Dynamics of Identity: Between Self-Enhancement and Self-Assessment

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Aiden P. Gregg, Constantine Sedikides, and Jochen E. Gebauer

Abstract

Identity, in the psychological sense, denotes a significant subset of self-construals: those that are relatively accessible mentally, deemed essential to who one is, and valued as important. Given that identity matters, it is a locus of affect and motivation. Nonetheless, the number, nature, strength, and interrelation of distinct identity motives remains contested. This chapter focuses on one key pair of motives involved in self-evaluation: self-enhancement and self-assessment. The former denotes the drive to see oneself positively, the latter, the drive to see oneself accurately. Probable signs and dynamic effects of both motives abound. Examples of self-enhancement include above-average effects and cognitive dissonance; examples of self-assessment include the respective attenuation of these by semantic precision and self-affirmation. Often, the self-enhancement "accelerator" competes with the self-assessment "brake" in this way, and several conditions have been established under which one or the other motive predominates. As regards the relative adaptiveness of self-enhancement or self-assessment, the findings are complex and mixed. However, moderate self-enhancement often promotes psychological and physical well-being, albeit at the expense of interpersonal relations, probably because it serves to sustain good spirits and goal-pursuit. Many other identity motives have been postulated. These include drives for meaning, continuity, coherence, communion, and agency. Such motives cannot be completely reduced to self-enhancement and self-assessment, nor vice versa. Still, self-enhancement and self-assessment partly pervade other identity motives: the latter cannot be easily satisfied without also entailing tolerably favorable implications for self, nor unless sufficient warrant exists to conclude they really have been satisfied.

A.P. Gregg (✉)
School of Psychology, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK
e-mail: a.gregg@soton.ac.uk

What Is Identity?

Normal adult human beings experience the *existential intuition*: they explicitly apprehend that

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they are something (Tallis, 2004). The familiarity of this experience belies its strangeness. The physical world ultimately consists of atomic particles moving in fields of force. Yet, parts of this world—recently evolved two-legged organisms with complex brains—have somehow become aware of this world and of themselves.

The existential intuition lies at the root of people's *psychological identity*, the motivational dynamics of which are the topic of this chapter. Before reviewing these dynamics, we outline our conception of psychological identity, so that it can be fruitfully compared and contrasted with the many others offered in this volume. Our conception is designed to be inclusive and to accommodate a variety of theories and findings. After doing so, we proceed (a) to outline identity motives, (b) to explore the dynamics of two of them in detail, (c) to examine some of the key consequences they entail, and (d) to discuss how various identity motives might be classified and what roles they might play.

The Roots of Psychological Identity

Psychological identity differs from logical identity. Every distinct thing possesses an objective logical identity: it trivially is what it is. However, some things, namely human beings, also possess a subjective psychological identity: part of what they are, at any point in time, is also who they construe themselves as being. Otherwise put, whereas all things can be described, from the outside, in terms of "It is X," human beings can be further described, from the inside, in terms of "I am X."[1]

How does psychological identity (hereafter "identity") arise in the human mind and brain? The complete answer may lie beyond our cognitive ken (McGinn, 1999). But at least two interlocking cognitive capacities, together with their neural substrates, are likely to be preconditions for the emergence of identity.

One is the capacity for *symbolic language* (Deacon, 1998; Pinker, 2008). Human beings are adept at representing objects with symbols, and at flexibly and creatively manipulating those symbols in rule-governed ways to convey propositional meanings that are either true or false. All spoken and written communication, not to mention mathematics and logic, rely on this fruitful union of reference and syntax.

The other is the capacity for *reflective thought* (Piaget, 2001; Strack & Deutsch, 2004). Whereas non-human animals, by and large, are mentally shackled to the concrete, the actual, and the here-and-now, human beings can freely contemplate the abstract, the possible, and the temporally distant (Liberman & Trope, 2008). Hence, their minds can embrace the conceptual and intangible, the hypothetical and counterfactual, the future and past.

Equipped with these capacities, human beings subjectively construe themselves in sophisticated but distinctive ways. We now consider some of these.

Dimensions of Self-Construal

People's spontaneous self-descriptions (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954) typically make mention, not only of occasional attributes, but also of *enduring characteristics*, such as traits and habits (Holmberg, Markus, Herzog, & Franks, 1997). Such characteristics, being atemporal, must be encoded into semantic memory (i.e., memory for abstract attributes). Intriguingly, clinical and experimental studies show that semantic memory is not only functionally distinct from episodic memory (i.e., memory for concrete events), but is also capable of supporting self-construals even when episodic memory is badly disrupted (Kihlstrom, Beer, & Klein, 2003). That said, autobiographical recollections undeniably enrich self-construals, and a perennial theme running through the relevant literature is either that they are, or should be, integrated into a meaningful life narrative (McAdams, Chapter 5, this volume). Regardless of their mnemic basis, however, people's self-construals are rich, articulate, and distinctive.

But people do not only construe themselves as they are or were, but they also construe

themselves as how they might be (Higgins, 1987) or might have been (Roese, 1997). Such "possible selves" (Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo, & Scabini, 2008; Oyserman & James, Chapter 6, this volume), whether hypothetical or counterfactual, are as much a part of the psychological landscape as the actual self is: they furnish the framework for interpreting and evaluating it. Complex comparisons ensue (Suls & Wheeler, 2007), with information drawn from the social world (Taylor, Neter, & Wayment, 1995), personal introspections (Sedikides & Skowronski, 1995), and theories about abilities (Dweck, 1999).

Human beings' self-construals are unique in another way: they readily extend beyond personal boundaries to encompass other persons (Chen, Boucher, & Kraus, Chapter 7, this volume) and groups (Spears, Chapter 9, this volume). That is, people can categorize themselves, not only as standalone individuals, but also as partners in a relationship or as members of a collective (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). People can even mentally merge with inanimate consumer goods (Dittmar, Chapter 31, this volume), abstract social roles (Stets & Burke, 2003; Skorikov & Vondracek, Chapter 29, this volume), and geographical locations (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010).

The Core of Identity

Now we come to the main point. Identity amounts to more than just the sheer totality of ways in which people could construe themselves—whether semantically or episodically, actually or possibly, individually or collectively. The answer to the question "Who am I?" is in practice not infinitely long. Accordingly, a useful definition of identity should encompass only a consequential subset of potential self-construals—in particular, those that are relatively (a) *central* as opposed to peripheral, (b) *essential* as opposed to accidental, and (c) *important* as opposed to immaterial (Markus, 1977; Sedikides & Green, 2000). What do these three properties mean?

