SELF-MONITORING AS A MODERATOR OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS AND PERFORMANCE

MURRAY R. BARRICK, LAURA PARKS, MICHAEL K. MOUNT
Department of Management and Organizations
University of Iowa

This study examined the hypothesis that self-monitoring moderates the relationship between Big Five personality traits and interpersonal performance. The findings from a sample of 102 employed Executive MBA students reveal that when self-monitoring was high the relationships between 3 of the Big Five personality traits (Extraversion, Emotional Stability, and Openness to Experience) and supervisory ratings of interpersonal performance were attenuated. These effects were replicated using peer ratings of interpersonal performance for Extraversion and Emotional Stability but not for Openness to Experience. Further, as expected, self-monitoring did not moderate the relationships between personality traits and supervisory or peer ratings of task performance. Implications for future research in the area of personality and other motivational theories are discussed.

Personality traits refer to characteristic, enduring patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior that are stable over time and explain people’s behavior across different situations (Costa & McCrae, 1989; Funder, 2001). There have been a large number of primary studies and meta-analyses conducted over the past 15 years that have examined the relationship of personality traits to job performance. These studies have shown that under certain conditions, there are meaningful relationships between personality traits and performance dimensions (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Salgado, 1999).

Of particular relevance to the present study is that these meta-analyses have shown that there is substantial variance in personality–performance relationships that remains unaccounted for. This is significant because it indicates that there are other individual difference variables or external conditions that moderate the relationship between personality traits and performance. Thus, research has begun to move from merely examining personality as a main effect (Is personality related to performance?), to...
focusing on the moderating or mediating effects that explain how personality influences performance (What conditions facilitate or constrain the influence of personality traits on performance?; see Barrick, Mitchell, & Stewart, 2003; Hough, 2003; and Judge & Kristof-Brown, 2003, for a more detailed discussion of the topic). One variable that has been conceptualized as a potential moderator of the relationship between personality and performance is self-monitoring (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether self-monitoring moderates the relationship between Big Five personality traits and job performance.

**Self-Monitoring**

Snyder (1974) defines self-monitoring as the extent to which individuals monitor, adjust, and control their behavior based on how it is perceived by others. At its core, self-monitoring “relates to status-oriented impression management motives” (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; p. 547). High self-monitors are socially ambitious and have a strong desire to project positive images of themselves with the objective of impressing others. Because they attach high psychological meaning to the image that they portray, there is an ongoing feedback process between high self-monitors and the situation. High self-monitors continually scan the social climate around them and adapt their behavior so that it is appropriate to the situation. Consequently, high self-monitors are motivated to engage in those behaviors that will help them be accepted and/or gain status (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Turnley & Bolino, 2001).

In contrast, low self-monitors attach low psychological meaning to image enhancement in social situations. They are more interested in self-validation than in status or prestige. They emphasize being true to themselves and find it important to behave in a fashion consistent with their core values and beliefs. Because their behavior is not influenced by how they are perceived by others (Day & Kilduff, 2003; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000), they are less willing to put forward false images in social situations. In fact, low self-monitors have difficulty carrying off appearances and engaging in impression management (Day, Schleicher, Unckless, & Hiller, 2002; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Turnley & Bolino, 2001). Thus, in situations in which individuals have the opportunity to engage in discretionary behavior, low self-monitors are less likely to change their behavior in order to impress others. Consequently, there is greater fidelity between their personality traits and the behaviors they exhibit.

Several studies have examined the impact of self-monitoring in the workplace. High self-monitors are more socially adept and are therefore
more likely to choose to work in sales and management positions (Day & Kilduff, 2003). They tend to be underrepresented in lower-level jobs that lack prestige (Day & Kilduff, 2003; Day et al., 2002; Kilduff & Day, 1994). They are more likely to have contacts with important constituents either internal or external to the group (Caldwell & O’Reilly, 1982; Day & Kilduff, 2003) and to get more promotions (Kilduff & Day, 1994). High self-monitors also tend to fill more leadership roles (Day et al., 2002; Zaccaro, Foti, & Kenny, 1991) and more central positions within organizations (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001).

Yet, although much of this research portrays high self-monitors favorably, there is evidence that they exhibit less desirable behaviors as well. For example, they engage in more impression management (Turnley & Bolino, 2001), exhibit less organizational commitment (Day et al., 2002), and change employers more frequently than low self-monitors (Jenkins, 1993; Kilduff & Day, 1994). Further, although high self-monitors have large social networks, they typically have fewer close relationships (Day & Kilduff, 2003; Day et al., 2002) and are less committed to their work relationships than low self-monitors (Day et al., 2002). For these reasons, the relationship of self-monitoring with overall performance is actually quite small. In fact, a recent meta-analysis (Day et al., 2002) found that the sample-weighted mean correlation with overall job performance was just .09.

