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Self-Awareness and Saliency of Social versus Individualistic Behavioral Standards

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Abstract

In three studies the effects of private and public self-awareness on saliency of behavioral standards were examined. Several well-known manipulations were used to test the effects of private or public self-awareness on the activation of behavioral standards. It was expected and found that public self-awareness was related to relatively social standards, as “getting along well” with others, conveying a positive image, and wanting to be accepted. Private self-awareness was related to the relatively individualistic standard to be authentic and even to be different from others. The consequences of these results are discussed in light of previous research and it is argued that it is important to acknowledge that awareness of different self-aspects may increase saliency of distinct behavioral standards.

## Self-Awareness and Saliency of Social versus Individualistic Behavioral Standards

What happens when people become aware of themselves? Previous research offers a variety of suggestions. Self-awareness has been related to, for example, *accurate self-reports* (Gibbons, 1983; Scheier, Buss, & Buss, 1978; Pryor, Gibbons, Wicklund, Fazio, & Hood, 1977), *consistency* (Silvia & Gendolla, 2001), *conformity* (either to general norms, or to specific others, e.g., Kallgren, Reno, & Cialdini, 2000), and *strategic self-presentation* (Schlenker & Weigold, 1990; Solomon & Schopler, 1982). In the current article, we will argue that the consequences of self-awareness may become more predictable when it is specified which self-aspects people are aware of.

Even though several researchers have speculated about the behavioral standards that are activated when people become self-aware (e.g., Duval & Wicklund, 1973; Gibbons, 1983; Schlenker & Weigold, 1990; Carver & Scheier, 1998), behavioral standards, to our knowledge, have seldom been assessed directly as a consequence of self-awareness. From behavioral data (e.g., “participants behave consistently” or “participants conform to norms”), it is typically concluded that certain behavioral standards must have been activated (e.g., Gibbons & Wright, 1983; Schlenker & Weigold, 1990). Gibbons (1983), for example, inferred from the result that self-aware participants expressed attitudes that were consistent with their behavior, that self-awareness leads to accuracy. But was “accuracy” activated? An alternative explanation for this finding may be that the standard “to be consistent” was activated, which led participants to behave consistent with previously expressed attitudes.

Similarly, based on the finding that self-aware participants contrasted their opinion away from the opinion of others, Schlenker and Weigold (1990) concluded that participants emphasized autonomy and personal identity. But was autonomy in this case a salient behavioral standard? Or was, perhaps, the standard “to be unique” activated? As the

activation of behavioral standards was not assessed in these previous studies, we do not know why self-aware participants behaved the way they did.

Although the activation of different behavioral standards may induce similar behaviors, these different standards may also induce different behaviors. For example, the standard “to be consistent” may lead to the expression of an opinion consistent with previously expressed behavior, even when this opinion is inconsistent with a private opinion. In contrast, the standard “to be accurate” may lead to the expression of a private opinion, even when it is inconsistent with previously expressed behavior. To predict which opinion self-aware people will express, it may therefore be important to know which standard is activated.

One possibility to gain knowledge about the standards that are activated is to measure all kinds of behavioral consequences and—by means of deduction—infer from the data which standard must have been activated. This approach requires numerous experiments, as every possible standard has to be depicted against the other standards. Another way to gain some insight is to measure the behavioral standards more directly. For this reason we designed the current studies: To measure the saliency of behavioral standards as a consequence of increased self-awareness.

#### *Private and Public Concerns*

In continuation of a research tradition started by Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss (1975), we hypothesize that the consequences of self-awareness may become more predictable when we specify the self-aspects of which people are aware. Fenigstein et al. (1975) argued that attention could be turned to public self-aspects (e.g., behavior and physical appearance) or private self-aspects (e.g., thoughts and opinions). In the decades that followed, numerous studies on the consequences of private and public self-awareness were conducted.

Froming and Carver (1981) and Scheier (1980), for example, demonstrated that private self-awareness leads to the expression of privately held opinions, whereas public self-awareness leads to the expression of an opinion that is consistent with the opinion of others. Scheier (1980) subsequently argued that high public self-aware persons try to create a favorable public image. In contrast, Froming and Carver (1981) explicitly argued against the idea of positive self-presentation and hypothesized that public self-awareness leads to conformity because people want to “get along well” with others (instead of “impressing others”). Thus, even though the behavioral data of Scheier (1980), and Froming and Carver (1981) are consistent with each other, the behavioral standards that are thought to drive these behaviors are not. Measuring these standards as a consequence of (private and public) self-awareness, thus, may provide insight into the processes that lead to the demonstrated behavioral effects, and, as a consequence, may sharpen predictions that concern its behavioral effects.

