

The Effect of Self-Consciousness on the Expression of Gender Views¹

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This study examines the effect of public self-consciousness on the expression of gender-role attitudes. It was hypothesized that high public self-consciousness was more likely to alter their gender-view expressions to meet situational expectations than were high private self-consciousness and that, under an activated state of public self-attention, people were more likely to alter their gender views. Tested in 156 college students in a quasi-experiment conducted in classrooms, these hypotheses were supported only in work-related gender-role attitude expressions, but not in domestic gender-view expressions. The experimental manipulation of public self-consciousness in a classroom setting might have made work-related identities more salient. Correspondingly, participants were more responsive to regulating work but not domestic gender views.

Private and public self-consciousness are considered two styles of self-regulation (Buss, 1980; Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). People high in public self-consciousness take into consideration the expectations and desires of other people in regulating their own behavior (Carver & Scheier, 1985). In social interactions, they are portrayed as “presenting” themselves to others, instead of “behaving” (Buss, 1980, p. 20). Consequently, public self-conscious people are more conforming to social norms (Scheier, 1980; Schlenker & Weigold, 1990) and are more sensitive to the opinions of others for fear of being rejected (Fenigstein, 1979).

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Much empirical research bears out the association between public self-consciousness and conforming behaviors (Abrams & Brown, 1989; Kurosawa, 1993; Scheier, 1980). For example, public self-conscious people's desire to conform is revealed in their concerns for clothing (Kwon, 1992; Lee & Burns, 1993), brand labels (Bushman, 1993), diet (Hamilton, Falconer, & Greenberg, 1992), body stereotyping (Ryckman, Robbins, Thornton, & Kaczor, 1991), balding (Franzoi, Anderson, & Frommelt, 1990), and avoidance of embarrassing situations (Edelmann, 1986; Froming, Corley, & Rinker, 1990).

People high in private self-consciousness, on the other hand, regulate their behavior according to their inner feelings and moods (Fenigstein et al., 1975), privately endorsed attitudes (Scheier, Buss, & Buss, 1978), and personal convictions and egocentric goals (Carver & Scheier, 1985). In social situations, they are seen as behaving, not as presenting themselves (Buss, 1980). Private self-conscious people are, thus, less conforming (Scheier, 1980), more independent and autonomous (Carver & Scheier, 1985; Schlenker & Weigold, 1990), and behave in a manner more consistent with their own beliefs. The fact that private self-conscious people are less susceptible to social pressure and act according to their inner beliefs is also well documented in the literature. For example, Doherty and Schlenker (1991) showed that people high in private self-consciousness and low in public self-consciousness presented themselves consistently, regardless of performance feedback. In another study, ratings of funniness of humorous stimuli by subjects high in private self-consciousness were least influenced by canned laughter (Porterfield, Mayer, Dougherty, & Kredich, 1988). Similarly, it was difficult to influence voting decisions of private self-conscious people (Echebarria-Echabe & Valencia-Garate, 1994). People high in private self-consciousness were also found to be more consistent in their self-reports of personal attributes (Hjelle & Bernard, 1994; Kernis & Grannemann, 1988; McFarland & Sparks, 1985; Nasby, 1989).

Self-consciousness, especially public self-consciousness, has also been studied as an induced state of self-attention that has been found to affect a wide range of cognitive and social behaviors. Generally, a state of self-attention as a member of a public is experimentally induced by having the subject perform in front of a camera. The camera may be presented with or without an evaluative audience or with or without self-identification. Considerable evidence suggests that people change their behavior as a function of such an induced state of public self-attention. For example, people were more generous and equitable, both of which are socially desirable, when their reward allocation was publicly known (Major & Adams, 1983; Reis & Gruzen, 1976). Similarly, people were found to be more hard working (Major, McFarlin, & Gagnon, 1984), more charitable (Satow, 1975), and making more self-serving attributions (Bradley, 1978).

Gender-related attitudes are part of a self-schema of personal beliefs that are shaped and influenced by commonly shared norms (Cann, 1993) and contextual and situational expectations (Deaux & Major, 1987). To the extent that people

differ in their propensity to regulate behavior according to private beliefs or perceived public demands, their expression of gender-related attitudes is expected to be more or less consistent with their true gender views or with perceived situational expectations. In today's political climate, people have a large stake in controlling the inferences that others draw from their expressions of gender-role attitudes, particularly at workplaces. Self-consciousness should play an important role in regulating gender-view expression to balance the need for internal consistency (e.g., to be consistent with a self-concept that is based on traditional values) and the desire to meet situational expectations (e.g., to be politically correct).