Taken together, these findings illustrate that self-monitoring is related to both positive and negative behaviors at work and that the strongest relationships are likely to be with behavior in social situations. Consequently, the major question that we examine is whether the relationship of Big Five (FFM) personality traits to behavior at work (and particularly in social settings at work) is moderated by the high self-monitor’s behavioral flexibility and desire to portray a favorable image (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder & Ickes, 1985).

Five-Factor Model of Personality

The five-factor model (FFM) of personality has achieved widespread (though not universal) acceptance as a meaningful description of the arrangement of the higher-order structure of personality traits (e.g., Digman, 1990; Saucier & Ostendorf, 1999). The five factors are generally labeled Extraversion (sociable, gregarious, assertive, adventurous, ambitious, reward-seeking); Agreeableness (courteous, helpful, trusting, cooperative, sympathetic, friendly, good-natured, tolerant); Conscientiousness (dependable, hardworking, efficient, organized, thorough, responsible, persevering, achievement-striving); Emotional Stability (even-tempered,
self-confident, calm, resilient, tolerant of stress, well-adjusted); and Openness to Experience (perceptive, imaginative, cultured, curious, creative, broad-minded, intelligent).

A large body of research now exists utilizing the FFM as a predictor of numerous outcomes at work, including job performance. Conscientiousness shows the most robust and consistent correlations with performance across all jobs and settings. Emotional Stability has also been found to relate to overall performance across many if not all jobs. Thus, these two traits can be considered universal or generalizable predictors because they are relevant in all or nearly all jobs (Barrick et al., 2001; Hogan & Holland, 2003).

The other three personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience) “are nearly equally important as Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability for certain occupations and criteria” (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000, pp. 877). That is, these three traits are “contingent predictors,” as their relevance depends on the demands of the job. Hogan and Holland (2003) showed that when successful job performance requires getting along with others (e.g., facilitating peer and team performance), Agreeableness was an important predictor. In contrast, when performance required getting ahead of others (e.g., negotiating or influencing others), Extraversion was a relevant predictor. For training and creative tasks, Openness to Experience has emerged as an important predictor (Barrick et al., 2001; George & Zhou, 2001). Thus, these personality traits can be valid predictors of success when the demands of the job fit the behavioral tendencies associated with the traits.

How does self-monitoring “fit” into the FFM personality framework? Self-monitoring is generally considered to be a personality variable, but it is not well represented within the FFM framework (Day et al., 2002; Digman, 1990). A recent meta-analysis (Schleicher & Day, 2002) shows self-monitoring has a moderately high correlation with Extraversion (mean $r = .37$, $\rho = .44$); whereas it has a low correlation with the other FFM traits (Agreeableness, mean $r = .04$, $\rho = .05$; Conscientiousness, mean $r = -.02$; $\rho = -.03$; Emotional Stability, mean $r = -.01$, $\rho = -.02$). With the exception of the correlation with Extraversion, these intercorrelations are lower than those for FFM traits with each other (Mount, Barrick, Scullen, & Rounds, 2005). One explanation for these low intercorrelations is that self-monitoring is a “hybrid” construct, which reflects both skill and desire or motivation. For example, Schleicher and Day (2002) found self-monitoring was more strongly related to “skills” associated with managing one’s image (e.g., interpersonal skills) than “motives” to impress others (e.g., desire for conformity). This suggests that self-monitoring may be more skill than trait, although it is likely some combination of the two.
Regardless of the precise nature of the self-monitoring construct (i.e., skill or trait), it is clear that it is not a substitute for one of the FFM traits.

**Moderators of Personality-Performance Relationships**

It has long been recognized that personality traits best predict performance when a person’s behavior is unconstrained (Bem & Allen, 1974; Weiss & Adler, 1984). All behavior is a function of the characteristics of the situation and the characteristics of the person, because both can potentially facilitate or constrain the behavioral expression of an individual’s personality traits. When situations are exceptionally strong, individuals tend to behave in the same way regardless of their personality traits. Numerous studies have shown that situations can restrict the extent to which an individual can behave in accordance with his or her personality (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1993; Beaty, Cleveland, & Murphy, 2001; Gellatly & Irving, 2001; Hochwarter, Witt, & Kacmar, 2000). For example, the study by Barrick and Mount (1993) found that the amount of autonomy in the job represented a situational constraint such that when there was low autonomy (a strong situation), personality traits did not predict performance because there was little variability in behavior. In contrast, when situations are weak that is, there are few expectations or many ambiguous demands, individuals have considerable discretion in how to behave. Weak situations provide individuals with considerable discretion to engage in behaviors that are in accordance with their personality traits.

