Jennifer Lodi-Smith
Kenneth G. DeMarree   *Editors*

Self-Concept Clarity

Perspectives on Assessment, Research, and Applications

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Foreword

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I write a foreword to this volume summarizing recent research and theory regarding self-concept clarity. The self-concept clarity construct evolved from earlier studies I conducted that focused on self-esteem differences in how individuals responded to self-relevant feedback, both real and imaginary and social and nonsocial. In pursuing this line of research, I engaged in many debriefing sessions during which I explained to research participants that the feedback they had received was false and that they had been randomly assigned to feedback conditions. I then inquired about their reactions to the feedback. Let me describe one of those studies and its results before noting the observations I made in these debriefing sessions.

In Campbell and Fairey (1985), we showed anagrams to low self-esteem (LSE) and high self-esteem (HSE) participants and informed them that they would soon be taking a timed anagram test. We then said that although we had no idea of how well they would perform on this test, we would like them first to write an explanation for a hypothetical success or failure on the test (in a control condition, they wrote no explanation). Following this, they either stated or did not state their performance expectancies, and then all participants took the same anagram test with performance on that test constituting the primary dependent measure.

Compared to the no-explanation condition, both LSE and HSE participants performed better in the success-explanation condition, but only LSE participants performed worse in the failure-explanation condition (this result was more pronounced when expectancies were stated). In other words, the performance of HSE participants was only affected by "feedback" that was consistent with their positive self-views (success explanation), whereas the performance of LSE participants was affected by both types of feedback. It was also the case that a content analysis of the explanations yielded a robust self-serving bias among HSE participants; they included a much higher proportion of characterological reasons for a hypothetical success than a hypothetical failure. LSE participants were relatively even-handed in their explanations, providing a similar proportion of characterological reasons for succeeding and failing.

I cite this particular study because I found it remarkable that we had not given participants any actual feedback; we only asked them to consider the possibility of receiving such feedback. But in other studies where actual feedback was delivered, the pattern of results was similar. HSE participants were robustly resistant and indeed often completely unaffected by feedback that was inconsistent with their self-concepts. LSE participants were influenced by whatever feedback they were given. The results suggested to me that LSE people were generally more susceptible to external feedback. That, in turn, led me to suspect that perhaps their self-concepts were not just more negative in terms of evaluation but were also more uncertain and confused. In other words, perhaps their self-concepts lacked clarity. This impression was solidified in the debriefing sessions. LSE participants often expressed confusion and self-doubts about who and what they were. And some even referenced the idea that they were dependent on environmental cues for self-definition. For example, I asked one LSE participant if she was extraverted. To paraphrase her response, she said she thought she was extraverted because nearly all of her friends said she was. But then, her mom had said she was kind of shy, so she wasn't really sure.

Thus, I initially explored the idea of self-concept clarity and its relation to self-esteem because it provided a more cogent explanation for some findings in the self-esteem literature than did the self-esteem trait itself. That is, a simple consistency explanation using self-esteem could not account for the fact that LSE people appeared to be generally susceptible to environmental cues, both positive and negative. And similar to the construct of self-esteem, I conceptualized clarity as a relatively stable personality variable trait and speculated that self-esteem and self-concept clarity were probably confounded and causally related to one another in a reciprocal manner.

I retired from the University of British Columbia in 2003 and moved to Florida. About 6 months into an unsuccessful quest to decide what I wanted to do in the role of "retired" person, I abandoned the role altogether and took a full-time administrative position at what is now Palm Beach State College. My position was not an academic one but I immersed myself in the new role, leaving behind my academic interests. In 2015, I retired again having enjoyed a challenging and rewarding second career at the College. A few months after my retirement, I received an email from Jennifer Lodi-Smith, the coeditor of this volume, introducing herself and inquiring as to whether I would be interested in contributing to this book. I have to admit I was stunned. When I said that I left my academic interests behind, I really do mean behind. I had no idea that the clarity construct had continued to be an active research area. When Jennifer began to send me references and articles and then finally draft chapters of this volume, I was even more stunned. What a lovely post-retirement gift!

The chapters in this volume demonstrate the remarkable strides that have been taken in the 25 years or so since the construct was introduced. Without commenting on specific chapters, the new directions in the field have greatly enhanced the depth and the breadth of the self-concept clarity construct. For example, the conceptual boundaries of the construct have been more clearly delineated by research addressing measurement of the construct, its distinction from self-esteem, and its location

within personality theory in general and identity theory in particular. The authors explicate the usefulness of clarity not only as a trait but as a state, as a characteristic adaptation and highlight its utility within the context of narrative identity, where personal narrative can serve both as a measure of and a consequence of clarity. The volume also addresses applications of the construct to issues of well-being, motivation, workplace behavior, body image, and eating disorders and psychopathology. Of particular surprise to me in terms of application was the research demonstrating a connection between self-concept clarity and schizophrenia, both in terms of the positive symptoms such as delusions and the negative symptoms such as a lack of emotion.

In addition to the chapters focusing on conceptual boundaries and application, there are chapters concerned with the development of self-concept clarity. Here the sources of both state and trait self-concept clarity are carefully examined within the context of three types of antecedents – self-verification, anxiety, and uncertainty. There is also a consideration of how clarity both changes and remains stable over the lifespan, indicating that while there is substantial rank-order stability across time, there are changes in the mean levels of clarity, coupled with individual variability in how clarity develops and changes. Social role transitions are potent in eliciting changes in clarity, with the loss of important social roles, such as the end of a romantic relationship, being an especially important factor. Finally, there is an extension of self-concept clarity beyond the level of the individual to the notion of collective identity, an extension that explicitly acknowledges the critical importance of group memberships to self-definition.

From even this very brief summary of the book's contributions, it should be apparent that giant strides have been made to the self-concept clarity construct since its inception. I am grateful to the present authors and a host of other researchers whose persistence has resulted in the rich body of work presented here.

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Introduction

An Overview of Self-Concept Clarity: Definitions, Empirical Themes, and Introduction to the Volume

Kenneth G. DeMarree and Jennifer Lodi-Smith

People's beliefs about themselves – their self-conceptions – play a central role in their psychological experiences and can be powerful determinants of their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Baumeister, 1998). Self-conceptions are important considerations in domains as diverse as social perception (e.g., Dunning & McElwee, 1995; Markus, Smith, & Moreland, 1985; Sedikides & Skowronski, 1993), self-evaluation (e.g., Marsh & O'Mara, 2008; Pelham & Swann, 1989), interpersonal relationships (e.g., Andersen, Chen, & Miranda, 2002; Gabriel, Carvallo, Dean, Tippin, & Renaud, 2005; Swann, Hixon, & de la Ronde, 1992), decision making (e.g., Freitas, Langsam, Clark, & Moeller, 2008; Niedenthal, Cantor, & Kihlstrom, 1985; Touré-Tillery & Fishbach, 2015), and even consumer behavior (e.g., Aaker, 1999; Belk, 1988; Wheeler, Petty, & Bizer, 2005).

Researchers studying the self have examined a variety of aspects of people's self-conceptions, including their accuracy (e.g., Brown, 1991; Robins & John, 1997) and relative stability versus malleability (e.g., Markus & Kunda, 1986; McConnell, 2011; McGuire & Padawer-Singer, 1976). One important aspect of people's self-conceptions – and the focus on this book – is the clarity with which people hold their self-conceptions (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996).

Campbell (1990; see also her foreword to this volume) first introduced self-concept clarity, positing that differences in the clarity or confidence of self-knowledge could account for some of the differences observed between individuals high and low in self-esteem. Notably, Campbell observed that compared with people who scored high on measures of self-esteem, people who scored low in self-esteem appear to be more malleable in response to situational influences, such as false feedback or social influence attempts (e.g., Brockner, 1984; Campbell & Fairey, 1985). She posited that such malleability might be due to lower clarity or certainty in the self-conceptions of people low, compared with high, in self-esteem. She tested this idea in a series of studies using a variety of indirect methods. For example, compared with their high self-esteem counterparts, people low in self-esteem had less extreme, less confident, less internally consistent, and less accessible self-views across a range of self-perceptions. They also exhibited reduced

stability over time and across situations and less self-conception-behavior congruence. Campbell concluded that reduced clarity among people low (versus high) in self-esteem may pose a compelling explanation for their apparently increased malleability.

This initial work was highly influential with over 1300 citations as of 2017, according to Google Scholar. Campbell and her colleagues' subsequent publication of the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (Campbell et al., 1996) provided researchers with a useful tool for studying and more fully understanding the clarity construct. Although researchers continue to use other assessment strategies, including the ones used in Campbell's original (i.e., 1990) paper (for examples, see Boucher, 2011; Burger & Guadagno, 2003; Landau, Greenberg, Sullivan, Routledge, & Arndt, 2009; Stopa, Brown, Luke, & Hirsch, 2010), this scale has, in many ways, become synonymous with the construct, with over 1300 citations itself.

Since these seminal publications, self-concept clarity has been evoked to help understand a variety of topics. Campbell's own work in part explored the relationships between self-concept clarity and mental health and well-being (e.g., Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2000, 2003; Campbell et al., 1996). As Chapters 10–12 highlight, a great deal of research has followed up on these initial findings, documenting negative associations between self-concept clarity and a variety of mental health problems, including symptoms related to depression (Lee-Flynn, Pomaki, DeLongis, Biesanz, & Puterman, 2011; Richman et al., 2016), anxiety (Kusec, Tallon, & Koerner, 2016; Stopa et al., 2010), eating disorders (Vartanian, 2009; Vartanian, Froreich, & Smyth, 2016; see also Chap. 12, this volume), prolonged grief disorder (Boelen, Keijsers, & van den Hout, 2012), and schizophrenia (Cicero, Becker, Martin, Docherty, & Kerns, 2013; Cicero, Martin, Becker, & Kerns, 2016; see also Chap. 13, this volume), among others.

But the potential importance of self-concept clarity goes well beyond the mental health domain, as the chapters in this volume indicate. Because our selves are intimately intertwined with our personal relationships, the clarity of these selves can impact and be impacted by forming and terminating social relationships (Light & Visser, 2012; Slotter, Emery, & Luchies, 2014; Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2010) and in the operation of relationships themselves (Lewandowski, Nardone, & Raines, 2010; Luchies, Finkel, McNulty, & Kumashiro, 2010). Self-concept clarity also reflects people's identity and identity development, including their personal, social, and role identities, across the lifespan (Johnson & Nozick, 2011; Lodi-Smith, Cologgi, Spain, & Roberts, 2017; Morrison & Wheeler, 2010; Schwartz et al., 2011; Usborne & Taylor, 2010). Self-concept clarity may also predict how one deals with conflict (Bechtoldt, De Dreu, Nijstad, & Zapf, 2010), how one responds to social influence attempts (Burger & Guadagno, 2003), and how well someone can predict their own behavior (Lewandowski & Nardone, 2012).

Undoubtedly, the clarity of one's self-conceptions is relevant across a wide range of people's lives. But what is self-concept clarity? The most cited definition (Campbell et al., 1996) is "the extent to which the contents of an individual's self-concept are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable" (p. 141). A few aspects of this definition are worthy of note. First, it refers to

self-conceptions (i.e., people's mental representations of the self) rather than self-esteem. Self-conceptions can include a wide variety of self-beliefs and domain-specific self-evaluations (e.g., perceptions of one's athletic abilities). Second, it refers to the whole of one's self-concept rather than a specific self-conception. Certainty or clarity in specific self-conceptions has also been a topic of interest to self researchers (e.g., Swann & Ely, 1984; Talley & Stevens, 2017), but it is not clear the extent to which more general self-concept clarity relates to certainty in specific beliefs. Third, it discusses multiple ways in which a person's self-concept can be "clear" (clarity, confidence, internal consistency, and temporal stability). These dimensions map onto many of the indirect methods Campbell (1990) initially used to examine clarity, and items from the Self-Concept Clarity Scale attempt to assess people's perceptions regarding different aspects of this definition. Note that although Campbell and her colleagues discussed clarity as a *structural* feature of the self, the Self-Concept Clarity Scale, because it relies on people's self-perceptions regarding their self-conceptions, is metacognitive in nature (DeMarree & Morrison, 2012; Guerrettaz & Arkin, 2016).

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Research on self-concept clarity faces a number of empirical challenges. As noted earlier, Campbell's original 1990 work on self-concept clarity sought to elucidate differences between high and low self-esteem individuals, and consequently, self-concept clarity is closely related to self-esteem. Indeed, a great deal of empirical research has examined the relationship between self-esteem and self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996; DeMarree & Rios, 2014; Nezlek & Plesko, 2001; Wu, Watkins, & Hattie, 2010). Because self-esteem is so closely related to self-concept clarity, it is important to consider self-esteem when discussing clarity. Indeed, some existing work has examined self-esteem as a main effect or interactive antecedent of self-clarity (DeMarree & Rios, 2014; Streamer & Seery, 2015; Wu et al., 2010), and some researchers have postulated that self-concept clarity can play a meditational role in understanding effects of self-esteem (Hohman & Hogg, 2015; Story, 2004). Other work has suggested that self-concept clarity might be an antecedent of self-esteem (Błażek & Besta, 2012), and some researchers have postulated that self-esteem may play a meditational role in understanding effects of self-concept clarity (Lewandowski et al., 2010). Although Campbell (1990) herself postulated that both directions of causality might be possible (see also Wu et al., 2010), the relationship between self-esteem and self-concept clarity is still not well understood. Because of these strong relationships, we asked chapter contributors to discuss the role of self-esteem in their domain.

     To date, theory on self-concept clarity has been relatively limited. The papers on self-concept clarity to date have been written by a large number of different researchers and published in wide-ranging outlets. One goal of this volume is to bring many of these different perspectives together and to get clarity researchers to think about

unifying themes and next steps in developing theory related to self-concept clarity. Indeed, we explicitly asked each of the contributors to this volume to discuss the future of self-concept clarity research in their domain. We hope that identifying the gaps in our knowledge and elaborating on potential future directions will help guide interested researchers toward the important work that still needs to be done.

The Present Volume

The goal of the present volume is to bring together different perspectives on self-concept clarity in a single volume both to summarize the current state of the literature and to provide a way forward toward developing novel theoretical and empirical contributions. The chapters from this book draw on clinical, developmental, personality, and social psychology perspectives, among others. Some of the topics examined in these chapters have been the focus of a great deal of self-concept clarity research, whereas other topics have received scant empirical attention to date. Regardless of how much research has been done in each of these topics, each of these chapters provides a roadmap for future research on self-concept clarity.

The early chapters set the stage for the rest of the book by providing basic background on the measurement of self-concept clarity and clarity's relationship to other dispositions. DeMarree and Bobrowski begin by reviewing published and new research on the structure and validity of self-concept clarity measures. Dunlop situates the construct of self-concept clarity into the broader personality and individual difference landscape, including traits, characteristic adaptations, and narrative identity. Hertel documents a wide range of variables that have been studied as potential antecedents of self-concept clarity. Lodi-Smith and Crocetti then take a developmental approach with a meta-analysis and review of the patterns of stability and change in self-concept clarity across the lifespan.

Next, the volume shifts toward the social self, examining interrelationships between self-concept clarity and people's social worlds. Specifically, Slotter discusses how social role transitions (e.g., entering or exiting relationship) can affect and be impacted by self-concept clarity. McIntyre, Mattingly, and Lewandowski discuss how self-concept clarity relates to relationship processes and relationship outcomes. Gardner and Gall-Schultz extend the notion of self-concept clarity beyond the individual self, discussing ways in which the concept of clarity might relate to people's collective identities. Schwartz, Meca, and Petrova then discuss how self-concept clarity relates to the development and maintenance of personal identity. Spain and Kim close this section out with a focus on a specific social context and organizational settings and discuss ways that self-concept clarity can affect leadership.

The final chapters of the book move toward examinations of possible individual-level consequences of self-concept clarity. Light's chapter speculates on potentially important roles that self-concept clarity might play in self-regulation and goal pursuit. Vartanian and Hayward discuss ways that self-concept clarity relates to body

dissatisfaction and other beliefs associated with disordered eating. To close out this section, Cicero discusses the relationship of self-concept clarity to psychopathology and symptoms of schizophrenia in particular.

Together, these chapters provide a relatively comprehensive review of the self-concept clarity literature. Further, they point to key unresolved issues and future directions for work on self-concept clarity. In the final chapter of this book, we return to the empirical themes outlined here and integrate them with the reviews, issues, and suggestions raised by the following chapters. It is our hope that this chapter will thus serve as both a primer on the construct of self-concept clarity and a guide for future research on this important topic.