First, central self-construals occupy the foreground of the mind, having being made *acutely or chronically accessible* (Sedikides & Skowronski, 1990) by salient cues (McGuire & McGuire, 1988; Spears, Chapter 9, this volume) or personality dispositions (Bem, 1981).[2] Thus, a solitary male among females in a transient group, or a male who is habitually gender-schematic (i.e., typically thinks in terms of gender), would more readily tag themselves as male. Second, essential self-construals are those that refer to characteristics subjectively seen as *intrinsic* or *inevitable* (Haslam, Bastian, & Bissett, 2004). They imply a naïve theory about what necessarily one is or can be (Dweck, 1999). Gender identity would again be a good example (Frable, 1997; see also Bussey, Chapter 25, this volume; Dillon, Worthington, & Moradi, Chapter 27, this volume). Finally, important self-construals are those that *matter* to people: they are imbued with motivation (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003). For example, people in some cultures deem masculine or independent traits to be worth striving for, whereas people in other cultures place more value on feminine or interdependent traits (Fernandez, Paez, & Gonzalez, 2005; for a review, see Smith, Chapter 11, this volume).

As self-construals become more central, essential, and important—properties liable to be empirically correlated—they come to constitute people's prototypical identity. Subjectively, this means that people will regard such self-construals as "theirs" and be committed to them (Abelson, 1986; Kroger & Marcia, Chapter 2, this volume; Luyckx, Schwartz, Goossen, Beyers, & Missotten, Chapter 4, this volume); objectively, it means that those self-construals will be more impactful, both psychologically and behaviorally (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Sedikides & Skowronski, 1993; Swann, Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007). All sorts of self-construals generated by people's cognitive capacities provide potential grist for the identity mill: from remembered experiences to projected plans, from personal passions to social commitments, from current values to anticipated feelings. However, only a consequential subset of that content ends up

getting ground by that mill. This, we submit, is people's identity.

Distinguishing Identity and Self

If this, then, is people's identity, what is their "self?" As with "identity," there is little consensus about the meaning of this naturally fuzzy term (Baumeister, 1998). Different researchers either advocate a preferred shade of meaning from a reasonable spectrum or else simply assume that its meaning is already clear enough. Fortunately, this lack of consensus does not prevent empirical progress, perhaps because the umbrella terms "self" and "identity" gesture toward broad areas of enquiry as much as they denote discrete phenomena.

Nonetheless, we attempt one clarification here. We assert that self-construals do *not* fully constitute the self. It follows that, because identity consists of a consequential subset of self-construals, identity does not fully constitute the self either. Rather, identity and self-construals are merely aspects of the self.

The impression that the self amounts to nothing more than identity or self-construals may be fostered by use of "self" as shorthand for terms like "self-concept." For example, Sedikides and Brewer (2001, p. 1) state that "... the self-concept consists of three fundamental self-representations: the individual self, the relational self, and the collective self" (see also Chen et al., Chapter 7, this volume; Spears, Chapter 9, this volume). Such shorthand is harmless, so long as it does not lead to inadvertent equivocation, or prompt the mistaken inference that the self is a purely cognitive entity. For example, Kihlstrom et al. (2003) seem to draw precisely this inference when they state that "Although the self [...] is a thorny metaphysical problem, cognitive psychology [holds that]... [t]he self is a mental representation of oneself, including all that one knows about oneself [p. 59]."

But suppose the self really were identical to self-construals or identity. Who would then be there to entertain them? The answer is: no one. But this is incoherent: mental content cannot be free-floating. An underlying self, to ground such mental content, must be posited (Searle, 2008). Even when self-construals shift to a collective level (Spears, Chapter 9, this volume)—so that "we" construals replace "me" construals—some primordial self must still entertain those construals (Gaertner, Sedikides, & O'Mara, 2008). Moreover, this would be the very same self who experiences emotions and desires, or who acts or refrains from acting. In brief, self is a locus of coordinated cognition, volition, and action (Gregg, Sedikides, & Hart, 2008; Higgins, 1987).

Identity Motives

Human beings, then, do not merely coolly contemplate who they are; rather, they avidly take an interest in it. Their identity matters to them. Why? The answer is straightforward: identity-relevant self-construals carry affective consequences (Leary, 2007). So people seek to construe themselves in ways that augment the pleasantness, or diminish the unpleasantness, of those consequences. But what types of self-construals do people seek? Otherwise put, what are the key motives underlying people's identity?

Three Key Motives

Three fundamental *self-evaluation motives* (or *self-motives*, for short) have been postulated (Baumeister, 1998; Sedikides & Strube, 1997; Taylor et al., 1995).[3] First, people can be concerned with the accuracy of their identities: they can seek to self-assess by favoring true self-construals over false ones (Trope, 1986). Second, people can be concerned with valence of their identities: they can seek to self-enhance by favoring positive self-construals over negative ones (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). Third, people can be concerned with the consistency of their identities: they can seek to self-verify by favoring familiar self-construals over novel ones (Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2003).

In addition, each self-motive can, so to speak, operate in either direction: in pursuit of a desired identity, or in flight from a feared one (Elliot & Mapes, 2005; Higgins, 1987). For example, people can self-enhance either by promoting the positivity of their identity (i.e., engaging in opportunistic self-aggrandizement) or by preventing their identity from becoming negative (i.e., engaging in self-protection against self-threat; Alicke & Sedikides, 2009). However, these priorities need not be equally urgent. In particular, protecting one's self is more imperative than promoting it (Roese & Olson, 2007). For example, perceptions of not embodying one's "undesired self" predict well-being better than perceptions of embodying one's "ideal self" (Ogilvie, 1987; Oyserman & James, Chapter 6, this volume), and people consider themselves superior to others even more in terms of lacking vices than in having virtues (Hoorens, 1996). Given the generality of this motivational asymmetry (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; but see Sedikides & Green, 2009), it would probably also characterize the motives to self-assess and self-verify, although empirical testing awaits.

What hedonic benefits might accrue from satisfying each of the three self-motives? First, knowing that one's identity is accurate—fostered by impartial self-assessment—should forestall the anxiety that being uncertain about oneself would create (Hogg, 2007). Second, believing that one's identity is consistent—fostered by a bias toward self-verification—should forestall the confusion that finding oneself to be unpredictable would cause (Swann et al., 2003). Third, evaluating one's identity as positive—fostered by a bias toward self-enhancement—should forestall the pain that being critical of oneself would induce (Leary & Leder, 2009).

Note too that these self-motives can compete. For example, suppose my existing self-conception was positive, stable, and justified. All three self-motives would then be satisfied. But suppose I now received information about myself that was both credible and critical, I would then have to choose between satisfying the motive to self-enhance, on the one hand, and the motives to self-assess and self-verify, on the other.