Equally important, but perhaps less intuitive, is the idea that certain characteristics of individuals may also constrain behavior, which in turn restricts the expression of personality traits. For example, there is evidence in the literature that suggests that personality traits interact with one another to determine behavior (i.e., George & Zhou, 2001; Witt, Burke, Barrick, & Mount, 2002). Witt et al. (2002) investigated whether Conscientiousness and Agreeableness interacted in the prediction of job performance. Results from seven independent samples of employees supported the hypothesis that the relationship between Conscientiousness and job performance was stronger for persons high in Agreeableness than for those low in Agreeableness, particularly in jobs where interaction or joint collaboration is necessary. This suggests that workers with low levels of Agreeableness exhibited a narrow range of uncooperative and inconsiderate behaviors toward others, which resulted in lower supervisory ratings of job performance, even when that person was highly conscientious. This evidence led us to examine the possibility that self-monitoring may interact with personality traits to determine performance.

High self-monitors view social situations very favorably and attach high psychological meaning to opportunities for interaction with others.
They see social situations as a way to make a favorable impression on others, especially their boss, and to gain acceptance and status in groups. Thus high self-monitors engage in a relatively restrictive set of behaviors in social situations, that is, those that they believe will help them fit in and impress others. This has important implications for how FFM personality traits affect behavior. Because the motive to be perceived favorably is so strong among high self-monitors, the individual chooses to engage in a very narrow, limited set of behaviors associated with making a good impression on others; in turn, this constrains the expression of FFM personality traits.

The constraints on behavior that may result from self-monitoring are both similar and different to situational constraints. They are similar in that both may restrict the range of behaviors the individual engages in, thereby attenuating correlations with personality traits. They are different because strong situations are external factors that influence whether or not the person is able to engage in different types of behaviors. That is, certain situations induce conformity such that individuals cannot behave differently even if they would like to. On the other hand, self-monitoring represents person-based constraints—internal factors that may influence the behaviors an individual chooses to engage in. That is, self-monitoring may lead individuals to choose to engage in socially acceptable behavior and to choose not to engage in other types of behavior. Although the mechanisms differ somewhat, the effects of both situational and personal-based constraints on behavior would be the same. They lead individuals to engage in a narrow range of behaviors that constrains the expression of personality traits.

Tests of the Moderating Effects of Self-Monitoring

This study examines whether self-monitoring moderates the relationships between FFM personality traits and behaviors in social settings. The fundamental premise is that high self-monitors are highly motivated to adapt their behavior to look good in the eyes of others, especially their supervisor. Because this motive is so strong, it overrides the motivational processes associated with FFM traits. That is, high self-monitoring effects are so strong that they restrict the behaviors that the individual chooses to engage in; consequently, FFM personality traits have less “influence” on behaviors the person chooses to engage in. In contrast, low self-monitors strive to be genuine and act according to a set of core values and beliefs. Consequently, their behavior is not constrained, and therefore personality traits are likely to better predict behavior. Bolino (1999) proposes a similar interaction between personality and impression-management motives (which are closely related to self-monitoring). He argues that the impact of personality on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) will be weaker
when impression-management motives are strong, because the OCBs may be a product of the impression-management motive, rather than a result of personality. Thus we expect that high self-monitoring will attenuate the relationship between FFM personality traits and performance.

When conducting research investigating personality traits, it is important to make certain that the criterion is relevant to the personality constructs (Hogan & Holland, 2003). Thus, for the purposes of this study, we chose to focus on interpersonal performance, rather than overall job performance. This decision was made because self-monitoring is evident primarily in social settings (Day & Kilduff, 2003; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Snyder, 1974). Furthermore, our sample population (primarily managers) is a group for which interpersonal performance is critical to overall performance and effectiveness. In addition, taxonomies of job performance consistently show that interpersonal performance is an important component (Campbell, 1991; Johnson, 2003; Viswesvaran, Ones, & Schmidt, 1996). Thus, interpersonal performance is the most appropriate component of performance to test our hypotheses.

As regards interpersonal performance, Extraversion and Agreeableness are arguably the key dispositional determinants of social behavior. Empirical evidence shows these two FFM traits are significantly related to measures of interpersonal performance (Mount, Barrick, & Stewart, 1998). This makes sense given that individuals who score high on Extraversion tend to be sociable and gregarious, and individuals who score high on Agreeableness tend to be friendly and helpful—all traits that facilitate getting along well and working well with others. Thus, when assessing how effective one is at “managing” social requirements at work (communication, interpersonal skills, and facilitating peer or team performance), we expect Agreeableness and Extraversion to be important predictors.

Mount et al. (1998) also reported that Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability were important predictors of interpersonal performance. Individuals who score high on Conscientiousness are typically dependable and responsible, and individuals who score high on Emotional Stability are even-tempered, well adjusted, and tolerant of stress. Again, it seems reasonable that these traits would result in higher-quality working relationships. In contrast, there is no empirical evidence or intuitive reason to associate Openness to Experience with one’s ability to work well with others. Individuals who score high on this factor tend to be imaginative, curious, and creative. These are traits that might be beneficial to performance depending on the job or the situation, but they would not necessarily contribute to interpersonal effectiveness.

