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**Self-Monitoring Personality Trait at Work:**

**An Integrative Narrative Review and Future Research Directions**

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## Abstract

In this narrative review, we provide an overview of the self-monitoring literature as it applies to the workplace context. Our starting point to the review is a meta-analysis of self-monitoring literature by Day, Schleicher, Unckless, and Hiller (2002). After providing an overview of the theoretical basis of self-monitoring and its measurement, we present a summary of the broad literature on self-monitoring to examine the implications of self-monitoring for employees and organizations. Based on our review, we identify the main outcomes of self-monitoring as well as findings of the literature treating self-monitoring as a moderator. We provide evidence that self-monitoring has potential downsides which would benefit from further investigation. We conclude our review by identifying important potential future research directions.

*Keywords:* self-monitoring, personality, leadership, social networks.

Self-monitoring refers to an individual's observation, regulation, and control of his or her expressive behavior and self-presentation guided by social and situational cues (Snyder, 1974; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). In the more than four decades following its introduction to the literature, self-monitoring emerged as an important and relevant trait in understanding individual behavior, finding application in fields as diverse as educational psychology, health psychology, marketing, and management. Because self-monitoring captures interpersonal variation in the degree to which individual behavior reflects interpersonal cues as opposed to inner affective states, self-monitoring has been treated both as a predictor of specific employee behaviors (e.g., Tasselli, Kilduff, & Menges, 2015), and as a moderator of the effects of other traits (Barrick, Parks, & Mount, 2005), contributing to a finer grained understanding of individual behaviors.

In a meta-analysis of 136 studies, Day, Schleicher, Unckless, and Hiller (2002) examined the relationship between self-monitoring trait and workplace attitudes and behaviors, exploring its implications for performance, advancement, leadership, organizational commitment, and role stress. Their conclusion was that the self-monitoring trait "has relevance (i.e., validity) in organizations. Researchers and theorists are encouraged to further consider how self-monitoring helps shape who succeeds and leads in organizations." (Day et al., 2002, p. 398). Since then, and following a theory piece by Day and Schleicher (2006) in which they elaborated on these findings, research on self-monitoring has gained traction in relation to work-related outcomes.

Given that it has been 16 years since the last comprehensive review, we believe the time has come to take stock of whether the promise of self-monitoring trait to shed light on performance, leadership, and other workplace outcomes has been fulfilled and what avenues of research remain to be pursued. Such a review is timely. For example, as *Figure 1* shows, over 75% of the literature in this area have been published after Day and colleagues' (2002)

meta-analysis. Therefore, our first intended contribution is to provide a systematic and up-to-date review of the literature since then, identifying key themes, summarizing the main findings, while also identifying understudied areas. Our goal is to integrate and make sense of the findings and evaluate implications for organizational behavior.

Further, a potentially problematic trend in self-monitoring research is that studies have tended to emphasize the benefits of self-monitoring while paying relatively little attention to emerging evidence on the potential *dark effects* or undesired outcomes. Despite the predominantly positive view of self-monitoring in the literature, evidence also exists on the ways in which this trait has negative or undesirable outcomes for individuals and organizations. We use the term “dark effects” to refer to potential risks to health, happiness, and effectiveness of the individual in multiple domains of life, including one’s job and career. For instance, self-monitoring has been related to lower levels of consistency between one’s attitudes and behaviors (Allen, Weeks, & Moffitt, 2005; Jawahar, 2001) or the tendency to make biased decisions (Jawahar & Mattsson, 2005). Thus, a second contribution is to juxtapose existing evidence relating to its potential bright and dark effects.

Finally, after reviewing the literature, we focus on key future research directions. Thus, a third contribution of our review is to highlight areas which deserve additional research attention. We identify areas where self-monitoring is a relevant and strategically important addition to models of individual behavior, particularly in the areas of leadership, team dynamics, employee selection, and newcomer adjustment. We also pose questions relating to the nature of self-monitoring which have a bearing on future research designs, including an increased recognition of the multidimensional nature of self-monitoring. Our goal is to formulate research directions involving fuller integration of self-monitoring into models of workplace behavior.

Our starting point was to conduct a joint keyword search of PsycINFO database using the search terms “self-monitoring” AND “personality” without specifying a starting date, which revealed 1,334 articles published as of November 1, 2018. We further restricted the search parameters to between 2000 to our search date, yielding 873 articles. Our review focused on studies conducted within work settings as well as in other disciplines with possible implications for organizational psychology and behavior. We reviewed articles written since 2000, with the intent to identify articles which may not have been published at the time of the most recent meta-analysis on the topic (Day et al., 2002). As a result, 761 articles were deemed not work-related and a total of 112 articles were identified for inclusion in our review, 99 of which were empirical papers which became the corpus of our integrative review. It is worth noting that we do not aim to present an explicitly chronological history of the self-monitoring concept. Instead, we summarize the major findings of the studies that followed Day et al.’s (2002) meta-analysis to highlight what we learned since then, what questions need further research attention, and how self-monitoring may be further integrated into studies within organizational contexts.

### **The Conceptualization and Theory of Self-Monitoring**

Snyder (1974, 1979) was the first to propose, conceptualize, and define the self-monitoring personality trait. Self-monitoring theory is a theory of expressive control. It examines variations in the extent to which individuals are *willing* and *able* to control their public expressions, and shape their public appearances. Specifically, self-monitoring captures one’s willingness and adeptness at modifying their social images in line with situational demands, and behaving in line with social role expectations of others. Therefore, a number of researchers have likened the individuals who are higher on self-monitoring to *chameleons* (e.g., Bedeian & Day, 2004; Blakely, Andrews, & Fuller, 2003; Kilduff & Day, 1994), or called them *social pragmatists* (e.g., Day & Schleicher, 2006; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000),

who craft their self-presentations to fit the requirements of the situation and context (Snyder, 1979). By contrast, those lower on self-monitoring are characterized as reflecting their authentic, true selves regardless of the context. Expressive behavior of those lower on self-monitoring is assumed to be rooted in their motivation to authentically reflect their inner-selves, emotions, and dispositions, and to establish their relationships on the basis of earnestness, sincerity, and equal status (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Individuals who are lower on self-monitoring are therefore portrayed by some as *principled* (Day & Kilduff, 2003; Day & Schleicher, 2006).

Gangestad and Snyder (2000) maintained that self-monitoring is characterized by a “status enhancement motive,” or a desire to achieve and enhance status within social structures. There is empirical support for this argument. For example, in a series of studies, Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, and Ames (2006) showed correlations ranging between .25 and .31 with need for social status, and supported the hypothesis that self-monitoring was related to social status as mediated by perceived generosity. Similarly, Highhouse, Brooks, and Wang (2016) found a correlation of .28 between self-monitoring and status-seeking. Interestingly, even though self-monitoring is related to status seeking, its relationship with need for approval follows a different pattern. Specifically, self-monitoring and need for social approval showed correlations ranging between -.21 (Sosik & Dinger, 2007) to .09 (Sendjaya, Pekerti, Härtel, Hirst, & Butarbutar, 2016) in organizational samples. In other words, there seems to be a distinction between seeking *approval* versus *status and standing* in relation to self-monitoring.

By setting forth these assumptions, self-monitoring theory proposes a boundary condition and offers an answer to a fundamental dichotomy in psychology: whether behavior is a function of the individual’s personality traits or of the environmental context. Self-monitoring theory’s answer to this question is that it will depend on one’s self-monitoring

(Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Because self-monitoring captures the degree to which individuals act on social cues, the behavior of high self-monitors will be less dependent on personality, attitudes, or values, and instead be a function of situational cues that signal desired social image. In contrast, those lower on self-monitoring do not necessarily adjust their behaviors according to environmental cues, which makes their behaviors more of a function of their personality traits, attitudes, or values.

