DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 237 832 CG 017 086

AUTHOR Snyder, Mark
TITLE The Self in Action.
SPONS AGENCY National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE May 83
GRANT NSF-BNS-82-07632
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association (55th, Chicago, IL, May 5-7, 1983).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Locus of Control; *Personality Traits; Psychological Characteristics; Reference Groups; *Role Perception; *Self Concept; *Self Congruence; Social Behavior; Social Cognition; *Social Psychology; State of the Art Reviews

ABSTRACT

People tend to have both public and private selves, creating different images in their own minds, and in the minds of others. High self-monitoring individuals (SMIs), as identified through the Self Monitoring Scale, observe their public images and adapt them to produce desired effects. They tend to see themselves as pragmatic, flexible, and role-oriented. Their self-presentational skills are often used to promote smooth social interactions, to provide leadership, and to promote diplomacy. By contrast, low SMIs tend to maintain a consistent self-image regardless of the situation. They view themselves as principled, congruent, and trait or disposition-oriented. Their self-presentation reflects their mood state, personality attributes, and expressive behavior, suggesting they do well in interpersonal relationships and fields where intimacy is important. Both high and low SMIs use thier skills to create social worlds in which their personality needs can be met. In social interactions, high SMIs prefer conversations with high clarity of definition in character and role, while low SMIs prefer conversations in which they feel similar to a member of the group. In leisure activities, high SMIs choose to spend time with "specialists" in the activity, while low SMIs choose to spend time with well liked individuals. Both high and low SMIs tend to form friendships with similarly high or low individuals. Although both types of selves have advantages and disadvantages, high SMIs pay for their orientation through the continual discrepancy between their true feelings and attitudes and their actions. Future research should focus on developmental roots and societal roles of high and low SMIs. (BL)

The Self in Action

Mark Snyder

University of Minnesota

This research and the preparation of this manuscript were supported in part by National Science Foundation Grant BNS 82-07632 to Mark Snyder. The manuscript was prepared as an invited address at the annual meetings of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago, Illinois, 1983.

Correspondence with Mark Snyder should be addressed to Department of Psychology, University of Minnesota, 75 East River Road, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

Running Head: The Self

4-5-83

The Self in Action

Everyday, countless numbers of people ask themselves "Who am I?", "Who am I really?", in hope of discovering that one true self that lurks beneath the many roles they play in their lives. For some people, the discovery comes easily--they just look inward and know themselves. For other people, a sense of identity is not so readily available--many of these people turn to self-help books that offer techniques for discovering themselves, for liking themselves, and for respecting themselves. And, for still others, the road to self-understanding is a torturous one--some of these people subject themselves to year after year of painful self-examination in psycho-analysis. Yet, as difficult as the quest for knowledge of the self may be, it is the rare individual in this culture who even questions the assumption that there does exist a self that is uniquely his or her own, that distinguishes him or her from all others, that gives meaning to his or her experiences, and that gives continuity to his or her life.

Nevertheless, this assumption and other assumptions about the self--some of our most cherished assumptions about human nature--are precisely the ones that are being challenged by the discoveries of researchers who have been looking into the nature of the self. Most people assume that each person has one and only one true self. It's not always so. It appears as if some people may have not one, but <u>many</u> selves. Moreover, in spite of the widespread belief that the self is an integral feature of personality, it appears that, for many people, the self is to a great extent the product of their relationships with other people. Furthermore, conventional wisdom to the contrary, there may be striking gaps and contradictions between the public appearances and the private realities of the self.

It is these gaps and contradictions between the selves that we allow other people to see and the more private self that only we are allowed to know that have been the focal point 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. For, it is clear that some people are particularly sensitive to the ways they express and present themselves in social situations--at parties, in job interviews, at professional meetings, in circumstances of all kinds where one might choose to create and maintain an appearance. Indeed, I have found that such people have developed the ability to carefully observe their own performances and to skillfully adjust these performances when signals from others tell them that they are not having the desired effect. 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 interaction. Unlike these individuals, low self-monitoring individuals are not so concerned with constantly assessing the social climate around them. Instead, they tend to express what they think and feel, rather than mold and tailor their behavior to fit the situation.

To identify high self-monitoring individuals and low self-monitoring individuals, I have developed a 25-item measure--the 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 (identified by their relatively high scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale) claim, in their endorsement of Self-Monitoring Scale items, that:

> When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.
>
> In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons.
>
> In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what other people expect me to be rather than anything else.