As stated previously, meta-analytic research has found a small (.09) correlation between self-monitoring and overall performance (Day et al., 2002). Although self-monitoring may have a larger effect on interpersonal
performance than on overall performance, it is not clear that this will lead to a significantly larger effect size. Consequently, we make no hypotheses regarding the relationships between self-monitoring and interpersonal performance. Based on research cited above, we expect that four FFM personality constructs, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Agreeableness, will be positively correlated with supervisory ratings of interpersonal performance. The hypothesis we test is that self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between relevant personality traits and interpersonal performance. Low self-monitors adopt a principled interpersonal orientation such that there is a higher correspondence between their attitudes, values, and personality and their social behavior (Gangestad & Snyder, 1985; 2000). In contrast, high self-monitors adopt an instrumental interpersonal orientation. They regulate their social behavior to promote a favorable public image of self and to gain outcomes of value to them. Hence, their behavior is more strongly determined by their desire to promote situationally appropriate interaction outcomes (Gangestad & Snyder, 1985; 2000). Given that high self-monitors adjust their behavior across situations (but low self-monitors do not), we hypothesize that the relationship between the four relevant personality traits (Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Agreeableness) and interpersonal performance will be stronger when self-monitoring is low than when it is high. Because we do not expect main effects for Openness to Experience in predicting interpersonal performance, we make no hypothesis about Openness to Experience interacting with self-monitoring.

In addition, we examine these effects for both supervisory and peer ratings of interpersonal performance. Because high self-monitors are motivated by the desire to gain status and project a positive image of themselves, much of their behavior is directed toward pleasing the boss, as he or she controls the rewards. On the other hand, high self-monitors have less to gain by pleasing peers because peers have less control over rewards that high self-monitors value. Therefore, we expected the moderating effects of self-monitoring to occur for supervisory ratings, and less so for peer ratings of interpersonal performance. Further, for comparison purposes we also include measures of task performance as rated by supervisors and peers, although we do not expect a significant moderator effect for self-monitoring with this component of performance.

Method

The sample consisted of 102 Executive MBA students enrolled in an organizational behavior class who volunteered to participate in this study in order to obtain developmental feedback about their personality and
performance at work. Although participation had no impact on their class grade, 88% of the 116 students in the class chose to participate. The respondents were mostly male (72%), and Caucasian (85%), with an average age of 32.3 years ($SD = 7.23$). Respondents held a wide variety of jobs, including finance and tax (15%), administrators and supervisors (30%), field service and engineering (12%), legal (6%), human resources (5%), manufacturing (12%), and marketing (21%). With respect to job level, 40% were nonmanagement and 60% were management. The average respondent earned about $48,000. The average number of hours worked per week was 47.14 ($SD = 7.19$). Participants provided self- and observer ratings on personality and performance, as well as a description of their job and goals at work. The participants were instructed to obtain performance ratings from their direct supervisor and at least one peer rater. All raters were recruited by the participant, and identified themselves as either upper-level managers, their direct supervisor, coworkers (peers), subordinates, or customers. On average, each participant obtained ratings from 6.8 observers, 1.2 managers (includes direct supervisor), 3.5 peers, 0.9 subordinates, and 1.2 customers.

**Measures**

**Personality**

The Personal Characteristics Inventory (PCI, Mount & Barrick, 2002) was used to assess the five factor model of personality. The PCI is a widely used inventory that assesses Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Emotional Stability, and Openness to Experience. Evidence of construct validity, reliability, and predictive validity is reported in the PCI manual (Mount & Barrick, 2002). In this sample, coefficient alpha ranged from .84 to .90.

**Self-Monitoring**

Self-monitoring was measured using the 18-item scale developed by Snyder and Gangestad (1986). Items include, “I’m not always the person I appear to be,” and “I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone or win their favor” (reverse scored). Items were averaged to form an overall score for self-monitoring ($\alpha = .85$). Higher scores indicated the respondent was higher on self-monitoring.