In a recent conceptual article, Dalal and colleagues (2014) propose a novel use of self-monitoring in the operationalization of the *personality strength* construct. These authors define personality strength as the level of the within-person variability in behaviors across situations, and contend that self-monitoring can be used to operationalize personality strength. Thus, they argue that higher scores in self-monitoring indicate a situation where personality has weak effects on behavior, while lower self-monitoring scores signify the potential for strong personality effects. The predictability of behaviors by personality traits should be greater for those who are lower on self-monitoring compared to those who are at the higher end, as the former are expected to display less variation in translating their traits and attitudes into subsequent behavior. It is worth noting that self-monitoring is not related to within-person fluctuations in personality itself (Lievens, Lang, De Fruyt, Corstjens, & Van de Vijver, 2018).

### **The Measurement and Psychometric Properties of Self-Monitoring Scales**

The measurement and psychometric properties of self-monitoring has evolved over the last 45 years. Going back to the beginning, Snyder (1974) developed the first scale of self-monitoring, consisting of 25 true-false items and labeled the *Self-Monitoring Scale (SMS)*. While the scale was popular, stimulated research in this area, and constituted the dominant approach to measuring self-monitoring, it has not been without criticisms. For example, Briggs, Cheek, and Buss (1980) argued that, for the original SMS, there was a



misalignment between the items and the construct of self-monitoring, indicating construct contamination concerns. Evidence supporting these concerns comes from the fact that the alphas for the original scale were below the recommended .70 minimum for newly developed scales (Nunnally, 1978). Finally, concerns regarding the nomological network of the original scale and its sub-factors also exist (Briggs et al., 1980; Wilmot, 2015).

Addressing such concerns, Lennox and Wolfe (1984) subsequently developed a revised scale designed to tap this construct, called the *Revised Self-Monitoring Scale (RSMS)*. They created this scale after working through the full-scale development process. The two subscales of RSMS, *ability to modify self-presentation* and *sensitivity to expressive behavior of others*, were correlated at .22. Finally, in response to the earlier criticisms and the Lennox and Wolfe scale, Snyder and Gangestad (1986) revised and reduced the 25-item SMS into a shorter scale of 18 items with stronger psychometric properties such as an alpha above .70. This revised scale is referred to as the *SMS-Reduced*. The goal of this revision was to develop a unidimensional scale, but Briggs and Cheek (1988) found this scale to be two-dimensional as well, consisting of *public performance* and *other-directedness* dimensions. The SMS-Reduced scale has also been criticized because it represents a shift from self-presentation concerns to extraverted self-presentation (John, Cheek, & Klohnen, 1996). As can be seen, there is a lack of agreement regarding exactly which subscales best conceptually and empirically capture self-monitoring.

Table 1 shows that both Snyder and Gangestad's (1986) and Lennox and Wolfe's (1984) scales have gained traction since 2000, unlike the distribution of scales in the Day et al. (2002) meta-analysis. For example, there was a marked decrease in the use of SMS (Snyder, 1974) from 51% to 18% from the papers reviewed up to 2002 until our current review. While decisions regarding which scale to use should be made with the goals of the study in mind, we do not recommend the use of the original Snyder (1974) for the reasons

noted. The Lennox and Wolfe's (1984) scale provides a suitable option as it is the shortest with 13 items compared to 18 in the Snyder and Gangestad (1986) scale. Further, the former scale has superior reliability compared to SMS and SMS-Reduced (.81 compared to .71 and .73, as noted in Day et al., 2002). Given its brevity and reliability, at first glance, Lennox and Wolfe's scale offers advantages. It is also important to note that the majority of the research on self-monitoring utilized a True-False scoring format, which had lower reliability relative to using a Likert type response format (.72 as opposed to .77, as noted in Day et al., 2002).

At the same time, in management and organizational behavior literatures, self-monitoring has been typically treated as unidimensional. However, there is emerging evidence that when dimensions are analyzed separately, they are not significantly correlated (e.g., Pillow, Hale, Crabtree, & Hinojosa, 2017; Wilmot, 2015), suggesting that self-monitoring actually consists of two orthogonal dimensions with different nomological networks. Future research would benefit from considering the multidimensional nature of this construct. Treating a multidimensional scale as if it were unidimensional is likely to negatively affect reliability and result in loss of valuable information. As a result, researchers have been working on developing scales accounting for the multidimensional nature of self-monitoring (e.g., Wilmot, Kostal, Stillwell, & Kosinski, 2017). We will revisit this issue in our future research directions section.

### **Self-Monitoring and Other Personality Traits and Competencies**

Several studies conducted in organizational settings as well as general population samples included measures of self-monitoring along with other traits, allowing us to examine intercorrelations. For example, self-monitoring has been positively related to goal orientation (Cellar et al., 2011), emotional intelligence (Livingstone & Day, 2005; Schutte et al., 2001), self-awareness (Kulas & Finkelstein, 2007), and workaholism (Mudrack & Naughton, 2001), and was not significantly related to interpersonal competence (Graf & Harland, 2005). Where

there is a significant relationship, these studies report correlations ranging between .32 – .59 between self-monitoring and other personality traits, justifying studying it separately from other traits.

Interestingly, only a few studies examined the relationship between self-monitoring and the Five-Factor Model of personality. Bono and Vey (2007) reported that self-monitoring is not significantly related to neuroticism but is significantly and positively correlated with extraversion ( $r = .27$ ). Wolf, Spinath, Riemann, and Angleitner (2009) showed that, out of the big five traits, extraversion ( $r = .54$ ) and openness ( $r = .40$ ) share the largest correlations with self-monitoring. Further, Wilmot, DeYoung, Stillwell, and Kosinski (2016) showed that self-monitoring was positively related to five-factor personality at the meta-trait level (higher order combinations of multiple big five traits), especially with the higher order factor representing extraversion and openness. These studies suggest that self-monitoring is distinct from, but shares conceptual space with, extraversion and openness.

### **Examination of Outcomes of Self-Monitoring**

In this section, we review key points that can be gleaned from studies that examine the relationship between self-monitoring and outcomes relevant to the work context, summarized in Figure 2. We primarily review studies on working adults, but we also include studies conducted in non-organizational settings if the outcome has relevance to workplace behaviors. Our starting point is the meta-analysis conducted by Day and colleagues (2002). The conclusion of their study was that, presumably owing to adeptness at reading social cues, adjusting behaviors, and using impression management, self-monitoring was positively related to job involvement, emergence as a leader, performance, and advancement.

#### **Self-Monitoring and Leadership Emergence**

Day et al. (2002) had identified 22 studies linking self-monitoring to leadership emergence. Given the theoretical relevance of self-monitoring to status enhancement,

leadership emergence remained an important outcome of interest. With rare exceptions (e.g., Kilduff, Mehra, Gioia, & Borgatti, 2017), research on this topic took place in laboratory settings and corroborated the positive association between self-monitoring scores and emerging as leaders (e.g., Eby, Cader, & Noble, 2003). These effects remained even controlling for other traits, namely intelligence, dominance, and self-efficacy (Foti & Hauenstein, 2007). In fact, in one study self-monitoring was the sole significant predictor, with dominance and self-efficacy having no bearing on leadership emergence (Turetgen, Unsal, & Erdem, 2008). These studies add to the evidence from Day et al. (2002) that self-monitoring is related to leadership emergence.