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Chapter 1
Structure and Validity of Self-Concept Clarity Measures

Kenneth G. DeMarree and Miranda E. Bobrowski

Abstract We examine the structure and validity of existing measures of self-concept clarity (SCC). We document six different measurement strategies that have been employed in the self-concept clarity literature, review existing research on their relationships with each other and with self-esteem, and present in-progress research designed to examine their structure and validity. We conclude that these measures largely reflect different constructs and that they demonstrate distinct patterns of relationships with criteria previously examined in the self-concept clarity literature. Further, we examine incremental validity over self-esteem, noting that measures of self-concept clarity demonstrate considerably weaker relationships with criteria once self-esteem is controlled for in the analyses. We discuss measurement of self-concept clarity, placing special emphasis on understanding potentially diverse measures of SCC-related constructs, the role of self-esteem in self-concept clarity research, and potential cultural boundedness of extant assessment strategies.

Keywords Self-concept clarity · Self-esteem · Measurement · Scale validity · Culture · Mental health

As evidenced by this volume and the chapters contained herein, understanding self-concept clarity (SCC) has implications for understanding a host of phenomena, ranging from personal and social identities, to interpersonal relationships, and to mental health. However, since the original publications on SCC, no work we are aware of has critically evaluated the structure and validity of self-concept clarity measures. In this chapter, we review existing research on the measurement of self-concept clarity and present a program of research we have initiated with our colleagues to more fully understand the interrelationships and construct validity of various SCC measurement strategies.

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Research on self-concept clarity began with the near simultaneous publication of two papers: Campbell (1990) and Baumgardner (1990). Both papers begin with the observation, building on previous research (e.g., Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989; McFarlin & Blascovich, 1981; Pelham & Swann, 1989), that people with low self-esteem or with negative self-concepts appear to hold more malleable or less certain views of themselves compared to those with high self-esteem. Campbell and Baumgardner each sought to systematically study the differences in self-views of individuals with high and low self-esteem – not by examining differences in the content of those self-views but rather in terms of the "strength" of those views.

Baumgardner (1990) examined what she labeled as certainty, which was primarily assessed using the latitudes of self-description questionnaire. For each of 20 attributes, participants reported their standing on a percentile scale (e.g., Maria might indicate her likeability is at the 70th percentile) and then report the highest and lowest possible percentiles that are plausibly self-descriptive (e.g., Maria may then indicate that she is more likeable than at least 60% of the population, but not more than 90% of the population). From these reports, Baumgardner calculated *latitudes* – parallel to work on social judgment examining latitudes of acceptance (e.g., Sherif & Hovland, 1961) – that were hypothesized to represent the certainty (or clarity) of one's self-views, with narrower latitudes indicating a more certain self-conception. Across these traits, she found that people high in self-esteem had narrower latitudes than did people low in self-esteem. Although these latitudes were the primary way she assessed "certainty," in one study she instead measured the latency to which people indicated their standing on each of a series of traits, arguing that the more certain and less confused a person is in their personality, the faster they should be to indicate their standing on any given attribute. In line with this prediction, Baumgardner found that people with high self-esteem were quicker to respond than people lower in self-esteem (Baumgardner, 1990; study 3).

Only 3 months later, Campbell's original paper on self-concept clarity (1990) was published – the first to employ the term. Campbell (1990) defined self-concept clarity as the degree to which the self-concept is clearly and confidently defined, later also adding the temporal stability and internal consistency of self-beliefs to her definition of SCC (Campbell et al., 1996). In her original work on self-concept clarity, Campbell examined self-esteem differences in SCC using a variety of different approaches. In Study 1, participants indicated their standing on each of 15 different bipolar traits and, after each rating, indicated their certainty in the rating. People low in self-esteem gave less extreme ratings on the traits (i.e., closer to the scale midpoint) and reported less certainty in their self-ratings. In Study 2, participants reported their standing on 20 unipolar traits on two occasions, separated by approximately 2 months. The ratings of people low in self-esteem were less similar on the two occasions than were the ratings of people high in self-esteem, consistent with greater stability in self-views as self-esteem increases. Study 3 was similar, except the time 2 ratings were specific to a structured interaction with another participant. In this study, as self-esteem increased, people were more likely to report ratings of their behavior in the interaction that were consistent with self-ratings from 2 to 3 months prior, consistent with both temporal and cross-situational stability. Finally, in Study 4, participants made "me" versus "not me" responses to

each of a series of traits, including 25 pairs of opposite traits, and indicated their confidence in each response. This study thus provided measures of confidence, response time (similar to Baumgardner, 1990), and consistency, which was computed by summing the number of consistent responses to the opposing traits (i.e., "me" to one trait and "not me" to its opposite). High self-esteem was associated with more certainty, shorter response latencies, and more consistency in responses.

These two papers independently documented differences in the characteristics of the self-conceptions of people with high and low self-esteem, and did so using a variety of methods (Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, 1990). Add to these the subsequently developed self-concept clarity scale (SCCS; Campbell et al., 1996), and no fewer than six methods have been used to examine differences in the clarity of people's self-conceptions as a function of self-esteem (i.e., the SCCS; latitudes of self-description; and the certainty, extremity, consistency, and response latency of self-views). However, these early studies raise two issues, which we believe have not been adequately addressed by the subsequent literature on self-concept clarity.

Issue 1: Are Measures of SCC Measuring the *Same* Clarity?

In the decades since this original research, researchers who study self-concept clarity have still continued to utilize a variety of measures, including measures described above, such as latitudes of self-description (Burger & Guadagno, 2003), response latency (Boucher, 2011; Study 3), certainty (Hamid & Cheng, 1995), extremity (Landau, Greenberg, Sullivan, Routledge, & Arndt, 2009; Study 2), consistency (Boucher, 2011; Study 3), and the SCCS (Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2010), as well as other measures (e.g., self-esteem ambivalence; DeMarree & Rios, 2014). However, in this work, all of these different approaches are uniformly labeled as self-concept-clarity. Interestingly, because the definition of SCC is relatively broad (i.e., self-conceptions that are clearly and confidently defined, temporally stable, and internally consistent; Campbell et al., 1996), each of these measures might tap into different aspects of that definition (Guerrettaz & Arkin, 2016). But, despite purporting to measure self-concept clarity, little is actually known about the extent to which the different indicators of self-concept clarity are measuring the *same* "self-concept clarity."

The existing evidence is not promising. In her original paper, Campbell (1990) reported a correlation of 0.24 between extremity and certainty in Study 1. In the SCCS development paper (Campbell et al., 1996), the SCCS was positively, but modestly, related to consistency ($r = 0.31$) and temporal stability ($|rs| = 0.27-0.38$). These correlations are consistent with subsequent literature on self-clarity as well. Although most studies do not include multiple measures of self-concept clarity, the papers that we've identified that report correlations between two or more potential measures of self-concept clarity generally find small to moderate correlations, typically around $r = 0.3$ (range -0.05 to 0.48 in DeMarree, Morrison, Wheeler, & Petty, 2011; DeMarree, Petty, & Strunk, 2010; Stopa, Brown, Luke, & Hirsch, 2010; Story, 2004). These correlations are far below what one would expect from measures of the same construct.

However, it is worth noting that because many of these measures are *indirect* measures of self-concept clarity, each is likely laden with measure-specific variance. The most obvious example of this is response latency, where participants' response times to me/not me judgments on a series of trait adjectives are likely influenced by the clarity of their self-views in general but also by the clarity of the specific trait in question as well as clarity-irrelevant factors like their reading speed, general response time, general (i.e., self-irrelevant) decisiveness, finger placement, and so forth. In other words, when measures that are so very different are compared with each other, the non-shared, measure-specific variance associated with each of these potential indicators of self-concept clarity limits the magnitude of correlations that can be expected.

Issue 2: Are the Associations and Effects of SCC Independent of Self-Esteem?

Recall that nearly all of the early work on SCC sought to explain differences in self-conceptions of people low and high in self-esteem. Consequently, the correlations between measures of SCC and self-esteem are generally moderate to large in magnitude, with some studies reporting extremely strong correlations of $r = 0.70$ or more (e.g., Constantino, Wilson, Horowitz, & Pinel, 2006; Thomas & Gadbois, 2007; Wong, Vallacher, & Nowak, 2014). In other words, measures of self-concept clarity are often at least as closely related to self-esteem as they are with each other! This offers some support for the possibility that different measures of SCC may be distinct constructs (see above) but also raises another important concern.

Quite simply, the relationship between self-esteem and self-concept clarity is important because many of the purported correlates and effects of SCC are plausible, and often times well-documented, correlates and effects of self-esteem. Most notable among these effects are mental health outcomes like depression, anxiety, and beliefs related to disordered eating, but the majority of the intrapersonal and interpersonal variables examined in self-concept clarity research are potentially associated with self-esteem as well.

Although some work has shown that SCC measures predict relevant outcomes after controlling for self-esteem (e.g., Lee-Flynn, Pomaki, DeLongis, Biesanz, & Puterman, 2011; Nezlek & Plesko, 2001; Stopa et al., 2010; Vartanian, 2009), other studies have measured self-esteem but do not control for it in their analyses (e.g., Bigler, Neimeyer, & Brown, 2001; Błażek & Besta, 2012). Finally, some studies do not appear to measure self-esteem at all, despite potential relevance to the effects of interest (e.g., Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerssen, 2009; De Dreu & van Knippenberg, 2005).

When self-esteem is not measured or controlled for in the relevant analyses involving self-concept clarity, it undermines the strength of the conclusions that can be drawn. For example, Bigler and colleagues (2001) predicted depression symptoms (among other outcomes) from the SCCS and self-concept differentiation (SCD). They observed that SCC predicted depression symptoms over SCD. However these analyses

did not control for self-esteem, which was also included in the study and was strongly correlated with SCC ($r = 0.64$). Further, self-esteem was more strongly correlated with depression than was SCC (rs = -0.73 and -0.63, respectively). It is difficult to conclude that SCC is the proximal predictor variable when SCC's close correlate, self-esteem, more strongly predicts depression and has been identified in many previous studies as a consistent predictor of depression symptoms. This failure to establish incremental validity over self-esteem greatly weakens the conclusions that can be drawn from these data. Fortunately, because the authors reported full descriptive statistics and a table of correlations among all measures, we were able to reanalyze these data using MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2011). When we add self-esteem to the model predicting depression symptoms, self-esteem is the strongest predictor, $\beta = -0.538$, SE = 0.068, $t = 7.949$, $p < 0.001$, although SCC does continue to predict, $\beta = -0.255$, SE = 0.073, $t = 3.489$, $p < 0.001$, albeit much more weakly than when self-esteem was excluded from the model. Although in this case, the original conclusion holds up to further analysis, in most cases such reanalysis is not even possible.

Confronting These Issues Empirically

These two issues limit the strength of the conclusions that can be drawn from the SCC literature. Are findings using one assessment strategy directly comparable to findings with another assessment strategy? Which of the extant self-concept clarity findings hold up once self-esteem is accounted for and which are due only to SCC's close correlate, self-esteem?

To address these potential issues, we, along with our colleagues (Bobrowski, DeMarree, Lodi-Smith, & Naragon-Gainey, 2018), collected two data sets including multiple measures of self-concept clarity along with self-esteem and many previously identified correlates or consequences of SCC. Our first goal was to examine the structure and interrelationships among SCC measures. Our second goal was to determine the extent to which SCC (or SCC-related constructs, depending on the emergent factor structure) predicts relevant outcomes over and above self-esteem.

Assessment and Structure of Self-Concept Clarity

In these data sets, we included the six measures of self-concept clarity identified earlier: the SCCS, the certainty, extremity, accessibility (response latency), and consistency of self-views, and the latitudes of self-description questionnaire. To examine the structure of these measures, we took two critical factors into consideration.

First, as noted earlier, each of these measures has measure-specific variance that may not be correlated with self-concept clarity (e.g., average response speed affecting the response time measure, cultural norms affecting tendency to adopt extreme positions). To address this concern, we employed an exploratory structural equation modeling

(ESEM) approach (e.g., Asparouhov & Muthén, 2009). This approach is analogous to an exploratory factor analysis, except with ESEM we can allow error terms of all items on a given measure to correlate with each other to remove the measure-specific variance to more easily identify the shared variance across measures.

A second issue is that other than the SCCS, which is a relatively direct self-report measure of self-concept clarity, the other measures are rather indirect – operationalizing self-concept clarity as aggregates across many different traits. Each of these indirect assessments likely only shares a small portion of its variance with a global self-concept clarity construct, as responses to each will represent some global SCC component as well as trait-specific clarity (e.g., how certain I am of my own level of "silliness"). To address these issues, we created separate random item parcels for each of the measures. By creating parcels (e.g., of three different certainty items), the trait-specific variance will be reduced. The hope in creating parcels is that each parcel contains more "true score" variance than the individual items had. So, for certainty, for example, one parcel contained the traits of hardworking, quiet, and risky. We sought to have minimal overlap of clusters for other measures of self-concept clarity to reduce parcel content contributing to the structure observed, so we selected among possible random order those that minimized such overlap (e.g., the cluster for response latency that contains hardworking does not include quiet or risky but instead contains harsh and bold).

Table 1.1 shows the zero-order correlations among manifest measures of SCC in one of our data sets. Consistent with the past research outlined above, correlations among measures of SCC are weak to modest in magnitude (median $r = 0.09$), with certainty providing the strongest interrelationships with extremity and the SCCS. Further, many of the correlations with self-esteem were of a similar magnitude to the correlations between measures of self-concept clarity (median $r = 0.105$).

As noted earlier, however, a combination of measure-specific variance and the indirect nature of most of these measures can limit the magnitude of these interrelationships. To address this issue and to get a better idea of the structure of measures of self-concept clarity, we conducted an ESEM on parcels of items, allowing for the error terms of items from a given measure to correlate. This analysis suggested a three-factor solution. The first factor represented the SCCS. The second factor was a combination of certainty and extremity. The third factor was latitudes of self-

Table 1.1 Zero-order correlations among measures of self-concept clarity in Sample 1, $N = 347$

	SCCS	Certainty	Extremity	Response Latency	Consistency	Latitudes
SCCS						
Certainty	0.19***					
Extremity	0.08	0.51***				
Response Latency	−0.02	−0.12*	−0.15**			
Consistency	0.07	0.03	0.13*	0.06		
Latitudes	−0.09	0.04	−0.09	0.16**	0.05	
Self-esteem	0.59***	0.27***	0.15**	−0.06	−0.01	0.001

Data from Bobrowski et al. (2018)
*p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001

description. Neither response latency nor consistency loaded on any factors, although models with four or more factors failed to converge, so it is possible that these factors would have emerged. The first two factors were moderately correlated ($r = 0.28$, $p = 0.006$), whereas they were not strongly correlated with the third (rs < 0.07, ps > 0.55). This structure was supported in confirmatory analyses in a second, independent data set (Bobrowski et al., 2018).

Predictive Utility of Self-Concept Clarity Over and Above Self-Esteem

Our structural analyses suggested that self-concept clarity measures might actually reflect three weakly related concepts. How do these constructs relate to criteria? Using latent variable regressions, we first regressed each criterion on the three self-concept clarity factors. These self-concept clarity factors demonstrated unique patterns of relationships with criterion variables (See Table 1.2). Specifically, the SCCS factor predicted reduced depressive symptoms, reduced perseverative thinking, and reduced physical symptoms. The certainty/extremity factor did not predict these three criteria, but it did positively predict self-efficacy, satisfaction with life, and the observer-rated coherence of participants' self-defining narratives. Finally, the latitudes factor predicted decreased physical symptoms and (marginally) increased self-efficacy. Thus, each of the self-concept clarity factors demonstrated a different pattern of relationships with criterion variables.