Moreover, these individuals report that what they say and do need not necessarily reflect what they really think and believe. Furthermore, these individuals regard themselves as actors sufficiently skilled to convincingly adopt whatever self-presentation seems appropriate to their current situations.

Low self-monitoring individuals claim, in their endorsement of Self-Monitoring Scale items, that:

> My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes and beliefs.

I can only argue for ideas which I already believe.

I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone or win their favor.

Moreover, these individuals tend to perceive themselves as not possessing the self-presentational skills that would permit them to adopt any orientation other than "being themselves."

Self-monitoring propensities are not associated with any substantial differences in intelligence or social class. Nor are they meaningfully related to being highly anxious, to being extremely self-conscious, to being an extravert or an introvert, to having a strong need for approval, to being neurotic, to having an external or internal locus of control, to having high or low self-esteem, to having a Machiavellian view of the world, and the list goes on. But, self-monitoring propensities are profoundly reflected in something else--that something else is the lives that individuals actually live. Self-monitoring propensities influence individuals' views of the world, their behavior in social contexts, and the dynamics of their relationships with other people. The processes of self-monitoring are, I believe, the processes of the self in action.

My work on self-monitoring grew out of a long-standing fascination with explorations of reality and illusion in literature and in the theater. I was struck by the contrast between the way things often appear to be and the reality that lurks beneath the surface--on the

stage, in novels, and in people's actual lives. I wanted to know how this world of appearances in social relationships is built up and how it is maintained, as well as what its effects are on the individual personality. But, I was also interested in exploring the older, more philosophical question of whether, beneath the various images that people project to others, there is a "real" me, an essential self.

In the beginning, though, what was of most immediate concern to me was the undeniable fact that there are striking differences in the extent to which people can and do control their self-presentations: some people do it more often--and with greater skill--than others. Professional actors, as well as many of the more mercurial trial lawyers, are among the best at it. So too are many successful salespeople, diplomats, and politicians.

Of course, actors and politicians are the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, people differ in the extent to which they can and do exercise intentional control over their self-presentations. And, it is the high self-monitoring individuals among us who are particularly talented in this regard. In my experiments, I have seen high self-monitoring individuals succeed, with little apparent difficulty, in looking and sounding, in quick succession, first happy and then sad, now fearful and then angry, and so on through a long list of emotions. And, as studies by Richard Lippa have shown, they often are such polished actors that they can effectively adopt the mannerisms of a reserved, withdrawn, and introverted individual and then do an abrupt

about-face and portray, just as convincingly, a friendly, outgoing and extraverted personality. Moreover, high self-monitoring individuals, as Bob Krauss and his co-workers have shown, can manage to exploit their self-presentational skills to practice deception with considerable finesse in face-to-face interviews.

High self-monitoring individuals are also quite likely to seek out information about appropriate patterns of self-presentation. As studies by, among others, Ellen Berscheid, Gregory Elliott, E. E. Jones, and their co-workers have demonstrated, they invest considerable effort in attempting to "read" and understand others, at times, even going so far as to "purchase", at some cost to themselves, information that may aid them in choosing their self-presentations in social situations. And, they are highly responsive to such information. In social situations, they use their self-presentational abilities to appear to be precisely the type of person called for by their current circumstances.

In an experiment I conducted with Tom Monson, we allowed students to participate in group discussions that differed in their normative climates. In some groups, the norms favored independence and autonomy. In other groups, the norms favored consensus and agreement in the group. High self-monitoring individuals were keenly attentive to these differences. They conformed with the group when conformity was the most appropriate posture and did not conform when they knew that the norms of the group would favor autonomy in the face of social pressure. Low self-monitoring individuals were virtually unaffected by the differences in social setting.

What this and other demonstrations suggest is that high self-monitoring individuals literally act like different persons in different situations and with different people. It is as if they possess a repertoire of selves from which they conveniently choose the one that best fits their current surroundings. These individuals are the ones for whom William Shakespeare's claims that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players" seem most aptly taken. And, these individuals seem to be precisely the ones about whom William James theorized when he proposed, in 1890, that people have as many social selves as there are individuals or groups who recognize and who carry images of them in their minds, and that people generally show different sides of themselves to each of these different groups. Almost a century later, we now have some empirical evidence for James' proposition that people have not one, but many selves. And, not only do we have some evidence that James' theory was right, but we can also see the limits of what he said. He was only right for some people--it is only the high self-monitoring individuals of this world who have not one, but many selves.