### **Self-Monitoring and Performance**

The Day et al. (2002) meta-analysis reported a sample-weighted correlation of .09 between self-monitoring and performance based on 28 studies, and .15 when performance ratings as opposed to objective metrics were used. Studies since then continued to show a positive link to performance (Deeter-Schmelz & Sojka, 2007), while also investigating mediators. For instance, Wang, Hu, and Dong (2015) showed that the self-monitoring - performance relationship was mediated by leader-member exchange quality and, to a lesser extent, by employee network diversity. In a meta-analysis of personality and social networks, Fang and colleagues (2015) confirmed that self-monitoring effects on performance were mediated by network centrality. In other words, there is some evidence that self-monitoring may provide advantages while developing strategic relationships, with implications for one's performance.

At the same time, studies contradicting the assumption that self-monitoring benefits job performance also began to emerge. As a case in point, Semadar, Robins, and Ferris (2006) failed to identify a significant relationship with supervisor-rated managerial job performance. Ozelik (2013) showed that self-monitoring was positively related to surface

acting (modifying the expression of emotions without modifying one's actual emotions) and that surface acting had negative effects on role performance. Miller and Cardy (2000) showed that self-monitoring was not related to peer or supervisor ratings. Finally, the benefits may also be situational: Moser and Galais (2007) showed that self-monitoring was positively related to the rate of new sales, but this relationship held only for employees with less tenure.

A possible explanation is that self-monitoring is related to figuring out more quickly what they need to do to sell, an advantage which disappears over time when others catch up.

Studies also began to examine the link between self-monitoring and contextual performance (i.e., discretionary employee behaviors involving the helping and cooperating elements of organizational citizenship behaviors), as organizational citizenship behaviors may reflect an impression management motivation (Bolino, Long, & Turnley, 2016). The empirical evidence suggests that self-monitoring is related to interpersonal helping (Blakely et al., 2003; Toegel, Anand, & Kilduff, 2007). There is also some evidence that context matters. First, sometimes the context motivates or enables *everyone* to demonstrate contextual performance, resulting in self-monitoring effects only where the context is least encouraging. For example, Bizzi and Soda (2011) showed that self-monitoring was related to contextual performance only when autonomy was low. Second, self-monitoring may be related to avoiding discretionary behaviors when chances of misunderstandings are high. As a case in point, Caligiuri and Day (2000) demonstrated that self-monitoring was negatively associated with supervisor-rated contextual performance when there was a rater-ratee national dissimilarity. Finally, the type of contextual behavior makes a difference. Self-monitoring was positively related to challenging and change-oriented voice behaviors only when individuals have achieved strong social standing, for instance, in the form of higher performance ratings (Fuller, Barnett, Hester, Relyea, & Frey, 2007). Because voice is

inherently risky, self-monitoring may be positively related to a tendency to engage in voice only when their image is not at risk.

### **Self-Monitoring and Social Networks**

A new direction researchers focused on following Day et al. (2002) was investigating self-monitoring in relation to social networks, and their findings point to the key role played by self-monitoring with respect to network structure. Existing studies consistently show that self-monitoring predicts holding advantageous network positions (Tasselli et al. 2015). For example, self-monitoring is positively associated with centrality in friendship and workflow networks (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001). Further, self-monitoring is positively related to structural holes, or knowing a greater number of direct acquaintances who themselves are unconnected to each other (Oh & Kilduff, 2008). Self-monitors tend to make more new friends, engage in network brokerage, and make the most of the structural holes in the aftermath of an organizational change (Sasovova, Mehra, Borgatti, & Schippers, 2010).

At the same time, emerging evidence shows that social network benefits associated with self-monitoring may be situational. Kleinbaum, Jordan, and Audia (2015) reasoned that “chameleon-like” tendencies associated with higher levels of self-monitoring may come across as self-serving and inauthentic, and hence others’ perceived empathy for the focal person should be a boundary condition amplifying the positive relationship between self-monitoring and social network benefits. They found that others’ perceptions of one’s empathy bolstered self-monitoring’s effect on network brokerage, formation of new ties and new structural holes, and the friendship reciprocity in dyads. Evidence also shows that social network benefits do not come without liabilities. Mehra and Schenkel (2008) showed that self-monitoring was positively related to role conflict, because it increased the likelihood of occupying boundary-spanning positions, which inherently entails competing role expectations from different role senders.

## **Self-Monitoring and Impression Management**

Given that self-monitoring is associated with a desire to portray images that will improve one's social status, self-monitoring has been extensively examined as an antecedent of impression management, or the efforts of an individual to create, change, manage, and sustain his or her social image (Bolino et al., 2016). Specifically, self-monitoring has been positively related to political skills (Ferris et al., 2005) and achieving desired outcomes through effective use of impression management tactics (e.g., Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Turnley & Bolino, 2001). A meta-analysis of 39 studies on influence tactics showed that self-monitoring is positively associated with the use of specific influence tactics, such as ingratiation, building coalitions, appealing to higher authority, assertiveness, and rationality (Barbuto & Moss, 2006).

## **Self-Monitoring and the Employee Selection Process**

Self-monitoring is thought to be advantageous in an employee selection context where making quick and favorable impressions and signaling fit remain important. Bauer and Truxillo (2000) found that self-monitoring of temporary employees was associated with selection success, but only for those who went through a prolonged (twelve months), as opposed to a short (three months) probationary period. This finding hints that those who are higher in self-monitoring may be more resilient in the face of long-term scrutiny, owing to their ability to act upon contextual cues and to fit in. Higgins and Judge (2004) found that self-monitoring favorably affected recruiters' overall fit perceptions through applicants' use of influence tactics (ingratiation and self-promotion impression management tactics). Recruiters' overall fit perceptions, in turn, led to hiring recommendations and eventually job offers.

Do high self-monitors achieve success in a selection setting because they are less honest? Studies suggest that self-monitoring is related to deception (for an exception, see Weiss and Feldman, 2006). For instance, Levashina and Campion (2007) investigated whether the interview faking behavior scale is positively correlated with self-monitoring in a student sample. Their findings corroborated a positive significant correlation for almost all dimensions of the interview faking behavior scale except one that taps into lying. Similarly, in a lab study of faking during job interviews, Hogue, Levashina, and Hang (2013) concluded that self-monitoring was related to intentions toward mild, but not severe faking. Highhouse et al. (2016) showed that self-monitoring predicted fabricating one's credentials as part of the job search. Finally, self-monitoring was negatively associated with integrity ratings in assessment centers (Leugnerova, Vaculik, & Prochazka, 2016). To summarize, self-monitoring is positively related to deception, which may partly explain their success in interviews.

It is also clear that self-monitoring is positively related to favorable opinions by decision makers and comfort in social settings. These findings may also explain the relation between self-monitoring and success in interviews. In a mock interview setting, self-monitoring was related to being judged less anxious, more competent, and happier (Levine & Feldman, 2002). In a unique study, Hofmann (2006) examined the psycho-physiological correlates of self-monitoring such as heart rate, skin conductance levels, and EEG readings of the brain while the participants were anticipating having to give an impromptu speech to strangers. Self-monitoring was negatively related to physical arousal in this study.