Table 1.2 Self-concept clarity factors predicting selected criteria with and without controlling for self-esteem in Sample 1

	SCCS factor		Certainty/extremity factor		Latitudes factor		
Criterion	Just SCC	W/ self-esteem	Just SCC	W/ self-esteem	Just SCC	W/ self-esteem	Self-esteem
Depressive symptoms	−0.56***	−0.15**	−0.02	0.24**	−0.09	−0.02	−0.76***
Perseverative thinking	−0.66***	−0.46***	−0.06	0.06	−0.08	−0.04	−0.38***
Physical symptoms	−0.49***	−0.37***	−0.05	0.01	−0.11*	−0.09†	−0.21*
Self-efficacy	0.31***	−0.004	0.48***	0.29***	0.10†	0.05	0.59***
Satisfaction with life	0.43***	0.09	0.31***	0.13†	0.06	0.01	0.61***
SDM coherence	−0.05	−0.09	0.25***	0.26**	0.05	0.05	0.05

For each self-concept clarity factor, the first column represents the standardized beta from a simultaneous regression of a latent variable of the relevant criterion on the SCC latent variables
The second column represents the beta from a comparable regression model that also includes the self-esteem latent variable as a predictor
Data from Bobrowski et al. (2018). SDM coherence is observer ratings of participant essays in which participants were asked to describe a self-defining memory
*p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001; †p <.10

Next, we added self-esteem to this model. In this data set, self-esteem predicted many of the criteria included in this study (depressive symptoms, perseverative thinking, physical symptoms, self-efficacy, and satisfaction with life) after controlling for the three self-concept clarity factors. Critically, many of the previously documented correlates of the self-concept clarity factors were either eliminated or reduced in magnitude once self-esteem was accounted for. Analyses like this are critical to identify the true associates of self-concept clarity constructs. For example, consistent with the reanalysis of Bigler et al. (2001) reported earlier, the relationship of the SCCS factor with depressive symptoms, although present, appears to be much weaker than analyses without self-esteem might lead us to conclude. However, some outcomes do appear to be uniquely related to self-concept clarity measures and not to self-esteem in this data set. Most notably, the extremity/certainty factor predicted naïve coders' ratings of the coherence of participants' self-defining narratives, whereas self-esteem did not, although this relationship was not replicated across these data sets. This particular outcome – the ability to clearly express a personally defining memory – is conceptually more related to self-concept clarity than to self-esteem (Adler, Lodi-Smith, Philippe, & Houle, 2016) and is one that may warrant further research.

Moving Forward

As should be apparent from the data we have on the measurement and validity of SCC measures, our existing understanding of self-concept clarity measurement is rather incomplete. Next we attempt to interpret these new findings and offer a road map forward for the study of SCC.

Recommendations for Assessing Self-Concept Clarity

Despite analyses that reduced measure-specific variance, our ESEM analysis largely suggested that the different approaches to assessing SCC are meaningfully distinct from each other, and they do not represent a unitary "self-concept clarity" construct. Only extremity and certainty loaded onto a single factor, and even this should be interpreted with caution as these two measures were collected simultaneously (i.e., as each person indicated their standing on each trait [from which extremity was calculated], they also indicated their certainty of their standing on that trait). Although we were unable to fit a model in which response latency or consistency had meaningful loadings on any factors, the overall takeaway is that, for the most part, each of the measures of SCC should be treated as measures of separate constructs. Treating any two measures as equivalent in a given study should only be done when there is a compelling empirical basis for doing so. For example, DeMarree and Rios (2014) found strong correlations between the SCCS and subjective

ambivalence in the self-evaluation[1] (in each of three studies, |*rs*| = 0.54, 0.70, 0.70) and found parallel results with the two measures and consequently averaged them (after recoding ambivalence) to create a self-concept clarity composite variable.

This recommendation parallels work on attitude strength. Researchers studying attitudes have documented a host of variables that are associated with the strength – that is the stability, resistance, and predictive utility – of an evaluation, including certainty, accessibility, extremity, importance, and ambivalence, among others (for reviews, see e.g., Bassili, 2008; DeMarree, Petty, & Briñol, 2007; Howe & Krosnick, 2017; Petty & Krosnick, 1995). In terms of nomenclature, these variables (i.e., accessibility, certainty, etc.) are said to *predict* the strength of the attitude to which they apply, and are not, themselves, strength (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). Consequently, they are sometimes called "strength-related attitude features" or "strength-related attitude attributes" (e.g., Krosnick & Petty, 1995; Visser, Bizer, & Krosnick, 2006). One critical recommendation from this literature is that instead of referring to "strength," researchers should refer to the specific strength-related attitude feature(s) under consideration at a given time. We make a similar recommendation for reporting work on self-concept clarity. Rather than referring to "self-concept clarity," we encourage researchers to specify the specific self-concept feature they are examining (e.g., responses to the self-concept clarity scale, *certainty* of self-conceptions, *accessibility* of self-conceptions, etc.). Such an approach more clearly conveys to readers that the different strategies for assessing self-concept clarity might not be equivalent.

In addition, we recommend that researchers include multiple measures of self-concept clarity in their work. If the different self-concept clarity assessment strategies are not equivalent, it will be critically important to know which outcomes are related to each assessment and which are not. Furthermore, it may be worth exploring interactions among different self-concept clarity assessment strategies – particularly between those assessment strategies that represent structural features of one's self-conceptions (e.g., accessibility, consistency) and metacognitive features of one's self-conceptions (e.g., certainty, SCCS) – in order to gain greater insight into self-related processes (Guerrettaz & Arkin, 2016). Recall that the various indicators of self-concept clarity were largely uncorrelated with each other. So the responses of people with the same level of one self-concept clarity indicator (e.g., high SCCS, a metacognitive indicator of self-concept clarity) might differ depending on their level of another self-concept clarity indicator (e.g., high versus low self-concept accessibility, a structural indicator of self-concept clarity). For example, someone who perceives high self-concept clarity (i.e., SCCS), but who has difficulty retrieving self-relevant information due to their inaccessibility, might be surprised by such difficulty and may even experience it as a threat (Guerrettaz & Arkin, 2015). Across a wide range of potential future studies, a more complete body of data – examining multiple measures in parallel and interactively – will be useful in helping to develop and refine theory relating to self-concept clarity.

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[1] Self-evaluation ambivalence is not typically used as a measure of clarity, but it does share some conceptual overlap with the content of the SCCS (see DeMarree & Morrison, 2012)

Treating Measures of Self-Concept Clarity as Strength-Related Self-Features

One notable feature of the attitude strength literature is that main effects of strength-related attitude features are relatively rare. Instead, variables related to the strength of attitudes tend to interact with the valence of the attitude itself in predicting the consequences of the attitude. For example, an attitude (e.g., positivity or negativity toward a political candidate) predicts attitude-relevant outcomes (e.g., biased perceptions of debate performance, likelihood of voting for a candidate) *to a greater extent* as the strength of the attitude increases (e.g., as indicated by the strength-related attitude feature of accessibility; Fazio & Williams, 1986). That is, strength-related attitude features moderate the impact of the attitude. Comparable effects have been documented with the strength of the self-attitude (i.e., self-esteem) as well, with self-esteem predicting related consequences (information processing biases) to a greater extent as features associated with strength (accessibility, in this case) increase (e.g., DeMarree et al., 2010; for a review, see DeMarree et al., 2007). This raises the question of whether the various measures of self-concept clarity might serve a similar moderating influence.

Initial evidence suggests that yes, high SCC might be associated with greater "strength" of self-conceptions. Notably, Lewandowski and Nardone (2012) found that increased SCC (measured by the SCCS) was associated with greater self-other congruence. In other words, people's self-views predicted a friend's perceptions of them across a number of dimensions to a greater extent as self-concept clarity increased. This congruence could occur, for example, because people high in self-concept clarity express their self-conceptions more consistently and clearly in their overt behavior (a "strength" effect), leading their friends to form perceptions of them that are consistent with their self-views.

Typically, attitude strength is assessed at the level of the specific attitude object (e.g., accessibility of an attitude toward a specific presidential candidate, policy, or brand). Researchers have had success applying a similar approach to people's self-conceptions, such as the certainty of people's level of extraversion (Swann & Ely, 1984), political ideology (Shoots-Reinhard, Petty, DeMarree, & Rucker, 2015), and specific personality scales (Shoots-Reinhard et al., 2015) or the accessibility of people's self-esteem (DeMarree et al., 2010), self-guides (Norman & Aron, 2003), and specific personality scales (Mellema & Bassili, 1995). However, SCC presumably applies to the whole of one's self-conceptions, so it is not entirely clear how narrowly or broadly it is expected to extend (DeMarree & Morrison, 2012). Critically, variables tend to best predict outcomes measured at the same level of specificity (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), and since SCC applies relatively broadly to one's self-conceptions, it might be that it best moderates the outcomes of relatively broad measures of self-conceptions or broad patterns of self-concept expression, as in the Lewandowski and Nardone (2012) work. In addition, because self-esteem is related to people's self-views across a wide range of domains (Pelham, 1995; Pelham & Swann, 1989), and because SCC is related to ambivalence in one's level of self-esteem (DeMarree & Rios, 2014), SCC might also predict the "strength" of self-esteem.
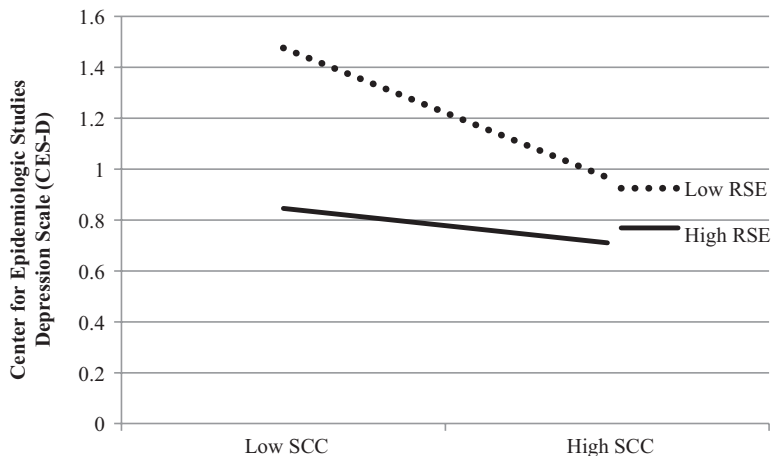
Fig. 1.1 Interaction between self-esteem (RSE) and self-concept clarity scale (SCCS) latent factors on symptoms of depression (CES-D)

In some exploratory analyses with the data described above, we examined possible interactions between self-esteem and the various SCC measures included in our samples to predict the outcomes included in the study. In these analyses, we observed several effects that make conceptual sense. For example, we found that the SCCS factor moderated the relationship between self-esteem and depressive symptoms. Overall, high self-esteem individuals report fewer depressive symptoms. However, high self-concept clarity seems to buffer low self-esteem individuals against depressive symptoms more than their low-clarity counterparts (see Fig. 1.1).

This may be thought of as a protective or buffering effect of high self-concept clarity. However, on a different outcome – self-efficacy – we see more of a strength effect of latitudes, with self-esteem more strongly predicting this efficacy as the latitude facet of self-concept clarity increases (Bobrowski et al., 2018). Thus, different measures of self-concept clarity show different patterns of interaction with self-esteem on relevant outcomes, further reinforcing the nonequivalence of these measures.

Self-Esteem

As we have noted repeatedly, SCC measures are consistently related to self-esteem. Further, many of the main effect associations observed of self-concept clarity appear to be due, at least in part, to the relationship of SCC measures with self-esteem. Interactions with self-esteem, such as those just described, offer evidence that self-concept clarity is not redundant with self-esteem. However, it should be clear that research examining SCC-related self features would benefit from the inclusion of, and examination of, self-esteem.

In addition to the above, it is worth considering why self-esteem and self-clarity are related to each other. Campbell (1990; see also her forward to this volume) discussed possible causal relationships between SCC and self-esteem, noting either direction is plausible. For example, low self-esteem could lead to reduced self-concept clarity because self-verification motives would lead people with low self-esteem to acquire information that is inconsistent with what would be acquired via their self-enhancement motives, resulting in reduced SCC. Alternatively, low self-concept clarity could undermine self-esteem because it might leave people more open to the self-information available, some of which is negative. In contrast, high self-clarity people would have more clear self-boundaries, and consequently would reject information that does not seem to "fit" who they are, leading negative information to be preferentially rejected given high levels of self-esteem on average. Both causal directions have been supported in at least one longitudinal study, although the support was strongest for low self-esteem undermining SCC, as operationalized as the SCCS (Wu, Watkins, & Hattie, 2010).

Additional evidence examining the relationship between self-esteem and SCC is consistent with the notion that self-enhancing biases might undermine the self-concept clarity of people low in self-esteem. Specifically, building on the observation that discrepancies between actual and desired attitudes on any topic can increase people's experience of conflict in their attitudes (DeMarree, Wheeler, Briñol, & Petty, 2014), DeMarree and Rios (2014) found that actual-desired self-esteem discrepancies – which are greatest for people low in self-esteem – strongly predicted decreases in self-concept clarity (SCCS and subjective ambivalence). Further, self-esteem level was no longer a significant linear predictor of self-concept clarity once these discrepancies were entered into the analysis. However, the *quadratic* effect of self-esteem remained significant (DeMarree & Rios, 2014). In the attitudes literature, there is a consistent relationship between the extremity of an evaluation (i.e., deviation from neutrality) and its strength (both in terms of strength outcomes and strength-related attitude features; see e.g., Bassili, 1996; Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent, & Carnot, 1993). However, because "low" self-esteem in most healthy samples is at or above the neutral point of self-esteem scales, it is rare that the distribution of self-esteem has sufficient range to observe a curvilinear pattern, leaving a stronger linear pattern present than if the full possible range were available. Although Campbell (1990) found no evidence for curvilinear associations in her original study (reported in the general discussion, p. 546), it is plausible that the limited statistical power or restriction of range could have weakened the sensitivity to such effects. Future research on self-concept clarity might benefit from sampling a wide range of the self-esteem distribution to tease apart potential linear and quadratic relationships between these constructs.

Cultural Boundaries

One critical variable that has been understudied in the literature on SCC is culture. Different cultures emphasize a variety of dimensions related to the clarity of one's self-views. For example, relative to Western European cultures, East Asian cultures

emphasize the inevitability of contradiction and the inability to understand something independent of its context (e.g., Choi, Koo, & Choi, 2007; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). Consequently, the self-conceptions and self-evaluations of people from East Asian cultures tend to contain more contradiction (Spencer-Rodgers, Boucher, Mori, Wang, & Peng, 2009; Spencer-Rodgers & Peng, 2005) and have more contextually defined self-views (English & Chen, 2007, 2011), compared with people from Western European cultures (see Gardner & Garr-Schultz, this volume for more on identity-based conceptualizations of self-concept clarity).

Perhaps because of their relative greater comfort with and expectation of contradiction, Japanese participants scored lower on the SCCS and demonstrated a weaker correlation between the SCCS and self-esteem than Canadian participants in the original publication of the scale (Campbell et al., 1996). However, the implications for self-concept clarity extend beyond such mean level differences. When testing or comparing across cultures, it is important that the conceptual variables of interest are instantiated in a way that is meaningful in each culture (Hardin, Robitschek, Flores, Navarro, & Ashton, 2014). Although the global self-concept might be meaningful in a Western cultural context, context-specific self-conceptions might be the most meaningful in East Asian cultures (Chen, English, & Peng, 2006; Cousins, 1989; English & Chen, 2007). Consequently, global self-concept clarity may not tap into the culturally meaningful form of self-concept clarity in East Asian cultures, and, instead, the clarity of specific social, relational, or contextual selves might be more appropriate when investigating self-concept clarity in these cultural contexts (DeMarree & Morrison, 2012; see also Gardner & Garr-Schultz, this volume).

In addition, different ways of conceptualizing self-concept clarity might differ in their cultural relevance. For example, even when considered in a contextually defined context, people from East Asian cultures may still be more likely than their Western counterparts to recognize contradiction in their self-views (i.e., have low self-concept clarity based on indices of consistency). However, it is possible that these individuals could hold those contradictory self-conceptions with confidence and believe that they will be consistently displayed in that particular role.

Although these ideas are somewhat speculative, they point to new directions for future research on self-concept clarity. Most centrally, there is a need to understand the extent to which contextually constrained self-concept clarity concepts are meaningful within and between cultures. Related to this issue are questions about whether the correlates and consequences of different SCC measures are the same or different, when assessed at the appropriate level of analysis, across cultures.

SCC Measurement and Barriers to Conceptual Development

We have raised a number of important issues with the measurement of self-concept clarity: multiple, nonequivalent self-concept clarity assessment strategies, potential confounds with self-esteem, and concerns with the cross-cultural validity of self-concept clarity conceptualization and measurement. We believe that the issues

raised pose serious barriers that the SCC literature needs to overcome. But, overcoming and addressing these barriers also pose a number of opportunities as well.