Although high self-monitoring individuals are in large measure social chameleons, using their finely-tuned self-presentational skills to slip in and out of a wide variety of social roles, we should not automatically assume that they necessarily use these skills for deceptive or manipulative purposes. Indeed, in their relationships with friends and acquaintances, high self-monitoring individuals often are eager to put their self-monitoring abilities to use to promote smooth social interactions.

We can find some clues to this motive in the way high self-monitoring individuals react to and cope with unfamiliar and unstructured social

settings. For example, in a study done at the University of Wisconsin, William Ickes and Richard Barnes arranged for pairs of strangers to spend time together. In these meetings, as in so many other areas of their lives, high self-monitoring individuals suffered little or no shyness. Soon after meeting the other person, they took an active and controlling role in the conversation. They were inclined to talk first and to initiate subsequent conversational sequences. They also felt, and were seen by their partners to have, a greater need to talk. Their partners also viewed them as having been the more directive member of the group.

It was as if high self-monitoring individuals were particularly concerned about managing their behavior in order to create, encourage, and maintain a smooth flow of conversation. Perhaps this quality may help high self-monitoring individuals to emerge as leaders in groups, organizations, and institutions. Perhaps, too, this quality may help high self-monitoring individuals to function well in circumstances that require effective interaction, or functioning in a "go between" role, with members of two or more differing constituencies (e.g., with management and labor, with producers and consumers, in international diplomacy and negotiations, etc.).

As much as the interpersonal orientation of high self-monitoring individuals may give them the flexibility to cope with a diversity of social roles, I must hasten to point out that there are costs associated with the way they live their lives. The high self-monitoring orientation may be purchased at the cost of having their actions reflect and communicate very little about their private attitudes, feelings, and dispositions. To the extent that high self-monitoring individuals habitually choose behaviors that fit their current surroundings, they may create gaps and contradictions between their attitudes and their actions. But, it is in the domain of

correspondence between private attitudes and public behaviors that the low self-monitoring individuals of the world excel.

Low self-monitoring individuals typically enforce and display substantial consistency between their attitudes and their actions. It is possible to predict, as Bill Swann and I have done, the future behavior of low self-monitoring individuals from their present attitudes. And, it also is possible to forecast, as Beth Tanke and I have done, the attitudes that they will express in the future from their current actions. Based upon these investigations, I have constructed a composite index of the proportions of low self-monitoring individuals and high self-monitoring individuals whose attitudes and behavior were consistent or inconsistent. This index reveals that, for low self-monitoring individuals, fully 75.5% acted in accord with their attitudes and only 24.5% did not. That is, consistency between attitudes and behavior was over three times as prevalent than inconsistency. By contrast, high self-monitoring individuals were about equally likely to act in accord with their attitudes (43.8%) or to act in ways that contradicted their attitudes (56.2%).

And, beyond the domain of social attitudes, low self-monitoring individuals also display marked correspondence between mood states and self-presentation as well as between various personality attributes and corresponding expressive behaviors. Evidently, when it comes to the private realities of attitudes and dispositions versus the public realities of words and deeds, low self-monitoring individuals are rather consistent beings for whom the message "To thine own self be true" has particular meaning. They are the individuals of whom traditional assumptions about the nature of the self speak--they are the individuals whose unified, consistent sense of self is expressed in consistent fashion from circumstance to circumstance. No doubt, the willingness of low self-monitoring indi-

viduals to reveal and communicate their inner selves may serve them well in those arenas of life (such as close and intimate relationships) where the ability to disclose a "true self" may be the cement that bonds person to person.

What we have, then, is two characteristic behavioral orientations--one typical of high self-monitoring individuals and the other typical of low self-monitoring individuals. High self-monitoring individuals chronically strive to appear to be the type of person called for by each situation in which they find themselves. It is as if their actions in social contexts are behavioral answers to the question "Who does this situation want me to be and how can I be that person?". Low self-monitoring individuals habitually strive to display their own personal dispositions and attitudes in each situation in which they find themselves. It is as if their actions in social contexts are behavioral answers to the questions "Who am I and how can I be me in this situation?" What, then, does all of this imply for the sense of self and identity possessed by individuals of differing self-monitoring propensities?