The FFM personality measures and self-monitoring scale used a 5-point Likert rating format (from $1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ to $5 = \text{strongly agree}$). Scores on all scales were obtained by averaging the items.
Interpersonal Performance

Performance measures were developed for the purpose of this study, based on relevant dimensions of task and interpersonal performance identified from a review of the performance literature (Campbell, 1991; Vishwesvaran et al., 1996). Although our interest was primarily in interpersonal performance, task performance measures were also included in order to provide more comprehensive developmental feedback to participants. In this study, nine performance items were assessed. This included five task performance items (quantity, quality, job knowledge, problem solving, and effort) and the following four interpersonal performance items: “interpersonal skills: builds and maintains rapport and productive relationships, demonstrates strong interpersonal skills when interacting with others”; “cooperation: assists and helps others, works cooperatively with other coworkers to achieve group/team goals, maintains focus on group/team goals, facilitates workgroup interactions”; “communication: communicates skillfully both in written and oral communications, tails communication to the audience to facilitate understanding, actively listens and responds appropriately in discussions, presents one’s self effectively (e.g., nonverbal behaviors, making presentations to others)”; “customer service orientation: attends to customer needs and requests, listens to customers in order to understand needs and determine how they can be met, works to fill customer needs.” Ratings were made on a 6-point scale (from $1 = \text{somewhat below requirements}$ to $6 = \text{consistently exceeds requirements}$). Internal consistency reliability was .84.

To investigate the distinctiveness of the interpersonal performance dimension, two confirmatory factor analysis models were specified using LISREL 8 (Joreskog & Sorbum, 1996). The first analysis tested a two-factor model of performance, with interpersonal performance being one of the dimensions and task performance the second. The second model tested a single-factor model of performance in which all nine performance items loaded on a single, unitary construct. The fit for the two-factor measurement model was as follows: $\chi^2 (26, N = 102) = 33.86$, $p = .14$. We calculated several fit indexes and all were acceptable; the root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .055; the normed-fit index (NFI) = .95; the non normed-fit index (NNFI) = .98; and the comparative fit index (CFI) = .99. The fit for the alternative model, hypothesizing one underlying latent factor, was as follows: $\chi^2 (27, N = 102) = 151.03$, $p = .00$, RMSEA = .213, NFI = .84, NNFI = .83, CFI = .87. The 90% confidence intervals for the two RMSEA statistics did not overlap. The results of these analyses show that a two-factor model provides the best fit to the data in the present study. We therefore computed the average of the four interpersonal performance items as the measure of interpersonal
performance for subsequent analyses ($\alpha = .84$). As discussed earlier, self-monitoring effects are centered on social behaviors such as attaining status and making a good impression. Because the interpersonal dimension reflects these social behaviors, we focus on this criterion for the purposes of our study.

Other Measures of Performance

To examine how generalizable the hypothesized interactions were, we also examined results using supervisory ratings of task performance, which have been previously described. Internal consistency across the five-item measure of task performance was .89. However, there were no formal hypotheses associated with task performance, because the nonsocial nature of the criteria is not expected to reflect the hypothesized interaction.

Peer raters also provided ratings of task and interpersonal performance using the same items as used by the participant’s direct supervisor. These ratings, along with ratings by other managers, subordinates, and customers were obtained to provide comprehensive developmental feedback to the Executive MBA student. Although we did not propose formal hypotheses, we examined the extent to which the hypothesized interactive results were found using peer ratings of interpersonal performance, as well as the less relevant task performance ratings, to obtain insight into the extent to which our results generalize across the entire criterion space. Peer raters independently rated the participant on items assessing task performance and interpersonal performance ($\alpha = .93$ and .82, respectively).

Results

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for the FFM traits, self-monitoring, and supervisory and peer ratings of interpersonal performance and task performance. We first examined correlations among the variables (see Table 1) to test the main effects of the personality traits on interpersonal performance. In general, these results were consistent with previous findings. The two interpersonally oriented traits, Extraversion and Agreeableness, were related to supervisor ratings of interpersonal performance ($r = .24$ and .20, respectively, 95% confidence interval is $0.01 \leq .20 \leq .39$). The magnitude of the correlations between interpersonal performance and Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness, and self-monitoring ($r = .18$, .11, and .11 respectively) was consistent with previous meta-analytic results (Barrick et al., 2001; Day et al., 2002), although these effects were not significantly different from zero.
TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for all Variables (N = 102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conscientiousness</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Extraversion</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Agreeableness</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Emotional Stability</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Openness</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Self-monitoring</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Supervisory ratings of interpersonal performance</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Supervisory ratings of task performance</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Peer ratings of interpersonal performance</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Peer ratings of task performance</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 102. The 95% confidence interval for correlations greater than or equal to .20 does not include zero (95% CI: .01 ≤ .20 ≤ .39).
Examining the other criteria, we find the pattern of correlations between the personality traits and peer ratings of interpersonal performance were quite similar to the supervisory ratings ($r = .18, .16, .12,$ and $.07$, for Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability, respectively), although they were consistently smaller and were not significantly different from zero. Finally, the magnitude of the validities with task performance, whether assessed by the supervisor or a peer was comparable to that found in prior meta-analyses ($r$ ranges from $-.02$ to $.20$), except for Agreeableness, which consistently was found to have a negative correlation ($r = -.08$ and $-.15$), although the 95% confidence intervals included zero.