Accordingly, various research paradigms have pitted one self-motive against another in order to gauge their relative strength. Taking feedback-seeking as an index of motive priority, it turns out that each self-motive can, on occasion, overpower the other. For example, people sometimes choose feedback more on the basis of its diagnosticity rather than its positivity (i.e., they prioritize self-assessment; Trope, 1986); or they sometimes choose to ask themselves questions that yield positive rather than diagnostic or confirmatory answers (i.e., they prioritize self-enhancement; Sedikides, 1993); or they sometimes choose negative confirming feedback over positive disconfirming feedback (i.e., they prioritize self-verification; Swann et al., 2003).

Later, we address the self-verification motive in particular, and consider further identity motives. But first we deal with the motives to self-enhance and self-assess. We contend that both are potent and pervasive. We further contend that many dynamics underlying identity can be efficiently understood in terms of the tension between them (for a fuller exposition, see Sedikides & Gregg, 2003, 2008).

Evidence for the Motive to Self-Enhance

Phenomena vary in how definitely they implicate a motive to self-enhance. Some provide circumstantial evidence, others more definite indications. The former type—which we term *prima facie signs*—include several aggregate effects and personality traits; the latter type—which we term *processing dynamics*—are demonstrated in experimental or quasi-experimental designs.

Prima facie signs can be both obvious and subtle. Obvious ones include various forms of *normative self-aggrandizement*. For example, people self-servingly take credit for successes while denying responsibility for failures (Mezulis, Abramson, Hyde, & Hankin, 2004), and they evaluate themselves favorably the world over (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). People also display a triad of positive illusions (Taylor & Brown,

1988), respectively reflecting inflated perceptions of (a) their own merits (Alicke, Vredenburg, Hiatt, & Govorun, 2001), (b) their levels of personal control (Fenton-O'Creevy, Nicholson, Soane, & Willman, 2003), and (c) their future prospects (Helweg-Larsen & Sheppard, 2001). The first positive illusion is typified by the *better-than-average effect* (Alicke & Govorun, 2005), where most people rate themselves as superior to others on a variety of desirable dimensions—including (ironically) the dimension of being bias-free (Pronin, Gilovich, & Ross, 2004).

A more subtle prima facie sign is *implicit self-positivity* (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Things linked to the self—such as one's name, face, possessions, or group memberships—spontaneously take on a positive valence (Gebauer, Riketta, Broemer, & Maio, 2008). Moreover, by capitalizing upon this Midas-like effect, indirect measures of self-esteem can be devised, key among them being the *Name Letter Task* (Koole & DeHart, 2007) and the *Implicit Association Test* (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000). Although such indirect measures correlate only modestly with traditional self-report measures (Rudolph, Schröder-Abé, Schütz, Gregg, & Sedikides, 2008), they reveal evidence of robust preferences for self that hold up cross-culturally (Yamaguchi et al., 2007). More astonishingly still, people gravitate toward locations, occupations, and partners whose names resemble their own (Jones, Pelham, Carvallo, & Mirenberg, 2004; Pelham, Mirenberg, & Jones, 2002).

Do such prima facie signs reflect motivated self-enhancement? Alternative explanations, of a drier cognitive sort, can be posited. For example, name letter preferences may reflect, not so much enhanced self-liking, as greater familiarity with more frequently encountered indices of self. If so, a confounded property of the indices themselves, rather than the entity to which they refer, would drive the effect.[4] Similarly, the better-than-average effect may be driven by an array of known artifacts (Hamamura, Heine, & Takemoto, 2007). For example, single things (e.g., oneself) are rated more favorably than sets of things (e.g., other people; Klar & Giladi, 1997), and respondents rely more on information about themselves than others when making self–other comparisons (Eiser, Pahl, & Prins, 2001). In addition, although judgments about commonplace virtues and abilities elicit better-than-average effects, judgments about rarer virtues and abilities elicit *worse-than-average effects* (Moore, 2007).

Nonetheless, cognitive factors alone do not fully account for such prima facie signs (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009). First, such signs persist, albeit in attenuated form, when particular confounds are controlled. For example, people still rate themselves somewhat more positively than other specific individuals (Alicke, Klotz, Breitenbecher, Yurak, & Vredenburg, 1995). Second, such signs exhibit dynamics that defy purely cognitive explanations. For example, implicit self-esteem decreases following ego-threat (Jones, Pelham, Mirenberg, & Hetts, 2002). Third, although it is scientifically appropriate to test motivational hypotheses rigorously by offering well-articulated cognitive alternatives, those hypotheses remain a priori plausible. For instance, are parents' judgments that their own children are superior to other people's children—judgments that covary with parents' own self-esteem—likely to be solely attributable to cognitive factors (Wegner & Fowers, 2008)?

In any event, the case for the potency and pervasiveness of the motive to self-enhance rests upon more telling evidence, which directly implicates processing dynamics. In this regard, two types of motivated bias merit mention: *memory selectivity* (Sanitioso, Kunda, & Fong, 1990) and *partisan reasoning* (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979). An example of the first bias is people's forgetting of unfavorable (but not favorable) behavioral predictions, made about them (but not others), when they concern central (but not peripheral) aspects of their identity (Sedikides & Green, 2000). An example of the second bias is people's thinking harder and longer about, and being more likely to doubt and check, information that threatens them compared to information that reassures them (Ditto & Lopez, 1992). In the first case, the past is warped to preserve positive identity in the present; in the second case, the present

is warped to promote positive identity in the future.

Still more convincingly, self-enhancing dynamics exert behavioral as well as psychological effects. In particular, people engage in *self-handicapping* (Jones & Berglas, 1978). Afraid they may perform poorly without excuse (e.g., on an examination), they duly act so as to provide one (e.g., by drinking beforehand), thereby sabotaging their own performance (Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005), but preserving their self-regard (McCrea, 2008). This form of handicapping—*discounting*—involves self-protection; the self-promoting equivalent—*augmenting*—involves hindering one's performance so as to triumph despite the hindrance (Rhodewalt, Morf, Hazlett, & Fairfield, 1991).

In addition, people will go so far as to sabotage the performance of close others for egoistical reasons (Pemberton & Sedikides, 2001). Here, the *self-evaluation maintenance model* (Tesser, 1988) provides some relevant theoretical gloss. The model states, first, that social comparisons with close others matter more; second, that superior or inferior performance by close others in identity-relevant domains threatens or boosts the self; and third, that similar performance in identity-irrelevant domains does the reverse. For example, a friend's success at securing (or failure to secure) a salary raise will matter more than a stranger's success (or failure) will; but if securing a salary raise is also an important part of one's identity, then a friend's success will serve as a source of shame (via *comparison*, a contrast judgment), whereas if it is not, it will serve as a source of pride (via *reflection*, an assimilative judgment). Various predictions of the model are well borne out, and the dynamics it specifies push for complementarity of abilities in close relationships (Beach, Whitaker, Jones, & Tesser, 2001).