It is becoming increasingly clear that high self-monitoring individuals and low self-monitoring individuals have very different ideas about what constitutes a self and that their differing notions about the nature of the self are quite well suited to the ways they live their lives. What I have come to realize is that, with their answers to the items of the Self-Monitoring Scale, individuals are revealing some very fundamental truths about their sense of self and identity. They are disclosing their personal "theories" of their own human nature, their own natures as individuals and as social beings.

High self-monitoring individuals (the ones who claim that "In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons") are telling us that they regard themselves as rather flexible and adaptive creatures who shrewdly choose selves that fit their situations. It would seem that high self-monitoring individuals are endorsing a rather pragmatic conception of self--a theory that construes their identities in terms of the specific social situations and interpersonal settings of their lives. That is, the sense of self for high self-monitoring individuals seems to be a flexible one. For these individuals, the self is whoever they appear to be at any particular moment or in any particular situation. As one high self-monitoring individual put it to me: "I am me, the me I am right here and right now." Indeed, the self-portraits of high self-monitoring individuals often are sketched in terms of the roles that they play. As one high self-monitoring individual said when asked "Who are you?": "I am a student", "I am a Post Office employee", "I am first violin in a chamber music group", "I am treasurer of the local Americans for Democratic Action."

Some strikingly different ideas about the nature of the self are harbored by low self-monitoring individuals. These individuals (the ones who claim that "I would not change my opinions [or the way I do things] in order to please someone or win their favor") seem to cherish images of themselves as rather principled beings who value congruence between "who they think they are" and "what they try to do." These low self-monitoring individuals seem to be endorsing a rather principled conception of self--a theory that construes their identities in terms of their personal characteristics and psychological attributes--a single, coherent identity that must not be compromised for other people and that

must not bend to the will of circumstance. The sense of self for these individuals seems to be an enduring and a continuing "me for all times and places." Indeed, the sense of self typically offered by low self-monitoring individuals is cast in terms of stable traits and enduring dispositions. As one low self-monitoring individual said of her "self": "I am friendly", "I am even-tempered", "I am reliable", "I am a liberal".

Moreover, the images of self possessed by low self-monitoring individuals are particularly rich and accessible ones. As Nancy Cantor and I have seen in our research on personality and cognition, low self-monitoring individuals are particularly adept and skilled at conveying detailed and informative images of their characteristic selves. Thus, low self-monitoring individuals who regard themselves as, say, creative types can handily list all of the ways in which they are creative and all of the situations that provide them with creative opportunities. High self-monitoring individuals, by the way, tend to draw a blank on tasks such as these ones. But, if they cannot report much about the ways in which they are by nature, say, creative types, they can with little difficulty tell you all of the ways in which they could create the appearance of having the very spirit of creativity. In keeping with their pragmatic views, the selves about which they know very much are the repertoires of the roles they play, and the how and the why of playing these roles. But, the self that seems unknown and elusive to them is a self composed of a stable, coherent, integrated core of attributes that they might carry with them from role to role and from situation to situation, the type of self that seems to be so intimately known and experienced by their low self-monitoring counterparts.

These conceptions of self--the pragmatic selves of high self-monitoring individuals and the principled selves of low self-monitoring individuals--

fit well with their characteristic behavioral orientations. High self-monitoring individuals conceive of themselves as rather flexible and pragmatic types, and their social behavior indeed manifests marked situation-to-situation fashioning of the selves they present to others. Low self-monitoring individuals conceive of themselves as rather consistent and principled types, and their actions typically are accurate and meaningful expressions of their own enduring attitudes, traits, and dispositions. Both types of individuals seem to be living their lives in accord with their own particular conceptions of self.

Just as it has become clear that there exist intimate bonds between the characteristic behavioral orientations and the conceptions of self of individuals low and high in self-monitoring, so, too, has it become very apparent that these ties that bind are not accidental ones. To the contrary, these links seem to be the product of motivated and strategic activities. High self-monitoring individuals are directly and actively involved in designing and constructing social worlds in which it is easy for them to be the appropriate person for each different situation in which they find themselves. And, low self-monitoring individuals, too, are directly and actively involved in designing and constructing social worlds in which it is easy for them to act in accord with their personal attitudes, stable traits, and enduring dispositions.