#### *Overview of Present Research and Hypotheses*

In the present research we will measure the saliency of behavioral standards in response to an increase of both trait and state private and public self-focused attention, in order to circumvent the caveats associated with a focus on only (trait) self-consciousness or (state) self-awareness<sup>1</sup>. Establishing a relation between individual differences in public self-consciousness and positive self-presentation, for example, would give us an indication of the behavioral standards associated with attention to public self-aspects, but it would not tell us anything about the direction of these effects. It could be that the behavioral standard to impress others leads to attention to one’s public self-aspects, so as to establish how one is doing. By experimentally inducing state self-awareness, we could overcome this drawback.

Unfortunately, experimentally inducing state self-awareness is also not without its caveats. For instance, it is not entirely clear what different self-awareness manipulations

induce. Although an audience may increase public self-awareness pretty straightforwardly (e.g., Froming, Walker, & Lopyan, 1982), the effects of an often-used mirror manipulation are less conclusive. Some authors inferred from their data that a mirror must have enhanced public self-awareness (e.g., Hofmann & Heinrichs, 2002), but others infer from their results that it enhances private self-awareness (Froming et al., 1982; Scheier & Carver, 1980). To overcome this drawback, we will use different self-awareness manipulations and assess which aspects of the self (public or private) are increased. An additional benefit of this approach (besides that it may provide multimethod evidence for the relation between public and private self-awareness and certain behavioral standards) is that it may shed light on the specific consequences of different self-awareness manipulations, which are, to date, have not yet been established unequivocally.

In Study 1 we will first measure behavioral standards as a function of individual differences in self-consciousness. This study will enable us to get an initial impression of the relationship between public and private self-focused attention and several behavioral standards. In Study 2 and Study 3 we will use several often-used self-awareness manipulations and measure their effects on public and private self-awareness and saliency of behavioral standards. Taken together, we believe that this approach will give us an opportunity to obtain converging multimethod evidence for the relatedness of private and public self-awareness and saliency of several behavioral standards. By specifying the consequences of self-awareness manipulations for awareness of public and private self-aspects, and delineating the relation between awareness of these self-aspects and specific standards of behavior, the consequences of self-awareness should become more predictable.

Consistent with research that shows that people have distinctive levels of self-representation (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Gardner, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999) and that depending on context (and culture) they may represent themselves in relationship with others

(social self-construals) or as individuals (personal self-construals), we hypothesize that a focus on private aspects of the self (personal self-awareness) will activate relatively *individualistic* standards. Awareness of one's private thoughts and feelings, may increase the activation of an individualistic self (e.g., Cheek & Briggs, 1982; Gardner et al., 1999), which, in turn, may increase saliency of relatively "egocentric" standards. In contrast, awareness of aspects of the self that others can see (public self-awareness) may activate a social self (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Scheier, 1980; Wiekens & Stapel, 2008), which, in turn may increase saliency of relatively *social* standards.

Applied to the specific behavioral standards as mentioned in this article, we expect that private self-awareness is associated with the relatively *individualistic* standards to be authentic (accurate, or "true to one's inner-self") and, perhaps, even to be different from others (e.g., Schlenker & Weigold, 1990; Stapel & Koomen, 2001). Furthermore, we expect that public self-awareness is associated with the relatively *social* standard to "get along" with others (e.g., to conform and to be similar; Froming & Carver, 1981), and, perhaps, even to present oneself in a positive way (e.g., Scheier, 1980).

### Study 1

The main goal of this first study was to examine whether public and private self-focused attention is correlated with specific behavioral standards. To test our hypotheses, we used a version of the revised self-consciousness scales of Scheier and Carver (1985; see also, Fenigstein et al., 1975). We expect public self-consciousness to be *positively* correlated with the (social) standards to conform to others, to present oneself in a positive way, to be accepted and admired, and to appear consistent (e.g., not to swim with the tide and, hence, "to be unreliable"). Whereas the social self is related to "connectedness to others" (see, for example, Baumeister & Leary, 1995), activation of social standards may exclude relatively individualistic standards as "to be autonomous" and "to be different". Therefore, we expect

public self-consciousness to be negatively correlated with (individualistic) standards as “being autonomous” and “being different”. Conversely, we expected private self-consciousness to be *positively* correlated with the (individualistic) standard to be autonomous, accurate and different, and *negatively* correlated with the (social) standards to conform, appear consistent, present oneself in a positive way, and to be accepted and admired.

### *Method*

*Participants.* A total of 137 undergraduate students (90 women, 48 men) participated in a mass-testing session in return for partial course credit.