Another important phenomenon to which the motive to self-enhance contributes is *cognitive dissonance* (Cooper, 2007). The classic laboratory finding was this: participants, induced to deceive a confederate into believing that a boring activity (which they had themselves performed earlier) was interesting, concluded in retrospect that the activity was not so boring after all. Such shifts in attitude were originally put down to a motive to avoid incompatible beliefs (i.e., between beliefs about claims and experiences; Festinger, 1957). However, subsequent reformulations, backed up by abundant evidence, indicate that dissonance effects are largely driven by the perception that one has voluntarily and foreseeably caused harm to others (i.e., by misleading someone; Cooper & Fazio, 1984), thereby violating identity-related standards (Aronson, 1969; Stone & Cooper, 2001), and evoking the unpleasant affect that prompts remedial attitude change (Losch & Cacioppo, 1990). Thus, cognitive dissonance is mostly about self-protective rationalization: it is not merely "cognitive." In addition, given that honesty is a normatively important standard, public assertions and behavior can be a potent source of identity change via dissonance processes (Schlenker, Dlugolecki, & Doherty, 1994). Finally, when people voluntarily make sacrifices to acquire an identity or to achieve a goal, their commitment to that identity and goal intensify, lest they have to conclude with embarrassment that their sacrifices were misplaced (Axsom & Cooper, 1985).

Suppose that self-enhancement truly is a motive. If so, then satisfying it should attenuate or eliminate the phenomena to which it gives rise, just as satisfying hunger with one food attenuates or eliminates the eating of other food (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). Such is the case. For example, if people engage in *self-affirmation* (Sherman & Cohen, 2006)—that is, indicate, list, or elaborate upon values central to their identity—then the standard effects of cognitive dissonance are short-circuited. Self-affirmation also reduces levels of partisan reasoning (Cohen, Aronson, & Steele, 2000) and of defensive social comparisons (Tesser, 2000). Moreover, various identity motives, as either measures or manipulations, can flexibly compensate for each other in this way (Kumashiro & Sedikides, 2005; Schmeichel & Martens, 2005; Tesser, 2000). Such substitutability suggests a common motivational core, one that implicates

the motive to self-enhance, but whose precise nature can be debated.

Evidence for the Motive to Self-Assess

Everyday observation suggests that people are not shameless self-aggrandizers: they display only moderate positive illusions (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). We contend that this is mainly because the motive to self-assess keeps the motive to self-enhance in check, and vice versa. Borrowing a handy distinction from the philosophical lexicon (Searle, 2004, p. 172), we could further characterize the motives to self-enhance and self-assess as having opposing *directions of fit*. Specifically, whereas the motive to self-enhance has a *world-to-mind* direction of fit—that is, it aims to make how one actually is match how one construes oneself—the motive to self-assess has a *mind-to-world* direction of fit—that is, it aims to make how one construes oneself match how one actually is. Otherwise put, the motive to self-enhance prompts people to defy reality, whereas the motive to self-assess prompts people to defer to it. We now review the relevant evidence for self-assessment, mostly establishing the conditions under which modesty prevails (Sedikides, Gregg, & Hart, 2007).

First, people exhibit better-than-average effects on ambiguous traits but not on well-defined ones (Dunning, Meyerowitz, & Holzberg, 1989), and they exaggerate their academic grades when their recollection is fuzzy rather than clear (Willard & Gramzow, 2008). Thus, when there is little room for mental manoeuvre, people dutifully self-assess. Second, when people write down reasons why they might or might not possess a particular personality trait (i.e., engage in explanatory introspection; Sedikides, Horton, & Gregg, 2007), they rate themselves less positively on those traits. Such an activity evidently encourages even-handed thinking about self. Third, being made socially accountable—by having to justify specific self-evaluations to others—curtails self-enhancement, with the effect being statistically mediated by greater attention to weaknesses (Sedikides, Herbst, Hardin, & Dardis, 2002). Again, when prompted to consider hard facts about themselves, people realistically incorporate those facts into their judgments, although this may reflect pragmatism as well as motivation. Finally, the fact that people with negative self-views disdain favorable feedback about themselves (Swann et al., 2003) is consistent, not only with a motive to self-verify existing self-views, but also with a motive to self-assess on the basis of credible evidence (Gregg, De Waal-Andrews, & Sedikides, 2010). The voluntary seeking out of diagnostic over favorable feedback (Trope, 1980) also obviously implicates a motive to self-assess.

Whereas the motive to self-assess requires the use of reason, the motive to self-enhance need not. Hence, when cognitive resources are limited, the latter should prevail over the former: the "brake" being released, the "accelerator" takes over. This is exactly what happens. For example, people distracted or made mentally busy endorse more positive traits and deny more negative ones, and get faster at doing both (Paulhus, Graf, & VanSelbst, 1989; Paulhus & Levitt, 1987). In addition, people with negative self-views, who select negative feedback when they have time to think, nonetheless select positive feedback under cognitive load (Swann, Hixon, Stein-Seroussi, & Gilbert, 1990). Finally, people who lack cognitive ability in a domain—and hence meta-cognitive capacity to accurately assess their ability—typically overestimate that ability (Kruger & Dunning, 1999).

Not all self-effacement (i.e., the opposite of self-enhancement) reflects variations in motive to self-assess. The motive to self-enhance can itself be assuaged: the "accelerator" being released, the "brake" can take over. Affirming the self, as discussed above, can increase openness to potentially self-threatening information that would otherwise be dismissed (Sherman & Cohen, 2006).

However, the motives to self-enhance and self-assess need not necessarily operate at odds with one another. Sometimes self-assessment can actually facilitate self-enhancement. This happens when people strive to improve their

standing on some attribute (Sedikides, 2009), given that a typical precondition for succeeding is knowing one's true current standing. Thus, self-enhancement can be *tactical* (i.e., indirect) as well as *candid* (i.e., direct; Sedikides & Strube, 1997): one can self-assess now to enable the improvement that will allow subsequent self-enhancement—a form of delayed self-gratification. Yet not all self-improvement may be tactical: the growth and expansion of the self may be intrinsically rewarding (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Goldenberg, 2003). Either way, the phenomenon of self-improvement illustrates the significance of possible future selves to identity dynamics (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Sedikides & Hepper, 2009; see Oyserman & James, Chapter 6, this volume).