The hypotheses pertaining to the moderating effect of self-monitoring was examined using moderated hierarchical regression analyses. In Step 1, the main effects of self-monitoring and each of the FFM traits were controlled by entering them in the initial step of a series of five regression analyses. Following Aiken and West (1991), these variables were centered (i.e., by subtracting the mean from each score), and the interaction term was based on these centered scores. The hypothesis is tested by examining the incremental gain in prediction in Step 2, when the interaction term between self-monitoring and one FFM personality trait is entered in each regression.

As reported in Table 2, the results revealed a significant interaction between self-monitoring and three FFM traits in predicting supervisory ratings of interpersonal performance: Extraversion ($\Delta R^2 = .127, p < .01$), Emotional Stability ($\Delta R^2 = .078, p < .01$), and Openness to Experience ($\Delta R^2 = .048, p < .05$). The nature of these interactions is shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3. Regression lines were plotted for high, average, and low levels of the personality variable ($+1, 0,$ and $-1$ standard deviations from the mean; Cohen & Cohen, 1983). For those individuals with low levels of self-monitoring, there was a strong positive relationship between the FFM trait and interpersonal performance. On the other hand, for those individuals with high levels of self-monitoring, there was no relationship between the FFM trait and interpersonal performance. Thus our hypothesis was supported for Extraversion and Emotional Stability, when predicting interpersonal performance. No significant interaction was reported for either Conscientiousness or Agreeableness, contrary to expectations. Finally, although it was not originally hypothesized, the relationship between Openness to Experience and supervisory ratings of interpersonal performance was found to be moderated by the participant’s level of self-monitoring. This relationship corresponds to that found for Extraversion and Emotional Stability, and is shown in Figure 3.

Peer ratings of interpersonal performance were consistent with the significant interactive results reported with supervisory ratings of interpersonal performance for Extraversion ($\Delta R^2 = .106, p < .01$) and Emotional
TABLE 2
Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Supervisory Ratings of Interpersonal Performance on Personality and Self-Monitoring. (N = 102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>(stderβ)</td>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>(stderβ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.76**</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.74**</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>(.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>(.14)</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>(.14)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness × self-monitoring</td>
<td>-.52</td>
<td>(.30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model R²</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.059</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step ΔR²</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.77**</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.82**</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion × self-monitoring</td>
<td>-.94**</td>
<td>(.24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model R²</td>
<td>.061*</td>
<td></td>
<td>.188*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step ΔR²</td>
<td>.127**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.76**</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.76**</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>(.10)</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>(.10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness × self-monitoring</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>(.21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model R²</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td></td>
<td>.058</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step ΔR²</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.76**</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.75**</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stability</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>(.11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stability × Self-monitoring</td>
<td>-.76**</td>
<td>(.26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model R²</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td></td>
<td>.126**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step ΔR²</td>
<td>.078**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.76**</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.78**</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to Experience</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>(.11)</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>(.11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to Experience × self-monitoring</td>
<td>-.47*</td>
<td>(.21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model R²</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td></td>
<td>.063</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step ΔR²</td>
<td>.048*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. (stderβ) = standard error of the beta.

Stability (ΔR² = .083, p < .01), along with Conscientiousness (ΔR² = .106, p < .01). Again, contrary to the hypothesis, Agreeableness (ΔR² = .011, ns) did not significantly interact with self-monitoring to predict peer ratings of interpersonal performance, nor did Openness to Experience (ΔR² = .008, ns). As expected, with one exception, none of the interactive effects were significant with the task performance measures, whether based on supervisor ratings or peer ratings. The one exception was
Extraversion by Self-Monitoring

Note. Graph shows performance range from $-1 \text{ SD}$ to $+1 \text{ SD}$ of mean performance.

**Figure 1:** Significant Interaction Between Self-Monitoring and Extraversion on Supervisory Ratings of Interpersonal Performance.

Emotional Stability by Self-Monitoring

Note. Graph shows performance range from $-1 \text{ SD}$ to $+1 \text{ SD}$ of mean performance.

**Figure 2:** Significant Interaction Between Self-Monitoring and Emotional Stability on Supervisory Ratings of Interpersonal Performance.
Meta-analyses of the relationships between FFM personality traits and performance have revealed that there is substantial variance in correlations across studies, which remains unexplained. This study heeds the call of other researchers (Barrick et al., 2001; Hough, 2003), who suggest we focus on finding moderating effects that explain the conditions that facilitate or constrain the influence of FFM personality traits on performance. Our findings indicate that one such moderator is self-monitoring. What is surprising about these findings is they indicate that characteristics of the person (e.g., self-monitoring), not just the situation, may restrict the extent to which an individual can behave in accordance with his or her Big Five personality traits.