Prominent among the strategies they use for structuring their social worlds are strategies that involve the situations, surroundings, and circumstances within which they choose to live their lives. In the natural course of their lives, individuals typically have considerable freedom to choose where to be, when to be there, and with whom to be there. Accordingly, the

social settings and interpersonal contexts in which individuals find themselves may be partially of their own choosing. The more I have thought about the considerations that might guide these choices, the more I have come to believe that at least some of these choices may reflect features of one's personal identity. Thus, for example, the choice to enter and to spend time in situations that promote gregarious behavior (e.g., parties) may reflect one's gregarious nature; by contrast, the choice to enter and to spend time in situations that promote intellectual behaviors (e.g., seminars) may reflect one's intellectual inclinations. More generally, I would suggest that individuals may choose to enter and to spend time in situations that facilitate behavioral expression of their characteristic dispositions (e.g., competitively disposed individuals may seek situations in which to compete with other people), their attitudes (e.g., individuals with conservative political attitudes may seek situations in which to further the aims of conservative causes), and their conceptions of self (e.g., individuals who conceive of themselves as leaders may seek situations in which to assume positions of leadership). From the perspective of concerns with self-monitoring, individuals may choose to be in situations particularly conducive to enactment of the characteristic behavioral orientations and conceptions of self associated with their self-monitoring propensities.

What, then, are features of social situations particularly conducive to high self-monitoring individuals? Their characteristic behavioral orientation ought to be facilitated in interpersonal settings that provide clearly defined guidelines for them to use in fitting their self-presentations to their situations. To use a theatrical metaphor, high self-monitoring individuals ought to choose social situations and interpersonal relationships that have good scripts, scripts that give them all the stage directions

necessary to specify in great detail the roles they are to play in those situations. These "good scripts" then may provide the operating guidelines that allow high self-monitoring individuals to "become" the persons called for by their situations.

By contrast, the behavioral orientation of low self-monitoring individuals ought to be facilitated in interpersonal settings that permit them to "be themselves." Low self-monitoring individuals ought to choose, whenever possible, to enter and to spend time in social situations and interpersonal settings that provide information indicating that it will be appropriate to engage in behaviors that express their own attitudes, traits, or dispositions. In such contexts, it will be possible for low self-monitoring individuals to engage in behaviors that not only are congruent with their own personal attributes but also are appropriate to their situations.

And, the evidence suggests that, given the choice, individuals gravitate toward those social situations conducive to their self-monitoring propensities. In one demonstration, Steve Gangestad and I allowed individuals to choose to enter or not to enter a social situation that called for the expression of sociability; we told them we wanted someone to be the extravert in a group discussion. For some individuals, we defined the sociable character of the situation in clear, precise, and unambiguous fashion, to provide a detailed set of specifications of the precise instrumental and expressive behaviors by which sociability was to be displayed in the situation. For other individuals, we defined the sociable character of the situation in only the vaguest of terms, sufficient to define the situation as one that called for the display of sociability but not sufficient to specify the form that sociability would take in the situation. The difference between these two situations is not unlike the difference between

being invited to a party in which you know everything about what type of party it will be (who you will meet there, what you should wear, how you should act, what you will do there, how formal or informal the affair, will it be a lively or a subdued occasion, what others will want to talk about, whether there will be entertainment, will there be dancing, etc.) versus being invited to a party in which you know little beyond the fact that it's a party (and that, of course, is a rather vague specification because we all know just how many different types of social occasions go by the name of "party").

High self-monitoring individuals were highly responsive to this difference between the two situations. They were particularly eager to enter the situation of clearly-defined character, but relatively unwilling to enter the situation of vaguely-defined character. Low self-monitoring individuals were virtually unaffected by the clarity of the character of the situation: they were equally willing to enter the situations of clearly-defined and of vaguely-defined character.

However, the willingness of low self-monitoring individuals to enter either situation was a direct reflection of their own personalities. Extraverted low self-monitoring individuals were particularly eager to enter either sociable situation, introverted low self-monitoring individuals were distinctly unwilling to enter either of these situations that might force them to be something they are not.