It has been argued that members of collectivistic cultures, if they self-enhance at all, do so less than members of individualistic cultures (Heine & Hamamura, 2007), an argument that has sparked debate. On the one hand, members of both cultures reliably regard themselves as above-average on traits valued in their own culture (Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005), and implicitly prefer themselves to others (Yamaguchi et al., 2007). Moreover, members of both cultures also show evidence of threat-based dynamics (Greenberg, Solomon, & Arndt, 2008). On the other hand, members of collectivist cultures refrain from self-enhancement, relative to members of individualistic cultures, when it comes to self-serving attributions and social comparisons (Heine & Hamamura, 2007). Complicating matters further, members of collectivist cultures may expect close others to self-enhance on their behalf, even if they do not self-enhance themselves (Muramoto, 2003).

Ultimately, it cannot be simply concluded from the fact that ostensible signs of self-enhancement are less pronounced in collectivist cultures that the motive to self-enhance is weaker. It could be equally strong, but the antagonistic motive to self-assess stronger still—because, for example, collectivistic cultures lay greater emphasis on self-improvement as a means of tactically self-enhancing, and such self-improvement requires preparatory self-assessment (Heine & Raineri, 2009). It could also be that self-enhancement occurs, but is less frankly expressed, in collectivist cultures where modesty norms prevail (Kurman & Sriram, 2002). Indeed, modesty itself may even serve a source of self-enhancement in such cultures. Consistent with this contention, although modesty correlates negatively with direct measures of explicit self-esteem in collectivistic and individualistic cultures alike, it correlates positively with indirect measures of self-esteem in collectivistic cultures alone (Cai et al., in press).

Consequences of the Motives to Self-Enhance and Self-Assess

We have seen that the motives to self-enhance and self-assess loom large in the dynamics of identity. But what consequences, good or bad, do these motives have? Here, we focus on a single potential consequence: levels of psychological well-being or adaptation. Note, however, that the consequences of identity dynamics range much wider. They are apparent in such diverse domains as organizational processes (Haslam & Ellemers, Chapter 30, this volume), consumer behavior (Dittmar, Chapter 31, this volume), and group violence (Moshman, Chapter 39, this volume), to name but a few.

Some prefatory points are in order. First, given the psychological significance of both motives, each is liable to be beneficial at least some of the time. Second, given the complexity of both the human mind and social world, they may also be occasionally harmful. Third, that the motive to self-assess would be beneficial is unsurprising: contact with reality, including with the reality of oneself, is an obvious foundation of both mental health (Maslow, 1950) and sound judgment (Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004). The challenge, rather, is to elucidate the benefits of the motive to self-enhance, which works to undermine strict rationality. Fourth, the consequences of the two motives may vary depending on whether one is dealing with prima facie signs

of their presence (e.g., self-ratings and personality traits) or processing dynamics (e.g., partisan processing and post hoc rationalization). One reason is that the former, but not the latter, reflect *faits accomplis* about people. This means that the former may index, not only people's wish to be a particular way, but also their ability to end up that way, making the underlying causality harder to disentangle. For example, a person may have high self-esteem, not only because they like to self-enhance, but also because they are capable of self-enhancing: hence, high self-esteem would be only an impure index of their motive to self-enhance. Fifth, the precise operationalization of self-enhancement and self-assessment may make a difference. For example, inflated self-views can be operationalized by comparing people's self-ratings either (a) to the midpoint of the scale (Alicke & Govorun, 2005), (b) to their ratings of other people (Taylor & Brown, 1988), (c) to other people's ratings of them (Colvin & Block, 1994), or (d) to some objective standard (Willard & Gramzow, 2009). Each index, except perhaps the last, has idiosyncratic impurities that likely moderate what it predicts.

Bearing all these caveats in mind, then, what does the evidence suggest? Let us begin with normative self-aggrandizement and self-assessment. Which is better? The answer is intriguingly two sided. On the one hand, moderately inflated ratings of one's own attributes, control over one's fate, and future prospects—in absolute terms or relative to others—do predict good psychological adjustment (Gillham, Shatté, Reivich, & Seligman, 2001; Maddux & Gosselin, 2003; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Such inflated ratings also predict successful coping with serious illnesses and with other major forms of adversity (Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). On the other hand, thinking better of oneself than others do appears to predict poorer social and academic adjustment (Colvin, Block, & Funder, 1995). Muddying the waters further, some studies find that, across diverse operationalizations of self-enhancement, a positive linear association emerges with a range of psychosocial outcomes (Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, & McDowell, 2003), whereas other studies find that, although self-enhancement predicts better adaptation to highly stressful events, it also appears to predict impaired social relationships (Bonanno, Field, Kovacevic, & Kaltman, 2002; Bonanno, Rennicke, & Dekel, 2005).

The complications continue. For example, if self-enhancement is operationalized as an overly positive view of oneself, persisting even after the positivity of one's views of others and the positivity of others' views of oneself have been taken into account, then it negatively predicts occupational performance (Lonnqviust, Leikas, Verkaslo, & Paunonen, 2008). However, if self-enhancement is operationalized as the private reporting of exaggerated grade point averages (which can be objectively determined), then it actually predicts stronger academic motivation and ultimately better subsequent grades (Willard & Gramzow, 2009).

Summing up these mixed findings, one can still conclude that prima facie signs of self-enhancement predict positive outcomes better than a firm advocate of psychological realism would expect. In particular, such signs almost always entail better psychological health (e.g., happiness, fewer psychiatric symptoms) and sometimes entail better objective adjustment (e.g., coping and physical health). An occasional link to social maladjustment seems to be the main downside. Roughly, the same picture emerges if one looks at self-esteem (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). It seems that antisocial behavior is mainly engaged in by people with high self-esteem (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Yet overall, such people are also less prone to delinquency (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005) and less likely to blow minor relationship problems out of proportion (Murray, Rose, Bellavia, Holmes, & Kusche, 2002).

Such mixed findings may partly derive from the fact that there is more to self-esteem than whether it is high or low: its *quality* may matter too, something that conventional measures may miss or inconsistently capture. Accordingly, researchers have drawn a distinction between *secure* self-esteem and its more

fragile or *defensive* counterpart (Heppner & Kernis, Chapter 15, this volume), and that distinction has been operationalized in various ways.