Nevertheless, there are also studies questioning the greater ability of self-monitors to achieve selection success. A study in the recruitment context showed that candidate self-monitoring was positively related to selection interview ratings only when the rater's extraversion was high, but the relationship was negative when the rater's extraversion was



low (Lazar, Kravetz, & Zinger, 2004). In other words, the relationship between self-monitoring and selection success may at least partly depend on the raters' personality.

### **Self-Monitoring as a Moderator**

In addition to studies examining the link between self-monitoring and its outcomes, self-monitoring has been frequently studied as a moderator in diverse literatures including consumer behavior, developmental psychology, and environmental psychology, along with studies of organizational behavior. A review of these studies is useful to fully understanding how self-monitoring affects employee attitudes and behaviors and the associated boundary conditions of such relationships. As we discuss next, understanding the moderator role of self-monitoring necessitates adopting a nuanced perspective.

### **Self-Monitoring Attenuates the Effects of Personality, Values, and Attitudes**

Because it is related to the tendency to read a situation to determine what types of behaviors are appropriate and modify one's actions accordingly, self-monitoring should weaken the relation between personality, values, attitudes, and behaviors. As a result, self-monitoring is expected to be a boundary condition of personal determinants of behaviors. Several studies support this prediction. First, there is some evidence that self-monitoring attenuates the relation between personality and behaviors. The relationship between personality and behavioral outcomes such as job performance, speaking up, and interpersonal behaviors is strongest for those lower on self-monitoring (Barrick et al., 2005; Oh, Charlier, Mount, & Berry, 2014; Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003). Second, studies support the argument that self-monitoring weakens the intention-behavior link. For example, the relationship between intentions and behaviors, such as turnover intentions and actual turnover (Allen et al., 2005), intention to take a health assessment and actually agreeing to take an assessment (Spangenberg & Sprott, 2006), and intention to use and actual use of technology (Lin, 2008) was strongest for those with lower levels of self-monitoring. Finally, self-monitoring

attenuates the relation between attitudes and behaviors. Examples include Jawahar (2001) who showed that the relation between attitudes toward performance appraisal accuracy and actual accuracy was significant and positive for only those who were lower on self-monitoring, and Bande Vilela, Varela González, and Fernández Ferrín's (2010) study demonstrating that the link between job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors was stronger for those lower on self-monitoring. Cumulatively, these studies support the proposition that personality, attitudes, and reported intentions have more predictive power for behaviors of individuals who score lower on self-monitoring.

At the same time, there are exceptions to studies that show that self-monitoring attenuates the effects of personal drivers of behavior. In the Oh et al. (2014) study, results showed that self-monitoring attenuated personality-behavior relationship only for behaviors that took place in public settings and subject to more interpersonal scrutiny, whereas the reverse was observed for behavior that took place in private settings. In addition to the public/private nature of behavior, considering self-monitoring along with other personality traits may increase our understanding as well. Chang, Rosen, Siemieniec, and Johnson (2012) predicted that self-monitoring would moderate the relationship between perceived organizational politics and organizational citizenship behaviors. Their results showed no two-way interaction, but the addition of conscientiousness resulted in a significant three-way interaction, with politics reducing citizenship behaviors only for highly conscientious, low self-monitoring employees.

### **Self-Monitoring Attenuates the Importance of Self-Context Discrepancies**

Self-monitoring is associated with a tendency to modify one's behavior to fit the demands of the situation. As a result, the ability to behave in an authentic manner, express their values, and achieve consistency between their values and actions may carry greater importance for those who are lower on self-monitoring. In contrast, those with higher self-

monitoring may engage in chameleon-like behavior with greater ease, suggesting that they may have greater tolerance for behaviors that do not reflect their authentic selves.

As a case in point, Gonnerman, Parker, Lavine, and Huff (2000) showed in a student sample that the discrepancy between one's ideal and actual self was a stronger predictor of depressed and anxious mood for those who are lower on self-monitoring. In contrast, the discrepancy between *others'* ideal and their actual self was a stronger predictor of anxiety and depression for those who are higher on self-monitoring. In other words, while threats to self-consistency was cause for anxiety for low self-monitors, what was more anxiety inducing for those higher on self-monitoring was threats to self-presentation. Similarly, self-monitoring determined the importance of fitting in. Bande Vilela et al. (2010) showed that self-monitoring attenuated the relationship between person-organization fit and job satisfaction.

There is also evidence that inconsistency and variability in their behaviors is more damaging to the morale of those who are lower on self-monitoring. Scott, Barnes, and Wagner (2012) conducted a study on bus drivers, utilizing Experience Sampling Methodology (ESM), to examine variability in surface and deep acting (displaying emotions appropriate to the situation either by changing how it is displayed or by how it is experienced). They showed that for individuals higher on self-monitoring, there was a weaker relation between surface acting variability, job satisfaction, and withdrawal, probably because those higher on self-monitoring were more used to inconsistent displays of emotions and were therefore harmed less by variability in surface acting.

### **Self-Monitoring Exacerbates the Effects of Social Influences**

Because those higher on self-monitoring present themselves in a way aligned with what the situation demands, we expect the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of high self-monitors to show greater sensitivity to the social context. In other words, while personality

and attitudes are the primary drivers of behaviors for low self-monitors, high self-monitors should show greater contextual influences over their behaviors and expressed attitudes.

When the context introduces social presentation concerns, those higher on this trait are more likely to choose a strategy or behavior that will make them look best. De Cremer, Snyder, and Dewitte (2001) conducted an experiment where they showed that high self-monitors engaged in cooperative decision making even under low trust when social accountability was high (as the decisions participants made were going to be communicated to others in the experiment as opposed to being kept anonymous). Similarly, a recent study by Lam, Walter, and Huang (2017) showed that emotional exhaustion triggers abusive behavior among supervisors lower on self-monitoring and who are faced with an underperforming subordinate, suggesting that self-monitoring may help supervisors suppress their aggression arising from emotional exhaustion. In a review paper on proactivity at work, Grant and Ashford (2008) proposed that, when the situation involves accountability for the individual, self-monitoring will be related to proactive behavior, because of a desire to create favorable impressions on others. Efron and Miller (2015) and Wijn and van den Bos (2010) conducted experiments and showed that those higher on self-monitoring chose a persuasive communication style that would make them look less hypocritical and less self-serving when negative evaluations by others was a realistic possibility.

In addition to choosing behaviors that would yield the most favorable consequences given the context, those higher on self-monitoring also show a preference for contexts that allow them to display their skills in self-presentation. Chapman, Uggerslev, and Webster (2003) examined the relation between interview medium (face-to-face, over the phone) and applicant reactions, and showed that those with higher self-monitoring showed the most positive reactions to face to face interviews, which is the medium that allows them to control their image the most.

Numerous studies showed that self-monitoring determines the strength of the relationship between environmental and situational antecedents, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, factors such as conflict perceptions (Chi & Yang, 2015), span of control of the manager (Cady & Fandt, 2001), coworker social network size (Fang & Shaw, 2009), managerial role (Bryant, Mitcham, Araiza, & Leung, 2011), and contextual factors (Tziner, Murphy, Cleveland, Yavo, & Hayoon, 2008) had stronger relations with attitudinal and behavioral outcomes for those higher on self-monitoring.

