DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 281 133 CG 019 867

AUTHOR Larkin, Judith E.
TITLE Temperamental Correlates of Self-Monitoring.
PUB DATE 10 Apr 87
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (Arlington, VA, April 9-12, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Students; Higher Education; *Parent Attitudes; *Personality; *Personality Traits; Prosocial Behavior; Self Evaluation (Individuals)
IDENTIFIERS *Self Monitoring

ABSTRACT

Self-monitoring theory describes high self-monitors as persons who control their expressive behavior and self-presentation and who are sensitive to social cues for situationally appropriate behavior. Low self-monitors, in contrast, do not control their self-presentation and act more in response to internal dispositions than to social cues. A study was undertaken to explore the origins of self-monitoring by examining its relationship to temperament. Self-monitoring and temperament measures were completed by 36 college students; a retrospective measure of the student's temperament as a child was completed by each student's parent. The results revealed that parental retrospective ratings of a subject's sociability and activity as a young child were positively and significantly correlated with student's present self-monitoring score. Although students' self-ratings of temperament failed to predict self-monitoring, results from the Revised Dimensions of Temperament Survey (DOTS-R) revealed a strong pattern of relationships with self-monitoring. When students were classified as high or low self-monitors based on Self-Monitoring Scale scores, the dimension of temperament measured by DOTS-R correctly classified 91% of cases. These findings are encouraging for further research into the relationship between self-monitoring and temperament. (NB)

Temperamental Correlates of Self-Monitoring

Judith E. Larkin

Canisius College
Buffalo, New York

Presented at:

Eastern Psychological Association Meeting
Arlington, VA
April 10, 1987

Title of Paper: Temperamental Correlates of Self-Monitoring

Topical Session Preferences: General Personality, Personality Measurement

Problem or Major Purpose: In recent theoretical papers Snyder et al., (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986; Gangestad & Snyder, 1985) have conceptualized self-monitoring as a discrete, dichotomous, latent class variable, much like one's biological sex, which influences social behavior in complex ways. According to self-monitoring theory, one class is comprised of high self-monitors, skilled impression managers who obser and control their expressive behavior and self-presentation, and are sensitive to social cues for situationally appropriate behavior. Into the other class fall the low self-monitors who, by contrast, lack the ability or motivation to control their self-presentation, and act more in response to their own internal dispositions than out of sensitivity or concern for the public appearance of their behavior. Snyder and Gangestad further contend that self-monitoring is a latent causal personality variable that has a genetic basis.

Although numerous studies (see Snyder, 1979) have provided empirical evidence of the link between self-monitoring and social behavior, little research has directly addressed the origins of self-monitoring and the development of differences in self-monitoring propensities. However, Gangestad and Snyder (1985) have speculated that genetically explicated self-monitoring may cause small individual differences in childhood which become amplified over time resulting in large differences in adult self-monitoring behavior.

The present study attempts to explore the origins of self-monitoring by examining its relationship to temperament. Temperament was selected because it encompasses early-developing personality traits usually thought to be biological in origin, and because considerable research (see Buss & Plomin, 1975; 1984) has supported the contention that certain temperaments, in particular emotionality, activity and sociability (EAS), are inherited. Temperamental differences are evident

in early infancy, while self-monitoring behavior may not occur until children have overcome the cognitive egocentrism that prevents their understanding of the responses their behavior elicits in others. Moreover, besides appearing early, temperaments are among the most stable aspects of personality (Buss and Plomin, 1984), and some, such as sociability, even bear a resemblance to self-monitoring. For these reasons the present research was conducted to examine the relationship between self-monitoring and temperament.

In the research reported below, self-monitoring scores of college students were studied in relation to their present temperament, and also to their childhood temperament as assessed by a parent's retrospective ratings. It was expected that particularly for early-appearing sociability and activity we would find evidence of a positive correlation with adult self-monitoring. Since temperament precedes self-monitoring in development, I was particularly interested in the degree to which self-monitoring could be predicted from knowledge of temperament.

Subjects Fifty-five students taking developmental psychology completed the temperament and self-monitoring measures in class; of these, 36 voluntarily arranged to have a parent complete a short retrospective measure of the student's temperament as a child. Results are based on the data from the 36 students and parents, for whom all measures were available.

Procedure Students completed in class the EAS Temperament Survey for Adults (Buss & Plomin, 1984); the 54-item Revised Dimensions of Temperament Survey (Windle & Lerner, 1986) which is an improved measure of Thomas and Chess' (1977) basic dimensions of temperament; and the 18-item Self-Monitoring Scale (Gangestad & Snyder, 1985). They were asked to have a parent fill out a short survey and return it by mail or via the student. Instructions to parents asked them to recall what their son or daughter was like as a young child and answer the EAS Temperament Survey for Children (Buss & Plomin, 1984).