As discussed at length above, we identified at least three distinct constructs that have all been labeled as "self-concept clarity." By recognizing the differences among these measures, the field will be better prepared to identify differences in the effects or correlates of various SCC-related measures that can inform conceptual understanding of the self. Moving forward, researchers should think carefully about what aspects of self-concept clarity are most important to their research questions in order to maximize the strength of their designs. Additionally, they may choose to include multiple measures of self-concept clarity to demonstrate the specificity of their predictions.

Because at least some measures of self-concept clarity are typically strongly correlated with self-esteem, a failure to appreciate the distinction between self-esteem and SCC may further hinder conceptual development. This is especially important when the purported outcomes are ones that are strongly associated with self-esteem, such as various mental health outcomes. Further, the failure to consider both self-esteem and SCC simultaneously prevents us from gaining insights into their potential interactions. As noted earlier, self-concept clarity – at least as indicated by some self-concept clarity measures (see Fig. 1.1 for an example using the SCCS) – might buffer low self-esteem individuals against negative consequences typically associated with negative self-evaluations. Alternatively, to the extent that SCC-related constructs represent the global "strength" of one's self-concept, it might be expected to predict the durability and impactfulness of self-esteem and people's self-conceptions.

Finally, because current conceptualizations of self-concept clarity are largely based on the notion of a unitary, context invariant self-concept, SCC research fails to adequately address culture. Future work may benefit from taking into account the culture-specific ways in which the self-concept and SCC may be manifest (Hardin et al., 2014).

Final Thoughts

In reviewing the existing literature and our ongoing work on the measurement and validity of self-concept clarity, we have identified a number of distinct ways that researchers have attempted to measure self-concept clarity. These different strategies appear to reflect different constructs and in some cases demonstrate limited incremental validity over self-esteem. Although many of the issues we raised represent potential "problems" with the SCC literature, we believe that they also present opportunities. By better understanding the measures and conceptual space of SCC-related constructs, the field can begin to grow. Researchers can make more informed choices about the measures they use and the research and analytic designs they employ. We hope this additional nuance will help researchers to develop richer, more accurate theory in this area.

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Chapter 2
Situating Self-Concept Clarity in the Landscape of Personality

William L. Dunlop

Abstract Personality may be understood in terms of three conceptual levels: dispositional traits (broad patterns of affect, cognition, and behavior, such as extraversion and agreeableness), characteristic adaptations (developmental and motivational variables, couched within certain contexts, such as personal goals), and integrative narratives of the self (life stories, which work to enhance a sense of continuity with the personal past, present, and [presumed] future). In this chapter, I present a review of the known relations between self-concept clarity and the many characteristics relevant to an understanding of personality. Evident from this review, self-concept clarity has been found to correspond significantly with constructs at each of these conceptual levels. This chapter concludes with the provision of several suggestions for future research examining self-concept clarity from a personality psychology perspective.

Keywords Personality psychology · Individual differences · Traits · Characteristic adaptations · Life narratives · Self-concept clarity

Self-concept clarity (SCC) has proven itself to be a valuable asset to many areas within the social sciences, including personality psychology. Recognizing the boon SCC has been for this substantive area, in this chapter I mean to say something instructive about SCC, on one hand, and personality, on the other. I begin by offering a definition of both constructs. I then go on to outline the various associations that have been observed between SCC and variables relevant to personality. From there, I consider the most appropriate place for SCC among these personality variables. Finally, attention will be turned to a series of implications concerning the relation between SCC and personality, as well as the nature of personality itself.

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What Is Self-Concept Clarity?

SCC is defined as, "the extent to which the contents of an individual's self-concept (e.g., perceived personal attributes) are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable" (Campbell et al., 1996, p. 141). Evident from this definition, SCC pertains to evaluations of the structural aspects of the self, rather than the evaluation of the self's content *per se* (for discussion, see Leary & Tangney, 2012). Among those self-hyphen constructs relevant to the evaluation of the self's structure, a distinction may be drawn between those aimed at assessing the degree of pluralism in the self (e.g., the number and nature of distinct self-representations) and those aimed at assessing the degree of unity in the self (e.g., the level of consistency among these self-representations, more global evaluations of the manner of coherence within the self). SCC is most applicable to an understanding of self-unity (Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003).

SCC captures evaluations of the lucidity of personal attributes, how well these attributes cohere among one another, and the degree to which they exhibit continuity through time. Thus, a researcher interested in SCC may probe (a) a given individual's understanding of his or her personal attributes, (b) the degree to which this individual views his or her personal attributes as harmonious with one another, or (c) the degree to which this individual views these attributes as continuous and coherent across contexts and through time.

Shifting from the conceptual to the methodological, SCC was initially assessed via a small number of rather indirect approaches, including the degree of confidence participants reported in their endorsement of certain self-attributes, the stability of these and related ratings through time, and the reaction times participants exhibited when determining whether a given attribute held relevance to the self (see Campbell, 1990). Since the pioneering work of Campbell (1990), however, researchers have come to commonly assess SCC via a 12-item self-report measure. This measure includes items such as "I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality" and "In general, I have a clear sense of who I am, and what I am." Participants are asked to rate their agreement with each of these items on a Likert-type scale, with higher values indicating greater enthusiasm. After reverse coding the appropriate items, a single measure of SCC is derived by averaging participants' ratings. Thus, SCC is operationalized as a unidimensional construct.

What Is Personality?

"Personality" is an umbrella term meant to capture both (a) the many psychologically relevant dimensions along which individuals differ and (b) the manner in which these dimensions relate to one another. There is great diversity in the dimensions relevant to an understanding of personality. For example, some individuals are talkative, whereas others are reticent; some are planful, while others are reckless;

and some have ambitions for social power and influence, whereas others long for intimate and fulfilling connections and others still long for both power and intimacy. Finally, some view their pasts favorably, drawing many inspirations and lessons from challenging experiences, whereas others view their lives as one let down after the next. Here, I use the term "personality characteristics" to refer to the assortment of psychologically meaningful dimensions upon which individuals may be understood to differ.

There is an emerging consensus within the field that personality itself is most usefully represented in terms of a series distinct "levels," each corresponding with its own unique conceptual and empirical history (e.g., Cantor, 1990; DeYoung, 2015; Dunlop, 2013, 2015; McAdams, 1995, 2013). There is less agreement, however, regarding the exact number and nature of these levels (see, e.g., DeYoung, 2015; Dunlop, 2015). All of the above being said, one framework, Dan McAdams' (1995) multilevel conception of personality, may be singled out on the basis of its conceptual breadth and widespread use within personality psychology and beyond. For this reason, in this chapter, McAdams' model will serve as the template from which to organize the constructs relevant to personality. This model has proven adequate in previous reviews of personality and personality processes (see, e.g., Roberts & Wood, 2006).

The three levels of personality Drawing together the major conceptual and empirical traditions within personality psychology, McAdams (1995) proposed that personality is best understood in terms of three levels. At the first level sits *dispositional traits*, which are broad, recurrent patterns of affect, cognition, and behavior. Researchers interested in assessing dispositional traits typically do so by way of inventories tapping the five-factor model (FFM) or the Big Five (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). As the name suggests, the FFM is composed of five factors which, collectively, capture the major dimensions of personality trait description (viz., extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience; for brief descriptions of these five factors, see Table 2.1). Dispositional traits have been found to possess a strong genetic component (Jang, Livesley, & Vernon, 1996), as well as a high degree of stability throughout the life span (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000), although, across adulthood, the majority of these traits have been noted to exhibit certain mean-level changes (see Lodi-Smith, Cologgi, Spain, & Roberts, 2016; Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006).

When most researchers assess personality, they do so via a consideration of personality traits. Indeed, the terms "personality" and "personality traits" are often treated as synonyms. Due to the widespread use of traits within the field, as well as their descriptive and predictive ability (see, e.g., Ozer & Benet-Martínez, 2006), these personality characteristics represent the bedrock of any viable framework of human personality.

Offering a succinct definition of the variables housed at the first level of personality is easy when compared to the variables housed at personality's second level, the level of *characteristic adaptations*. This is due to the fact that this level contains a great diversity of personality characteristics including "personal strivings, life

Table 2.1 Associations between self-concept clarity and personality characteristics associated with McAdams' (1995) personality levels

Level	Personality characteristics		Source(s)
	Positive associations	Negative associations	
Dispositional traits	*Extraversion* (degree to which individual is sociable, energetic, and experiences positive affect)		Campbell et al. (1996); Usborne and Taylor (2010)
	Agreeableness (degree to which individual is kind, trustworthy, and gets along with others)		
	Conscientiousness (degree to which individual is reliable, responsible, and planful)		
		Neuroticism (degree to which individual experiences negative emotions, particularly anxiety and rumination, as well as fluctuations between emotional states)	
Characteristic adaptations	*Self-esteem* (degree to which the self is evaluated favorably)		Campbell et al. (1996); Usborne and Taylor (2010); Smith et al. (1996)
	Sense of self (degree to which individuals report (a) an understanding of themselves, (b) consistency in values and feelings, (c) a distinction between one's own and others' emotions, opinions, and cognitions, and (d) the sense that one's existence is robust)		Ickes, Park, and Johnson (2012)
	Life comprehension (degree to which one's own life is understood)		George and Park (2016)
	Life purpose (degree to which one has purpose and direction in life)		
	Life mattering (degree to which one's own life is viewed as mattering in the grand scheme of things)		
	Meaning in life (degree to which one's own life is understood/makes sense)		Shin et al. (2016)
	Satisfaction with life (degree to which one's own life is evaluated positively)		Usborne and Taylor (2010)

Construct	Citation
Spiritual fitness (degree to which individual perceives his or her life as meaningful and purpose)	Hammer, Cragun, and Hwang (2013)
Tolerance of uncertainty (degree to which individual is comfortable with ambiguity/lack of resolve/uncertainty)	Kusec, Tallon, and Koerner (2016)
Extrinsic religious orientation (degree to which religion is used as a means to achieve other ends/needs)	Blazek and Besta (2012)
Ethno-cultural identity conflict (degree to which respondent perceives "intrapersonal conflict along with conflict involving family, ethnic group, and the wider society" [p. 464])	Ward, Stuart, and Kus (2011)
Deaf identity centrality (degree that being deaf is central to one's sense of self [among deaf populations])	Carter (2015)
Couple identity (the degree to which a romantic relationship is incorporated in an individual's sense of self)	Manzi, Parise, Iafrate, Sedikides, and Vignoles (2015)
Identity achievement (indicates both exploration of various possibilities within certain domains [e.g., occupation, religion] and subsequent commitments within said domains)	Ickes et al. (2012)
Identity diffusion (indicates a lack of exploration within certain domains [e.g., occupation, religion] and a lack of commitments within said domains)	
Identity foreclosure (indicates a lack of exploration within certain domains [e.g., occupation, religion] and commitments within said domains)	
Identity moratorium (indicates exploration within certain domains [e.g., occupation, religion] and a lack of commitments within said domains)	

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

| Level | Personality characteristics | | Source(s) |
	Positive associations	Negative associations	
		Anxious attachment ("the extent to which an individual is anxious or fearful about abandonment or being unloved" [p. 44])	Wu (2009)
		Avoidant attachment ("the extent to which an individual is uncomfortable with closeness and dependence on others emotionally close to them" [p. 44])	
	Active coping style (represented by the tendency to take action, plan, and engage in positive reinterpretation in the face of life challenges)		Smith et al. (1996)
		Passive coping style (represented by the tendency to engage in denial when faced with life's challenges)	
	Striving for accomplishment (a cognitive-motivational work orientation assessing individuals' achievement motivation within work contexts)		Chiaburu and Carpenter (2013)
	Desire for fame (degree to which individual longs to be rich and famous)		Gountas, Gountas, Reeves, and Morgan (2012)
	Desire for anonymity while shopping ("consumer desires to avoid shopping related self-disclosure" [p. 70])		Nichols (2015)
	Positive goal-related affect (degree to which pursuit of personal goals leads to increases in emotions such as happiness and interest)	*Negative goal-related affect* (degree to which pursuit of personal goals led to increases in emotions such as dejection and feeling tense)	Kernis, Paradise, Whitaker, Wheatman, and Goldman (2000)

Narrative identity	More prominent reminiscent bump in distribution of salient autobiographical experiences	Wolf and Zimprich (2016)
	Degree of episodic contextual details provided in narrative recounts of early childhood	Fuentes and Desrocher (2012)
	Degree of semantic details provided in narrative recounts of early childhood	
	Degree to which narrator views autobiographical recounts as reflecting cooperative interactions with others	
	Degree to which narrator repeats information when prompted for further details about autobiographical narratives	
	Degree to which narrator provides perceptual information (e.g., sounds, smells, tastes) when prompted for further details about autobiographical narratives	
	Degree to which individuals report reflecting on their pasts for the purposes of self-continuity	Berna et al. (2016); Bluck and Alea (2011); Liao, Bluck, Alea, and Cheng (2016)
	Degree to which individuals report reflecting on their pasts for the purpose of social bonding	Berna et al. (2016)
	Degree to which individuals report reflecting on their pasts for the purpose of directing their own behaviors	

tasks, defense mechanisms, coping strategies, domain-specific skills and values, and a wide assortment of other motivational, developmental, or strategic constructs that are contextualized in time, place, or role" (McAdams, 1995, p. 365). This breadth has led some personality psychologists, including myself (Dunlop, 2015; Dunlop, Walker, & Wiens, 2013), to propose that the second level of personality be more squarely focused on motivation and goal constructs (see also Little, 1996). For the purposes of this chapter, however, this seems a bit too restrictive. With this in mind, and drawing from Matsuba and Walker's (2004) research on characteristic adaptations, in the current chapter, characteristic adaptations will be considered in terms of (a) evaluations of the content of the self and/or one's life, (b) socio-cognitive and ideological variables, (c) attachment and coping styles, and (d) goals/ motivations.

Finally, the third level of personality is represented by an integrative life story or *narrative identity*. As McAdams (1995) proposed, in modern Western societies, individuals often seek to understand who they are via the construction of a coherent and compelling life story. Through the construction of such a story, the narrator is provided with a mechanism to explain how his or her past fits together, has led to present circumstances, and will likely extend into the future. As a result, this story works to bring the many varied ways in which the self is understood across contexts and through time into a broader unifying and coherent framework. In McAdams' own words, "Contemporary adults create identity in their lives to the extent that the self can be told in a coherent, followable, and vivifying narrative that integrates the person into society in a productive and generative way and provides the person with a purposeful self-history that explains how the self of yesterday became the self of today and will become the anticipated self of tomorrow" (p. 382).

In summary, within McAdams' (1995) model, personality is manifest in terms of a small number of dispositional traits, a myriad of constructs functioning under the moniker of characteristic adaptations, and a narrative identity, which represents a coherent story about the self, its personality characteristics, and the life it is in the process of leading. Before turning attention to the relation between SCC and personality, it is important to note that the personality characteristics at each level are not redundant with those at another. For example, one's narrative identity cannot be reduced to a particular pattern of dispositional traits, nor can one's dispositional traits be approximated by a particular pattern of characteristic adaptations (Dunlop, 2015).

Self-Concept Clarity and Personality

My study of the relation between SCC and personality began by exploring all known and readily accessible relations between SCC and the personality characteristics housed within each level of McAdams' model. The fruits of my labor are on display in Table 2.1. Of course, in the construction of Table 2.1, I was forced to draw a "line in the sand" to determine what does and does not constitute a personality

characteristic. My strategy here was to focus primarily on the characteristics most commonly considered by personality psychologists (e.g., traits, goals/motives, identity processes, narrative identity) rather than adopt a broader focus. For this reason, several constructs that have shown relations with both SCC and the personality characteristics depicted in Table 2.1 fall outside my purview (e.g., positive and negative affect).

Summarizing the contents of this table, at the trait level, SCC has been found to relate positively with extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness and negatively with neuroticism. At the level of characteristic adaptations, in contrast, SCC has been noted to correspond positively with self-esteem, purpose in life, and active coping styles and negatively with an anxious attachment style, avoidant attachment style, and passive coping style, among other constructs. Finally, at the level of narrative identity, SCC has been found to correspond with several narrative-centric variables, including the degree and quality of details offered in autobiographical recounts and the reasons why individuals report reflecting upon their pasts.

