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ABSTRACT

Symbolic interactionists have proposed that one's self-concept is primarily affected by interactions with others to the extent and in the way one perceives those interactions. According to this perspective, an individual's global self-esteem is largely the result of subjective "reflected appraisals" of others' evaluations of him rather than their actual evaluations of him. This study hypothesizes that if the symbolic interactionist position is veridical, then high self-monitoring participants would be more attuned to the behavioral and emotional manifestations of parental discipline than are individuals low in self-monitoring. Participants (N=222) were college students who were asked to appraise their own self-esteem and their parents' disciplinary style as well as to complete Synder's Self-Monitoring scale. Results showed the self-esteem of college students to be inversely related to parental authoritarianism and directly related to parental authoritativeness. The strength of these relationships was much greater for high self-monitors than for low self-monitors. The results suggest that "looking glass" explanations for self-esteem may not have universal cogency, but may be far more germane to high self-monitors' self-esteem development than to that of low self-monitors. (ABL)

Self-Monitoring and the Looking Glass Self

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ABSTRACT: *Employing a symbolic interactionist methodology, the self-esteem of college students was found to be inversely related to parental authoritarianism and directly related to parental authoritativeness. The strength of these relationships was much greater for high self-monitors than for low self-monitors. The results suggest that "looking glass" (Cooley, 1902) explanations for self-esteem may not have universal cogency, but may be far more germane to high self-monitors' self-esteem development than to that of low self-monitors.*

Symbolic interactionists (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934) have proposed that one's self-concept is primarily effected by interactions with others to the extent and in the way that one perceives those interactions. Several researchers (e.g., Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Quarantelli & Cooper, 1966; Reeder, Donohue, & Biblarz, 1960; Schafer & Keith, 1985) have confirmed that our "imputed sentiments" (Cooley, 1902) of others' appraisals of us are more closely related to our self-concepts than are their actual appraisals of us. According to this perspective therefore, an individual's global self-esteem is largely the result of subjective "reflected appraisals" (Rosenberg, 1979) of others' evaluations of him or her rather than their actual evaluations of him or her.

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It has been proposed by Snyder (1974, 1987) that people differ in the extent to which they are sensitive to important cues provided by others. Those individuals who are especially sensitive to external cues (i.e., high self-monitors) attempt to gather as much information from others as they can in their search for appropriate behavior. Low self-monitors, on the other hand, tend to be less sensitive to information provided by those around them. Research has indicated that high self-monitors are better able to "read" the emotional states of others (Brandt, Miller, & Hocking, 1980), that they are better able to ascertain the truthfulness of others' behaviors (Geizer, Rarick, & Soldow, 1977), and that they pay more attention to the information provided by others and they make more inferences based upon that information (Berscheid, Graziano, Monson, & Dermer, 1976; Jones & Baumeister, 1976).

Considering the symbolic interactionist perspective in view of Snyder's self-monitoring construct, one might expect that not all individuals are equally attuned to the evaluative cues provided by others. To be more specific, one might expect high self-monitors to be more sensitive than low self-monitors to information from which self-esteem assessments might be derived. One such potential source of information is parental discipline.

The relationship between parental disciplinary practices and adolescents' self-esteem has repeatedly been investigated, but often with conflicting results. For example, Bachman (1982) reported that strict disciplinary practices by both mothers and fathers were inversely related to boys' self-esteem. However, Gecas (197) and Gecas and Schwalbe (1986) found that parental discipline was largely unrelated to adolescents' self-esteem; the lone exception in these studies was a small significant relationship between fathers' discipline and

the adolescents' self-esteem. Furthermore, Coopersmith (1967) found higher levels of self-esteem among boys whose parents employed greater disciplinary strictness. Finally, Peterson, Southworth, and Peters (1983) reported a positive relationship between both boys' and girls' self-esteem and a maternal discipline that was principled and firm, but a negative relationship between the adolescents' self-esteem and their mothers' discipline when that authority was exercised in a coercive and restrictive manner.

In an effort to provide greater clarity to our understanding of the relationship between parental discipline and self-esteem, Buri, Louiselle, Misukanis, and Mueller (in press) developed the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) based upon Baumrind's (1971) three prototypes of parental authority: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting. Buri et al. reported that college students' self-esteem was unrelated to parental permissiveness, inversely related to authoritarian parenting, and directly related to parental authoritativeness. These findings were interpreted as offering a feasible extrication of the conflicting findings cited above.