*Materials and procedure.* All participants completed a version of the Scheier and Carver (1985) private versus public self-consciousness scale (see also, Fenigstein et al., 1975; Sedikides, 1992). The items measuring private self-consciousness (“I think about myself a lot”, “I’m quick to notice changes in my mood”, “I’m always trying to figure myself out”, “In general, I’m aware of the way my mind works”, and “I generally pay attention to my inner feelings;” Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .83$ ) and “public self-consciousness” (“I’m usually aware of my appearance,” “I often check myself in a mirror”, “I generally pay attention to my behavior”, and “I’m aware of the way I look;” Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .77$ ) were measured on 7-point scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Next, participants received a measure of social standards they would like to pursue. All of the items were measured on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We measured the following behavioral standards: *positive self-presentation* (“I strive to make a good impression on other people”, “I want to give people the impression that my life is great”, and “I want to show my best side;” Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .64$ ), *accuracy* (“I want to portray myself in a realistic way”, and “If I were to meet another person, I would want to convey who I really am;” Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .70$ ), *consistency* (“I want to behave consistent”), *autonomy* (“I want to be an independent, autonomous person”) *being different* (“I want to be

different from other people”), *conformity* (“I prefer to conform myself to others”), *being accepted* (“I want to be accepted by other people”) and *being admired* (“I want to be admired by other people”).

### *Results and Discussion*

*Private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness.* Consistent with past research (e.g., Fenigstein et al., 1975), we found that public and private self-consciousness were correlated ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ); people who are high in public self-consciousness have a tendency to be high in private self-consciousness as well. We did not find significant gender-differences in private and public self-consciousness, all  $F_s < 1$ .

*Saliency of behavioral standards.* A close inspection of the inter-item correlations showed that “being different” and “conformity” were highly correlated ( $r = -.55, p < .01$ ; see Table 1). Because of the conceptual overlap between these items, we computed a compound score “being different” (after reverse-scoring conformity, Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .71$ ).

In previous research on the effects of private and public self-consciousness, the significant correlation between public and private self-consciousness is often ignored, and—as a result—the unique relation between, for example, behavioral standards and public and private self-consciousness is obscured (but see Froming and Carver, 1981, for an exception). To be able to establish the unique relation between private self-consciousness and behavioral standards we partialled out the effects of public self-consciousness (and vice versa). As Table 2 shows, a partial correlation analysis demonstrated, as expected, a positive correlation between private self-consciousness and the (individualistic) standards to be autonomous ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ), and to be different ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ). As also expected, we found a positive correlation between public self-consciousness and the (social) standards to present oneself in a positive way ( $r = .47, p < .01$ ), to be admired ( $r = .41, p < .01$ ) and to be accepted ( $r = .35, p < .01$ ). In addition, as expected, public self-consciousness was correlated negatively with the

(individualistic) standard to be different ( $r = -.31, p < .01$ ). Because we reverse-scored conformity and aggregated it with wanting to be different, this latter finding also means that public self-consciousness is correlated positively with conformity. Contrary to predictions, the standards to be consistent or to be accurate were not differentially correlated with public and private self-consciousness.

In conclusion, we found initial evidence that private and public self-consciousness are correlated differentially with specific standards. As expected, private self-consciousness was associated with the relatively *individualistic* standards to be authentic and to be different, whereas public self-consciousness was associated with the relatively *social* standards to conform (not being different), to be accepted, to be admired, and to present oneself in a positive way. Contrary to predictions and previous research, however, neither public nor private self-consciousness was correlated with the standards to be accurate and to be consistent. In the next two experiments, we will test the robustness of these findings.

## Study 2

In Study 1 we demonstrated that *trait* private and public self-consciousness were correlated with specific behavioral standards. To assess the influence of *state* self-awareness on saliency of behavioral standards, we conducted a second study in which we manipulated private and public self-awareness. We will start off with a fairly blatant manipulation: Having participants imagine a private situation (in which their attention is focused on private thoughts and feelings) or a public situation (in which their attention is focused on public self-aspects). We hypothesize that an imagined audience increases public self-awareness and leads to saliency of the (social) standards to present oneself in a positive way, to be accepted, to be admired, and not to be different, whereas an imagined private situation increases private self-awareness and leads to an increased saliency of the (individualistic) standards to be autonomous and to be different.

## *Method*

*Participants and design.* A total of 189 undergraduate students (139 women, 50 men) participated in a mass-testing session in return for partial course credit and were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 3 (awareness: private, public, control) factor design.

*Procedure.* Participants in the public self-awareness condition were asked to imagine a situation in which they had to “present themselves” in front of their peers (in such a way that their peers would get an impression of the kind of person they were), whereas participants in the private self-awareness condition were asked to imagine a situation in which they were alone and thinking about their “inner self.” Next, participants were asked several questions about the situation (e.g., to describe the situation).