Moreover, the differing bases on which individuals high and low in self-monitoring choose their situations come into play when these individuals find themselves confronted with two competing social situations, only one of which they can enter. These circumstances are not unlike

those confronting a person who, upon arrival at a party, discovers that there are two distinct groups of people involved in conversation and must decide which one to join. The two conversational groups constitute two social situations between which the party-goer must choose.

In an attempt to represent such circumstances, Al Harkness and I presented individuals with maps depicting groups formed by six people at a cocktail party. Each map depicted two separate groups of three people engaged in conversation; one, a conversational situation with high clarity of definition (three people of converging type; e.g., theatre lover, music lover, art lover), the other, a situation with low clarity of definition (three people of diverging type; e.g., a pacifist, militarist, shy person). When the time came to join one of these two conversational situations by placing themselves on the map, self-monitoring propensities came into action.

High self-monitoring individuals were clearly drawn toward the conversational situation with high clarity of definition (in which the common interests of the other members provide clearly-defined specifications of the nature of the situation and how to behave and present oneself appropriately in it) and away from the conversational situation with low clarity of definition (in which the diverging interests of the other members provide conflicting specifications of how to be an effective participant in the conversation).

By contrast, low self-monitoring individuals were relatively insensitive to the clarity of definition of the conversational groupings. Instead, they approached either situation to the extent that they regarded themselves as the types of people already present in the conversation. Thus, for example, low self-monitoring individuals who regarded themselves as

pacifists were drawn to the group containing another pacifist, even though that situation might occasion some conflict with the militarist in the group. Presumably, such choices make it easy for low self-monitoring individuals to say and do things that reflect their beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions--to be the type of person they regard themselves to be.

The importance of such choices for low self-monitoring individuals and their desires to live lives in which believing means doing is highlighted in a study in which Deb Kendzierski and I invited students to join groups devoted to discussions of issues of current concern to them. We found low self-monitoring individuals willing to accept our invitation to join these discussion groups if the topic of discussion was one that was supportive of their own personal attitudes on the issue at hand. Thus, those low self-monitoring individuals who had favorable attitudes toward affirmative action were very eager to join groups devoted to discussions of that issue, if the topic of discussion would be the benefits of affirmative action for women and minorities. By contrast, the very same group drew very few low self-monitoring individuals with unfavorable attitudes (only 1/5 as many) to be members of the group.

Whether high self-monitoring individuals accepted or declined our invitations to join these discussion groups was in no way whatsoever a reflection of their own general attitudes toward the issue on the agenda for discussion. Rather, they were most sensitive to the role appropriateness of their membership in the groups. Thus, for whatever reason, high self-monitoring individuals acted as if they regarded membership in a group concerned with the benefits of affirmative action as more clearly sex-role-appropriate for women than for men. Indeed, for high self-monitoring

individuals (but not at all for low self-monitoring individuals), women were fully twice as likely than were men to accept our invitations and join this discussion group.

The consequences of the differing choices of situations of high self-monitoring individuals and low self-monitoring individuals may be profound ones. To the extent that high self-monitoring individuals gravitate toward situations of clearly defined character and with clearly defined roles for them to play, they may provide themselves interpersonal settings ideally suited to acting out their pragmatic conceptions of self and to maintaining their characteristically chameleon-like behavioral orientation in the course of their social relationships. They will always have the good scripts they seek in their quest to be creatures of their situations. And, to the extent that low self-monitoring individuals gravitate toward situations that call for personalities or attitudes of the type possessed by them, they may provide themselves interpersonal settings ideally suited to acting upon their principled conceptions of self and to maintaining their characteristic behavioral orientation in the course of their social relationships. They will always be in circumstances that make it easy for them to "be themselves" and to show others just what attitudes and personalities they really possess.

Moreover, there are reasons to believe that these structuring activities go so far as to influence the social worlds within which these individuals actually live their lives. Indeed, it is possible to specify the population of their social worlds, the activities and dispositions of the members of their social worlds, and the nature of the social relationships that exist within their social worlds.