Evident from the brief summary provided directly above (and Table 2.1), SCC holds relevance to an understanding of personality at each of its three levels. Some readers may be of the mind that the placement of SCC within the landscape of personality would have been easier if significant relations had been noted between SCC and the variables at one and only one personality level. Unfortunately, even if this had been observed, the proper place of SCC within personality's landscape would still be a matter of some debate. Although conceptually and methodologically distinct, the personality characteristics at one level often correspond significantly with the personality characteristics housed at another level (e.g., Dunlop et al., 2013; Matsuba & Walker, 2004).

In all honesty, a case could be made for the placement of SCC at any one of the three levels of personality. For example, SCC shares much in common with dispositional traits, including the manner in which it was initially conceptualized (e.g., Campbell et al., 1996), is typically assessed (via self-report), and the stability it has exhibited over time (Lodi-Smith et al., 2016). SCC also holds strong ties with many of the more contextualized constructs located at the level of characteristic adaptations (e.g., meaning in life) and the self-reflective spirit of the integrative life narrative. Given the position we find ourselves in, we need now consider the more conceptual and mechanistic features associated with each personality level.

Personality and three perennial problems for the self In addition to specifying the types of characteristics associated within each of these level, McAdams (2013) recognized three "perennial problems for the self" (p. 281) pertaining to (1) self-regulation, (2) self-esteem, and (3) self-continuity. Conveniently, the characteristics associated with each personality level speak primarily to one of these three problems.

Self-regulation and dispositional traits Self-regulation is manifest when "the self… [exerts]…control to override a prepotent response, with the assumption that replacing one response with another is done to attain goals and conform to standards" (Vohs et al., 2008, p. 884). In layman terms, self-regulation represents the phenomenon

whereby an individual controls, or *regulates*, his or her impulse to perform a given action. The history of empirical study on this construct can be traced back at least as far as Walter Mischel's (1974) now classic research examining individual differences in children's ability to refrain from consuming a marshmallow placed in front of them, in the interest of being gifted a second marshmallow following a delay.

The "problem" of self-regulation is particularly pertinent to dispositional traits due to the behavioral, and therefore observable, nature of these personality characteristics. These constructs help to define us as actors upon "the social stage of life" (McAdams, 2013, p. 273). Some individuals play the role of the lovable extravert, whereas others orient to the role of the tortured artist. Irrespective of the manner in which one's traits are best defined, self-regulation is a requisite during the performance process. As McAdams noted, throughout childhood and beyond, we are socialized to experience pride when our social behaviors are evaluated positively by others and less enviable emotions (e.g., anxiety, embarrassment, shame, guilt) when others disapprove of our actions. Self-regulation is relevant to this socialization process as it helps to tailor our behaviors (and, by extension, our traits) to the sensibilities of the relevant audience. Early in development, this audience is selective and immediate, represented by specific figures in the individuals' life (e.g., parents, siblings). Over time, however, this audience becomes more expansive, representing the expectations and demands permeating within the broader cultural milieu.

Characteristic adaptations and self-esteem Self-esteem refers to a global evaluation of the self's worth (Rosenberg, 1965). High and consistent levels of self-esteem indicate that the self is evaluated favorably, whereas low and/or inconsistent levels of self-esteem suggest a less favorable, mixed view of the self's worth. The "problem" of self-esteem, that is the problem of maintaining a positive view of the self, is recognized as most relevant to characteristic adaptations because evaluations of the self are often strongly related to the degree to which one is making progress toward his or her goals (McAdams, 2013). For example, successful attainment of personal goals has been found to predict improved adjustment and life satisfaction (Sheldon & Cooper, 2008).

Integrative life narratives and self-continuity The "problem" of self-continuity reflects the challenge of initially forming, and then maintaining, a sense of ownership over one's past as well as his or her potential future. Consider, for example, the type of person you were as an adolescent, relative to the type of person you now consider yourself to be. Chances are the descriptions of these two temporally distant selves are divergent from one another (e.g., Do you currently hold the same hobbies and interests you did as an adolescent? What about your behavioral mannerisms and the goals you were pursuing during this developmental period relative to your current traits and goals?). Indeed, the degree of divergence between these two representations is likely so great that it would not be out of the question to propose that these selves actually correspond to two numerically distinct individuals, rather than a single individual at two points in time. Given this incongruence, how exactly do we come to view ourselves as one and the same person, through time (Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003)?

One mechanism by which such a view may be initially achieved and then maintained is through the construction of a personal narrative integrating the self through time and across contexts (Chandler et al., 2003; Dunlop et al., 2013; McAdams, 2013) – that is, a narrative identity. This narrative allows us to reconcile the numerous distinct selves that have existed in our past and the many potential "new" selves that may exist in our future, thereby leading to a sense of continuity through time.

Narrative arguments made in the interest of attaining a sense of self-continuity (i.e., narrative warranting strategies) differ considerably. Speaking to this diversity, Chandler and colleagues (2003) offered five distinct forms these strategies may take, ranging in their degree of sophistication and nuance. In their most basic, narrative arguments for personal continuity typically manifest via a story sans a plot. In this form of warranting strategy, autobiographical experiences are simply listed off in chronological order. A subtly more advanced form of this warranting strategy, the second one contained within Chandler and colleagues' system, is predicated by creating a "picaresque" account of a life through time. At this stage in the game, one at least flirts with a broader plot applicable to the life in question although any notion of character development or change on the part of the author is absent, perhaps conspicuously so. Moving on, we find "foundational" accounts of the self through time wherein the self is recognized as either "(a) the inevitable effect of which one's ancestral past was the antecedent or determinant cause or (b) the natural outgrowth of a perfectly predictable process of maturation" (pp. 39–40). The fourth strategy identified by Chandler and colleagues may be distinguished from the previous three along two dimensions. First, those who employ this fourth warranting strategy recognize the influence that a number of individuals have exhibited on their unfolding lives. Second, proprietors of this warranting strategy typically describe their progression through time as one marked by a notable degree of self-discovery. Finally, the fifth narrative warranting strategy within Chandler and colleagues' model similarly recognizes the influence multiple forces have exhibited on one's life but shies away from the notion that the self has somehow been discovered. Summarizing this less deterministic position, Chandler et al. noted that "such respondents did not view their current efforts to emplot their own lives as the discovery of some guiding principle that could hardly have been otherwise, but instead regarded their own efforts at meaning making as only the latest in a perhaps endless series of attempts to interpretively reread the past in light of the present" (p. 40).

The process of using narrative to build and maintain a sense of self-continuity is one that most often works "behind the scenes." By this I mean that individuals, no matter the pull of the narrative gravity in their lives, are unlikely to allot constant focus to the storying of the self. Rather, the meanings inherent in their narrative identities are kept up-to-date in part through the disclosure of salient autobiographical experiences within their social circles, as well as additional "biographical practices" (Habermas & de Silveira, 2008) including the crafting of journal entries and the review of personal photographs, undertaken in the interest of satisfying other needs, such as building and maintaining social connections (see, e.g., Bluck & Alea, 2011).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is also true that certain circumstances can work to bring narrative and narrative processing into focus. Periods of rapid personal and social change may force the narrator to explicitly confront the fact that his or her personal story no longer "fits." For example, consider a hypothetical individual who has constructed her narrative around the fact that she is happily married, choosing to frame her past in a way that anticipates the emergence of the "love of her life," followed by a magical courtship phase and, ultimately, a "happily ever after." All things being equal, this narrative likely carries with it certain psychological benefit. Suppose, however, that our narrator has recently been informed of her partner's extramarital affair, as well as the fact that he is planning to seek a divorce so that he may begin a new life with his mistress. Under such conditions, our case's narrative identity will likely require drastic revision. During this revision process, she will actively and explicitly reflect upon the major events of her life, in an attempt to draw a new meaning – and a qualitatively new story – from her past. Perhaps her former husband was not the "one" after all, and now she is free to go find her true soul mate. Alternatively, perhaps he was and will always be the "one," and there was something she had done to drive him away all those years ago. Irrespective of the nature of the story our narrator comes to construct, in the absence of a coherent fable, she will no doubt face a great deal of angst (and, given the nature of her disequilibrium, perhaps a reduction in SCC; see Slotter & Gardiner, 2012; Slotter, Gardiner, & Finkle, 2010).

Self-continuity and identity Those familiar with the theorizing of Erik Erikson (1968) will no doubt recognize that self-continuity is central to his notion of identity and identity crises. Briefly summarized, Erikson proposed that, in late adolescence and early adulthood, individuals begin to entertain questions pertaining to who they are and where, in the future, their lives may be heading. The timing of this initial foray into matters of crises and commitments is manifest when the burgeoning cognitive sophistication of the young person in question is met with the increased societal expectations that he or she demonstrate some degree of purpose and direction in life.

To have a viable identity is to have some appreciation of how the self is both distinct from others and continuous through time (Dunlop & Walker, 2013). One, however, can hardly be said to have an appreciation of how the self is distinct from others if this self is not believed to maintain its integrity through time. For this reason, some theorists have gone so far as to suggest that the attainment of a viable identity and achieving a sense of self-continuity are one and the same process (e.g., Chandler et al., 2003). This, of course, feeds back into the notion that constructing a (narrative) identity represents an appropriate strategy to attain a sense of self-continuity.

Adding self-concept clarity to the mix There you have it then - three perennial problems of the self (viz., the problem of self-regulation, self-esteem, and self-continuity) and three levels of personality from which to address them (viz., behavioral dispositions, characteristic adaptations, and narrative identity). We are now in a position to determine the relevance self-concept clarity holds for each of these problems and, by extension, the place of SCC within the pantheon of personality constructs and levels.

SCC and self-regulation Turning first to the problem of self-regulation, it is prudent to consider the ways in which high or low levels of SCC may align with self-regulation. With this in mind, at least two possibilities may be entertained. First, one could argue that a certain degree of clarity regarding the structure of the self is required before it may be regulated. Consistent with this perspective, SCC has been found to relate strongly to traits reflecting successful socialization and integration within society (e.g., agreeableness, conscientiousness; Campbell et al., 1996). That is, the trait profile of an individual with a high level of SCC mirrors the profile of an individual who has learned to display socially desirable behavioral mannerisms. Furthermore, and consistent with this notion, recent research by Lodi-Smith and colleagues (2016) has provided evidence that SCC corresponds positively with trait maturation.

On the contrary, one may argue that a high level of self-regulation actually contributes to a low degree of SCC. Recall that those who engage in self-regulation must bring their actions in line with the demands of the immediate environment as well as more distant social pressures and expectations. Goffman (1959) proposed that the social interactions taking place within these environments are akin to scenes in a play, with individual "actors" adopting roles that come coupled with certain characteristic behaviors. The adoption of these roles is thought to be dynamic across environments and through time (see also, Gergen, 1991). As a result, highly regulated social actors are likely to exhibit a greater range of behaviors across situations. For this reason, they may come to endorse items such as "If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another day" (a reverse coded item from the SCC scale).

This much is speculative, as is the possibility that both of the above explanations may apply dependent on the personal importance an individual places on the domain or context in question (e.g., academics, athletics, aesthetics). Nevertheless, given that there appears to be an absence of a definitive argument for the nature of the relation between SCC and self-regulation and my review of the literature failed to identify any previous work noting a significant relation between SCC and self-regulation, leads to the conclusion that SCC is only marginally relevant to the problem of self-regulation. By extension, and despite the strong relations noted between SCC and dispositional traits, SCC is likely better placed at one of the higher levels of personality.

SCC and self-esteem With respect to these higher levels, let us now consider the problem addressed at the second level of personality, the problem of self-esteem. Here, it is useful to revisit the aforementioned distinction between self-hyphen constructs designed to assess evaluations of the structure of the self and those more attuned to evaluations of the self's content. Earlier work has made clear the fact that SCC pertains to the former category (Campbell et al., 2003). Self-esteem, in contrast, is the flagship construct associated with the latter category.

As was the case with our first problem, we may consider the relevance SCC holds to the problem of self-esteem on both empirical and conceptual grounds. On empirical grounds, it is clear that SCC and self-esteem share a strong positive relation (see Table 2.1), meaning that those high in SCC tend to report largely favorable

views of the self and vice versa. In addition, experimental and longitudinal research has provided evidence for SCC's influence on self-esteem, as well as self-esteem's influence on SCC (e.g., Baumgardner, 1990; Nezlek & Plesko, 2001; Wu, Watkins, & Hattie, 2010). Such bi-directional influence is consistent with Campbell's (1990) assertion that "at least among adults, the relation [between SCC and self-esteem] is reciprocal and confounded" (p. 546). In this same work, Campbell also conceited the possibility that the relation between SCC and self-esteem may be curvilinear in nature, with high levels of SCC present among individuals with high or low self-esteem.

The above concession complicates the conceptual aspect of the relation between SCC and self-esteem. Specifically, given the diversity of findings regarding the relation between SCC and self-esteem, possible third variable explanations for this relation (e.g., DeMarree & Rios, 2014), as well as the diversity present in the conceptual arguments and rationales for the existence of this relation, it is a challenge to mount a definitive case that arriving at a high degree of SCC, by whatever means, will ensure a high level of self-esteem. Although these constructs tend to hang together empirically, one can easily bring to mind friends and acquaintances who possess a clear sense of who they are, a lack of conflict between the aspects of their personalities, and coherent beliefs about the nature of the self, yet view themselves in largely negative terms (e.g., individuals with high SCC and low self-esteem). This illustrates the simple fact that those who are able to gauge the structure of the self with lucidity may not necessarily like what they find (cf. Baumgardner, 1990). Indeed, the distinction drawn between evaluations of the structure and content of the self is particularly apt for this very reason. Evaluations of the structure and content of the self are not synonymous and knowledge pertaining to one of these evaluations does not guarantee insights into the other. It follows that, although statistically related, the conceptual linkage between SCC and self-esteem is somewhat tenuous.

SCC and self-continuity   In contrast to the noted significant relation between SCC and self-esteem, no known empirical research has directly assessed the relation between SCC and self-continuity. Despite this lack of empirical evidence, however, an argument can be made that SCC holds more than a passing relevance to the problem of self-continuity.

By way of brief review, self-continuity pertains to a sense of persistence through time and across situations (Chandler et al., 2003). SCC, in contrast, represents the degree to which the contents of the self are clearly defined, coherent, and consistent. On the basis of these definitions, it is hard to imagine an individual with a strong sense of self-continuity (i.e., a clear sense about how his or her past, present, and future are linked temporally and thematically) and a low level of SCC (i.e., the belief that the self is not well-defined, incoherent, and inconsistent across contexts and through time). Indeed, even though consistency and continuity are distinct concepts (Chandler et al., 2003), when personal consistency is present, so too is continuity.

It is my contention that the communality between SCC and self-continuity is brought about by their equally strong ties with identity (arguably the most nebulous

construct in psychology). Recall the Eriksonian (1968) notion that identity requires both differentiation from others and continuity through time. A review of the items contained in the SCC scale leads to the conclusion that those who have achieved a high level of SCC will have invariably also reached some viable explanation regarding the ways in which the self is unique and maintains some degree of persistence through time.

This brings us some way to addressing the question of the proper placement of SCC within the landscape of personality. Based on the manner in which these levels of personality are currently constituted, however, this placement is far from "just right." Although it is clear that SCC is relevant to identity processes, many of these processes themselves are actually placed at the second rather than the third level of personality. In addition, the third level of personality is highly narrative in nature (indeed, within this model, identity *is* a story; McAdams, 1995) and there is nothing inherently narrative about SCC. In light of these valid challenges, it is timely to consider an alternative model of personality.

Revising the Three Levels of Personality

The alternative model of personality that is championed here is not a "root and branch" overhaul to McAdams' (1995) earlier model but, rather, a slight refocusing of the second and third levels contained therein. As I have previously argued (Dunlop, 2013), I believe that the third level of personality should be expanded to encompass all processes relevant to identity. For reasons expanded upon below, this requires transitioning beyond the exclusive consideration of *narrative* identity.

The problem that the third level of personality is meant to solve pertains to self-continuity. Although many individuals solve this problem through the construction of a coherent and compelling life narrative, narrative processing does not represent the sole route by which a viable identity may be attained (Dunlop, 2013; Dunlop & Walker, 2013, 2015). There is a long storied literature noting that individuals tend to function within one of two "modes" of thought (e.g., Bruner, 1986; Chandler et al., 2003; Dunlop & Walker, 2013). Recognition of this fact may be traced back at least as far as William James (1878), who proclaimed that "To say that all human thinking is essentially of two kinds…is to say only what every reader's experience will corroborate" (p. 237). These different "kinds" of thought have been referred to using a variety of terms. Irrespective of the label placed upon them, however, one is decidedly "narrative" in nature, whereas the other is much more "paradigmatic" (Bruner, 1986).