*Behavioral standard questionnaire and manipulation check.* Next (or, in case of the control condition, “first”), ostensibly in a separate study, participants received exactly the same behavioral standard questionnaire as was used in the first study. Subsequently, as a manipulation check, participants filled out a slightly modified version of the private and public self-awareness questionnaire we used in Study 1. The original questions were rephrased so that they would measure *state* instead of trait self-consciousness (see also Sedikides, 1992). The items measuring private self-awareness (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .78$ ) were rephrased as to measure awareness at that particular moment (e.g., “I’m always trying to figure myself out” became “I’m trying to figure myself out”). The items measuring public self-awareness (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .60$ ) were rephrased in the same way (e.g., “I’m usually aware of my appearance” became “At this moment I am aware of my appearance”). Participants were asked to indicate on 7-point scales ( $1 =$  strongly disagree,  $7 =$  strongly agree) which answer reflected their current state best. Afterwards, the participants were fully debriefed about the nature of this study and about the manipulations used. No participants showed suspicion about the relationship between the questionnaires.<sup>2</sup>

*Results and Discussion*

*Manipulation check.* We conducted a 3 (awareness manipulation: private, public, control) between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance on the self-reported *private* and *public* self-awareness scales to check whether the manipulations had the intended effect. This analysis yielded a significant effect,  $F(4, 372) = 9.19, p < .001$ .

Between-subjects analyses of variance showed an effect of private self-awareness,  $F(2, 186) = 4.54, p < .01$ . Consistent with hypotheses, planned contrast analyses showed that participants who had been thinking about their own thoughts and feelings, were more privately self-aware ( $M = 5.6, SD = .73$ ) than participants in the control condition ( $M = 5.2, SD = .87$ ),  $t(186) = 2.65, p < .01$ , and participants who had been thinking about giving a presentation ( $M = 5.2, SD = .87$ ),  $t(186) = 2.57, p < .01$ . There was no significant difference in private self-awareness between participants who had been thinking about giving a presentation and participants in the control condition,  $t(186) = .03$ .

Between-subjects analyses of variance also showed an effect of public self-awareness,  $F(2, 186) = 12.10, p < .001$ . Planned contrast analyses showed that, consistent with hypotheses, participants who had been thinking about giving a presentation were more publicly self-aware ( $M = 5.2, SD = .65$ ) than participants in the control condition ( $M = 4.6, SD = .77$ ),  $t(186) = 4.70, p < .01$ , and participants who had been thinking about their thoughts and feelings ( $M = 4.7, SD = .74$ ),  $t(186) = -3.72, p < .01$ . There was no significant difference in public self-awareness between participants who had been thinking about their thoughts and feelings and participants in the control condition,  $t(186) = -.90$ .

*Saliency of behavioral standards.* Because “being different” and “conformity”, again, were highly correlated ( $r = -.56, p < .001$ ), and due to the conceptual overlap, we aggregated them into the variable “being different” (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .71$ ).

We conducted a 3 (awareness manipulation: public, private, control) multivariate analysis of variance on the behavioral standard questionnaire. This analysis yielded a significant effect,  $F(12, 360) = 13.78, p < .001$ . Consistent with hypotheses, analyses showed a significant effect of awareness manipulation on *positive self-presentation*,  $F(2, 184) = 23.12, p < .001$ , *accuracy*,  $F(2, 184) = 4.57, p < .01$ , *being admired*,  $F(2, 184) = 24.63, p < .001$ , *autonomy*,  $F(2, 184) = 31.04, p < .001$ , *being different*,  $F(2, 184) = 27.41, p < .001$ , and *being accepted*,  $F(2, 184) = 16.42, p < .001$ . Contrary to predictions, but consistent with the results of Study 1, we found no significant effect of self-awareness on the standard to be consistent,  $F(2, 184) = 2.5, ns$ .

As can be seen in Table 3, planned contrast analyses showed that, compared to the control- and public self-awareness conditions, *private* self-awareness increased saliency of the standard to be autonomous and different, which is consistent with predictions and the results of Study 1. Contrary to the results of Study 1 but consistent with predictions, private self-awareness increased saliency of the standard to be accurate and decreased saliency of the standard to be accepted. Furthermore, and consistent with the results of Study 1, planned comparisons showed that *public* self-awareness increased saliency of the standards to present oneself in a positive way, to be admired, and to be accepted. Also consistent with Study 1, public self-awareness decreased saliency of the (individualistic) standards to be different (or increased the saliency of the—social—standard to conform) and to be autonomous. Consistent with the results of Study 1, but contrary to predictions, neither public nor private self-awareness had a significant effect on the saliency of the standard to be consistent.

In conclusion, in this study we successfully induced state public and private self-awareness by asking participants to imagine a public or a private situation. As expected, private self-awareness increased saliency of relatively individualistic behavioral standards, whereas public self-awareness increased saliency of relatively social behavioral standards.

Furthermore, private self-awareness increased the saliency of the standard to be accurate and decreased the saliency of the standard to be accepted. At this point we are hesitant to speculate about these latter results, because they are inconsistent with the results of Study 1. This inconsistency could be the result of a difference between the effects of state and trait private self-awareness, but it could also be coincidental, especially because the effects are moderate. In the next study we will see whether these results can be replicated.