To the extent that people differ in their propensity to regulate behavior according to private beliefs or perceived public demands, it is hypothesized that people low in private self-consciousness and high in public self-consciousness (high publics) will be more likely to alter their gender views to meet situational expectations than will those low in public self-consciousness and high in private self-consciousness (high privates). In addition, gender-view expression may also be affected by public self-consciousness as an activated state of mind at a particular moment. Deaux and Major (1987) predicted that people would alter their gender-related behavior to the degree that either a self-presentational or a self-verification motivation had been aroused at the moment. When a person's concern for self-presentation is activated, it is likely that his or her behavior will conform to the expectations of the situation. In contrast, when a person is concerned with self-verification, the behavior of the person is most apt to be consistent with self-beliefs. In light of previous studies on the effect of public self-consciousness, it is hypothesized that, under an activated public self-consciousness state, people will be more likely to alter their expressed gender views to meet perceived situational expectations.

Method

Participants

Participants were college students from two state universities in a midwestern state of the United States. They were recruited from two sections of a large economics class in each of the two universities. One of the two classes from each university was randomly chosen to be the experimental group. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. There were 175 participants (103 or 59% female and 72 or 41% male) completing the pretest (to be discussed next) and 157 participants (94 or 60% female and 63 or 40% male) completing both the pre- and post-tests; 10 participants from the control group and 8 participants from the experimental group discontinued their participation after the pretest. Out of the 157 cases that had complete data, 79 and 78 were from the experimental and control groups, respectively. To achieve a balanced design, one randomly

selected experimental case was eliminated from the analysis. Thus, all analyses were based on 156 cases that had complete data. There was no statistical difference on any of the variables between the 156 subjects who were included in the analysis and the 19 subjects who were excluded from the analysis. Similarly, the initial sample of 175 cases had almost identical results as did the final sample of 156 cases on all of the variables.

Measures

Participants in both groups first took a pre test, which consisted of two questionnaires. One was the revised Self-Consciousness Scale (SCS; Scheier & Carver, 1985). The 22-item SCS consists of three subscales: private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness, and social anxiety. Only the 16 items comprising the private and public self-consciousness subscales were used. The items were presented on a 4-point Likert-type scale, with higher numbers indicating higher consciousness. There is a substantial literature supporting the reliability and validity of these two subscales (e.g., Bernstein, Teng, & Garbin, 1986).

The other questionnaire was the Gender Role Egalitarian Attitudes Test (Chang, 1999), which is presented in the Appendix. Derived from role-distribution theory (Eagly, 1983, 1987), the questionnaire consists of 10 items with 5 items measuring attitudes toward domestic gender roles and 5 items measuring attitudes toward work-related gender roles. Thus, there were two gender-role attitudes variables concerning work and domestic roles, respectively. The items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 to 4, with lower numbers indicating gender-egalitarian attitudes and higher numbers representing attitudes favoring traditional gender-role differentiation. Reliability and validity data based on two American samples (Chang, 1999) were satisfactory. For example, the average internal consistency reliability was about .75. In one sample, these two scales were significantly correlated with the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1972) and with measures derived from a gender-role stereotyping experiment (Chang, 1999).

Procedures

Two weeks after the pre test, participants were given the Gender Role Egalitarian Attitudes Test for the second time. To create a situational expectation of gender views, the post test questionnaire was presented with the following statements: "On the following questions, some of your responses were found to be less gender egalitarian than those of educated and socially responsible people. Please answer these questions again. Please be most conscientious and faithful to your beliefs." This instruction, which was presented to both the experimental group and the control group, was intended to create the social expectation that educated and socially responsible people are gender egalitarian. In order not to create the

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability Estimates of the Gender Role Attitudes

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>
Work	0.32	1.01	.81
Home	0.63	0.96	.83
Public	2.83	0.66	.80
Private	2.90	0.55	.63
Age	24.77	6.15	
Female	60%		
<i>N</i>	156		

Note. Work = gender role attitudes toward work-related roles. Home = gender role attitudes toward domestic roles. Public = public self-consciousness. Private = private self-consciousness.

unwanted impression that the subjects were expected to change their answers, they were reminded to be most conscientious and faithful to their beliefs.

In the experimental group, the participants were videotaped while they answered the survey, and their professor was present. The videotaping and the presence of the professor constituted the experimental manipulation to induce the state of public self-consciousness. These two features were absent in the control group.

