

Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring is known to be a chronically stable personality construct that predicts cross-situational consistency of behavior.



High self-monitors are "social chameleons" who monitor and control their expressive behavior with the goal of producing favorable impressions on others (Snyder, 1987).

Low self-monitors are less motivated by self-presentation goals and exhibit behavioral consistency that more closely reflects their attitudes, internal states, and assessed traits (Snyder, 1987).



Background

Originally measured with a 25-item scale, Snyder & Gangestad (1986) revised the scale down to 18 items after issues of multi-dimensionality had been raised (e.g., Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980).

Ironically, many of the items removed in order to improve the internal reliability of the scale appeared to be among the most face valid (e.g., "My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs"). We fear this blind pursuit of reliability may have distracted researchers from refining the construct and exploring it as a trait expressed differentially by different people across critical interpersonal domains (e.g., Zhang, Bi, & Yu, 2010).

We believe that the assessment of self-monitoring, as it is differentially expressed in critical interpersonal domains, will lead to a Self-Monitoring Scale that disambiguates those items on the original scale that were responsible for its questionable internal consistency.

Present Investigation

The original 25-item scale was re-examined in an attempt to better understand its psychometric weaknesses.

We propose that the self-monitoring trait is expressed differentially by people within different interpersonal domains. Because the original scale did not specify these key domains, several items were rendered ambiguous to respondents who likely answered them assuming a particular domain (e.g., with intimate others, as a professional on the job). Such a scale would produce multi-modal distributions reflecting, not different populations of self-monitors (high versus low), but different populations of respondents who were applying the scale items to different interpersonal domains (e.g., at work, at home with a significant other).

Are you a high or low self-monitor?

Relaxing with a loved one?



1. My behavior with my romantic interest is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.
2. While with my romantic interest, I'm not always the person I appear to be.
3. In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what my romantic interest expects me to be rather than anything else.

At work?



1. My behavior at work is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.
2. While at work, I'm not always the person I appear to be.
3. In order to get along and be liked at work I tend to be what people expect me to be rather than anything else.

T,F,F = Low self-monitor
F,T,T = High self-monitor

Does your response to these three items differ in these situations?

Hypotheses

Respondents will answer many items differentially depending on the interpersonal domain to which they are applied.

H₁. With no domain specified people will respond to all items assuming whichever domain happens to be salient at the time, which will either pull for high self-monitoring (e.g., at work) or low self-monitoring (e.g., relaxing at home with a loved one). This will result in a bi-modal distribution of scores reflecting respondents' differing self-monitoring in their correspondingly distinct situations.

When interpersonal domains are disambiguated in to those that elicit high self-monitoring then:

H₂. A unimodal distribution of self-monitoring scores will result for each interpersonal domain.

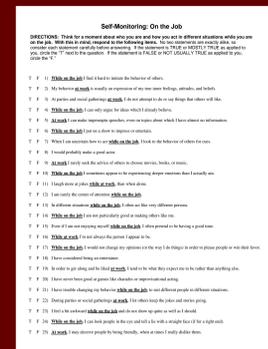
H₃. Self-monitoring will be higher for the interpersonal domain where it is beneficial for success (at work) and lower where it is not (within loving relationships).



Original Self-Monitoring Scale



Self-Monitoring Scale:
Romantic Interests



Self-Monitoring Scale:
While at Work

Method

Participants (97 females and 64 males) completed the original 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. Over several weeks they returned to the lab and completed the Self-Monitoring Scale again with different interpersonal domains in mind.

Results

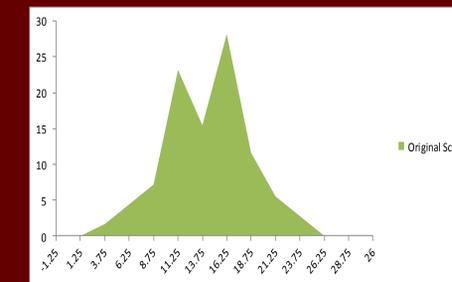


Table 1. Sex (between) by Scale Version (within) ANOVA.

SOURCE	df	SS	MS	F	p <	eta
BETWEEN						
Sex	1	199.63	199.63	7.08	.01	.25
error	111	3119.60	28.19			
WITHIN						
Version of Scale	2	179.40	89.70	14.87	.0001	.34
Version X Sex	2	11.18	5.59	0.93	n.s.	
error	222	1339.13	6.03			

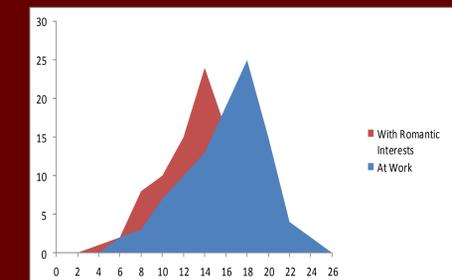


Table 2. Self-Monitoring Scores as a Function of the Specific Interpersonal Domain to which They Were Applied.

	Interpersonal Domain (Scale Version)		
	Romance	(original scale) Ambiguous	Professional
Males	14.8 ^b	15.1 ^a	16.0 ^c
Females	13.1 ^a	13.6 ^c	15.0 ^b

Note: Means with different superscripts differ significantly at the $p < .05$ level.

Discussion

Whereas the distribution of scores generated from the original 25-item scale do not appear normal, suggesting two populations of self-monitors (high and low), the distribution of scores appeared normally distributed and differed significantly in central tendency when the interpersonal domain was specified.

Overall, scores for self-monitoring were significantly higher when considering the work place than when considering behavior among romantic interests.

Conclusion

When using the self-monitoring construct to predict outcomes in specific interpersonal domains, such as relationship satisfaction and professional success, an unambiguous Self-Monitoring scale that specifies the relevant interpersonal domain should be used.