### Study 3

Although a mirror is probably the most often applied manipulation of self-awareness, agreement on its effects on public and private self-awareness, has yet to be established (see, for example, Buss, 1980 versus Carver & Scheier, 1978). In the current study we will assess public and private self-awareness as a consequence of exposing participants to a reflection of themselves in a mirror. Our hypothesis is that a (fairly large) mirror (in which participants can see the upper-half of their body) increases public self-awareness<sup>3</sup> and increases saliency of relatively social standards. Even if a mirror should increase private self-awareness as well, we would still expect social standards to be more important, as people will not only be aware of their private thoughts and feelings, but also of the judgment of those thoughts and feelings by others.

Besides mirrors, self-activation manipulations have been used to activate self-knowledge. One such self-activation manipulation is “I-priming” by means of encircling words as “I”, “me”, and “mine” in a text (see Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Stapel & Koomen, 2001). We expect this method to increase private self-awareness, without necessarily increasing public self-awareness. We expect the strong activation of private self-aspects to increase the saliency of relatively individualistic standards and to decrease the saliency of relatively social standards.

#### *Participants and Design*

Seventy-six female students were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 3 cell (self-awareness manipulation: mirror, I-priming, control) between subjects factorial design. Participants received partial course credit for their participation.

### *Materials and Procedure*

On arrival in the laboratory, participants were seated in separate cubicles. In the mirror-condition, a mirror was placed at the end of the table in such a way that participants could see the upper half of their body while filling out the questionnaire. In the self-activation and control condition there were no mirrors.

*Self-activation.* The priming task was modeled after Brewer and Gardner (1996, p.87). Each participant, regardless of condition, received a task called “tracking.” In the self-activation condition, participants were instructed to circle—as part of a word search task—all first-person pronouns that appeared in a text. In the I-priming condition, all of the pronouns referred to *I*, *me*, *my*, and *mine*. In the mirror- and control condition these pronouns were replaced by the letter combinations *abc* and *xyz*.

*Manipulation check and dependent variables.* To measure private and public self-awareness, the same questionnaire as in Study 2 was used. The same behavioral standard questionnaire as was used in the previous two studies followed.

### *Results and Discussion*

*Manipulation check.* We conducted a 3 (awareness manipulation: mirror, I-priming, control) between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance on the self-reported private (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .87$ ) and public (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .67$ ) self-awareness scales to check whether the manipulations had the intended effect. This analysis yielded a significant effect,  $F(4, 146) = 9.08, p < .001$ .

Between-subjects analyses of variance showed an effect of awareness manipulation on private self-awareness,  $F(2,73) = 3.73, p < .05$ . Planned comparison analyses showed that,

consistent with hypotheses, participants in the I-priming condition were more aware of private self-aspects ( $M = 5.9$ ,  $SD = .87$ ) than participants in the control condition ( $M = 5.1$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ),  $t(73) = 2.68$ ,  $p < .01$ . In the mirror-condition, private self-awareness was marginally increased ( $M = 5.6$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) compared to the control condition ( $M = 5.1$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ),  $t(73) = 1.80$ ,  $p = .08$ .

Between-subjects analyses of variance also showed an effect of awareness manipulation on public self-awareness,  $F(2,73) = 15.34$ ,  $p < .001$ . Consistent with hypotheses, planned comparisons showed that in the mirror condition, participants were more aware of public self-aspects ( $M = 5.8$ ,  $SD = .73$ ) than both participants in the control condition ( $M = 4.8$ ,  $SD = .83$ ),  $t(73) = 4.59$ ,  $p = .001$ , and participants in the I-priming condition ( $M = 4.7$ ,  $SD = .76$ ),  $t(73) = 4.96$ ,  $p = .001$ . Participants in the control condition did not differ significantly in public self-awareness from participants in the I-priming condition,  $t(73) < 1$ . In conclusion, the manipulations were successful at inducing a state of private self-awareness (I-priming condition) and public self-awareness (mirror condition).

*Saliency of behavioral standards.* Again, we aggregated “being different” and “wanting to conform” (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .72$ ). Next, we performed a 3 cell (awareness manipulation: mirror, I-priming, control) multivariate analysis of variance on the behavioral standard questionnaire. This analysis yielded a significant effect,  $F(14, 138) = 11.41$ ,  $p < .001$ . Consistent with hypotheses, these analyses rendered a significant effect of the awareness manipulation on *positive self-presentation*,  $F(2, 73) = 12.31$ ,  $p < .001$ , *being admired*,  $F(2, 73) = 5.30$ ,  $p < .01$ , *accuracy*,  $F(2, 73) = 9.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , *autonomy*,  $F(2, 73) = 38.46$ ,  $p < .001$ , *being different*,  $F(2, 73) = 52.03$ ,  $p < .001$ , and *being accepted*,  $F(2, 73) = 13.88$ ,  $p < .001$ . Contrary to predictions, but consistent with the results of Study 1 and 2, we found no significant effect of self-awareness on the standard to be consistent,  $F < 1$ .