As Bruner (1986) articulated, the narrative and the paradigmatic modes of thought come with their own evaluative criteria. In the case of the narrative mode, "objective" truth is less important than delivering a tale which accords to the characteristics of a "good" story (e.g., suspense, resolution; see also Spence, 1982). In contrast, within the paradigmatic mode, logic and soundness of a given argument take precedence. Fleshing out the nature of these two modes, consider the disparate

fields of literature and mathematics (Bruner, 1986). As my colleague Larry Walker and I articulated in an earlier article on this topic (Dunlop & Walker, 2013, p. 242),

> In literature one seeks to create connections (or relations) between specific agents, actions, and intentions by way of presupposition and playful violations of logical consistency. The hallmark of good literature lies in leaving just enough ambiguity to convey coherence while also allowing for multiple interpretations. In contrast, mathematics involves logically plodding along in the abstract, attempting to establish universally valid conclusions. The hallmark of good mathematics lies in absolving all possible ambiguities until a single account remains.

Two modes of identity work These modes of thought are relevant to the reenvisioning of the third level of personality for the following reason: identity, as well as a sense of self-continuity, may be established within either mode of thought. The manner in which the narrative mode may be used for such purposes has been discussed earlier in this chapter, when summarizing the research of Chandler and colleagues (2003). What need now be added to this summary is that Chandler et al. observed that, although many participants offered narrative warranting strategies when making the case for their personal persistence through time, many others did so in a decidedly more paradigmatic manner. As elaborated directly below, these latter strategies varied with respect to their degree of sophistication. They were united, however, in their endorsement of the belief that, despite the many changes that the self has experienced through time, there was some fundamental, or *essential*, aspect of the self that had "withstood the ravages of time" (Chandler et al., 2003, p. 30).

Five distinct categories of essentialist warranting strategies were identified by Chandler and company. In its most basic form, paradigmatic appeals for persistence through time took the form of "simple inclusion accounts" wherein an attribute, usually a physical one (e.g., hair color, being tall), was recognized as a constant in participants' lives. Beyond these inclusionary accounts were "topological" appeals to self-continuity, this warranting strategy being defined by the belief that although the self may have appeared to change over time, there exists a certain category of self-attribute that has been ever present. In other words, it is only the *observability* of these attributes that has varied with time. Those championing the third strategy within Chandler et al.'s model, the "preformist" strategy, frame "any seemingly new structures of the self as necessarily having already been present, at least in some nascent form, from the very beginning. Snapshots taken at different junctures along an individual's preordained life-course sometimes create what is, at best, the *false* impression that there is actually something new under the sun" (p. 33). The fourth strategy, the "frankly essentialist" strategy, in contrast, is defined by the belief that, although the observable characteristics of the self may change across time and contexts, the innermost structure of the self remains constant. Finally, the fifth strategy is defined by the "revisionist" belief that any number of theories about the self may be valid, and these theories will be evaluated based on their ability to incorporate and explain the changes that have yet to, but ultimately will, befall the self.

Recasting the third level of personality I propose expanding the boundaries of the third level of personality to encompass all processes relative to an understanding of identity. Given the fact that these processes are not subsumed by the narrative mode of thought, I believe that this expansion is actually more consistent with McAdams' (2013) assertion that the constructs at the third level of personality work to solve the problem of self-continuity, which is really the problem of personal identity. Such expansion would work to change the layout of Table 2.1. Specifically, the identity-centric variables at personality's second level (e.g., identity status variables such as foreclosure and moratorium, couple identity) would migrate to the third level of personality.

One by-product of the revision championed here is that SCC would now more clearly fit within the third level of personality. This is due to the fact that a high level of SCC requires a perception of accurate self-knowledge (see, e.g., items such as "In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am") and recognition of the fact that the self is continuous through time (see, e.g., reverse coded items such as "When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like"). Indeed, due to the nature of the items contained in the SCC scale, researchers would be within their rights to use this measure as a proxy for the degree to which certain identity-related concerns have been resolved (see, e.g., the positive relation between SCC and identity achievement reported in Table 2.1), as well as the strength of the subjective tether uniting the self across contexts and through time.

Conclusion

Among the many constructs indexing evaluations of the structure of the self (see Campbell et al., 2003; Leary & Tangney, 2012), SCC is by far the most widely used and for good reason. SCC has been found to correspond significantly with many personality constructs lying at the heart of this field. In addition, as articulated in this chapter, it provides a crucial piece of the identity "puzzle." It falls to future research to better incorporate SCC within the broader identity and personality psychology literature.

But how, exactly, should future research lying at the intersection of SCC and personality psychology proceed? The good news is that any one of a number of viable avenues may be pursued. Below, I outline some of the major issues that should be tackled in this subsequent research. I have restricted myself to three topics, although more topics could and perhaps should be recognized. In no particular order, these three topics take the form of a greater focus on (1) demographic and cultural factors, (2) personality processes, and (3) changing life circumstances.

Demographic and Cultural Factors in the Study of SCC and Personality

As is the case for the whole of psychology (see Henrich, Henine, & Norenzayan, 2010), researchers have too often drawn conclusions about the nature of SCC and personality from the study of Westernized college students (e.g., Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996; 2003; DeMarree & Rios, 2014; Nezlek & Plesko, 2001; Shin, Steger, & Henry, 2016; Smith, Wethington, & Zahn, 1996; Usborne & Taylor, 2010), although community (Lodi-Smith et al., 2016) and non-Western samples have been considered (e.g., Wu, 2009; Wu et al., 2010). Nevertheless, the nonrepresentativeness of the samples often relied upon to gain insights about SCC is potentially problematic, given that the structure and content of the self have been found to vary throughout the life span and across cultures (e.g., Harter, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Ideally, examining SCC with an eye toward developmental and cultural variability requires more thorough examination of SCC, personality, and the relation between the two within diverse and inclusive samples. At the very least, researchers should adopt as standard practice the examination of demographic and cultural variables in relation to their focal constructs. Such examination need not be the central focus of all SCC-related research nor need it be strictly theory driven. On the contrary, being more mindful of these demographic and cultural variables may take the form of a succinct summary of the relations observed between the demographic/cultural variables assessed and SCC prior to the presentation of a researcher's primary analyses. If all SCC researchers adopted this modest practice, a large corpus of knowledge regarding SCC and demographic and cultural variables would quickly be amassed.

SCC and Personality Processes

In this chapter I have focused primarily on personality characteristics that are largely stable or static in nature. The continued examination of SCC in relation to these characteristics is no doubt a worthwhile aim. To this aim, however, I would add the potential relevance of more dynamic relations between SCC and personality via a consideration of personality processes. Personality processes "are mechanisms that unfold over time to produce the effects of personality" (Hampson, 2012, p. 315). As an example of a study of "personality processes," Hill and Roberts (2011) sought to explain the positive relation typically noted between conscientiousness and self-reported health by exploring the potentially mediating role of adherence behaviors (to Doctor's/medical orders). They hypothesized and found that, relative to those low in conscientiousness, individuals high in conscientiousness were much more likely to exhibit adherence behaviors within the health domain, and this, in turn, accounted for variability in self-reported health.

Personality processes may be explored via a number of empirical designs, including traditional longitudinal studies, as well as intense short-scale studies relying upon daily experience-sampling procedures (see Fleeson, 2012). These methods are often adopted in the study of SCC (e.g., Lodi-Smith et al., 2016; Nezlek, & Plesko, 2001; Wu et al., 2010). Such methods, however, have rarely been adopted in the study of the relation between SCC and personality (but see Lodi-Smith et al., 2016). Given the overwhelming evidence that personality processes represent an important area of study (for a review, see Hampson, 2012), in future, the manner in which personality processes may come to influence SCC, as well as the manner in which SCC may come to impact these processes themselves, demands greater attention.

SCC and Developing Lives

Continuing the theme of the importance of longitudinal studies, it would be beneficial for SCC researchers to increase their study of the manner in which changes in life circumstances may come to influence the level and functioning of SCC. A similar focus within the personality trait (e.g., Hudson, Roberts, & Lodi-Smith, 2012) and narrative identity (e.g., Dunlop, Guo, & McAdams, 2016) literatures has provided evidence that mean-level changes in personality characteristics are often predicted by changing life circumstances (e.g., changes in employment status). Applied to the SCC literature, a greater appreciation for the shifting contexts of participants' lives may lead to insights regarding the naturalistic conditions within which SCC is accentuated and diminished.

Indeed, if the position furthered in the current chapter is correct, then it will likely be profitable to consider SCC among individuals who have recently undergone a disequilibrating experience, such as the loss of a job or the termination of a committed romantic relationship. It is precisely these conditions that place self-continuity and personal meaning are in jeopardy (Chandler et al., 2003). It follows that the in-depth analysis of the process by which individuals work to reestablish continuity and meaning in the wake of life's challenges may offer descriptive insights regarding SCC's dynamism.

Bringing It All Home

In short, much work remains to be done before we can close the "book" on the relation between SCC and personality. Adding chapters to this tome will require the pursuit of several distinct programs of research. Irrespective of the nature of these research programs, they will no doubt benefit from an appreciation of demographic and cultural variables, personality processes, and changing life circumstances. The sum total of these efforts, I am certain, will contribute to a book that is worth reading.

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Chapter 3
Sources of Self-Concept Clarity

Andrew W. Hertel

Abstract How we define ourselves shapes our cognition, affect, behavior, and motivation. Optimal functioning is in part contingent on having a clear sense of ourselves (Campbell et al. J Person Soc Psychol 70:141–156, 1996). But what shapes self-concept clarity? In the current chapter, I provide an overview of findings about sources of self-concept clarity. By and large, findings to date indicate effects of self-confirmation, anxiety, and uncertainty on self-concept clarity. I also provide recommendations for future investigations, with an eye toward potential moderators of the effects of self-confirmation, anxiety, and uncertainty on self-concept clarity (including the nature of self-beliefs, trait and state self-concept clarity, and self-focus) as well as additional potential antecedents of self-concept clarity (including trait self-concept clarity, situational stability, interpersonal power, group identification, reflected appraisals, social acceptance, and mood). I attend to the distinction between self-concept clarity and self-esteem, and I consider explanations of self-concept clarity from extensions of relevant existing theory [including distinctiveness hypothesis (McGuire and Padawer-Singer, J Person Soc Psychol 33:743–754, 1976), Identity Consolidation Theory (McGregor, Defensive zeal: compensatory conviction about attitudes, values, goals, groups, and self-definition in the face of personal uncertainty. In: Spencer S, Fein S, Zanna M (eds) Motivated social perception: the Ontario symposium, vol 9, pp 73–92. Erlbaum, Mahwah, 2003), Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (Brewer, Optimal distinctiveness theory: its history and development. In: Van Lange PAM, Kruglanski AW, Higgins ET (eds) Handbook of theories of social psychology, vol 2, pp 81–98. Sage Publications, Los Angeles, 2012), Self-Verification Theory (Swann, Self-verification: brining social reality into harmony with the self. In: Suls J, Greenwald AG (eds) Social psychological perspectives on the self, vol 2, pp 33–66. Erlbaum, Hillsdale, 1983), Sociometer Theory (Leary, Sociometer theory. In: Van Lange PAM, Kruglanski AW, Higgins ET (eds) Handbook of theories of social psychology, vol 2, pp 141–159. Sage Publications, Los Angeles, 2012; Leary and Baumeister, The nature and function of self-esteem: sociometer theory. In: Zanna MP (ed) Advances in experimental social psychology, vol 32, pp 1–62. Academic Press, San Diego, 2000), Terror Management Theory

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(Greenberg and Arndt, Terror management theory. In: Van Lange PAM, Kruglanski AW, Higgins ET (eds) Handbook of theories of social psychology, vol 1, pp 398–415. Sage Publications, Los Angeles, 2012; Greenberg et al., The causes and consequences of a need for self-esteem: a terror management theory. In: Baumester RF (ed) Public self and private self, pp 189–212. Springer, New York, 1986), Uncertainty-Identity Theory (Hogg, Uncertainty-identity theory. In: Zanna MP (ed) Advances in experimental social psychology, vol 39, pp 69–126.Elsevier Academic Press, San Diego, 2007; Uncertainty-identity theory. In Van Lange PAM, Kruglanski AW, Higgins ET (eds) Handbook of theories of social psychology, vol 2, pp 62–80. Sage Publications, Los Angeles, 2012)].

How we define ourselves shapes our cognition, affect, behavior, and motivation. Optimal functioning is in part contingent on clearly knowing ourselves. Self-concept clarity is "the extent to which the contents of an individual's self-concept (e.g., perceived personal attributes) are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable," (Campbell et al., 1996, p. 141). But, what shapes self-concept clarity? In this chapter, I provide an overview of findings, and I provide recommendations for future investigations. I attend to the distinction between self-concept clarity and self-esteem, and I consider explanation of self-concept clarity by relevant existing theory.

Self-Concept Clarity: What Is It?

The nature of self-concept clarity is more thoroughly addressed elsewhere in this volume (see DeMarree and Bobrowski, Chap. 1, and Dunlop, Chap. 2). I briefly address particular considerations of its nature to provide insight into this chapter. Self-concept clarity reflects structure of self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is malleable, and thus, so too is self-concept clarity. It is distinct from self-esteem, which reflects self-evaluation. It is expressed metacognitively, subjectively, and directly via self-report, such as with the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS; Campbell et al., 1996), as well as objectively and indirectly via observations of extremity, internal consistency, and stability (both temporal stability and stability from trait to state) of self-knowledge (Campbell, 1990; Campbell & Lavallee, 1993; Campbell et al., 1996).

Self-concept clarity is a property of the entire self-concept. Recall that internal consistency between pieces of self-knowledge is a component of self-concept clarity. Thus, one could say that an individual piece of self-knowledge is clearly and confidently defined and stable over time, but one should not say that there is self-concept clarity with respect to that individual piece of self-knowledge. Self-esteem is also a property of the entire self-concept, but it is inherently linked to the valence of individual pieces of self-knowledge.

Self-concept clarity emerges from the working self-concept, or the contents of the self-concept that are currently in awareness, which can shift across time and situations (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Trait self-concept clarity emerges from what is typically in the working self-concept, whereas state self-concept clarity emerges from the current working self-concept. Trait and state self-concept clarity correlate with each other, but they can shift independently (Nezlek & Plesko, 2001). Across different working self-concepts, there might be inconsistency and instability, but to the extent that self-concept clarity emerges from the working self-concept, inconsistency and instability across different working self-concepts might not impact it.

Sources of Self-Concept Clarity: Overview of Empirical Findings

What impacts self-concept clarity? In what follows, I provide an overview of empirical findings. I primarily review only experimental studies or observational studies that are longitudinal and include repeated measurements, as single time-point/cross-sectional observational studies produce ambiguous evidence with respect to whether correlates are antecedents or outcomes. For the most part, the experimental studies address state self-concept clarity, whereas the observational studies address trait self-concept clarity. In addition, I review only studies that clearly assess self-concept clarity as defined by Campbell et al. (1996), given no theoretical justification for tangential measures. The studies and their central methodological features are presented in Table 3.1.

Most studies have revealed effects of self-confirmation, anxiety, and uncertainty on self-concept clarity. I first provide an overview of findings about these antecedents. Because of their similarities, I review anxiety and uncertainty together. I then provide an overview of findings about other antecedents. There are findings that are reviewed in other chapters (Lodi-Smith & Crocetti, Chap. 8; Slotter & Emery, Chap. 9) that I also review here, most as demonstrations of self-confirmation effects (Light & Visser, 2013; Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010; Lodi-Smith, Spain, Cologgi, & Roberts, 2017; Schwartz et al., 2011; Slotter, Emery, & Luchies, 2014; Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2010; Slotter, Winger, & Soto, 2015; Van Dijk et al., 2014).

