Self-Monitoring

The degree to which individuals are influenced by social pressures can be captured in a survey measure known as self-monitoring. Political scientists increasingly recognize its importance in survey response (e.g. Terkildsen 1994; Berinsky 2004; Berinsky and Lavine 2006; Weber, Huddy, Lavine, and Federico 2014; Klar and Krupnikov 2016).

Self-monitoring hinges on the notion that individuals vary in their degree of "expressive control," differing with respect to "lying, concealing one's true intentions, or presenting an inauthentic self" (Gangestad and Snyder 2000, 530). High self-monitors are more sensitive to self-presentation, situational cues, and self-image. Low self-monitors, on the other hand, are more likely to rely on internal states, such as values, attitudes, and general beliefs.

High self-monitors are more likely to reflect on how one ought to act in social settings, whereas low self-monitors reflect on their own behavioral tendencies (Snyder and Cantor 1980). Low self-monitors, while not entirely impervious to social influence (Weber et al 2015), are more likely to draw on dispositional states to guide. For instance, Azjen, Timko and White (1982) show that low self-monitors are more likely to act on their intentions when it comes to voting. Lavine and Snyder (1996) show that low self-monitors are more likely to be persuaded by arguments that draw on the expression of one's values, whereas high self-monitors are influenced by arguments that emphasize social utility (e,g., "fit into and reap rewards from a social situation"; Snyder and Lavine 1996, 586).

This has important implications for political science. For example, low self-monitors are more likely to rely on racial stereotypes to evaluate race-targeted policy -- an effect that is magnified in settings where racial stereotypes are accessible. Low self-monitors are also less likely to choose the midpoint when answering questions about race (Weber et al 2015). Similarly, in an experimental setting, Terkildsen (1993) shows that high self-monitors are susceptible to a randomly varied racial complexion of a candidate running for office. Berinsky (2004) argues that self-monitoring reveals whether an individual adjusts their expressed beliefs so as to comply with perceived social norms.

Klar and Krupnikov (2016) demonstrate the utility of self-monitoring pertaining to a question that has perplexed researchers for decades: What role do Independents play in the American political process. They address the question of whether independents are "undercover partisans," opting out of a partisan label to avoid the uncomfortable position of being labeled a Democrat or Republican in a polarized electorate. Those who score

high on the self-monitoring are more likely to mask their true partisan nature by choosing for the independent label. What is more, this effect is magnified in divisive social settings marked by political disagreement.

Unfortunately, very few surveys include this measure, thereby prohibiting researchers from understanding how context and disposition guide political attitudes and behavior. The primary exception was the 2008 American National Election Studies (Berinsky and Lavine 2012), which included a 3-item self-monitoring scale. These data have been used for subsequent analyses that would not have been otherwise possible (Klar and Krupnikov 2016).

Therefore, we propose using the same 3-item measure in 2016 that was included in 2008. Specifically, the following 3 questions:

1. When you're with other people, how often do you put on a show to impress or entertain them?
   ALWAYS, MOST OF THE TIME, ABOUT HALF THE TIME, ONCE IN A WHILE, or NEVER

2. How good or bad of an actor would you be?
   EXCELLENT, GOOD, FAIR, POOR, or VERY POOR

3. When you're in a group of people, how often are you the center of attention?
   ALWAYS, MOST OF THE TIME, ABOUT HALF THE TIME, ONCE IN A WHILE, or NEVER

References

Ajzen, Icek, Christine Timko, and John B. White (1982), "Self monitoring and the Attitude-Behavior Relation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42, 426-435

Berinsky, Adam. (2004). "Can We Talk: Self Presentation and the Survey Response." *Political Psychology* 25(4): 643–59.

Berinsky, Adam J., and Howard Lavine. (2012). "Self-Monitoring and Political Attitudes." In Aldrich, John H., and Kathleen M. McGraw (Eds.), *Improving Public Opinion Surveys: Interdisciplinary Innovation and the American National Election Studies*. Princeton University Press.

Gangestad, Steven W, and Mark Snyder (2000). "Self-Monitoring: Appraisal and Reappraisal." *Psychological Bulletin* 126(4): 530-555.

Klar, Samara, and Yanna Krupnikov. (2016). *Independent Politics: How American Disdain for Parties Leads to Political Inaction*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lavine, Howard and Mark Snyder (1996) "Cognitive Processing and the Functional Matching Effect in Persuasion: The Mediating Role of Subjective Perceptions of Message Quality" *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 32(6) 580-604.

Snyder, Mark, and Nancy Cantor. (1980). "Thinking about Ourselves and Others: Self-Monitoring and Social Knowledge." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 39(2) 222-234.

Terkildsen, Nayda (1993). "When White Voters Evaluate Black Candidates: The Processing Implications of Candidate Skin Color, Prejudice, and Self-Monitoring." *American Journal of Political Science* 37(4): 1032-1053.

Weber, Christopher, Howard Lavine, Leonie Huddy, and Christopher Federico (2014). "Placing Racial Stereotypes in Context: Social Desirability and the Politics of Racial Hostility." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(1): 63-78.

1.