As can be seen in Table 4, planned contrast analyses showed that, consistent with hypotheses, private self-awareness increased the saliency of the standards to be autonomous and to be different (compared to the control and public self-awareness conditions). Contrary to the results of Study 1, but consistent with the results of Study 2 and predictions, private self-awareness also increased saliency of the standard to be accurate and decreased the saliency of the standard to be accepted.

Consistent with hypotheses, planned comparisons showed that public self-awareness increased saliency of the standards to present oneself in a positive way, to be accepted, and to be admired. Furthermore, and also consistent with hypothesis, public self-awareness decreased saliency of the standards to be different (e.g., increased the social standard to conform) and autonomous.

In summary, the results of this study show that I-priming increased private self-awareness (but not public self-awareness) and that it increased saliency of relatively individualistic standards while decreasing saliency of relatively social standards. A mirror, on the other hand, primarily induced public self-awareness. The effects of a mirror-manipulation resembled the effects of an imagined audience: It increased saliency of the relatively (social) standards to present oneself in a positive way, to be accepted, and to be admired, whereas it decreased saliency of the (individualistic) standards to be autonomous and different.

### General Discussion

What happens when people become self-aware? In three studies we demonstrated that the answer to this question depends on which self-aspects are salient: Are people aware of their private thoughts, or are they also sensitive to more public self-aspects? The current results show that when people are aware of private self-aspects, more individualistic standards (e.g., to be authentic and to be different from others) are salient, whereas when they are aware of public self-aspects, more social standards (e.g., to get along well with others, to

present ourselves in a positive way, to be admired, and not to be different from others are salient.

These results point out two important issues. The first issue concerns the differential effects of self-awareness manipulations. Even though some authors have argued that different self-awareness manipulations have different behavioral effects (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998), others have used these manipulations interchangeably (e.g., Macrae, Bodenhausen, & Milne, 1998). By measuring private and public self-awareness directly as a consequence of several manipulations, we have shown that different self-aspects were increased. Consistent with hypotheses, we found that when people imagine that they have to give a presentation, public self-awareness (but not private self-awareness) increases, whereas when they imagine a private situation or when the self is primed, private self-awareness (but not public self-awareness) increases. The effects of a mirror are slightly more complex: Our results show that a mirror primarily induces public self-awareness, whereas previous research shows that private self-awareness are induced as well. Even when private self-awareness is induced as well, we would still expect public concerns to “win.” As our results show, a mirror induces the social standard to convey a positive image and get along well with others. In summary, the current results show that awareness of different self-aspects has different consequences. As a result, when applying self-awareness manipulations it seems important to specify upfront which aspects of the self we intend to activate (public or private self-aspects), and to choose our manipulations carefully.

The second issue concerns the consequences of public and private self-awareness. As we have shown, private self-awareness has profoundly different consequences than public self-awareness. Although a discussion of all previous research in light of the current results goes beyond the scope of this article, we believe that the results may shed light on unsettled debates. For example, the debate on whether an increased compatibility between self-reports

and behavior can be ascribed to the saliency of the standard to be consistent (Silvia & Gendolla, 2001), or to the standard to be accurate (Gibbons, 1983), or to the standard to be accepted (Wicklund & Duval, 1971), may be informed by the current results. In previous experiments concerning this issue, mirrors, cameras, and participants' own voice have been used to increase self-awareness. Our results suggest that these manipulations mainly increase public self-awareness. As a result, we would expect increased saliency of relatively social standards (to be accepted, to conform, to leave a favorable impression) to guide behavior, whereas relatively individualistic standards (to be authentic, or to be accurate) should be less salient. Together the current results offer support for the hypothesis that an increase in compatibility between self-reports and behavior is instantiated by the (social) standard to be accepted. Because knowledge of which standards are salient may improve predictions concerning the consequences of self-awareness, these results contribute to a better understanding of what happens when we are becoming self-aware.

*Measuring Self-Focused Attention and Saliency of Behavioral Standards*

In the current studies, as mentioned in Study 1, we used a slightly modified version of the revised self-consciousness scales (see also Scheier and Carver, 1985; Sedikides, 1992). Several of the traditional scales (see Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975) were confounded and may not have measured self-consciousness per se (e.g., Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1987). For example, the item "I am concerned about what other people think of me" seems to measure consciousness of other people instead of self-consciousness. In addition, the item "I usually worry about making a good impression" does not only measure self-consciousness (I am conscious of the way I look), but also "anxiety" ("I am worried about" the way I look). Similarly, in some of the items self-consciousness was confounded with behavioral standards (e.g., if you worry about making a good impression, "making a good impression", thus, is a salient behavioral standard).