Results Simple correlations between temperament and self-monitoring score for

the three measures are presented in Table 1. Parental retrospective ratings on the EAS scale of their offspring's sociability and activity as a young child were positively and significantly correlated with the student's present self-monitoring score. Regressing the three EAS traits onto self-monitoring score accounted for 34% of the variance, $R = .58$, $F(3,31) = 5.25$, $p < .005$. However, only the independent contribution of sociability (Beta=.54) was statistically significant ($p < .0007$). (Shyness when added to the analysis did not contribute significant unique variance). Multiple regression analyses of the students' self-ratings of temperament obtained on the adult version of the EAS temperament scale failed to predict self-monitoring, ($F < 1$, ns).

Results from the Revised Dimensions of Temperament Survey (DOTS-R) revealed a strong pattern of relationships with self-monitoring. High self-monitoring is associated with higher general activity levels, higher sleep activity levels, a tendency to approach rather than withdraw from persons and situations, less regularity in sleeping behavior, higher distractibility and lower levels of persistence. Mood and flexibility correlations with self-monitoring approached significance (ps <.10). Results of a stepwise regression to predict self-monitoring score from the DOTS-R indicated that approach-withdrawal (which correlated .73 with sociability), rhythmicity in sleeping behavior, and persistence accounted for 40% of the variance in self-monitoring score, $F = 6.34$, $p < .002$.

Finally, students were classified as high or low self-monitors based on a median split of their scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale. A discriminant analysis was performed to determine whether the dimensions of temperament measured by the DOTS-R could predict self-monitoring class. Results showed that 91% of the cases were correctly classified on the basis of the DOTS-R scores.

Implications and Conclusions The results of this study are encouraging for further research into the relationship between self-monitoring and temperament. Despite the methodological shortcomings of using a parental retrospective measure of

their offspring's childhood temperament, at least two of the EAS personality traits believed to be inherited showed a strong relationship to adult self-monitoring, with early sociability emerging as a good predictor of self-monitoring. The absence of these relationships in the students' self-ratings on the EAS adult scale needs further examination; however, the most likely explanation resides in differences in the items on the two EAS scales.

The findings from the recently created DOTS-R (Windle & Lerner, 1986) are particularly exciting and warrant additional study. Among the behaviors on the DOTS-R which distinguished between high and low self-monitors in adulthood were differences in the tendency to approach or withdraw from new persons or situations, which is directly related to sociability. Also, high self-monitors were lower in persistence, and less regular in their sleeping habits, reflecting their greater attentiveness to events in their environment and lesser responsiveness to their internal dispositions. It remains now to determine whether these dimensions of temperamental individuality, assessed in early childhoood, will predict later self-monitoring class. This task should be made easier by the fact that the DOTS-R comes in three nearly identical versions for use across the age span. A longitudinal study involving direct observation of infant and early childhood behavior followed by the tracking of self-monitoring behavior into adulthood would obviously be superior to parental retrospective ratings. Also, the development of an infant and children's version of the self-monitoring scale would be a desirable addition to research in this area.

This study has related self-monitoring to aspects of temperament, some of which may be genetic in origin. These dimensions of temperamental individuality encompass behaviors which do appear, and should be assessed, early in life---long before self-monitoring behavior, as it is currently conceptualized, begins to appear. It may well be that there is a temperamental basis for the proposed genetic origins of self-monitoring. The unique variance contributed by genetically explicated self-monitoring remains to be discovered.

REFERENCES

Buss, A. H, & Plomin, R. (1975) A temperament theory of personality development. New York: Wiley Interscience.

Buss, A. H., & Plomin, R. (1984) Early developing personality traits. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Gangestad, S., & Snyder, M. (1985) "To carve nature at its joints": On the existence of discrete classes in personality. Psychological Review, 92, 317-349.

Snyder, M. (1979). Self-monitoring processes. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), Advances in experimental social psychology (Vol. 12, pp. 85-128). New York: Academic Press.

Snyder, M. & Gangestad, S. (1986). On the nature of self-monitoring: Matters of assessment, matters of validity. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51, 125-139.

Thomas, A., & Chess, S. (1977). Temperament and development. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Windle, M., & Lerner, R.M. (1986). Reassessing the dimensions of temperamental individuality across the life span: The revised dimensions of temperament survey (DOTS-R). Journal of Adolescent Research, 1, 213-230.

TABLE 1

Pearson Correlations Between Measures of Temperament and Self-Monitoring

Student Ratings						Parent Ratings		
DOTS-R			EAS - Adult			EAS - Child		
	r	p		r	p		r	p
Activity Level-General	.32	.03	Emotionality	-.11	ns	Emotionality	-.26	.07
Activity Level-Sleep	.31	.03	Activity	.10	ns	Activity	.32	.03
Approach-Withdrawal	.29	.05	Sociability	.29	.04	Sociability	.54	.001
Flexibility-Rigidity	.24	.08	Shyness	.09	ns	Shyness	-.52	.001
Mood	.23	.10	Anger	-.12	ns			
Rhythmicity-Sleep	-.41	.007						
Rhythmicity-Eating	-.19	ns						
Rhythmicity-Daily Habits	-.11	ns						
Distractibility	-.28	.05						
Persistence	-.38	.01						