Table 3.1 Studies reviewed and their central methodological features

Study	Assessment	Design	Sample	Self-esteem predictor control?	Self-esteem outcome control?
Slotter et al. (2015)	Coded written content (Study 1) SCCS (Studies 2 and 3)	Experimental	Adults (Studies 1 and 2) College students (Study 3)	No	No
Burkley et al. (2015)	SCCS	Experimental	College students	No	No
Ayduk et al. (2009)	SCCS	Experimental (Study 1) Observational – longitudinal (Study 2)	College students	No	No
Slotter & Gardner (2014)	SCCS	Experimental	College students	No	No
Schwartz et al. (2011)	SCCS	Observational – longitudinal	Adolescents	No	No
Schwartz et al. (2012)	SCCS	Observational – longitudinal	Adolescents	No	No
Stinson et al. (2010)	Trait stability (Study 1, 4) SCCS (Study 2, 3, 6) Coded written content (Study 5)	Experimental	College students	N/A	Yes
DeMarree & Rios (2014) (Study 3)	SCCS	Experimental	College students	N/A	No
Slotter et al. (2010) (Study 3)	SCCS	Observational – longitudinal	College students	No	No
Slotter et al. (2014) (Study 3)	SCCS	Observational – longitudinal	College students	No	No
Lodi-Smith & Roberts (2010)	SCCS	Observational – single time-point/cross-sectional	Adults	No	No

Light & Visser (2012)	SCCS	Observational – single time-point/cross-sectional	Adults	Yes	Yes
Luchies et al. (2010)	SCCS	Experimental (Studies 2 and 3) Observational – longitudinal (Study 4)	College students	No	No
Vorauer et al. (1998)	SCCS	Experimental	College students	No	No
Van Dijk et al. (2014)	SCCS	Observational – longitudinal	Adolescent	No	No
Orr & Moscovitch (2015)	SCCS	Observational – single time-point	College students	No	No
Hohman & Hogg (2015)	SCCS	Experimental	College students	No	No
Landau et al. (2009)	Trait extremity (Campbell, 1990)	Experimental	College students	No	No
McGregor & Marigold (2003)	Trait endorsement reaction time (Campbell, 1990)	Experimental	College students	N/A	No
Boucher (2011)	Trait extremity (Campbell, 1990) (Study 2) Trait consistency and trait endorsement reaction time (Campbell, 1990) (Study 3)	Experimental	College students	N/A	No
Wu et al. (2011)	SCCS	Observational – longitudinal	Adolescents	Yes	No
Johnson & Nozick (2011)	SCCS	Observational – longitudinal	College students	No	No
Morrison & Wheeler (2010)	SCCS	Experimental	Adults	Yes (Study 1)	No

Self-Confirmation

A number of the studies indicate that self-concept clarity is bolstered when self-beliefs are confirmed and is undermined when self-beliefs are disconfirmed. Studies have addressed both specific self-beliefs and the self-concept as a whole.

Specific Self-Beliefs

In three different studies, Slotter et al. (2015) asked participants to imagine and write about no longer being a member of or no longer being able to maintain a group identity. Particularly among those who strongly identified with their group, those who engaged in this thought exercise indicated less self-concept clarity, in part because the thought exercise invoked anticipating self-concept change as a function of anticipating no longer sharing the traits and attributes of the group.

Burkley, Curtis, Burkley, and Hatvany (2015) assessed whether students in an introduction to psychology course had fused the goal of learning psychology with their self-concepts. Afterward, students received either positive or negative feedback about possessing the skills required to be a good psychologist. Positive feedback boosted self-concept clarity among those with goal fusion, whereas negative feedback boosted self-concept clarity among those without goal fusion. Similarly with respect to personal goals, Ayduk, Gyurak, and Luerssen (2009) observed that social rejection undermined self-concept clarity but only for those who were sensitive to rejection and thereby had a personal goal of avoiding rejection.

Slotter and Gardner (2014) provided premed students who entertained the notion of already considering themselves as doctors with the threatening feedback that they were not fit to be doctors. Subsequent to this, the students were given the opportunity to receive social support for their notions of being doctors. Ultimately, this opportunity boosted certainty in the belief about being a doctor and, in turn, self-concept clarity. Schwartz et al. (2011) conducted a multi-wave, daily diary study among Dutch adolescents over the course of 6 months. The investigators assessed commitment to and reconsideration of education as indicators of educational identity, noting that education is highly valued for its social and aspirational ramifications. They observed that increases in commitment to education were associated with increases in self-concept clarity, whereas increases in reconsideration of commitment to education were associated with decreases in self-concept clarity. Similarly, in a study that involved yearly assessments among adolescents, commitment to education and a best friend prospectively positively predicted self-concept clarity (Schwartz, Klimstra, Luyckx, Hale, & Meeus, 2012).

Stinson et al. (2010) examined the extent to which perceived relational value information impacted self-concept clarity. In a series of studies, they first assessed self-perceived relational value. They assessed either trait self-esteem, which reflected typical self-perceptions of relational value, where high self-esteem reflected self-perceived high relational value and low self-esteem reflected self-

perceived low relational value, or specific self-beliefs reflecting relational value (e.g., physically attractive, popular). Then they experimentally invoked information about being valued by others (e.g., recalling compliments or criticisms about traits or interacting with an interpersonally warm or cold person). It was repeatedly observed that consistency between self-perceived relational value and information about being valued by others resulted in more self-concept clarity. Among those with high self-esteem, high perceived relational value information resulted in more self-concept clarity than low perceived relational value information. Among those with low self-esteem, low perceived relational value information resulted in more self-concept clarity than high perceived relational value information. Information consistency distinctly impacted self-concept clarity. Information that was consistent with self-perceived relational value bolstered state self-concept clarity, whereas high relational value information bolstered state self-esteem regardless of whether it was consistent with self-perceived relational value. DeMarree and Rios (2014) also examined the relationship between self-esteem beliefs and self-concept clarity. They assessed self-esteem and then presented information suggesting that having high self-esteem can be either good or bad. Information consistent with self-esteem resulted in more self-concept clarity, and this appeared to particularly be the case for those with high self-esteem.

In all, research has demonstrated that processing specific self-belief relevant information that reinforces the belief boosts self-concept clarity, whereas processing specific self-belief relevant information that threatens the belief decreases self-concept clarity. Findings generalize across different assessments of self-concept clarity [Self-Concept Clarity Scale (Campbell et al., 1996), trait consistency, and coded written content], different methodologies (experimental and observational), and different populations (adolescents, college students, and adults).

Self-Concept as a Whole

The above research focused on specific self-beliefs. Research has also demonstrated that processing the self-concept as a whole has an impact on self-concept clarity.

Given that people's self-concepts become intertwined with those of their relationship partners, the dissolution of relationships results in self-concept change – specifically, a shrinking of the self-concept – and, as a result of this change, less self-concept clarity (Slotter et al., 2010). However, relationship dissolution does not always result in self-concept change. Self-concept change that occurs because of the relationship partner and that is internalized via effort put forth in developing it is likely to be maintained through a breakup. Maintenance of this change results in reduced self-concept clarity (Slotter et al., 2014). One important reason for this outcome is perhaps perceived lack of opportunity to continually confirm that change or, perhaps, more simply, confusion generated by maintaining an internalized self-belief that originated with the relationship partner despite no longer being with that partner.

Lodi-Smith and Roberts (2010) investigated the reasons for why age is linked to self-concept clarity, with the insight that it is not age per se that is associated with self-concept clarity but what comes with age that is critical. They demonstrated that self-concept clarity increases with age through 60 and decreases with age after age 60 and that limitations in social functioning due to health problems accounted for the negative relationship between age and self-concept clarity after age 60. Additional work demonstrated that increases in health-related social role limitations were associated with decreases in self-concept clarity regardless of age but most strongly among older adults (Lodi-Smith et al., 2017). Similarly, Light and Visser (2012) observed that exiting a social role (e.g., stopping work) is associated with less self-concept clarity. Interestingly, they provided evidence that loneliness and alterations in daily behavioral routines accounted for this relationship, which reflects the idea that social roles are tied to self-verifying social relationships and prescriptions for action.

Luchies, Finkel, McNulty, and Kumashiro (2010) examined the effects of forgiving someone for a personal transgression on self-concept clarity. They discovered that forgiving someone decreases self-concept clarity, because doing so represents a failure to stand up for oneself. The outcome is reversed when the person doing the forgiving feels valued, or at least anticipates feeling valued, by the person who is being forgiven.

Vorauer, Main, and O'Connell (1998) examined self-concept clarity shifts resulting from interactions between members of a dominant in-group and members of an out-group. Specifically, the investigators examined shifts in self-concept clarity among White Canadians resulting from them having interactions with Aboriginal Canadians. Self-concept clarity decreased among members of the former group as a function of thinking they were being perceived in terms of stereotypical group characteristics and not individual characteristics. This was particularly true among the group members who expressed prejudice toward the out-group, ostensibly because they felt more similar to the in-group than the out-group, expected to be stereotyped, and believed the stereotypes could readily be applied to them.

To date, research has indicated that processing the self-concept as a whole can affect self-concept clarity. This research has particularly concentrated on the influence of self-relevant life span and social experiences and has predominantly shown that self-concept threatening experiences undermine self-concept clarity. Like with research on specific self-beliefs, this research generalizes across different assessments of self-concept clarity [SCCS (Campbell et al., 1996) and coded written content], different methodologies (experimental and observational), and different samples (adults and college students).

Anxiety and Uncertainty

A number of studies have also indicated that anxiety and uncertainty can affect self-concept clarity. Two studies have examined the relationship between trait anxiety and self-concept clarity. In a longitudinal study among adolescents in the

Netherlands, Van Dijk et al. (2014) demonstrated that more experiences of myriad anxiety symptoms predicted less self-concept clarity. The authors speculated that this relationship exists because experiencing anxiety symptoms results in being less inclined to explore identities and being more uncertain about current identities. Orr and Moscovitch (2015) evaluated the relationship between trait social anxiety and self-concept clarity. They argued that trait social anxiety is associated with negative self-beliefs and translates into less self-concept clarity because of the tendency to inaccurately self-disclose out of fear of being negatively evaluated and experiencing social isolation. They conducted a study in which they assessed trait social anxiety and manipulated honest self-disclosure. Honesty significantly ameliorated the negative association between trait social anxiety and self-concept clarity. Thus, trait anxiety appears to undermine self-concept clarity.

There have also been experimental tests of the effects of situational anxiety and situational uncertainty on self-concept clarity. Landau, Greenberg, Sullivan, Routledge, and Arndt (2009) evaluated predictions extending from Terror Management Theory (Greenberg & Arndt, 2012; Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986) (for brief overviews of theories mentioned in this section, see section "Considering Theory"). They asserted that mortality salience produces anxiety and, to defend against this anxiety, also results in increased self-concept clarity. They further asserted that this self-concept clarity response would be particularly likely for those who desired structure. They assessed personal need for structure and experimentally manipulated mortality salience. Among those with a strong personal need for structure, those who contemplated their death expressed heightened self-concept clarity. Interestingly, those who also affirmed a core self-characteristic after contemplating their death did not show this response.

McGregor and Marigold (2003) tested predictions of Identity Consolidation Theory (McGregor, 2003). In particular, they evaluated whether self-concept clarity serves as compensatory conviction in response to personal uncertainty. Critically, they argued that those with high trait self-esteem might be particularly likely to bolster self-concept clarity following uncertainty, as those individuals tend to protect their self-views. The investigators assessed trait self-esteem and then experimentally manipulated uncertainty by having some participants focus on an unresolved personal dilemma. For those with high trait self-esteem, those who experienced uncertainty reported elevated self-concept clarity.

Working from a Terror Management Theory and Identity Consolidation Theory perspective, Boucher (2011) also evaluated the extent to which mortality salience and uncertainty could result in self-concept clarity and whether trait self-esteem moderated the effect. In two different studies, Boucher assessed trait self-esteem and then experimentally manipulated mortality salience or being generally uncertain about things. Among those with high trait self-esteem, those who contemplated either their death or being generally uncertain about things reported heightened self-concept clarity.

Working from an Uncertainty-Identity Theory perspective (Hogg, 2007, 2012), Hohman and Hogg (2015) hypothesized that mortality salience not only produces anxiety but also undermines self-concept clarity. Moreover, they argued that boosting

state self-esteem can positively impact self-concept clarity. Thus, if mortality salience does negatively impact self-concept clarity then boosting state self-esteem should eliminate the effect of mortality salience on self-concept clarity. They experimentally boosted state self-esteem, then experimentally induced mortality salience, and then assessed self-concept clarity. Consistent with the hypothesis, among those who did not have their state self-esteem boosted, those who contemplated their death reported lower self-concept clarity. Moreover, among those who did have their state self-esteem boosted, there were no differences in self-concept clarity between those in the mortality salience and control conditions. They thereby concluded that mortality salience undermines self-concept clarity.

At first glance, there are seemingly inconsistent findings across these studies on the effects of situational anxiety and situational uncertainty. Whereas Landau et al. (2009), McGregor and Marigold (2003), and Boucher (2011) showed that mortality salience and uncertainty resulted in more self-concept clarity, Hohman and Hogg (2015) showed that mortality salience undermined self-concept clarity. However, McGregor and Marigold (2003) and Boucher (2011) observed trends among those low in trait self-esteem that were similar to the trend observed in Hohman and Hogg (2015) among those who did not have their state self-esteem boosted. Moreover, like in Hohman and Hogg (2015), Landau et al. (2009) observed that reactions to mortality salience were dampened when state self-esteem was boosted. Furthermore, it is important to recognize the difference between typically having high self-esteem or structure and having it in the moment. Having high trait self-esteem or structure does not ensure having high state self-esteem, and there is a strong tendency to engage in tactics to maintain high state self-esteem in the face of threats that could lower state self-esteem (particularly if high trait self-esteem is fragile – Kernis, Lakey, & Heppner, 2008). Situational boosts to state self-esteem serve to thwart off potential decreases in state self-esteem. Thereby, it is to be expected that mortality salience or uncertainty would result in more self-concept clarity among those with high trait self-esteem or personal need for structure, whereas mortality salience would have no effect on self-concept clarity among those with high state self-esteem or need for structure.

Taken together, it appears that, all things equal, situational anxiety and uncertainty undermine self-concept clarity. However, for those with high trait self-esteem or personal need for structure, anxiety and uncertainty result in an increase in self-concept clarity, and when there is a boost to state self-esteem, anxiety and uncertainty do not affect self-concept clarity.

Additional Antecedents

Although most of the research to date points to self-confirmation, anxiety, and uncertainty as antecedents to self-concept clarity, some work points toward additional sources that could be fleshed out in future research.

Self-Esteem

Given the strong correlation between self-esteem and self-concept clarity (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996), one might think self-esteem gives rise to self-concept clarity. Wu, Watkins, and Hattie (2010) assessed self-esteem and self-concept clarity at two time points among a sample of adolescents. Self-esteem at Time 1 positively predicted self-concept clarity at Time 2. Similarly, Johnson and Nozick (2011) investigated change in self-concept clarity across two time points due to variables indicative of psychosocial development. Those who expressed self-defensiveness demonstrated increases in self-concept clarity. Self-defensiveness may have reflected high trait self-esteem (perhaps fragile high trait self-esteem, Kernis et al., 2008). Recall also that high trait self-esteem was associated with more self-concept clarity under conditions of self-threat (Boucher, 2011; McGregor & Marigold, 2003). Together, these findings indicate a potential causal effect of self-esteem on self-concept clarity.

Open Communication

In their study among adolescents, Van Dijk et al. (2014) demonstrated that more open communication with parents predicted more self-concept clarity. Ostensibly, open communication with parents allows for consolidating ideas about the self. Open communication was assessed with items such as "'It is easy for me to express all my true feelings to my parents'" and "'My parents are always good listeners'" (Van Dijk et al., 2014, p. 5). Thus, open communication may also foster confirmation of self-beliefs. It may also prevent social anxiety. Itzchakov, Kluger, and Castro (2017) experimentally observed that being thoroughly listened to decreased social anxiety. Moreover, it decreased subjective attitudinal ambivalence, which indicated that it increased self-concept clarity. Interestingly, considering that social anxiety was defined in this work as a discrepancy between how one thinks of oneself and the reactions of others to oneself, social anxiety could also be thought of as self-disconfirmation.

Personal Distinctiveness

According to the distinctiveness hypothesis (McGuire & Padawer-Singer, 1976), contents of the working self-concept are influenced by what is personally distinct in the social environment. For instance, people's ethnicities are more salient in their self-concepts when they are in the ethnic minority (McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978). According to Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (Brewer, 2012), people are motivated to express identities that offer an optimal balance of affiliation and distinction from other people.

Motivated by these perspectives, Morrison and Wheeler (2010) argued that what makes one distinct, particularly when that distinction does not come at the cost of belongingness, makes for self-concept clarity. They observed that people expressed more self-concept clarity when they believed they held a minority opinion, especially one that was consistent with their values, and particularly when they believed they held this opinion within a group with which they strongly identified and thus while maintaining a sense of belonging.