The social worlds of high self-monitoring individuals seem to be structured to allow them to be the different persons in different situations demanded by their pragmatic conceptions of self, to adopt identities specific to particular settings and relationships. High self-monitoring individuals seem to live in highly partitioned, differentiated, or compartmentalized social worlds in which they engage in specific activities with specific other people. Members of their social worlds appear to be chosen because they each bring out one of a wide variety of "selves" in them. Thus, high self-monitoring individuals may compartmentalize their lives, choosing certain groups of friends only for certain activities and never allowing the groups to overlap. They may play tennis with one friend, discuss politics with another, listen to music with another. And, the friends they choose to engage in these activities with may be chosen because of their particular skills in that area. Thus, the people they play tennis with will be good tennis players, the people they discuss politics with will be experts on politics, etc. In fact, the lives of high self-monitoring individuals may be so carefully partitioned that they could never give a party for all their friends at once because such an unfamiliar admixture of people and pursuits would only throw their roles into conflict.

By contrast, the social worlds of low self-monitoring individuals seem to be structured to allow them to "be themselves", to guarantee the congruence between personal attributes and social behavior demanded by their principled conceptions of self. Members of a low self-monitoring individual's social world seem to be chosen because they have personalities similar to and supportive of this low self-monitoring

individual. Low self-monitoring individuals appear to live in social worlds that are relatively homogeneous and undifferentiated in terms of population. Thus, low self-monitoring individuals may choose their friends on the basis of global affinities for them, and retain the same friends for most of their activities. Some of these people may be those who have a "best friend" with whom they engage in various leisure pursuits or those who belong to a "group" that sticks together and does almost everything as a group. They may be those who encourage social contact among well-liked individuals from different spheres of their social worlds.

These characterizations are supported by empirical "maps" of individuals' social worlds. Steve Gangestad and I recruited college undergraduates, known to be relatively high or low in self-monitoring, to participate in a study of "social networks." When they arrived for their individual appointments, we asked each one to generate a list of the "population" of his or her "social world", those people with whom he or she regularly spends time. He or she next selected the one specific social activity (e.g., "going to a fancy French restaurant", "playing tennis", "going to the ballet") that was most representative of his or her actual social life within each of several global categories of activities that the experimenter described (e.g., "going out to dinner", "competitive recreational activity", "attending live entertainment").

When this was done, we explained that each of the cells in a matrix (labeled with people he or she had listed and with activities he or she had nominated) represented engaging in a particular social activity with a particular person. For each activity, the participant then estimated how likely it would be that he or she would choose each of the people listed in the matrix as a partner for that activity, and how much he or she would enjoy engaging in each of these activities with each of these people.

To distinguish the differentiation and segmentation in the social worlds of high self-monitoring individuals from the uniformity and homogeneity in those of low self-monitoring individuals, we constructed an index reflecting the residual amount of variation present in each participant's ratings that could not be independently accounted for by differences due to targets or by differences due to activities. As predicted, high self-monitoring individuals showed significantly more non-additive variation (i.e., differentiation, partitioning, segmentation) in both their likelihood ratings and their enjoyment ratings than did low self-monitoring individuals.

Moreover, when it comes to making specific choices between competing leisure time activities (should I go to the concert with Jim or to the antique show with Anne?) high self-monitoring individuals choose to spend time with people who are "specialists" in the activity at hand and low self-monitoring individuals choose to spend time with people who are particularly well-liked as individuals. For example, when Steve Gangestad, Jeff Simpson, and I presented people with choices of the form "playing tennis with someone who is a particularly good tennis player but only average in general likeability" or "going sailing with someone who is very high in general likeability but only average in sailing ability" (of course, these choices always involved real activities and real people from their social worlds), high self-monitoring individuals chose to play tennis with the expert tennis player and low self-monitoring individuals chose to go sailing with the well-liked friend. In fact, within a set of such choices of leisure-time activities, a set which directly pitted specific expertise of the partner against general likeability of the partner, fully 4 out of 5 high self-monitoring individuals adopted the strategy of choosing

friends as activity partners on the basis of their expertise while only 1 out of 3 low self-monitoring individuals did so. Within the same set of choices, as many as two-thirds of low self-monitoring individuals chose friends as activity partners on the basis of their likeability while as few as one fifth of high self-monitoring individuals operated with this strategy.

Evidently, the social worlds within which high self-monitoring individuals live are characterized by great partitioning, differentiation, and segmentation, with friends chosen on the basis of their unique qualification for the activities and roles they will play. No doubt, segmentation makes it easier for high self-monitoring individuals to adopt different identities with different members of their social worlds, to display the many selves that they pragmatically conceive themselves to be. But in such carefully segmented social worlds, are there no particularly close friends whose relationships span diverse activity domains and involved multiple social roles? In our research on the friendship worlds of self-monitoring, Jeff Simpson, Dave Smith and I have found that, to the extent that such individuals exist in the lives of high self-monitoring individuals, they too seem to be particularly high in self-monitoring. It may be that high self-monitoring individuals are only willing to be seen in all their diversity by others whose own high self-monitoring orientation provides a personal appreciation of that diversity.