Interestingly, this greater sensitivity to social influences on the part of those higher on self-monitoring may sometimes manifest itself as a greater ability to cope with social threats or even turn social threats into an advantage. For example, Inzlicht, Aronson, Good, and McKay (2006) showed that being a minority (e.g., female student taking a math test with male confederates) resulted in higher performance for those higher on self-monitoring, while it hurt the performance of those lower on self-monitoring. In other words, those higher on self-monitoring were able to reverse the “stereotype threat” disadvantage, or the pressure one feels when they are at risk of confirming others’ negative stereotypes of them. The researchers contended that individuals with higher levels of self-monitoring may frame a situation where they are a public minority as a challenge rather than a threat, leading to their higher performance. In a similar vein, Van Quaquebeke (2016) showed that decline in span of control over time was related to increases in paranoid cognitions only for low self-monitors, again indicating that high self-monitors may be better at regulating their emotions when confronted with negative events.

### **Self-Monitoring Amplifies Social Capital Mobilization**

In their work, Fang, Duffy, and Shaw (2010) position self-monitoring as a contingency that impacts social capital mobilization. Drawing on Mehra and colleagues’ research (2001), these authors propose that self-monitoring is related to occupying

structurally advantageous bridging positions in social networks, and also the ability to capitalize on the advantages of such positions. In the particular case of organizational socialization process, Fang et al. (2010) further propose that newcomers high in self-monitoring will be especially open to and adept at recognizing critical situational and interpersonal cues about the organizational network structure and resources (i.e., social capital) and, being more responsive to these cues, will be able to mobilize the social capital at their disposal, setting themselves up for a smooth adjustment and subsequent career success. Empirically testing these arguments would add value to the literature by identifying the role of self-monitoring in social capital mobilization.

### **The Exceptions: Studies Not Finding Support for Stronger Situational Effects**

Interestingly, there are also a large number of studies that found little to no support for the expectation that, for high self-monitors, the context should be a stronger driver of behavior. These studies with unexpected results indicate the importance of carefully considering the criterion variable and the degree to which the outcome is socially desirable in and of itself. Self-monitoring may, under some circumstances, strengthen the role of the context on behaviors, particularly when the behavior is discretionary and it is not immediately clear whether it will have impression management implications. In contrast, if the behavior in question has implications for the way the individual appears to others, then situational effects may be weaker for those higher on self-monitoring. Instead, self-monitoring may have main effects on the behavior, regardless of the situational contingency.

For example, in Huang and Ryan's (2011) ESM-based study examining the degree to which situational contingencies predicted personality states, self-monitoring did not emerge as a moderator. Instead, self-monitoring had a main effect on state conscientiousness.

Customer service context may place particularly high demands for displaying conscientiousness, nullifying the effects of contextual variations. Chun, Choi, and Moon

(2014) expected that high self-monitors would be less likely to seek feedback when they perceived the cost of feedback seeking as high, but their study showed that high self-monitors demonstrated uniformly high feedback seeking. In this study, feedback seeking from one's manager may have been an impression management tactic in and of itself, leading high self-monitors to seek feedback regardless of perceived costs. This idea was also supported by Moss, Valenzi, and Taggart's (2003) work where a positive relationship between self-monitoring and feedback seeking was found.

There are additional studies showing weaker situational influences over the behavior of those higher on self-monitoring. For example, Rank, Nelson, Allen, and Xu (2009) showed that those higher on self-monitoring showed less sensitivity to different leadership styles, displaying uniform levels of performance regardless of leadership style. Premeaux and Bedeian (2003) showed that top management openness and trust in supervisor positively predicted speaking up behavior only when self-monitoring was low. Key, Edlund, Sagarin, and Bizer (2009) expected that self-monitoring would be related to showing greater acquiescence to conform to social pressure, but found no support for this. Altogether, these studies contradict the proposition that context matters more to explain the behaviors and attitudes of high self-monitors.

Finally, it is important to consider that not all social information is equally useful or valuable. While personally identified referents and powerful others may exert an influence, high self-monitors may not be equally sensitive to all social information. In a study of job applicant reactions to selection systems, Van Hove and Lievens (2005, 2007) found that self-monitoring did not affect individual receptivity to word of mouth information. In other words, high self-monitors may be discriminating in the type of social information they are receptive to.

## **Self-Monitoring as a Moderator of Impression Management and Benefits**

One final conclusion that can be drawn from studies examining self-monitoring as a moderator is that for high self-monitors, the relationship between impression management and desired outcomes is more positive. Blickle, Schneider, Perrewé, Blass, and Ferris (2008) showed that the relationship between modesty (an impression management tactic) and outcomes was stronger for those higher on self-monitoring. Similarly, O'Neill and O'Reilly (2011) predicted that preference for “masculine” values such as aggressiveness would be positively related to promotions for women if they could avoid a backlash for expressing values incongruent with gender stereotypes. In their study of MBA graduates studied over time, they found that having masculine value preferences was an advantage for actual promotions of women only for high self-monitors, and was a disadvantage for low self-monitors, suggesting that the ease with which high self-monitors manage their impressions may allow them to leverage more masculine values without facing negative consequences.

### **The Dark Effects of Self-Monitoring**

Our review suggests that self-monitoring can be both a boon and bane for the individual, his or her social network, and organizations, and research from the past decade shed more light on the dark effects of self-monitoring. In this section, we review evidence that highlights the dark effects of this interesting personality trait that often goes unnoticed in research studies.

#### **Self-Monitoring and Flawed Decision Making**

Social influence may have greater bearing on the attitudes and behaviors of those higher on self-monitoring, which may sometimes lead them astray. This occurs when self-monitoring results in increased sensitivity to social pressures and behaving in ways that may have negative consequences for one's own or others' well-being. For example, Bauman and



Geher (2002) conducted a study of college students and found that self-monitoring predicted the likelihood of falling victim to *false consensus* error. False consensus error is the tendency to overestimate the degree to which one's own attitudes on specific issues are shared by others. For those who report themselves at the lower end of self-monitoring, their behavioral intentions on controversial social issues were a function of their own attitudes, whereas the behavioral intentions of those higher on self-monitoring were affected by their overestimates of how widely shared their own opinions were. In other words, self-monitoring is associated with a tendency to behave in a particular way, because of a tendency to falsely believe that others are doing so.

Social monitoring may also predict unfair decision making due to a desire to fit one's behavior to situational cues. Hazer and Jacobson (2003) conducted an experiment in a hiring context, and showed that impression management behaviors of applicants showed stronger relations to employability ratings when recruiters were higher in self-monitoring. At the same time, the relationship between objective qualifications of applicants and employability ratings were weaker when recruiters were higher on self-monitoring. Because individuals higher on self-monitoring themselves engage in impression management behaviors, they may seek out individuals who display such behaviors while undervaluing more objective qualifications. In a similar vein, Jawahar and Mattsson (2005) conducted experiments with student subjects playing the role of recruiters, and found that self-monitoring was related to greater willingness to hire male applicants for male stereotyped, and female applicants for female stereotyped jobs. The hiring decisions of those higher on self-monitoring were also more strongly affected by physical attractiveness of the applicant. This pattern of preferring looks over competence may have implications for the relationship between self-monitoring and decision making quality.

## **Self-Monitoring and Situational Ethics**

Self-monitoring has been associated with situational ethics, due to a disposition to manipulate information as well as others' emotions (Grieve, 2011) to showcase likeable self-images and behave as the situation calls (Bedeian & Day, 2004). In fact, self-monitoring has a positive relationship with personality traits that have negative implications for ethical behaviors. For example, Rauthmann (2011) and recently Kowalski, Rogoza, Vernon, and Schermer (2018) found that self-monitoring was related to the dark triad of personality which includes narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. In a student sample, self-monitoring was found to be negatively associated with the honesty-humility scale, which signifies a tendency to be dishonest and self-oriented (Ogunfowora, Bourdage, & Nguyen, 2013).