In the present study, college-aged participants were asked to appraise their own self-esteem and their parents' disciplinary style as well as to complete Snyder's (1974) Self-Monitoring Scale. It is hypothesized that if the symbolic interactionist position (i.e., that one's self-esteem is more dependent upon one's perception of others' evaluations of him or her than upon their actual evaluations) is veridical, then high self-monitoring participants are more attuned to the behavioral and emotional manifestations of parental discipline than are individuals low in self-monitoring. More specifically, it is hypothesized that the relationships between self-esteem and parental authority are stronger

for high self-monitors than for low self-monitors.

Method

Subjects

The participants were 222 students (mean age = 18.9 years) from a co-educational liberal arts college in the upper Midwest who agreed to participate in the study as part of a psychology course requirement.

Materials and Procedure

Each participant was asked to complete four questionnaires: (a) the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, (b) a mother's PAQ, (c) a father's PAQ, and (d) the Self-Monitoring Scale. The order in which these questionnaires were presented to the participants was randomized. Each of the research participants was told that we were investigating factors that are believed to influence self-esteem in adolescents. They were instructed that there were no right or wrong answers, and therefore they should respond to each item as honestly as possible. They were also encouraged not to spend too much time on any one item since we were interested in their first reaction to each statement. They were also reminded of the importance of responding to every item in the questionnaires.

Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965) consists of 100 self-descriptive Likert-type items. Fitts reported a test-retest reliability for the Total Positive Self-Esteem Score of $r = .92$.

PAQ. Concepts and items for the PAQ (Buri et al., in press) were derived from Baumrind's (1971) parental authority prototypes. The PAQ consists of 30 5-point Likert items, and each participant completed two forms of the questionnaire, one for the mother's authority and one for the father's authority.

Examples of items from the permissive scale are: "My mother/father has always felt that what children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what their parents might want"; and "As I was growing up my mother/father allowed me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from her/him." Examples from the authoritarian scale are: "As I was growing up my mother/father did not allow me to question any decision that she/he had made"; and "My mother/father has always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to." Examples from the authoritative scale are: "My mother/father has always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable"; and "My mother/father had clear standards of behavior for the children in our home as I was growing up, but she/he was willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family."

The following test-retest reliabilities (N = 85) and Cronbach (1951) coefficient alpha values (N = 156), respectively, have been derived: r = .81 and r_{tt} = .75 for mother's permissiveness; r = .86 and r_{tt} = .85 for mother's authoritarianism; r = .78 and r_{tt} .82 for mother's authoritativeness; r = .77 and r_{tt} = .74 for father's permissiveness; r = .85 and r_{tt} = .87 for father's authoritarianism; and r = .92 and r_{tt} = .85 for father's authoritativeness.

Self-Monitoring Scale. The Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974) is a 25-item true-false scale with a reported Kuder-Richardson 20 reliability of .70 and a test-retest reliability of .83.

Results

The intercorrelations among the variables for all participants combined are presented in Table 1. Consistent with the results reported by Buri et al. (in press), the following variables were found to significantly correlate with self-

Table 1

Intercorrelations for All Participants and R^2 Values When Regressing Each Independent Variable on the Other Six

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R^2
1. SE	1.000							
2. PER-M	+.046							.407
3. TAR-M	-.379***	-.361***						.551
4. TAT-M	+.319***	+.128	-.478***					.430
5. PER-F	+.092	+.178***	-.307**	+.066				.522
6. TAR-F	-.313***	-.257*	+.600***	-.258*	-.524***			.653
7. TAT-F	+.409***	+.040	-.329***	+.511***	+.158	-.553***		.505
8. SM	-.128	+.042	+.114	-.027	+.132	+.025	-.071	.052

Note. SE = Self-Esteem; PER-M = Mother's Permissiveness; TAR-M = Mother's Authoritarianism; TAT-M = Mother's Authoritativeness; PER-F = Father's Permissiveness; TAR-F = Father's Authoritarianism; TAT-F = Father's Authoritativeness; SM = Self-Monitoring.

