outcome isn’t achieved. In addition, high self-monitors display a consistent preference for clearly defined situations, and, if given the opportunity, they will attempt to clarify the situations in order to make them more appealing. High self-monitors will also plan their actions more carefully before an expected social encounter begins and then modify their actions within the interaction in order to better adapt to the changing dynamics of the situation, typically by using other people’s behavior as a guide to their own.

Viewed collectively, these findings belie the image of high self-monitors as social chameleons who effortlessly and unself-consciously adapt to whatever new social situations they encounter. Instead, they support the contrasting view of high self-monitors as motivated impression managers who are willing to invest considerable thought and effort into planning the specific strategies and forms of impression management that will enable them to accomplish their interaction goals. Far from acting without any prior thought or planning, high self-monitors seem to be well aware that they can apply their skills best in (1) clearly defined situations that (2) enable them to use typical social scripts to (3) formulate effective action plans in advance of the social encounter and (4) fine-tune their presentation within the interaction by using other people’s behavior as a guide.

When the sociometer theory of Leary and his colleagues (e.g., Leary et al., 1995) is applied to self-monitoring, it suggests that high self-monitors have self-affect monitors that are particularly sensitive to the apparent situational appropriateness of their own self-presentations. If the self-presentation of a high self-monitor appears to have the desired effect on his or her interaction partner, the high self-monitor will experience a sense of acceptance and validation in the form of positive self-affect. On the other hand, if the self-presentation of a high self-monitor does not have the desired effect on his or her interaction partner, he or she will experience a sense of rejection and dismissal in the form of negative self-affect. (In contrast, the sociometers of low self-monitors are presumably less sensitive to the situational appropriateness of their behavior than to the degree to which it is typical of them, expressing what they regard as "my usual self.")

Extending the predictions of sociometer theory, we have argued that self-affect is sensitive to many co-acting sources of influence in ongoing social interaction, including (1) the type of relationship involved (e.g., friends vs. strangers), (2) the general context in which the interaction takes place (e.g., the nature of the situation as defined by the experimenter), (3) the more stable dispositional standards that presumably account for the relative consistency of the self-presentations of low self-monitors, and (4) the more fluctuating and unstable situational standards of social appropriateness that presumably account for the relative inconsistency of the self-presentations of high self-monitors.

As preliminary support for this argument, we considered the results of two of the more recent studies of the correlates of self-monitoring in unstructured dyadic interactions (Graham, 1994; Stinson, 1989). The data from both studies were consistent with our assumption that self-affect plays a central role in the processes by which self-monitoring dispositions influence behavior in ongoing social interactions. In particular, these data (1) further implicate positive self-affect as a potential sociometer mechanism, (2) directly link positive self-affect to individual differences in self-monitoring in a way that has not been documented before, and (3) suggest that the precise nature of these linkages can be articulated in the results of future studies in which the standards for appropriate behavior can either be clearly identified or experimentally manipulated.

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