One operationalization has been *narcissism*, considered as a normally distributed individual difference rather than as a categorical personality disorder (Foster & Campbell, 2007). On the one hand, "normal" narcissism correlates with adaptive personality traits in virtue of variance it shares with self-esteem (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). On the other hand, it also correlates with subtle indices of fragility and defensiveness. One of these is a second operationalization: *self-evaluative instability* (Kernis & Goldman, 2003). Narcissists' affective states, even though chronically more positive, also fluctuate more (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004). A further operationalization is *lower implicit self-esteem* (Koole & DeHart, 2007). This construct predicts both greater affective variability in general (Conner & Barrett, 2005) and higher levels of narcissism in particular (Gregg & Sedikides, 2010), although the latter pattern is disputed. Moreover, both narcissism and self-evaluative instability predict antisocial behavior above and beyond levels of self-esteem (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Kernis, Granneman, & Barclay, 1989). Further accounts of fragile self-esteem refer to what it is based on. In particular, some *contingencies of self-worth* (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) may be relatively adaptive (e.g., God's unconditional love), whereas others may be relatively maladaptive (e.g., physical appearance). Alternatively, some people's self-esteem may be more contingent overall than other people's (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Finally, some people may evince greater *self-compassion* than others when coming to terms with their inevitable imperfections. Having self-compassion confers adaptive benefits above and beyond self-esteem, and is inversely associated with other indices of fragile self-esteem (Neff & Vonk, 2009).

Moving on to processing dynamics, a similarly two-sided picture emerges. On the one hand, people who portray themselves egotistically are less well-liked—especially in the long run—than people who portray themselves modestly (Sedikides et al., 2007). Moreover, the desire to maintain a positive self-image, especially in the eyes of others, is at the root of many imprudently health-impairing activities, such as sun tanning which elevates cancer risk (Leary, Tchividjian, & Kraxberger, 1994). Furthermore, partisan reasoning—helping to insulate the self against bad news and opinion invalidation—can result in a failure to pay heed to information critical for averting potentially fatal outcomes (Ditto, Scepansky, Munro, Apanovitch, & Lockhart, 1998). Finally, people with higher self-esteem are more prone to rationalize health-impairing habits such as smoking (Gibbons, Eggleston, & Benthin, 1997).

On the other hand, when people are permitted to affirm important values—an activity that in some sense also involves enhancing the self by reminding oneself of one's true identity—many of the above biases disappear, as defensiveness is replaced by openness (Harris, Mayle, Mabbott, & Napper, 2007). Indeed, value-based self-affirmation seems to promote a range of benefits, from increasing school grades (Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006) to improving immune system parameters (Creswell et al., 2005). How should this benign process be characterized? Perhaps it involves the self's fundamental needs—the target of key identity-relevant motivations (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, & Scabini, 2006)—being satisfied (Soenens & Vansteenkiske, Chapter 17, this volume). There is a further interesting wrinkle here: self-affirmation effects do not appear to be mediated by state self-esteem (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; but see Rudman, Dohn, & Fairchild, 2007, implicating implicit self-esteem as a possible mediator). This reinforces the view that self-enhancement may come in different flavors, some perhaps more adaptive than others. In particular, self-affirmation may attenuate the need to self-enhance rather than satisfying the desire to do so; it may boost the underlying quality of self-esteem rather than its sheer quantity. Moreover, it may do so by satisfying more particular motives, such as for relatedness or affiliation (Crocker, Niiya, & Mischkowski, 2008; Kumashiro & Sedikides, 2005).

That said, the distinction between more or less adaptive self-enhancement may be hard to draw. It could be that satisfying fundamental needs is adaptive, in the sense that it fosters optimal psychological flourishing (Heppner et al., 2009; Waterman, Chapter 16, this volume) or more benign social attitudes (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001). However, from an evolutionary standpoint (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2001), successful adaptation may require the experience of psychological states that are aversive, or the exhibition of social behaviors that is antisocial. For example, the painful drop in state self-esteem occasioned by social exclusion may encourage efforts to reintegrate socially so as to mitigate that pain (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). And the existential terror of death may be well alleviated by the adoption of a meaningful worldview, whose standards of value require that the members of some marginal social groups be unjustly condemned (Greenberg et al., 2008). The "purpose" of adaptations is to secure the survival and reproduction of organisms, not to guarantee a psychosocial utopia (Dawkins, 1976).

Such grand functions aside, there may be a simpler reason why people exhibit self-enhancement bias rather being wholly rational self-assessors. Essential to survival and reproduction is the capacity to persevere despite setbacks. Self-enhancement covaries both with positive mood (Raghunathan & Trope, 2002) and with greater persistence (Sandelands, Brocker, & Blynn, 1988). So perhaps evaluating oneself positively helps to induce and maintain pleasant feelings and goal-directedness—the psychic fuel that people need to keep going. Moreover, it is significant that self-enhancement primarily kicks in, not before a decision has been made, but after that decision has been taken, as well as when a situation or identity is seen as unchangeable (Armor & Taylor, 2003). Thus, self-enhancement appears to be giving people the affective resources needed to decisively commit themselves to a course of action, or to reconcile themselves to where they now stand or to who they now are (Harmon-Jones, 1999). In essence, then, the motive to self-enhance may function as a sort of anti-dithering and anti-rumination device, enabling people to keep operating when strictly rational assessment of themselves would stymie them.

The Motive to Self-Verify

Having reviewed the motives to self-enhance and self-assess at length, we now return to the third member of our original trio: the motive to self-verify. This can be defined as the desire to discover that one's identity is already as one construes it, rather than to discover that it merits a favorable evaluation, or to discover whether or not it is objectively accurate. The main evidence for its existence seems strong: behavioral feedback choices. For example, when people with negative self-views are given the option of reading one of two contrasting accounts of their personality, they mainly opt for the less favorable account; or when given the option of meeting one of two people who view them differently, they mainly opt for the person who takes the less favorable view (Kwang & Swann, 2010). Moreover, the preferences that such people report for feedback and partners parallel their objective choices. So, among people with negative self-views, in whom the motives to verify and enhance identity should compete, the former seems capable of overriding the latter.

More specifically, the dueling motives are said to engender an "affective-cognitive crossfire," such that the motive to self-verify (its expression requiring comparisons of self and feedback) registers predominantly on cognitive indices, whereas the motive to self-enhance (its expression requiring only the reflexive processing of feedback valence) registers predominantly on evaluative indices (Swann et al., 1990). Moreover, several predicted moderator effects also implicate a motive to self-verify. For example, the more identity-defining a negative self-view is, the keener someone who possesses it tends to be, to remain in the company of someone else who shares it (Swann & Pelham, 2002).

Nonetheless, Gregg (2009) recently argued that many of the key findings cited in support of *self-verification theory* are equivocal. His *raison oblige theory* (ROT) posits a simpler possibility:

that people with negative self-views mostly opt for self-verifying (i.e., unfavorable) over self-refuting (i.e., favorable) information, not because they want their existing self-views to be true, but rather because—in virtue of earnestly holding their self-views—they cannot help but consider information at odds with them as "inadmissible." Accordingly, they deem unfavorable self-verifying information to be more worthy of consideration, and hence of subsequent selection, than favorable self-refuting information. Simply put, people with negative self-views often find themselves rationally obliged to take on board information about themselves that they would prefer *not* to be part of their identity.