*$p < .01$ **$p < .005$ ***$p < .0005$

esteem: mother's authoritarianism ($r = -.379$, $p < .0005$), mother's authoritativeness ($r = +.319$, $p < .0005$), father's authoritarianism ($r = -.313$, $p < .0005$), and father's authoritativeness ($r = +.409$, $p < .0005$). In the last column of Table 1, the R^2s resulting from regressing each of the independent variables on the other six are presented. While these R^2 values for the authority variables are sizeable (which is to be expected since the independent variable measures

were not independently derived in the first place), they remain a long way from unity, thus indicating that multicollinearity does not pose a serious threat to these data. Therefore hierarchical regressions of self-esteem on the authoritarian and authoritative variables were completed, a summary of which is presented in Table 2. Together the authority variables explained 24.1% ($p < .0001$) of the variance in self-esteem; the adjusted R^2 was .213.

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for All Participants

	Dependent variable		
	Self-esteem		
Independent variables	$F(1,213)$	p	Partial r^2
TAT-F	46.93	<.0001	.167
TAR-M	18.79	<.001	.067
TAT-M	.29	*ns*	.001
TAR-F	.26	*ns*	.001
TAT-F x TAR-M	.59	*ns*	.002
TAT-F x TAT-M	.74	*ns*	.003
TAR-F x TAR-M	.05	*ns*	.000
TAR-F x TAT-M	.06	*ns*	.000

Note. TAT-F = Father's Authoritativeness; TAR-M = Mother's Authoritarianism; TAT-M = Mother's Authoritativeness; TAR-F = Father's Authoritarianism.

Further analyses were completed for the high self-monitors (i.e., those participants scoring 13 or higher on the Self-Monitoring Scale; n = 103) and the low self-monitors (i.e., those scoring 11 or lower on the Self-Monitoring

Scale; n = 89) separately. The intercorrelations among the variables for the high self-monitors, as well as the R^2s resulting from regressing each of the independent variables on the other five, are presented in Table 3a. Similar values for the low self-monitors are presented in Table 3b.

Table 3a

Intercorrelations for High Self-Monitors and R^2 Values When Regressing Each Independent Variable on the Other Five

	1	2	3	4	5	6	R^2
1. SE	1.000						
2. PER-M	+.052						.419
3. TAR-M	-.459***	-.380***					.466
4. TAT-M	+.425***	-.002	-.359***				.457
5. PER-F	+.066	+.588***	-.275**	-.103			.483
6. TAR-F	-.289**	-.239*	+.527***	-.157	-.436***		.555
7. TAT-F	+.459***	-.070	-.205*	+.573***	-.064	-.430***	.515

Table 3b

Intercorrelations for Low Self-Monitors and R^2 Values When Regressing Each Independent Variable on the Other Five

	1	2	3	4	5	6	R^2
1. SE	1.000						
2. PER-M	+.073						.441
3. TAR-M	-.174	-.404***					.577
4. TAT-M	+.234*	+.218*	-.515***				.419
5. PER-F	+.162	+.597***	-.371***	+.187			.571
6. TAR-F	-.257*	-.290**	+.594***	-.243*	-.600***		.693
7. TAT-F	+.322**	+.160	-.344**	+.436***	+.370***	-.620***	.508

Note. SE = Self-Esteem; PER-M = Mother's Permissiveness; TAR-M = Mother's Authoritarianism; TAT-M = Mother's Authoritativeness; PER-F = Father's Permissiveness; TAR-F = Father's Authoritarianism; TAT-F = Father's Authoritativeness.

*p < .025 **p < .005 ***p < .0005

Table 4a

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for High Self-Monitors

	Dependent variable		
	Self-esteem		
Independent variables	$F(1,94)$	p	Partial r^2
TAR-M	32.67	<.0001	.211
TAT-F	21.53	<.0001	.139
TAT-M	1.23	*ns*	.008
TAR-F	.78	*ns*	.005
TAR-M x TAT-F	1.72	*ns*	.011
TAR-M x TAR-F	1.76	*ns*	.011
TAT-M x TAT-F	.20	*ns*	.001
TAT-M x TAR-F	.85	*ns*	.005

Table 4b

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Low Self-Monitors

	Dependent variable		
	Self-esteem		
Independent variables	$F(1,80)$	p	Partial r^2
TAT-F	9.94	<.005	.104
TAR-F	.51	*ns*	.005
TAT-M	1.10	*ns*	.012
TAR-M	.07	*ns*	.001
TAT-F x TAT-M	2.20	*ns*	.023
TAT-F x TAR-M	.14	*ns*	.002
TAR-F x TAT-M	.38	*ns*	.004
TAR-F x TAR-M	1.49	*ns*	.016

Note. TAR-M = Mother's Authoritarianism; TAT-F = Father's Authoritativeness; TAT-M = Mother's Authoritativeness; TAR-F = Father's Authoritarianism.