With respect to actual behaviors, Corral and Calvete (2000) found in a student sample that self-monitoring was related to moral slippage in the form of manipulation and unethical behavior when individuals saw it as reasonable. Further, Ogunfowora et al. (2013) found that self-monitoring was positively related to moral disengagement, and predicted unethical business decision making. It seems that self-monitoring is associated with the ability to predict behaviors that will help one achieve goals in a given situation, and one may choose to engage in unethical behaviors if it serves them in a given context. As a case in point, Yang, Yu, and Huang (in press) showed in a sample of bank employees that self-monitoring was positively related to both adaptive selling (i.e., adjusting their tone and message to the client) and unethical selling (such as withholding negative information about products). As such, high self-monitors may come across as inconsistent, self-promotional, and as lacking personal integrity, which is especially concerning in terms of sustaining trust of co-workers and followers (Day & Schleicher, 2006).

## **Self-Monitoring and Leadership Emergence versus Leadership Effectiveness**

Meta-analytic evidence shows that self-monitoring is positively related to leadership emergence (Day et al., 2002); however, some characteristics of those who are higher on self-monitoring cast doubt on their effectiveness as leaders. Self-monitoring is negatively related to organizational commitment (Day et al., 2002), and as such, those leaders who are higher on the self-monitoring spectrum may be less likely to internalize the corporate strategies and follow them through over the long run. Self-monitoring is also related to a tendency to embrace situational ethics and give in to strong situations. These tendencies may posit challenges and result in losing the trust and respect of followers, and hence casting doubt on the long-term effectiveness of high self-monitors' leadership (Bedeian & Day, 2004). Similarly, Sosik, Avolio, and Jung (2002) showed that self-monitoring of managers was negatively related to subordinate-rated pro-social impression management, and had indirect negative effects on managerial and unit performance. Further, Sosik, Potosky, and Jung (2002) showed that self-monitoring of managers was associated with specific leadership behaviors (e.g., passive management by exception) which negatively predicted managerial performance. These studies have shown that, although individuals at the higher end of self-monitoring may emerge as leaders, they may not always be effective leaders.

To date, only one study identified self-monitoring among the key individual difference variables that positively contribute to both leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness (Foti & Hauenstein, 2007). However, this study was conducted on a student sample. These findings warrant replication in organizational settings with a longitudinal design in order to establish how self-monitoring affects sustained leader effectiveness.

## Self-Monitoring and the Top Management Composition

The disproportionate representation of individuals higher on self-monitoring may be a cause for concern with respect to diversity at top management levels of organizations.

Bedeian (in an exchange with Day, in Bedeian & Day, 2004) contended that those higher in self-monitoring who are likely to occupy top leadership positions in organizations may give preference to other highly self-monitoring candidates for promotion. Although an increasing number of individuals high on self-monitoring may be beneficial to tap into a rich and novel concentration of social network ties (Day & Schleicher, 2006), in extreme cases, the domination of socially and ethically pragmatic high self-monitors in upper echelons of organizations may stifle voice and hamper diversity of opinions (Bedeian & Day, 2004).

The possibility that higher echelons of organizations may mostly be composed of individuals representing the higher end of the self-monitoring spectrum might also be concerning for the gender diversity in top management. According to meta-analytic evidence, men tend to display higher levels of self-monitoring (Day et al., 2002), which may suggest that part of the explanation for the lack of gender diversity at higher levels of organizations could be the success of high self-monitors in rising to higher levels. Experimental studies showed that the women who report themselves at the higher end of the self-monitoring spectrum were perceived as more influential and valuable contributors to the team; they were also found to perform better in dyadic negotiations over resources (Flynn & Ames, 2006). However, these results are not replicated in employee samples in applied organizational settings to date. It is important to examine the role of self-monitoring as a challenge to diversity in upper management, and explore conditions under which this challenge may be alleviated.

## **Self-Monitoring and Faring Well in Performance Ratings versus Performing Highly**

With a few exceptions, evidence shows a positive relationship between self-monitoring and performance ratings (Day et al., 2002; Deeter-Schmelz & Ramsey, 2010; Mehra et al., 2001). However, it is unclear whether individuals higher on self-monitoring owe their higher performance ratings to their superior technical expertise or effort, or to their superior impression management skills (Bedeian & Day, 2004), which make them more socially likable but less suitable for certain positions where technical expertise and perseverance are key. For example, research has shown that the relationship between self-monitoring and performance ratings can be attributed to relational advantages these employees enjoy (Mehra et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2015). These results indicate the possibility that higher performance ratings associated with self-monitoring may at least partially reflect high self-monitors' success in managing impressions and potential biases in subjective assessments of performance.

### **Self-Monitoring and Well-Being**

Self-monitoring is positively related to conformity and surface acting behaviors, which may deplete one's cognitive and emotional resources, and lead to unintended consequences for well-being. Hewlin (2003, 2009) proposed and showed that those higher on self-monitoring are more inclined to create *facades of conformity* at work. Facades of conformity arise when individual values clash with organizational values and when the individual elects to pretend and act as if he or she is embracing organizational values despite this incongruence. Self-monitoring is thought to be one of the antecedents of facades of conformity, as self-monitoring is likely to be related to engaging in these false representations of fit with an aim to achieve desirable rewards. This, in turn, was shown to lead to intentions to quit via emotional exhaustion (Hewlin, 2003, 2009). Coupled with the findings from the

Day et al. (2002) meta-analysis showing a positive relation between self-monitoring and role stress, these findings indicate that self-monitoring may have negative implications for employee well-being.

### **Agenda for Future Research**

Our review of the self-monitoring literature suggests that despite the research attention this personality trait received, there are ample opportunities for researchers to advance our knowledge of self-monitoring.

#### **Self-Monitoring and Leadership**

Although self-monitoring is positively related to achieving leadership ranks, its relationship with leadership effectiveness reveals more controversial findings, with some studies suggesting negative effects on managerial performance (e.g., Sosik et al., 2002).

These studies indicate a need for studies more fully investigating the effects of self-monitoring for the process of leadership. An important research question relates to whether managers view subordinates as part of a public setting where they need to create positive impressions, or whether they regard their interactions with employees as a private setting where the needs to manage impressions and gain status are lower. As suggested by Oh et al. (2014), this is an important distinction for those who are at the higher end of the self-monitoring spectrum. If we assume that employees are part of the public context for leaders and they are motivated to behave in ways that fit the situation, we would expect leaders to embrace styles endorsed by employees such as supportive leadership. If, on the other hand, interactions with employees are interpreted as a private setting, then behaviors of leaders high in self-monitoring may be driven by a desire to appease upper manager or customers. For example, this might mean overpromising to customers and then creating time pressure for employees. Or, the leader may be more likely to emulate the leadership styles displayed by upper management. One of the untested assumptions in the self-monitoring literature is that

all individuals are equally capable of triggering social presentation concerns in individuals with high self-monitoring. Answering this question is important to understand the effects of self-monitoring on leadership effectiveness.