One way of characterizing this state of affairs would be to say that, among people with negative self-views, the felt desire to self-enhance pleasingly is being overpowered by the felt duty to self-assess accurately. If so, there would be no need to postulate a motive to self-verify, whose world-to-mind direction of fit aimed at conclusively confirming a pre-existing identity. Rather, it would suffice to postulate a motive to self-assess, whose mind-to-world direction of fit aimed at correctly extrapolating from a pre-existing identity.

Supporting ROT, Gregg et al. (2010) found in that people with positive and negative self-views did not consistently differ in how much they wanted favorable versus unfavorable feedback about them *to be true*, only in how plausible they found that feedback to be. In one study, for example, people with negative self-views who opted to read an unfavorable personality profile over a favorable one (the majority) subsequently maintained that, although they found the chosen unfavorable profile to be more plausible, they still would have preferred the rejected favorable profile to be true. Question: if opting for unfavorable over favorable feedback is taken as evidence that the motive to self-verify has prevailed over the motive to self-enhance, then why would a desire for favorable feedback to be true at the same time prevail over the desire for unfavorable feedback to be true? Note that responses to enquiries about one's desire for feedback to be true are as much cognitive as they are affective in character; hence, they cannot be explained away in terms of the cognitive–affective crossfire.

Whatever the final resolution of the matter, it is undeniable that old identities are often abandoned, and new identities often embraced. For example, young adults (Arnett, 2000), and people who are open to experience (Tesch & Cameron, 1987), are especially inclined to explore their identities flexibly rather than committing themselves to one identity definitely (Kroger & Marcia, Chapter 2, this volume; Luyckx et al., Chapter 4, this volume). In addition, people who fall in love typically undergo dramatic self-concept transformations (i.e., *self-expansion*; Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995); yet they reputedly relish, and even seek to repeat, this identity-disrupting experience. Hence, even if a motive to self-verify exists, it is not so strong as to preclude many voluntary shifts in identity that are repeated or dramatic.

Other Identity Motives

Number, Nature, and Nomenclature

In presenting only three self-motives, we might stand accused of painting an oddly minimalist picture of identity-relevant motivation. In contrast, Vignoles (Vignoles et al., 2006; Chapter 18, this volume), persuasively argues that sufficient theoretical and empirical reason exists to postulate no fewer than six identity motives: *self-esteem*, *distinctiveness*, *continuity*, *belongingness*, *efficacy*, and *meaning*. One reason is that Vignoles and colleagues endorse a more inclusive conception of identity than we do, and seek to address, not only the process of self-evaluation, but also the process of self-definition. Moreover, several of their six identity motives find fully fledged exposition within specific theories (e.g., belongingness in *sociometer theory*: Leary & Baumeister, 2000; meaning in *terror management theory*: Greenberg et al., 2008), and further additions might even be contemplated (e.g., autonomy in *self-determination theory*: Soenens & Vansteenkiste, Chapter 17, this volume). To help make sense of things, one might draw the

following distinction. Our trio of self-motives constitute a special class: they are inherently about appraisals of oneself. In contrast, identity motives, considered broadly, need not be: despite having an important bearing on appraisals of oneself, they may nonetheless be about something else. For example, whereas the motive to self-enhance is directed at maintaining the positivity of one's self-views—a subjective psychological state—the motive to belong is directed at maintaining level of social inclusion—an objective social state. Both motives are subjective; but, whereas the former also has a subjective goal, the latter has an objective one.

But how many identity motives are there altogether? Alas, precise enumeration is currently impossible. No "periodic table" of identity motives yet exists that definitively describes the natural lines of fracture between identity motives or the hierarchical structure underlying them. The situation thus lags behind that in related fields of psychological research (e.g., personality: John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008; or values: Schwartz, 1992). Indeed, current models of identity motives are arguably on a par with models of matter in ancient Greece, in which supposed elements (e.g., earth, air, fire, and water) were empirically distinguished on the basis of ostensible dissimilarities, and a priori arguments then advanced by for the overriding primacy of one or another (Osborne, 2004).

Some identity researchers have indeed valiantly attempted to distil a "master" motive. For instance, Heine, Proulx, and Vohs (2006) have contended that human beings, given their cognitive sophistication, fundamentally strive to *maintain meaning*—that is, seek to preserve expected relations between elements.[5] How might such a "master" motive underlie, say the motive to self-enhance, often alternatively construed (including by Heine and colleagues) as the desire to maintain self-esteem?

One well-supported functional theory states that fluctuations in state self-esteem track the integrity of important social relations (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). From a meaning-maintenance perspective, the severing of such expected relations should be cognitively disorienting, and, for that reason, emotionally aversive. Yet surely social relations, and other contingencies of self-esteem (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), matter over and above any contribution they make to the integrity of mental representations alone (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). After all, rejection and failure still hurt, even when expected, whereas acceptance and success still reassure, even when unexpected. Hence, the motive to maintain meaning cannot fully subsume the motive to self-enhance.

Even properly distinguishing between different identity motives presents a challenge. Consider the alleged motive to *reduce uncertainty* about oneself or one's world, espoused by a range of psychologists under several guises (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996), and empirically shown to have various consequences, including fostering identification with social groups (Hogg, 2007) and increasing levels of zealous conviction (McGregor, Haji, Nash, & Teper, 2008). Should this motive—clearly identity-relevant—be considered an example of the motive to self-assess, to self-verify, both, or neither? It is hard to say. In principle, self-uncertainty could be reduced by seeking out objectively accurate information about oneself. However, it could also be reduced by seeking biased confirmation that one remains who one expected oneself to be. Moreover, self-uncertainty could also be reduced by unreflectively adopting *any* available self-construal; yet this would entail neither self-assessment nor self-verification strictly speaking, involving as it would neither a dogged search after truth nor a dogmatic adherence to a preconception.

Given such complications, we refrain here from attempting any definitive reduction, or proposing any final taxonomy, of identity motives. Rather, we confine ourselves to making a modest proposal: many identity motives can often be characterized in terms of the twin self-motives to self-enhance and self-assess. This is not to claim that other identity motives ultimately reduce to these self-motives; it is merely to claim that the former are, at least in part, pervaded by the latter. How so?

Consider Vignoles's aforementioned set of identity motives. Would people strive to be distinctive, effective, and accepted if doing so respectively entailed standing out for an unseemly reason (e.g., being hideously ugly), bringing about some tragic outcome (e.g., triggering a nuclear war), or gaining the support of a hateful group (e.g., being fêted by Nazis)? Equally, would people strive to construct a subjective narrative that insults them (e.g., portrays them as an invariable loser) or an objective worldview that dismays them (e.g., portrays their life as pointless)? Hardly. Our point is this: to satisfy any of the posited identity motives, an outcome must entail tolerably favorable implications for the self. True, other identity motives need not always implicate the motive to self-enhance, and they may occasionally even dominate the motive to self-enhance. But typically, we suggest, the motive to self-enhance pervades other identity motives.