These findings are new to the literature and suggest that self-monitoring plays an instrumental role in predicting work-related outcomes in jobs with a large interpersonal component. Employees high in Emotional Stability, Extraversion, or Openness to Experience who were also low in self-monitoring achieved the highest levels of interpersonal performance.
These findings are noteworthy because they show that these FFM personality traits are important predictors of interpersonal performance but only for those individuals who are low self-monitors. However, our results also show that individuals who scored high on self-monitoring had relatively strong interpersonal performance when the person had relatively low levels of, for example, Extraversion. In fact, we see in Figure 1 that the regression lines for low and average self-monitoring only surpassed the high self-monitoring line at above-average levels of Extraversion. Thus, high levels of self-monitoring appear to compensate for low Extraversion. It should also be noted, of course, that the reverse would also be true, that Extraversion would moderate the relationship between self-monitoring and performance.

The results show that the largest interaction effect was with self-monitoring and Extraversion ($R^2 = .127$). This makes sense given that both Extraversion and self-monitoring are related to a desire to attain status, and to status-seeking behavior. For example, the meta-analysis by Judge et al. (2002), showed that Extraversion was the strongest Big Five correlate of leadership ($\rho = .31$) and leadership emergence ($\rho = .33$). As a key disposition underlying social behavior, Extraversion is the primary personality trait influencing an individual’s attempts to obtain power and dominance within a status hierarchy (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002). Similarly, individuals who score high on self-monitoring see social situations as a way to make a favorable impression on others and to gain status in groups (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). The significant interaction reported in this study illustrates that the nature of the relationship between these two attributes is a multiplicative interaction, such that one must have either high scores on self-monitoring or Extraversion to be successful in settings where status is important. Based on this, we expect that the interaction between Extraversion and self-monitoring will be critical in social situations that reward status-seeking behavior or require negotiation and leadership, such as sales, management, or executive positions (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge et al., 2002).

As hypothesized, Extraversion and Agreeableness showed relatively large main effects on interpersonal performance, a result that is consistent with past personality research. Furthermore, Emotional Stability and Conscientiousness were positively related to interpersonal performance, although the confidence intervals for these correlations did not exclude zero. However, of these four traits, only Extraversion and Emotional Stability showed a significant interaction with self-monitoring. It is not clear why this would hold true for Extraversion and Emotional Stability and not for Conscientiousness and Agreeableness.

Some of these results were replicated in this data set using peer ratings of interpersonal performance, as Extraversion and Emotional Stability had
significant interactive effects on self-monitoring, and again, Agreeableness did not. These findings suggest the moderating effect of self-monitoring is generalizable. However, because the interactive results were significant for Conscientiousness (and were not for Openness to Experience) when using peer ratings of interpersonal performance, it may be premature to conclude that Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience are (or are not) likely to be relevant traits to be examined in future research.

Further research is clearly needed to replicate and clarify these results, as well as to examine the moderating impact of self-monitoring on FFM traits in other settings. It may be, for example, that in highly interdependent, cooperative settings a high self-monitor would act more agreeably (because agreeable behaviors would be perceived more favorably in this setting). In other words, there may be an interaction between Agreeableness and self-monitoring in a more cooperative setting, though we did not find one in our sample.

An interesting finding was the interaction of Openness to Experience and self-monitoring in predicting supervisory ratings of interpersonal performance. Neither trait showed significant main effects, yet, the interaction term was significant. However, this interaction was not significant when using peer ratings of interpersonal performance. Although replication of this finding is necessary, the results imply that Openness to Experience may be more important to performance than previously realized, because its value has been masked by self-monitoring.

There are several theoretical contributions of this study. The results of this study combined with previous research on situational strength (Barrick & Mount, 1993; Gellatly & Irving, 2001) reveal that both situation-based and person-based factors moderate the relationship between personality and performance. When behavior is primarily determined by a strong situation or a person-based effect, FFM personality traits have less effect on what we do at work. These findings suggest that both situation-based and person-based constraints on behavior could be more strongly incorporated into modern theories of motivation. In the same way in which these characteristics influenced the correlation between personality and performance, they may also affect one’s goal strivings, expectancies, self-efficacy, work attitudes, and implementation intentions. For example, the theory of planned behavior is based on the premise that attitudes predict behavior. However, it is possible that self-monitoring moderates this relationship as well, such that attitudes predict behavior relatively well for low self-monitors, but not well for high self-monitors. Of course, motivational theories have long recognized the role of situational constraints at work. As this study shows, however, behavioral constraints can also derive from the person, and unless job performance is somewhat independent of these constraints, interventions designed to influence work motivation
may not be enough to change underlying behaviors. Consequently, future research should examine whether these sources of behavioral inhibition also serve as moderators for other motivational interventions, in addition to personality.