Low self-monitoring individuals appear to live in relatively more homogeneous social worlds, in which they typically engage in the majority of their social activities with primarily the same set of other well-liked individuals who are most preferred as interaction partners across a wide range

of situational contexts. Moreover, it seems that their particularly close friends tend also to be low self-monitoring individuals, who may be sources of support for their own orientation to friends and friendships. As a consequence, low self-monitoring individuals may live in social worlds well-suited to being the single coherent selves that they conceive themselves to be.

Where to next? Many places. Among them, some attempts to discover the role of self-monitoring in intimate relationships (to predict who lives with whom, who marries whom, and to predict the course of these unions on the basis of what we know about the characteristic behavioral orientations associated with self-monitoring). Also, attempts to discover the ways in which individuals' choices of occupational and professional situations might reflect their self-monitoring propensities (to see, among other things, whether low self-monitoring individuals choose occupations or professions that support enactment of behaviors that express their own true attitudes, traits, and dispositions, and whether high self-monitoring individuals may choose professions that demand portrayal of a wide range of roles and that provide opportunity to exercise their self-presentational skills).

And, to trace, at long last, the developmental roots of self-monitoring propensities to find out why some people grow up to be high in self-monitoring and others low in self-monitoring. Among the questions I ask myself are these ones. What, if any, factors in relationships between parents and children and among sibling foster the beginnings of either orientation? Is identification with role models who exemplify either orientation at work in the acquisition of self-monitoring propensities? Do some life

experiences occasion particular concern with the appropriateness of one's self-presentational behavior and hence serve as the training grounds for the high self-monitoring orientation, and other life experiences occasion particular concern with defining and expressing one's attitudes and hence serve as the breeding grounds for the low self-monitoring orientation? Is the high self-monitoring orientation an urban phenomenon, born of the diversity provided by big cities, and the low self-monitoring orientation a reflection of the greater homogeneity of small-town living? Do those who move frequently, and must repeatedly adjust to new surroundings and adapt to the new expectations of newly-made friends, become high self-monitoring individuals and those with more stable backgrounds become low self-monitoring individuals? The questions come easily. The answers to them may not come so easily. But such is the challenge of the researcher's mission.

For now, though, a few reflections on the nature of the self in action. What is important, I believe, in understanding the self is not the elusive question of whether there is a quintessential self, but rather, understanding the theories that different people adopt in defining those features of their personal attributes, their social behavior, and their interpersonal worlds that they regard as "me", and understanding the impact of these differing conceptions of self on the lives that individuals actually live. From an understanding of how conceptions of the self are reflected in patterns of social behavior, in the dynamics of social interaction and interpersonal relationships, and in the structure of the social worlds within which individuals live will come, I believe, an understanding of the self in action.

With the help of the social psychological construct of self-monitoring, it is possible to identify two theories of the self that individuals can and do adopt to account for their natures as individuals and as social beings--

the pragmatic self and the principled self. And, it is possible to identify categories of individuals who exemplify and typify these two theories of self--high self-monitoring individuals characteristically endorse the pragmatic theory of self and low self-monitoring individuals characteristically endorse the principled theory of self. For me, these two categories of individuals serve as vehicles for investigating the pragmatic self and the principled self in action--for investigating the ways in which the pragmatic self and the principled self are manifested in the cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal activities of individuals high and low in self-monitoring. And, the evidence is that the lives of high self-monitoring individuals appear to be meaningful reflections of their pragmatic sense of self, and those of low self-monitoring individuals appear to be meaningful reflections of their principled sense of self.

More generally, as a strategy for understanding the nature of the self, it is considerations such as these ones--considerations of the consequences of the self--that serve to sensitize us to the processes by which people's notions about the self are translated into and become embodied in their cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal activities. Indeed, in this realization may lie the key to understanding the true importance of the conceptions of self possessed by individuals. Conceptions of self may be important precisely because of their pervasive influences on individuals' lives. Such may be the nature of the self in action.