To avoid these ambiguities in the current studies, the public self-consciousness scales we used, only measure *consciousness* of public self-aspects (e.g., “I am usually aware of my appearance” and “I generally pay attention to my behavior”). Similarly, the private self-consciousness scales we used, only measure *consciousness* of private self-aspects (e.g., “I think about myself a lot” and “I’m quick to notice changes in my mood”). As a consequence, in the current studies, measures of self-consciousness and behavioral standards were correlated, but did not overlap.<sup>4</sup> This result is consistent with early theorizing of Duval and Wicklund, who postulated that “when attention is focused on the self, there will be an automatic comparison of the self with standards of correctness” (Duval & Wicklund, 1972, p. 4). The current results corroborate this position, and add to it that awareness of private self-aspects activates relatively individualistic standards, whereas awareness of public self-aspects activates relatively social standards.

#### *Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research*

Even though the general conclusion that private self-awareness increases the saliency of relatively individualistic behavioral standards, whereas public self-awareness increases the saliency of relatively social standards seems warranted, not all findings of the present three studies were consistent. In Study 2 and Study 3 (when measuring state self-awareness) private self-awareness increased the saliency of being accurate and decreased the saliency of being accepted, whereas in Study 1 (when measuring trait self-consciousness) we did not find a significant relation. It may seem logical to conclude that private self-awareness does indeed decrease the saliency of the standard to be accepted, but the absence of a significant correlation in Study 1 suggests that this may not always be the case. Also, it could be argued that private self-awareness increases the saliency of the standard to be accurate out of “concerns about one’s autonomy” (“I am an autonomous person who wants to behave in line with my true self”), but, again, the correlations in the first study do not corroborate this.

Further research should determine whether these differences are due to a difference in state versus trait self-awareness, or whether another method may provide conclusive results.

Also, despite evidence for the thesis that private self-awareness increases consistency between reported attitudes and behavior, we did not find evidence for a relation between self-awareness and saliency of the standard to be consistent in the current studies. A possible explanation for this discrepancy is that people may believe that they generally behave in a consistent way, and, hence, that they do not have to pursue consistency between their thoughts and their behavior. In previous research (e.g., Scheier, 1980; Wicklund & Duval, 1971), participants often had to articulate their attitudes and then react to a situation in which they could act on their attitude (or vice versa). Perhaps this procedure increases saliency of the standard to be consistent. In contrary, our participants were not confronted with their attitudes. Therefore, the standard to be consistent may not have been salient for them.

Another issue concerns the question whether people always know which behavioral standard leads their behavior. Although we have studied “self-awareness” (which may imply monitoring one’s standards and behaviors closely), it may be argued that people do not always know what guides their behavior. Moreover, even when they suspect having a specific standard, they may be reluctant to report it. Additional evidence resulting from, for example, implicit measures is therefore needed. Thus, although the current results seem promising, additional evidence will be needed.

In conclusion, in the current article we found that state and trait public and private self-awareness have specific consequences. As expected, we found that private self-awareness increased saliency of relatively individualistic standards, whereas public self-awareness increased saliency of relatively social standards. These results suggest that in studying the effects of self-awareness, researchers have to specify which part of the self they

intend to activate, because awareness of different self-aspects can lead to increased saliency of profoundly different (but predictable) behavioral standards.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Consistent with previous research, we will use the term “self-consciousness” to refer to individual differences in self-focused attention, and “self-awareness” to refer to state self-focused attention.

<sup>2</sup> The self-awareness manipulations (imagining presenting oneself to peers, or imagining being alone and thinking about one’s thoughts and feelings) were framed as a research on “the start of college life.” All participants had recently started their studies. We asked them to imagine a specific situation, which is associated with college life (“meeting peers” or “being alone”). The behavioral standard questionnaire was framed as a study on the general motivation of students (comparative study between different ages, studies, etcetera). At the debriefing no participants showed suspicion about the relationship between the questionnaires.

<sup>3</sup> Buss (1980) has suggested that the size of the mirror may influence whether private or public self-awareness is induced. He hypothesized that pocket-mirrors induce private self-awareness, whereas larger mirrors induce public self-awareness, but did not test this hypothesis.

<sup>4</sup> Integration of the behavioral standards scales into the self-awareness scales decreased the internal consistency of the self-awareness scales. Integrating “Autonomy” and “Being different” into the private self-awareness scales decreased the Cronbach’s alpha in Study 1 from  $\alpha = .83$  to  $\alpha = .48$ , in Study 2 from  $\alpha = .78$  to  $\alpha = .49$ , and in Study 3 from  $\alpha = .87$  to  $\alpha = .49$ . Integrating “Positive self-presentation”, “Being different” (reversed scored) and “Acceptation” decreased the Cronbach’s alpha in Study 1 from  $\alpha = .77$  to  $\alpha = .49$ , in Study 2 from  $\alpha = .60$  to  $\alpha = .46$ , and in Study 3 from  $\alpha = .67$  to  $\alpha = .54$ . Even though the measures are significantly correlated, as expected, they do not measure exactly the same thing.