In both groups, participants were asked to provide the last four digits of their Social Security numbers, which were used to match the pre test with the post test. These experimental procedures were approved by the hosting universities' internal review boards. At the beginning of each test, verbal consent was sought from the participants who participated on a voluntary basis. At the end of the post test, students were given a written explanation of the purpose of the research.

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and internal consistency reliability estimates for the variables used in the study. A categorical variable was first created, which divided the cases into high publics and low privates versus high privates and low publics. These two groups are hereafter referred to as *high publics* versus *high privates*. To create this variable, the private self-consciousness subscale (mean score) was subtracted from the public self-consciousness subscale. The difference between the two subscales had a mean very close to zero. To achieve a balanced design, -.05 instead of zero was used as

Table 2

Split-Plot ANOVA Results

	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Work roles variable				
Test-retest	4.83	1	4.83	19.96**
Experiment (E)	0.99	1	0.99	4.11*
Self-consciousness (S)	0.95	1	0.95	3.92*
E × S	0.21	1	0.21	0.85
Residual	36.75	152	0.24	
Domestic roles variable				
Test-retest	1.11	1	1.11	5.56*
Experiment	0.08	1	0.08	0.40
Self-consciousness	0.08	1	0.08	0.40
E × S	0.04	1	0.04	0.19
Residual	30.31	152	0.20	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

the cutoff point. Those above $-.05$ were categorized as high publics, and those below or equal to $-.05$ were categorized as high privates. These two categories were evenly distributed across the experimental and control groups. This grouping variable of high publics versus high privates reflects intra-individual differences between public and private self-consciousness, but not so many inter-individual differences on either of two variables separately. Such grouping is different from the use in the literature where grouping is often based on the relative (not absolute) standings of the individuals on one of the self-consciousness variables.

Because the two gender-role variables were modestly correlated ($r = .23$), a univariate rather than a multivariate approach was taken. Specifically, a split-plot ANOVA design (e.g., Shavelson, 1995) was used for each of the two gender-role variables. There was one within factor with two levels: pretest versus posttest. There were two between factors: One was the experimental versus control group, while the other was high publics versus high privates. This design was completely balanced, with 39 cases per cell. The results are presented in Table 2.

The findings were mixed for the two gender-role variables. Both hypotheses were supported for the work-roles variable, whereas neither of the two hypotheses was supported in the domestic-roles variable. Unrelated to the hypotheses, the within factor of pretest-posttest was statistically significant for both the work-roles and domestic-roles variables. That is, averaging over the

experimental and control groups, participants expressed more gender-egalitarian attitudes during the second survey.

For the work-roles variable, the main effect³ of self-consciousness was statistically significant, $F(1, 152) = 4.11, p = .044$. Averaging over both the experimental (induced public self-consciousness state) and control groups, high publics showed more gender-egalitarian attitude change than did the high privates. The mean of the pretest–posttest change score was .36 for the high publics and .14 for the high privates. The difference was .22. According to Cohen (1992), a change of .20 is a small effect, while a change of .50 is a medium effect. Thus, the statistically significant difference between the high publics and the high privates represents a small to medium effect.

The main effect of the experimental variable also reached statistical significance, $F(1, 152) = 3.92, p = .049$. The effect size was .33. Under the induced public self-consciousness state, high publics as well as high privates altered their gender-view expressions to meet the researcher-manipulated expectations. The interaction⁴ between dispositional and experimental public self-consciousness was not statistically significant. However, for the work-roles variable and, to a lesser degree, the domestic-roles variable as well, the differences among the cell means showed, descriptively, the pattern of an ordinal interaction. For the work-roles variable, for example, the mean difference between the experimental and control condition on the pretest–posttest difference scores was .33 in the high publics and .12 in the high privates. Thus, it seems that high publics were more responsive to the manipulation of state public self-consciousness than were high privates.

Because the distribution of the two genders was uneven in the sample, to maintain a balanced design gender was not included as an additional independent variable in the balanced ANOVA reported previously. Because an almost equal proportion of males and females was assigned to the experimental versus control groups and was identified as high publics versus high privates, gender would not have caused confounding on the findings. To rule out any possible gender differences on the dependent variables, separate *t* tests were performed on the pretest–posttest difference scores between males and females. No significant gender difference was found in either the work-roles variable, $t(157) = -0.17, p = .87$; or in the domestic-roles variable, $t(157) = 0.24, p = .81$. Thus, there was no gender difference in gender-role attitude changes.

³In the split-plot design, this is actually the two-way interaction between the self-consciousness variable, which is one of the between factors and the test–retest, which is the within factor. The main effects associated with the two between factors represent the difference between the high publics and high privates and the difference between the experimental and control groups, respectively, on the average of the test and retest scores. The two-way interaction, but not the main effect, bears on the hypotheses of this study.

