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## Trends. The Tale of the Tape: The Consequences of Public Self-Consciousness for Political Life

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One influence of technology on political behavior involves the increasing sophistication of monitoring devices. Politicians--or colleagues, friends, family, and acquaintances of those politicians--can be less and less sure that behavior can be privately engaged in, be that behavior a conversation or more of the nonverbal variety. It seems reasonable to posit that as politicians more frequently run afoul of covert monitoring with dire public consequences to their power, they may more often experience, purposely shape, or be selected for--in a variant of so-called psychological or cultural evolution--public self-consciousness (PSC).

PSC denotes the (1) conscious awareness of how the self may appear to others as behavior is engaged in and (2) motivation (and hopefully the ability) to modify behavior so that the self appears in a positive mode to others--who may or may not be somehow present. Logically, it may well follow that politicians high in PSC would be less likely to be "caught" through covert monitoring--a positive consequence in an era wherein some observers believe that politicians as human are being held to superhuman or nonhuman standards. But a number of psychological studies suggest that high PSC may be accompanied by excess baggage that may contraindicate effective political decisionmaking for the commonwealth and commonweal.

For example, individuals high in PSC may be higher than other low PSC individuals on measures of anxiety--especially social anxiety--shame, embarrassment, and neuroticism and lower than low PSC individuals on measures of risk-taking and innovation. Individuals high in PSC compared to those low in PSC may have a psychological bias to attribute more favorable traits to people with athletic builds and more unfavorable traits to those who are considered "fat" and "out of shape." And a very suggestive finding for the world of politics and covert monitoring--individuals high in PSC are high on measures of paranoid thought (subclinical, but possibly nonadaptive).

The above findings have been obtained mainly with college students, psychological inventories, and artificial situations. They surely need to be replicated with other populations, assessment methodologies, and situations. However, the notion merits contemplation. Technological change as exemplified by more sophisticated covert monitoring devices may lead to a greater representation in politics of a psychological type. Individuals of this type may be less likely to "get in trouble" for moral behavior but, perhaps, more likely to get the political entity that they represent in trouble. (See Darvill, T.J., Johnson, R.C., & Danko, G.P. (1992). Personality correlates of public and private self-consciousness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 13, 383-384; Fenigstein, A., & Vanable, P.A. (1992). Paranoia and self-consciousness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62, 129-138; Ryckman, R.M., Robbins, M.A., Thornton, B., Kaczor, L.M., et al. (1991). Public self-consciousness and physique stereotyping. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 400-405; Tunnell, G. (1984). The discrepancy between private and public selves: Public self-consciousness and its correlates. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 48, 549-555.)