

This Week's Citation Classic™

Snyder M. Self-monitoring of expressive behavior.

J. Personal. Soc. Psychol. 30:526-37, 1974.[Lab. for Research in Social Relations, Dept. Psychology, Univ. Minnesota,
Minneapolis, MN]

A psychological construct of self-monitoring (self-observation and self-control) of expressive behavior and self-presentation was proposed, and the development of a reliable and valid measure of differences between individuals in these self-monitoring propensities was described. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI)® indicates that this paper has been cited in over 170 publications since 1974.]

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"The gaps and contradictions between the public selves that we allow other people to see and the more private self that only we are allowed to know have been the focal points of my explorations into the nature of the self. Many people, I have found, have much in common with the state of affairs described by W.H. Auden: 'The image of myself which I try to create in my own mind in order that I may love myself is very different from the image which I try to create in the minds of others in order that they may love me.'

"This creating of images in the minds of others, this acting in ways designed to control the impressions conveyed to others, is no doubt practiced to some extent by most people. But for some people it is almost a way of life. These are the people who are particularly sensitive to the ways they express and present themselves in social situations, and who possess the ability to carefully observe their own performances and to skillfully adjust these performances in order to create and maintain appearances particularly suited to their current situations. I call such persons 'high self-monitoring individuals' because of the great extent to which they are engaged in monitoring or controlling the selves that they project to others in social circumstances. In marked contrast to these individuals, low self-monitoring individuals are not so concerned with constantly assessing the social climate around them. Instead, low self-monitoring individ-

uals tend to express what they think and feel, rather than mold and tailor their self-presentations and social behavior to fit the situation.

"To identify high self-monitoring individuals and low self-monitoring individuals, I have developed a 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale that measures how concerned people are with the impressions they make on others, as well as their ability to control the impressions that they convey to others in social situations. High self-monitoring individuals, in their endorsement of Self-Monitoring Scale items, claim, 'When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues' and 'In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons.' Low self-monitoring individuals, by contrast, in their item endorsements, claim, 'My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes and beliefs' and 'I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone or win their favor.'

"In the cited article, I presented diverse sources of converging evidence for the reliability and validity of this measure of self-monitoring. This research, which had been the subject of my doctoral dissertation at Stanford University, received the Society of Experimental Social Psychology's Dissertation Award in 1973. This research also was the beginning of a long-term, and continuing, series of programmatic investigations of the ways in which self-monitoring propensities are reflected in the lives that individuals actually live. Self-monitoring propensities profoundly influence individuals' views of themselves and their social worlds, their behavior in social contexts, and the dynamics of their relationships with other people. Perhaps it is the intimate interweaving of self-monitoring processes into the fabric of social life that accounts, at least in part, for the frequent citation of this article in which the self-monitoring construct was first introduced.

"Theory and research on self-monitoring (almost 200 investigations of self-monitoring have been reported) is reviewed in a 1979 contribution to *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*.¹ Current emphases of self-monitoring researchers are the role of self-monitoring in close and intimate relationships, the influence of self-monitoring on choices of occupational and professional situations, applications of self-monitoring to concerns in clinical and counseling psychology, and investigations of the developmental origins of self-monitoring propensities."

1. Snyder M. Self-monitoring processes. *Advan. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 12:85-128, 1979.