### **Self-Monitoring and Team Dynamics**

Research to date has shown that self-monitoring is associated with relational advantages including higher quality relations with one's manager and leveraging one's social network (Mehra et al. 2001). At the same time, there is emerging evidence suggesting that self-monitoring is associated with lower scores on integrity tests and higher scores on faking (Levashina & Campion, 2007). It is important to reconcile these findings. Are the advantages of self-monitoring on interpersonal dynamics long lived and trust based? Or are they reliant on limited interactions and exposure to team members? Some studies suggest that time actually helps those higher on self-monitoring display their advantages. For example, Bauer and Truxillo's (2000) study suggests that temporary workers with longer probation periods are at an advantage in hiring, which hints that long term effects of self-monitoring may be more powerful. In contrast, Bhardwaj, Qureshi, Konrad, and Lee (2016) showed that self-monitoring effects on friendship networks are short lived and dissipate over time. These results are contradictory, and suggest that an explicit focus on time may be fruitful. It is important to examine how self-monitoring affects the process of relationship development and gaining social acceptance in various social contexts (e.g., friendships versus employment probation), and whether the trajectory of such relationship development shows only early or sustained advantages.

Further, studies examining self-monitoring in relation to social networks would benefit from studying the composition and distribution of self-monitoring within the team. Are the social capital advantages due to self-monitoring contingent on self-monitoring being a rare trait within the group? How is the composition of the network affected when the

majority consists of high self-monitors? Is there an advantage that accrues to those who are higher on self-monitoring than their surrounding peers? We are aware of only one study that examined self-monitoring at the team level (Roberson & Williamson, 2012) in relation to team climate strength. Examining how self-monitoring affects team dynamics is an important direction.

### **Self-Monitoring: A Stable or Dynamic Disposition?**

Although existing studies treat self-monitoring as a stable trait, the relative stability perspective in personality research (Woods, Lievens, De Fruyt, & Wille, 2013) suggests that an individual's personality traits may be malleable over time as a corollary of the roles assumed and work outcomes experienced. In order to uncover whether self-monitoring is a dynamic trait, we suggest that studies examining the long term stability of this trait would be beneficial. Longitudinal studies linking change in self-monitoring to change in work outcomes will be valuable. Important events in one's career history such as long periods of unemployment or working with abusive supervisors may result in heightened awareness of and desire to manage one's impression. Thus, research examining how self-monitoring changes in relation to career experiences would shed light on this issue. Further, it is important to examine whether there is short-term variability in self-monitoring, and whether such variation is meaningful.

### **Potential Problems with the Low vs. High Demarcation in Self-Monitoring Dispositions**

We notice that the literature on self-monitoring generally utilizes a dichotomous language and operationalization, where individuals are categorized as either high or low self-monitors. Given that self-monitoring is conceptualized as a continuous variable, dichotomizing the scale introduces power issues. Further, because these clusters depend on the sample characteristics in a study, a highly self-monitoring individual in one sample may well be classified as a low self-monitor in another sample (or vice versa). As such, the



literature on self-monitoring will also benefit from investigating whether individuals adopt varying levels of self-monitoring depending on the situations and the individuals they interact with. In other words, individuals may not be identified as absolute high or low self-monitors at any time of their lives (Bedeian & Day, 2004). Drawing on person-environment fit theory (Edwards, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1998), future research may examine how various environmental contexts trigger different levels of self-monitoring orientations in individuals.

### **Self-Monitoring in the Selection and Newcomer Adjustment During Socialization**

#### **Process**

Research to date has shown that self-monitoring applicants may be effectively using impression management tactics to their advantage and influencing recruiters' perceptions of fit during the interview process, which eventually leads to positive interview outcomes for those candidates (Higgins & Judge, 2004). Additional questions remain related to the role self-monitoring plays in the hiring process. For example, does applicant self-monitoring affect performance under different selection hurdles, such as one-on-one interviews versus group interviews? Similarly, is self-monitoring related to being perceived as more or less truthful depending on the personality of the perceiver? Does self-monitoring take a toll on job applicants given that they must attend to so many cues in a new environment? Beyond its effects in the hiring process, self-monitoring may be a particularly promising personality trait in investigating the process by which newcomers adjust organizations during the organizational socialization process. The ability of self-monitors to understand the demands of the new organizational context they joined and desire to gain status in this new context may encourage them to demonstrate behaviors such as proactivity, a key factor related to successful socialization (Ashford & Black, 1996; Saks, Gruman, & Cooper-Thomas, 2011).

## Multidimensional Nature of Self-Monitoring

The majority of studies on self-monitoring treats it as a unidimensional construct. However, the most commonly used scales of self-monitoring are in fact two-dimensional, and the dimensions are orthogonal. There is reason to expect that focusing on the dimensions of self-monitoring may change our understanding of the effects of self-monitoring. For example, Pillow et al. (2017) showed in a student sample that the *public performance* and *other-directedness* dimensions of SMS-Reduced were correlated at .06. The two dimensions had contradictory effects, with the dimensions having correlations of .17 and -.42 with reported authenticity, and .15 and -.27 with well-being respectively. Interestingly, the correlations of aggregated self-monitoring with authenticity and well-being were -.11 and .02 respectively. These results suggest that the dimensions had stronger but opposing effects on the outcomes, resulting in null effects when the scale was aggregated. Similar results were obtained in the Wilmot et al. (2016) study using a modified SMS-Reduced and examining intercorrelations with big five personality traits. These studies suggest that the *public performance* dimension, which refers to a desire and ability to create a positive image, may be fundamentally different from the *other-directedness* dimension, which captures the motivation to avoid a negative image. Given the absence of a strong correlation between the two dimensions, focusing on the dimensions of self-monitoring in future studies would result in a clearer understanding of the effects of self-monitoring and may reveal relationships that are blurred by the use of aggregated scales. At a minimum, reporting results at the dimension level would allow future meta-analyses to examine the effects of individual dimensions, along with the overall level of self-monitoring.

## Alter-centric Approach to Studying Self-Monitoring: Using Others' Ratings

A key conclusion that can be gleaned from our review is that how others perceive, make sense of, and react to a focal individual's self-monitoring tendencies is key in

determining the outcomes of self-monitoring, which mainly rely on others' responses to the focal individual (e.g., performance ratings, leadership emergence, social network benefits). Therefore, rather than relying solely on individuals' self-reported scores, future research may consider measuring others' ratings of an individual's self-monitoring levels or measuring others' reactions to the focal individual to better explain the outcomes of self-monitoring. Our review revealed that there are only a limited number of studies investigating the outcomes of self-monitoring by measuring others' reactions. For instance, as noted before, Kleinbaum and colleagues (2015) considered others' perceived empathy as a reaction of others to the focal self-monitoring individual. They showed that the positive effect of self-monitoring on brokerage is amplified for the individuals who are perceived as highly empathic by others and attenuated for those who are perceived as lower in empathy.

An alter-centric approach to measurement should also have methodological benefits. As this review reveals, the majority of studies rely on self-report perceptions of research participants in measuring their self-monitoring dispositions. Given the well-evidenced association between self-monitoring and impression management (e.g. Fuglestad & Snyder, 2010; Turnley & Bolino, 2001), and that impression management is one of the major sources of response bias (McGrath, Mitchell, Kim, & Hough, 2010), high self-monitors in a research sample might be particularly susceptible to response distortion. One remedy is, again, to measure others' perception of a focal person's self-monitoring disposition (Bedeian & Day, 2004), which will provide a more objective measure of self-monitoring compared to self-report perceptions. In fact, self-ratings of personality assume that individuals are motivated to report their personality accurately, which may be a less valid assumption in the case of individuals who have a higher tendency towards self-monitoring. Therefore, supplementing self-ratings with ratings obtained from co-workers and family members may improve predictive ability of self-monitoring.