⁴In the split-plot design, this is the three-way interaction involving high publics versus high privates, experiment versus control, and test versus retest.

Discussion

Unlike many existing gender studies, the present study investigates the display and expression of gender views, rather than the formation of such beliefs. By combining the rich literature on self-consciousness with a popular and important dependent variable, gender-role attitudes, this study looks at gender-view expressions from a social interaction perspective. Social interaction research (e.g., Swann, 1983; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985) has, in general, pointed out two competing forces in regulating behavior. One is the private need to routinize behavior in order to sustain a stable self-concept. The other is the public need to contextualize behavior to meet specific situational demands. People who are subsequently categorized as high publics versus high privates tend to be more concerned with one or the other need. These two conflicting needs result in the stability versus inconsistency in the display of many behaviors and opinions. As shown in this study, the expression of attitudes toward work-related gender roles was susceptible to the same regulating forces. That is, self-consciousness as a dispositional propensity affects the expression of work-related gender views.

The findings also show that self-consciousness as an activated state of mind has a similar effect on gender-view expressions. Of the two self-regulating effects, one is chronic, representing a person's disposition. The other is more acute and is activated by a specific interactional situation. The findings also seem to suggest that the combination of the two effects together is more forceful than is each effect alone. In other words, under the activated state of public self-attention, high publics seem more inclined than do high privates to alter their gender-view expressions to meet researcher-manipulated expectations. This interaction effect, however, was not statistically significant, partly because the two groups—high publics versus high privates—overlapped in the distribution of the two self-consciousness variables. Future research can explore this effect in larger samples where non-overlapping and more extreme groups can be created (e.g., top and bottom 10% of the distribution).

The effect of public self-consciousness was observed altering expressed gender attitudes toward work roles, but not toward domestic roles. One of the reasons for the mixed findings might be that the experimental manipulation involving a video camera and the presence of the professor in a classroom of students induced public awareness concerning a participant's work-related identities (e.g., a member of the university community), rather than home-related identities (e.g., a daughter or a girlfriend). Perhaps the saliency of work-related identities made subjects more responsive to regulating the expression of work-related gender views. According to identity researchers (e.g., Deaux, 1992), one constructs gender-related beliefs and regulates the display of related behaviors in accordance with a chronic as well as a situational accessibility of identities. An interesting future study could investigate the interplay between identity saliency and self-

consciousness in regulating gender-view expressions. For example, when a particular home-related versus work-related identity is made distinctive, would high publics express more or less consistent gender views than would high privates?

In this study, gender had no effect in changing gender-view expressions. In a group interaction, however, the sameness or difference of the gender of the target and receiver will make more or less salient gender-related identities (Deaux & Major, 1987), which, in turn, might exert different influences in regulating behavior. Would high publics express more or less consistent gender views than would high privates when interacting with the same or the opposite gender? Future studies could examine the effect of self-regulation on gender-view expression as a function of identity saliency and the gender of the participants in dynamic social interactions.

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Appendix

Gender Role Egalitarian Attitudes Test

On each of the following items, if you think it is equally important or appropriate for men and women, please check 0. If you think it is more important or more appropriate for women than it is for men, please use 1, 2, 3, or 4 next to *more for women* to indicate the degree to which you think it is more important or more appropriate for women than it is for men. If you think it is more important or more appropriate for men than it is for women, please use 1, 2, 3, or 4 next to *more for men* to indicate the degree to which you think it is more important or more appropriate for men than it is for women.

Become a leader

1 2 3 4 more for women
 0 same
 1 2 3 4 more for men

Do grocery shopping

1 2 3 4 more for women
 0 same
 1 2 3 4 more for men

Conduct business

1 2 3 4 more for women
 0 same
 1 2 3 4 more for men

Take care of children

1 2 3 4 more for women
 0 same
 1 2 3 4 more for men

Receive highest education possible

1 2 3 4 more for women
 0 same
 1 2 3 4 more for men

Make money

1 2 3 4 more for women
 0 same
 1 2 3 4 more for men

Cook at home

1 2 3 4 more for women
 0 same
 1 2 3 4 more for men

Do housework

1 2 3 4 more for women
 0 same
 1 2 3 4 more for men

Do laundry

1 2 3 4 more for women
 0 same
 1 2 3 4 more for men

Have a successful career

1 2 3 4 more for women
 0 same
 1 2 3 4 more for men