What about the motive to self-assess? We argued earlier, in the context of raison oblige theory (Gregg, 2009), that this motive can manifest itself as a felt obligation to respect reality, as a type of "brake" to counter the self-enhancement "accelerator." For example, people may find themselves compelled to believe, in virtue of being rational beings, that they are not as distinctive, effective, accepted as they would wish, nor is their life story or existential position as congenial as they would desire. Accordingly, the motive to self-assess, in this form, can pervade other identity motives: it pushes for ensuring that people pay due attention to the conditions required for them to be satisfied in reality.

Of course, the motive to self-assess also has appetitive manifestations. People may be genuinely curious about and interested in themselves (Luyckx, Goossens, & Soenens, 2006; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, Chapter 17, this volume). However, given the likely generality of the motivational asymmetry discussed earlier (Baumeister et al., 2001), people may more often seek to minimize the falsehood of their self-views than to maximize their accuracy of their self-views.

Identity, Affect, and Agency Are Intertwined

The motive to self-assess has a cognitive goal: establishing the objective truth about oneself. Other posited identity motives also have cognitive goals: specifically, the motive to self-verify aims at confirming subjective views about who one is (Swann et al., 2003), the motive for continuity at devising a coherent story about who one is (McAdams, Chapter 5, this volume), and the motive for meaning at generating a defensible account of the world. (But note some relevant differences too: the first motive seeks to establish cognitive coherence via identity maintenance, the second, despite identity change, and the third, beyond one's own identity.) It seems likely a priori that people do seek a coherent identity of some sort: They want to think of themselves (or at least, to avoid failing to think of themselves) in terms of a set of basic self-construals that intelligibly fit together.

However, it should be remembered that, as argued at the beginning of this chapter, identity is but a cognitive aspect of a larger self, one that also encompasses affect and agency. Hence, as identity forms and changes, as it develops or disintegrates, it never does so in isolation, but always in tandem with other self processes. Much evidence attests to the intimate links between various aspects of the self. For example, construing oneself clearly is linked to regarding oneself positively (a cognitive–affective link; Campbell et al., 1996) and regarding oneself positively is linked to persistence under adversity (an affective–agentic link; Baumeister et al., 2003).

This fact that identity is embedded within a broader self raises a thorny question: to what extent are disruptions of identity responsible in themselves for the outcomes that they predict? Are they causal determinants or epiphenomenal markers? The matter is empirically challenging to resolve. But one should not overlook the possibility that aspects of the self other than identity could exert independent or interactive effects on the outcomes that disruptions of identity predict. Take the classic identity crisis (Erikson, 1975).

By definition, it represents a crisis in cognitive coherence. But it is also typically intertwined with (a) a *self-positivity crisis*, where people find themselves obliged to entertain shamefully negative self-evaluations (Tangney, 1991), and (b) a *self-goals crisis*, where people find themselves unable to act so as to fulfill crucial basic needs (Soenens & Vansteenkiske, Chapter 17, this volume). In other words, people who wonder "Who am I?" will also wonder "Why am I inadequate?" and "Why can't I make progress?"

By way of illustration, consider the plight of adolescents who, in a repressive society, find themselves spontaneously inclined to embrace a homosexual orientation or identify with another gender (Diamond, Butterworth, & Pardo, Chapter 26, this volume; Savin-Williams, Chapter 28, this volume). Their society refuses to recognize them, frowns upon their conduct, imposes sanctions on them. As a result, not only are these minorities more likely to have trouble defining who they are sexually (i.e., a cognitive problem), they are also more likely to have trouble evaluating their sexuality positively (i.e., an affective problem) and achieving the goal of expressing their sexuality freely (i.e., an agency problem).[6] Hence, the problems they experience flourishing psychologically are unlikely to be the result of cognitive incoherence alone: social devaluation and behavioral constraint are also likely to be involved.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have (a) articulated a conception of identity in the context of a broader self; (b) surveyed the motivational basis of identity with a particular focus on the motives to self-enhance and self-assess; (c) reviewed the evidence that both motives are potent and commonplace; (d) examined some of the consequences they entail; and finally (e) discussed how identity motives in general should be classified, and where the motives to self-enhance and self-assess fit into the picture. We now suggest the following take-home messages.

First, identity is a remarkably multifaceted thing. Second, there is nonetheless more to the self than the self-construals that constitute identity. Third, many motives likely underlie identity, but no firm taxonomy yet exists. Fourth, the motives to self-assess and self-enhance nonetheless partly pervade many such motives, by moderating the criteria other motives must satisfy. Fifth and finally, although abundant evidence implicates these motives, their consequences and functionality are complex.

Notes

1. Psychological identity does not exactly correspond to what philosophers discuss under the rubric of personal identity (Perry, 1975). There, the primary concern is with what makes someone the person they are now (synchronic identity) or the same person over time (diachronic identity). Here, the primary concern is with what a person *takes* themselves to be, whatever or whenever they happen to be (Lampinen, Odegard, & Leding, 2003). In other words, psychological identity is a construction, but nonetheless a construction amenable to empirical investigation.
2. A case could be made that chronically *available* self-construals also constitute identity, even if infrequently accessed (Sedikides & Skowronski, 1990).
3. Readers may note that we have omitted mention here of the *self-improvement* motive; this temporary omission will be remedied shortly.
4. Name letter preferences persist even when normative letter frequency, which alone might account for the effect, is controlled (Nuttin, 1987). However, no study has yet controlled for the objective frequency with which people personally encounter their names, although one study has shown that subjective frequency does not explain it (Hoorens & Nuttin, 1993).
5. Heine et al. (2006) arguably define meaning too narrowly in terms of *expected* relations. Humans strive after meaning, not merely by accommodating reality to rigid expectations, but by accommodating expectations to surprising reality. Were this not so, there would be no scientists, only dogmatists. By

emphasizing expectation of *confirmation*, the meaning-maintenance model becomes vulnerable to the same criticisms leveled here at self-verification theory. In fact, people often seek to achieve new understandings of the world (outlooks) and of themselves (identities); they do not merely seek to preserve those understandings they already have.

6. In this example, society exerts pressure on individuals to embrace a majority identity that inhibits their natural proclivities, and thereby impairs their psychological functioning. Soenens and Vansteenkiske (Chapter 17, this volume) note that people can also put pressure *on themselves* to embrace such suboptimal identities, through maladaptive identifications.

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