An inspection of the bivariate correlations of self-esteem with the authoritarianism and authoritativeness variables for the high self-monitors vs. the low self-monitors revealed the following: $r = -.459$ vs. $r = -.174$ ($z = 2.16$, $p < .02$) for mother's authoritarianism, $r = +.425$ vs. $r = +.234$ ($z = 1.45$, $p < .08$) for mother's authoritativeness, $r = -.289$ vs. $r = -.257$ ($z = .26$, $p > .35$) for father's authoritarianism, and $r = +.459$ vs. $r = +.322$ ($z = 1.11$, $p < .14$) for father's authoritativeness. The cumulative effects of these differences can readily be seen in the summaries of hierarchical regression analyses provided in Table 4a (for the high self-monitors) and in Table 4b (for the low self-monitors). The authority variables were associated with 39.3% ($p < .0001$) of the variance in self-esteem for the high self-monitors; however, for the low self-monitoring participants, the authority variables explained only 16.5% ($p > .05$) of the variance in self-esteem.

Discussion

As reported by Buri et al. (in press), authoritarian and authoritative parental disciplinary practices were inversely and directly related to adolescents' self-esteem, respectively. The results of the present study offer a replication of these findings and further suggest this authoritarian vs. authoritative distinction as a legitimate means of extricating descrepancies that have emerged in research investigating parental discipline and self-esteem. Strong negative parental evaluations of adolescents' personal worth seem to be conveyed through authoritarian discipline whereas strong positive evaluations seem to be conveyed through authoritative discipline. More important in the present study, however, are the implications of the relationships between authoritarian and authoritative parental practices and self-esteem for

high vs. low self-monitors.

Snyder (1987) has reported considerable evidence that high self-monitors are much more sensitive to the cues provided by others than are low self-monitors. As suggested above, one source of evaluative cues about the self appears to be parental discipline. Based upon Snyder's self-monitoring construct, one would expect high self-monitors to be more sensitive to authoritarian and authoritative parental cues than would low self-monitors. More specifically, one would expect authoritarianism and authoritativeness to be more strongly related to self-esteem for high self-monitors than for low self-monitors. And this is just what was found in the present study; as the data summaries in Table 4 indicate, nearly 40% of the variance in self-esteem was associated with the authority variables for the high self-monitors, whereas only 17% of the variance in self-esteem was associated with these variables for the low self-monitors. These results suggest the Cooley's (1902) concept of the "looking glass" self may actually be more accurate for some individuals than for others. Specifically, high self-monitors may well be more dependent upon the "looking glass" in their deduced self-assessments than are low self-monitors. This is not meant to imply that high self-monitors are more accurate than low self-monitors in their evaluations of others' appraisals of them, but simply that they may derive their own self-concept through assessments of others' sentiments more than do low self-monitors. Whether high self-monitors are more accurate in their appraisals of others' evaluative sentiments toward them needs to be determined by more objective measurement of the independent variables of interest. This might prove to be a promising area of investigation for symbolic interactionist researchers.

An interesting speculation deriving from the present results might be proffered as a possible explanation for the fact that studies investigating the effects of parental variables upon children's development seldom yield unequivocal results. For example, Anthony (1987) and Cohler (1987) have cited cases of children who have experienced difficult familial circumstances and yet have fared quite well in their developmental progress. These "resilient" or "invulnerable" individuals may have benefitted from the moderating effects of low self-monitoring. On the other hand, those individuals who seem to suffer the most debilitating effects of a poor familial environment may be high self-monitors and therefore may be more highly attuned to the deleterious emotional and behavioral patterns within the home. If this type of speculation is accurate, then it would be important to note that the converse would also be true. Low self-monitoring children from stable and beneficent home environments would profit less from those environments than would high self-monitors. Clearly this is merely speculation at this point, but it suggests an intriguing avenue of investigation into a potential cognitive moderating variable of familial experience.

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