The results from this study also have important practical implications. For example, although prior research has been concerned with impression management and socially desirable responding in the selection process, the results presented here suggest that perhaps the emphasis should be on the broader construct of self-monitoring. Impression management is a behavior that high self-monitors frequently engage in (Turnley & Bolino, 2001), and it seems that they would be particularly likely to do so in a selection setting, when the person is motivated by “high stakes” testing. High self-monitors would therefore be likely to adjust their behavior in the selection process in order to be evaluated favorably. In other words, they are likely to engage in impression management behavior in the interview and to respond to personality scales in a socially desirable fashion due to the “high stakes” demands that occur during the selection process.

Although socially desirable responding on personality scales has been of considerable concern in selection, empirical research has found that it has little impact on the validity of the relationships between personality and either performance (Barrick & Mount, 1996; Christiansen, Goffin, Johnston, & Rothstein, 1994) or turnover (Barrick & Mount, 1996). Christiansen et al. (1994) suggested that the reason for this finding could be that the socially desirable responding was also related to performance, yet, research has not found a significant correlation between the two (Viswesvaran, Ones, & Hough, 2001)—just as self-monitoring has not been found to correlate strongly with performance. The interaction effect of self-monitoring with the FFM personality traits may help explain some of these confusing results. If an individual responds in a socially desirable fashion on a personality scale during the selection process for a sales position and, as a result, gets a higher score on Extraversion, it may be due to the trait of self-monitoring. Yet, this may be irrelevant to performance evaluations, because high self-monitors also know that they need to behave in an extraverted manner at work. As shown in Figure 1, individuals who scored high on self-monitoring exhibited relatively high levels of interpersonal performance, even at low levels of Extraversion. Consequently, the effect of the interaction of self-monitoring and personality is higher performance both as an applicant (yielding higher test scores) and as an employee (yielding higher performance ratings). Future research should therefore account for the dispositional effects of self-monitoring on impression management research.

Although we have suggested that a high score on self-monitoring may have an important effect in jobs for which interpersonal performance is
important, we do not intend to suggest that being a high self-monitor is important or desirable in all jobs. Indeed, there are likely to be many positions for which being straightforward is far more important than being socially adept. However, the results of this study indicate that the trait of self-monitoring has important work-related implications and suggest that self-monitoring should be considered an important moderator factor when examining the relationship between personality and performance.

This sample has both strengths and weaknesses that highlight potential directions for future research. The participants in this study were Executive MBA students who were attending classes part-time while continuing to work full-time. As a result, they came from a variety of work backgrounds and exhibited substantial work experience (average years of experience has 5). Participants responded to the questionnaires based on their role at work. Having participants from a range of occupations is an advantage as the self-monitoring scores have not been range restricted by the social demands of one organization and one job. Hence, scores were more likely to span the potential range of values in the relevant population. Further, a strength of this study is that the performance evaluations of participants came from their immediate supervisors at work, creating a realistic environment in which to test our hypotheses.

A possible limitation of this study is that in some cases, the questions asked regarding interpersonal performance were similar to the questions asked to assess personality. This was particularly true for questions related to Agreeableness and may, therefore, have contributed to the particularly strong main effect for this trait in predicting interpersonal performance. For example, the PCI includes items such as “I believe in helping others” as part of the Agreeableness scale, which is conceptually quite similar to the performance item of cooperation (“cooperation: assists and helps others, works cooperatively, etc.”). However, although this similarity might inflate the main effects somewhat, it would not impact the interaction effects, which were of most interest to us in this study.

Finally, it should be noted that supervisor ratings of performance were obtained via the Internet, and we are therefore unable to verify that the participant’s supervisor was actually the one to complete the performance measure. However, because the purpose of the study was for participants to obtain developmental feedback, there was no incentive for supervisors to provide false ratings of participants’ performance.

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to examine conditions that can facilitate or constrain the influence of personality traits on interpersonal performance. The primary contribution is the finding that individual differences associated with self-monitoring can moderate the influence of FFM personality traits on performance—particularly Extraversion and Emotional Stability. These findings extend prior research that
has demonstrated the moderating effects associated with situational conditions such as autonomy on the job or incentive compensation systems. Our results show that the tendency to engage in self-monitoring, whereby individuals adapt their behavior in order to portray a favorable image, especially as rated by their supervisor, moderates the effects of personality on performance. One implication of these findings is that in order to more fully understand the conditions under which the FFM personality traits influence performance, both situational and person-based factors must be considered. Given that relatively little research has examined the moderating influences of person-based factors such as self-monitoring, this appears to be a fruitful area for future research examining relationships between personality and performance. Consequently, we encourage future researchers to account for both individual and situational characteristics that will regulate the behavioral expression of a person’s personality when examining the relationship between performance criteria and relevant personality traits. We also believe this finding has important implications for future research in areas beyond personality, as the effect may extend to other motivational variables as well.

REFERENCES