Table 1. Cell means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-item Correlations: Study 1

|              | M   | SD   | Pos. S.Pr. | Admir. | Accur. | Consist. | Auton. | Diff.  | Conform. | Accept. |
|--------------|-----|------|------------|--------|--------|----------|--------|--------|----------|---------|
| Pos. self-   |     |      |            |        |        |          |        |        |          |         |
| presentation | 4.9 | .90  | -          | .43**  | .13    | -.07     | -.05   | -.25** | .09      | .19*    |
| Admiration   | 5.7 | 1.03 |            | -      | .08    | -.13     | -.23** | -.24** | .11      | .28**   |
| Accuracy     | 5.2 | 1.06 |            |        | -      | .08      | .10    | -.12   | .15      | .07     |
| Consistency  | 5.0 | 1.32 |            |        |        | -        | .40**  | .12    | -.10     | -.07    |
| Autonomy     | 4.6 | 1.50 |            |        |        |          | -      | .19*   | -.15     | -.07    |
| Different    | 4.5 | 1.53 |            |        |        |          |        | -      | -.55**   | .07     |
| Conformity   | 3.7 | 1.17 |            |        |        |          |        |        | -        | -.05    |
| Acceptation  | 4.4 | 1.42 |            |        |        |          |        |        |          | -       |

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ ,  $N = 138$

Table 2. Partial Correlations between Public and Private Self-Awareness and Behavioral Standards: Study 1

| Awareness:                 | Private | Public |
|----------------------------|---------|--------|
| Positive self-presentation | -.02    | .47**  |
| Admiration                 | -.02    | .41**  |
| Accuracy                   | .13     | .02    |
| Autonomy                   | .30**   | -.14   |
| Being different            | .30**   | -.31** |
| Consistency                | .15     | -.06   |
| Acceptation                | -.01    | .35**  |

\*\*  $p < .01$

Table 3. Saliency of Behavioral Standards as a Function of Awareness Manipulation: Study 2.

| Awareness Manipulation     | Private          |           | Control          |           | Public           |           |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
|                            | <i>M</i>         | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>         | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>         | <i>SD</i> |
| Positive self-presentation | 4.0 <sup>a</sup> | .63       | 4.1 <sup>a</sup> | .81       | 4.8 <sup>b</sup> | .65       |
| Being admired              | 3.6 <sup>a</sup> | .87       | 3.8 <sup>a</sup> | .91       | 4.7 <sup>b</sup> | .72       |
| Accuracy                   | 5.3 <sup>a</sup> | .96       | 4.9 <sup>b</sup> | 1.04      | 4.9 <sup>b</sup> | .98       |
| Autonomy                   | 5.9 <sup>a</sup> | .76       | 5.1 <sup>b</sup> | 1.02      | 4.6 <sup>c</sup> | .88       |
| Being different            | 5.3 <sup>a</sup> | .80       | 4.9 <sup>b</sup> | .87       | 4.3 <sup>c</sup> | .66       |
| Consistency                | 5.0 <sup>a</sup> | 1.60      | 4.7 <sup>a</sup> | 1.47      | 4.7 <sup>a</sup> | 1.11      |
| Acceptation                | 4.9 <sup>a</sup> | .83       | 5.3 <sup>b</sup> | 1.05      | 5.9 <sup>c</sup> | .92       |

Means that do not share a superscript differ significantly from each other at  $p < .01$

Table 4. Behavioral Standards as a Function of Awareness Manipulation: Study 3.

| Awareness Manipulation     | I-priming        |           | Control          |           | Mirror           |           |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
|                            | <i>M</i>         | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>         | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>         | <i>SD</i> |
| Positive self-presentation | 4.7 <sup>a</sup> | 1.04      | 4.9 <sup>a</sup> | .90       | 5.9 <sup>b</sup> | .62       |
| Being admired              | 4.6 <sup>a</sup> | 1.01      | 4.7 <sup>a</sup> | .87       | 5.7 <sup>b</sup> | 1.02      |
| Accuracy                   | 4.9 <sup>a</sup> | 1.09      | 3.6 <sup>b</sup> | 1.58      | 3.5 <sup>b</sup> | 1.11      |
| Autonomy                   | 6.4 <sup>a</sup> | .87       | 5.6 <sup>b</sup> | .81       | 4.4 <sup>c</sup> | .85       |
| Being different            | 6.4 <sup>a</sup> | .80       | 5.1 <sup>b</sup> | .94       | 4.1 <sup>c</sup> | .88       |
| Consistency                | 3.7 <sup>a</sup> | 1.07      | 4.0 <sup>a</sup> | 1.57      | 4.2 <sup>a</sup> | .93       |
| Acceptation                | 1.9 <sup>a</sup> | 1.17      | 2.8 <sup>b</sup> | 1.41      | 3.8 <sup>c</sup> | 1.33      |

Means that do not share a superscript differ significantly from each other at  $p < .01$