## Conclusion

Our review reveals that self-monitoring is a personality trait which can have mixed implications for both individuals and organizations. Self-monitoring plays an important role in attenuating the impact of other personality traits, individual values, attitudes, and intentions on behaviors. Personality, attitudes, and values become weaker predictors of behaviors for those higher on self-monitoring. Combined with an inherent motive to achieve status and an adeptness at expressive control, self-monitoring may turn into both bane and boon. While individuals with a higher self-monitoring tendency may emerge as leaders in work and social networks with stellar performance and astute impression management tactics, they may also be seen as self-serving and inauthentic, and using situational ethics. Expanding our understanding of bright and dark effects of self-monitoring may help us decipher various work contexts with greater precision.

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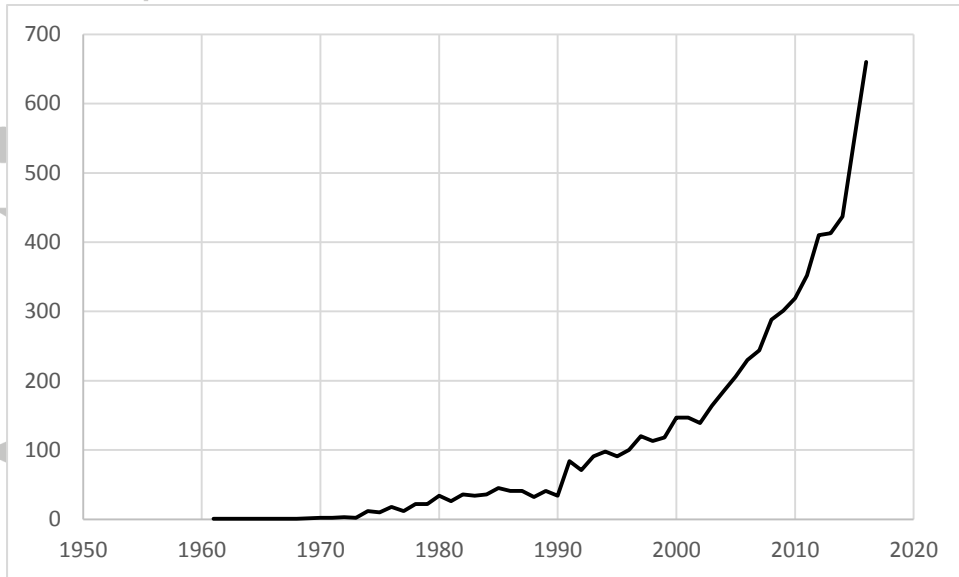
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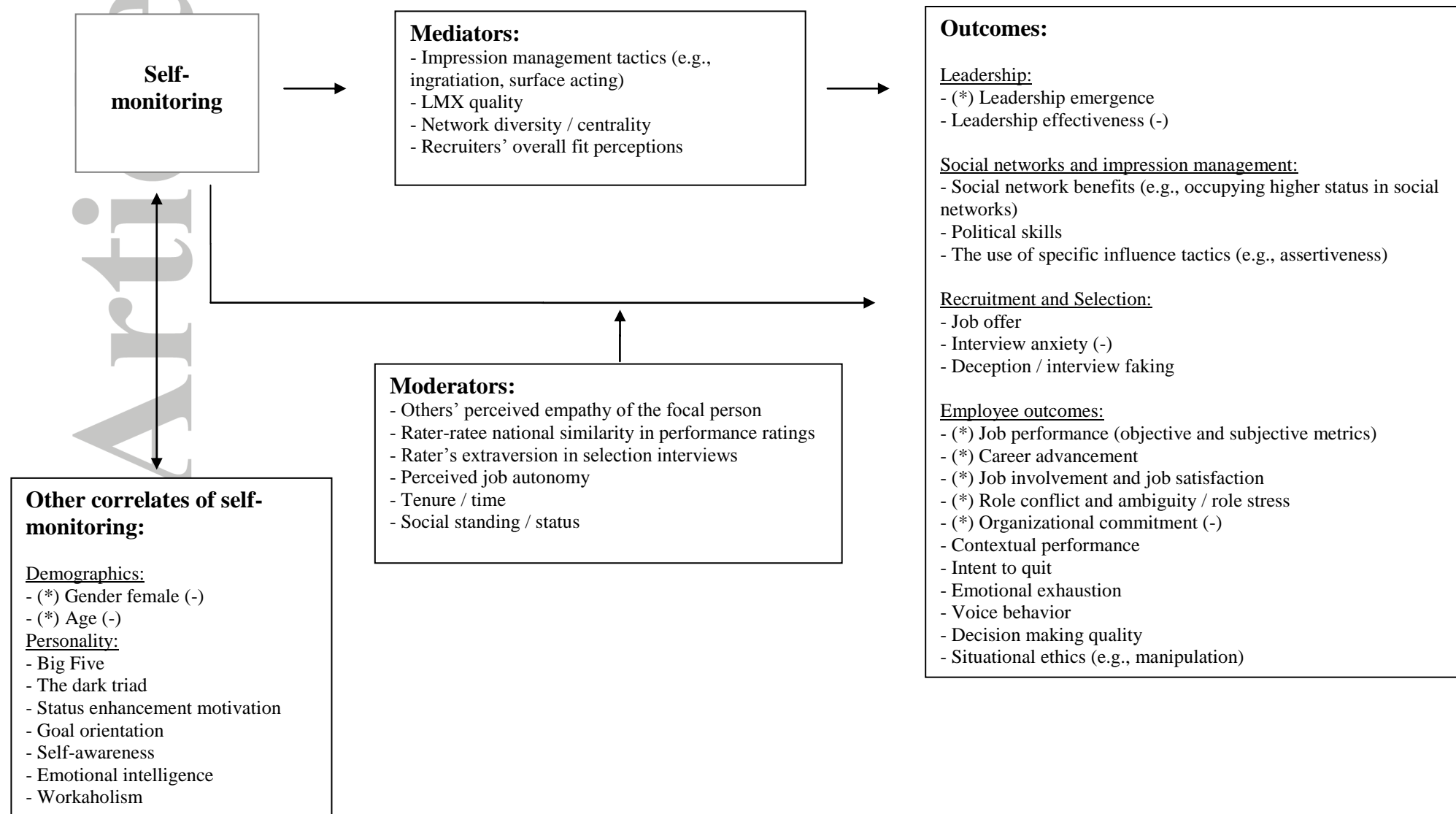
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Figure 1. Number of publications on self-monitoring over the years (based on a literature search in Web of Science™ using self-monitoring as the search term).



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Figure 2: A process model of the relationships between self-monitoring and work related variables.



Note: (\*) indicates that the relationship of self-monitoring with that variable was included in the meta-analysis by Day et al. (2000), and (-) indicates that self-monitoring has a negative relationship with that variable.



**Table 1. Summary of the Scales Used to Measure Self-Monitoring Over Time.**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b>Reported Alpha (Day et al., 2002)</b>	<b>Number (Percentage) of Studies Using this Scale in Day et al. (2002)</b>	<b>Number (Percentage) of Studies Using this Scale in Current Review</b>
Snyder & Gangestad (1986)	<i>SMS-Reduced</i>	18 items	.73	34 studies (25%)	44 studies (46%)
Lennox & Wolfe (1984)	<i>Revised Self-Monitoring Scale (RSMS)</i>	13 items	.81	14 studies (10%)	34 studies (36%)
Snyder (1974)	<i>Self-Monitoring Scale (SMS)</i>	25 items	.71	69 studies (51%)	17 studies (18%)

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