However, in their longitudinal study, Johnson and Nozick (2011) also observed that those who expressed a normative identity style – which reflects a tendency toward conforming to others – demonstrated an increase in self-concept clarity. It's possible that both distinctiveness and fitting in bolster self-concept clarity and that the effects of each are regulated by other factors. For instance, those who typically have a clear sense of who they are may benefit from distinctiveness, whereas those who typically have an unclear sense of who they are may benefit from fitting in with others. This question warrants future research.

Sources of Self-Concept Clarity: Toward the Future

In the preceding section, I provided an overview of empirical findings to date. In the current section, I consider explanations of self-concept clarity by theories identified in the overview. I then address potential moderators of antecedents of self-concept clarity identified to date, and I also address potential additional antecedents of self-concept clarity. I end with addressing some methodological considerations.

Considering Theory

Five different theories that could be considered as offering explanations of self-concept clarity were identified in the overview of findings, including Uncertainty-Identity Theory, Terror Management Theory, Identity Consolidation Theory (for an overarching perspective of these theories that focuses on psychological threat and responses geared toward ameliorating it – including, potentially, alterations in self-concept clarity – see Jonas et al. (2014)), distinctiveness hypothesis, and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory. In addition, Self-Verification Theory (Swann, 1983) is implicated in the findings about self-confirmation. How should they be considered as explanations of self-concept clarity?

None of the theories are, by design, about self-concept clarity, and none directly mention self-concept clarity. Yet, they can be readily considered as accounting for it. Consider that self-concept clarity can be thought of as a marker of self-coherence (Morrison & Wheeler, 2010; Stinson et al., 2010) and self-certainty. Self-Verification Theory (Swann, 1983, 2012) primarily attempts to explain maintenance of self-beliefs, under the guise that verification of those self-beliefs brings about a coherent

view of self and a coherent and predictable view of the social world, which in turn gives rise to smooth social interactions. The focus of Uncertainty-Identity Theory (Hogg, 2007, 2012) is on group identification following self-uncertainty, with the notion that group identification brings about self-certainty. Both Terror Management Theory (Greenberg & Arndt, 2012; Greenberg et al., 1986) and Identity Consolidation Theory (McGregor, 2003) primarily address reactions to anxiety and uncertainty, one of which is an increase in self-certainty. Interestingly, early Terror Management Theory initially concentrated on self-esteem changes as a reaction to existential anxiety, and only later was the theory extended to also consider self-certainty as an outcome.

Given that it is attended to in theories about the self, more direct theorizing about self-concept clarity is warranted. For instance, one might extend Self-Verification Theory or Uncertainty-Identity Theory to more fully consider circumstances under which maintenance of a self-belief or identification with a group has implications for self-concept clarity. One might also extend Terror Management Theory or Identity Consolidation Theory to consider circumstances under which self-concept clarity is chosen as the preferred route to dealing with anxiety or uncertainty, given myriad alternatives, or, at least, an articulation of the relationships between potential outcomes (e.g., does more fervently adopting cultural worldviews increase self-concept clarity?). Along these lines, consider that Landau et al. (2009) suggest that self-concept clarity boosts are the preferred route to dealing with anxiety for those who strongly desire structure. One might also expand on when and why personal distinctiveness contributes to self-concept clarity. One thing to consider is that the distinctiveness hypothesis and optimal distinctiveness theory provide explanation for the expression of self-beliefs. Expression of beliefs does not necessarily translate into being clear about those beliefs.

As a start for extending the theory, in the next section, I address potential moderators of the antecedents reviewed above that are ripe for investigation, with a particular eye toward self-confirmation, anxiety, and uncertainty.

Potential Moderators of Antecedents to Self-Concept Clarity

In this section, I address some potential moderators of antecedents that have been identified to date, namely, self-confirmation, anxiety, and uncertainty. What regulates whether self-confirmation, anxiety, or uncertainty results in self-concept clarity?

Nature of the Self-Beliefs

Confirmation of strong self-beliefs should result in more self-concept clarity than confirmation of weak self-beliefs. In particular, confirmation of self-beliefs that are held with certainty might contribute more to self-concept clarity than confirmation

of beliefs held with uncertainty. Self-beliefs that are held with certainty are particularly likely to be verified (Giesler & Swann, 1999) and are most indicative of self-belief stability (Pelham, 1991). Confirmation of self-beliefs held with uncertainty might also produce self-concept clarity, but not as strongly as confirmation of self-beliefs held with certainty. One thing to consider, however, is that confirmation of self-beliefs held with uncertainty may have an ironic effect of undermining self-concept clarity, as confirmation may only serve to reinforce the notion of being uncertain about these self-beliefs. It may take repeated confirmation of self-beliefs held with uncertainty to result in increases in self-concept clarity. Confirmation of important as opposed to unimportant self-beliefs may also have a strong influence on self-concept clarity, perhaps because they loom large in the self-concept. Wakslak and Trope (2009) provided evidence of this in a study of the effects of self-affirmation. Participants who wrote about an important value reported more self-concept clarity than did participants who wrote about an unimportant value. A control group was not included, however, and so it is not clear whether writing about the important value boosted self-concept clarity or writing about an unimportant value decreased self-concept clarity. Along these lines, confirmation of moral self-beliefs may be critical, given that moral self-beliefs are considered an essential component of identity (Strohminger & Nichols, 2014). The same goes for master identities (e.g., gender identity), which are considered core aspects of self, connected to other identities, and influencers of other identities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets & Burke, 2014). Similarly, confirmation of internalized self-beliefs, which are representative of who one truly is, should lead to more self-concept clarity than confirmation of non-internalized beliefs, which are thought due primarily to social influence (Slotter et al., 2014). In addition, certain types of traits may confer more clarity than other types. Stinson, Wood, and Doxey (2008) observed more self-concept clarity with respect to communal quality traits than with respect to less communal, social commodity traits.

Trait and State Self-Concept Clarity

Those with typically high self-concept clarity are likely to engage in extra efforts to maintain it. This is indicated by research that showed that those with high trait self-esteem or personal need for structure expressed more self-concept clarity after self-threats (Boucher, 2011; Landau et al., 2009; McGregor & Marigold, 2003).

But research also suggests that when self-concept clarity is strategically bolstered, there is less motivation to engage in efforts to bolster it even further, and threats to it are not as damaging. Studies presented as involving a self-esteem boost or self-affirmation lend support to this notion. Hohman and Hogg (2015) observed that contemplating death did not undermine self-concept clarity among those who had their self-esteem boosted. Landau et al. (2009) observed that those high in personal need for structure expressed more self-concept clarity than those low in personal need for closure when contemplating their death unless they previously affirmed a core self-characteristic.

The self-esteem boost in Hohman and Hogg (2015) consisted of the following message: "'While you may feel that you have some personality weaknesses, your personality is fundamentally strong' and 'Most of your aspirations tend to be pretty realistic'" (Hohman & Hogg, 2015, p. 34). This manipulation confirmed self-beliefs and thus likely boosted self-concept clarity. Similarly, self-affirmation in Landau et al. (2009) confirmed a self-belief and, thus, likely boosted self-concept clarity. Indeed, Wakslak and Trope (2009) provided evidence that self-affirmation via value expression increases self-concept clarity. Note that it is typically thought that self-affirmation increases self-esteem (McQueen & Klein, 2006), boosts psychosocial resources for dealing with threats to self-integrity, and expands the self (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). It appears to also increase self-concept clarity. Lack of defensiveness following self-affirmation (Sherman & Cohen, 2006) may in part be attributed to this boost in self-concept clarity.

These assertions and findings call into question the motivational nature of self-concept clarity. An important consideration is whether people are motivated to attain self-concept clarity, and if so, under what conditions they are motivated to do so. From the perspective of Self-Verification Theory (Swann, 1983, 2012), people are motivated to have self-concept clarity. To the extent that people are motivated to attain self-concept clarity, it is also important to consider the nature of that motivation. From the perspective of Self-Verification Theory, people are motivated to seek self-concept clarity rather than avoid self-concept confusion. According to Uncertainty-Identity Theory (Hogg, 2007, 2012) and also from the perspective of Terror Management Theory (Greenberg & Arndt, 2012; Greenberg et al., 1986), people seek to avoid self-concept confusion rather than gain self-concept clarity. Hence, it is argued that people have either an approach or an avoidance motivation for self-concept clarity. This argument is akin to the debate as to whether people are driven by self-enhancement or self-protection (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009).

The different motivations would be associated with different patterns of action and different ramifications of those actions. If people seek self-concept clarity, they should take actions to attain self-concept clarity regardless of their prevailing sense of it, and those actions should continually affect it. If people avoid self-concept confusion, people should take actions to attain self-concept clarity when they lack self-concept clarity or forecast a threat to self-concept clarity, and actions would affect it only under those conditions.

To a certain degree, parsing whether there is an approach or avoidance motivation is splitting hairs. Evidence suggests that people might proactively engage in self-verifying behaviors, such as displaying their identity through clothing choices. Yet, in the studies that have seemingly demonstrated these proactive efforts, whether actions were taken without thinking about the alternative possibility of failing to confirm self-beliefs cannot be ruled out. Indeed, studies on self-verification have primarily shown that people adopt self-verifying strategies when there is potential for disconfirmation of self-beliefs (Swann & Buhrmester, 2012).

It appears that people are motivated to have self-concept clarity. Although it may not be the case that people seek self-concept clarity, they are clearly averse to losing it. And in moments when self-concept clarity has been bolstered, efforts to attain it might be relaxed, and potential threats to it might be rendered inconsequential.

Self-Focus

Self-concept clarity is likely most impacted when self-focus is high. When self-focus is low, self-beliefs are likely not processed and actions are likely not evaluated with respect to self-beliefs, and thus any actions that serve to confirm or disconfirm self-beliefs are not likely to impact self-concept clarity. Consistent with this thinking, Swann et al. (1990) demonstrated that people more quickly endorsed their self-beliefs and were more likely to self-verify when they were not under cognitive load. Recall that Morrison and Wheeler (2010) demonstrated that participants reported more self-concept clarity when they were led to believe that they held a minority opinion, particularly when that opinion expressed a core value. These effects may have emerged in part because the participants were more self-focused by nature of considering themselves to be part of the minority. Interestingly, the direction of the moderating effect of self-concept focus may be contingent on the nature of it. Campbell et al. (1996) observed that those who tend to ruminate about themselves, as opposed to curiously reflect on themselves, also tend to have lower self-concept clarity.

Additional Potential Antecedents of Self-Concept Clarity

It is also important to consider additional antecedents to self-concept clarity that have not been addressed to date.

Trait Self-Concept Clarity

Trait self-concept clarity may affect situational self-concept clarity and the ability to further develop trait self-concept clarity. Those with high trait self-concept clarity are likely to have more positive self-beliefs (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993), and these are more likely to be confirmed by others given the norms of appraising others positively (DePaulo & Bell, 1996; Wallace & Tice, 2012). It is also likely the case that those with more self-concept clarity have more self-beliefs about which they are certain. Self-beliefs held with certainty have more ramifications for self-concept clarity, and so those with more self-concept clarity inherently have more opportunities to maintain their clear sense of themselves.

Those with clear self-concepts can more readily describe, predict, interpret, and remember themselves (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996). They are also likely to have more ability to maintain their self-beliefs. In other words, those with more self-concept clarity have a clearer schema about themselves, and schema-consistent effects perpetuate this clarity.

Moreover, self-concept clarity can be conceptualized as a self-schema with expectation effects in and of itself. Those with more self-concept clarity likely expect to have clear thoughts about who they are. As a result, they may more readily conclude that they have a clear understanding of themselves, have an easy

time remembering instances in which they acted consistent with their self-beliefs, and have stronger expectations for receiving information that is consistent with their self-beliefs. Regarding the latter, those with low self-concept clarity may treat information that is consistent with how they think about themselves as idiosyncratic and as information that they can discount (see also Guerrettaz and Arkin (2015), for a similar line of thinking about self-related expectations driven by self-concept clarity).

These expectations come with a downside, however. For those with high self-concept clarity, having a difficult experience with self-reflection potentially undermines self-concept clarity because it violates expectations of easy self-reflection (Guerrettaz & Arkin, 2015). Along these lines, Csank and Conway (2004) observed that self-reflection undermined self-concept clarity for those with high self-concept clarity (while also boosting self-concept clarity for those with low self-concept clarity) perhaps because the self-reflection task was overly difficult. This was particularly true for females. The investigators argued that the gender effect occurred because females are often more self-focused.

Situational Stability

Situational stability has the potential for impacting self-concept clarity. All other things equal, those who maintain the same occupation, maintain the same romantic partners, or live in the same place for an extended amount of time might end up developing clearer perceptions of themselves than those who experience frequent change because of the prevailing opportunities for self-confirmation that come with the situational stability. Light and Visser (2013) showed that routine stability was positively correlated with self-concept clarity. People often choose to exit situations that do not offer self-confirmation (Swann & Buhrmester, 2012; Swann & Pelham, 2002). Self-change can occur in situations (Burke & Stets, 2009; Markus & Wurf, 1987), and this may temporarily decrease self-concept clarity. But should a stable situation emerge, clarity may emerge. Given the prospects of situational stability for long-term self-confirmation and self-concept clarity, people may even choose to withstand short-term self-disconfirmation, self-change, and dips in self-concept clarity.

Interpersonal Power

Those with interpersonal power in a situation should be able to maintain their perceptions of who they are and, thus, maintain self-concept clarity, whereas those without power should have difficulty maintaining their self-concepts and thereby remaining clear about who they are. Those with power tend not to pay attention to individuating information and influence self-conceptions of those they have power over. Those without power more fully and individually process, as well as have self-beliefs shaped by, those with power over them (Burke & Stets, 2009; Erber & Fiske, 1984; Fiske, 1993; Goodwin, Gubin, Fiske, Yzerbyt, 2000) (yet see Vorauer et al. (1998), for an exception).

Group Identification

Uncertainty-Identity Theory (Hogg, 2007, 2012) posits that uncertainty-motivated group identification reduces self-concept confusion. This effect is thought to be particularly likely when group identities are clear (Usborne & Taylor, 2010), which is likely for groups with high entitativity. To date, however, this potential effect has received little attention (Szabo & Ward, 2015). Adopting a group identity is thought to give rise to a depersonalized, group member prototype-based self-concept. To the extent that self-concept clarity emerges primarily from personal identities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets & Burke, 2014), adopting a group identity may not boost self-concept clarity. However, individuals can adopt the identity of a group while maintaining a personal identity (Swann, Gomez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009). It may also be the case that group identities are at times represented as part of personal identities. Moreover, any given self-belief can be represented at both the person and group level. For example, a person may consider herself to be an introvert, and that may distinguish her from other people, but that same person may also consider herself to be part of a group of introverts (Burke & Stets, 2009). And so, group identification may indeed positively impact self-concept clarity.

Reflected Appraisals

Reflected appraisals are others' perceptions of who one is; they reflect a third-person perspective of oneself (Burke & Stets, 2009; Wallace & Tice, 2012). To the extent that reflected appraisals affect self-perceptions, clear reflected appraisals might give rise to self-concept clarity. If people have a clearly articulated notion about how others perceive them, then they might also think clearly about themselves. Whatever gives rise to those clearly articulated notions, therefore, might also give rise to self-concept clarity. Group identification, for instance, might give rise to self-concept clarity given a clear, shared understanding of what it means to be member of that group (Hogg, 2007, 2012). Fully identifying with a role (e.g., student or father role identities when at school or in action as a father) (or social investment in a role, see Lodi-Smith and Roberts (2007)) may also generate self-concept clarity, in that those identities may be associated with a clear idea about how others in a situation might perceive who one is.

Social Acceptance

Findings from Light and Visser (2013) indicate that loneliness is associated with less self-concept clarity. In conjunction with the recognition that others want to maintain coherent and predictable social environments (Swann, 1983, 2012), social acceptance may be perceived as indicating that one is clearly perceived by others (and rejection may be perceived as indicating that one is not clearly perceived by others). Given that one's self-perceptions can in part be based on beliefs about how one is perceived by others, perceiving that others perceive one clearly may translate

to having a clear self-perception. This notion is reminiscent of the idea put forth in Sociometer Theory (Leary, 2012; Leary & Baumeister, 2000) that social acceptance elevates and social rejection undermines self-esteem.

However, other evidence suggests that only self-esteem is directly responsive to social acceptance, whereas self-concept clarity is responsive to whether that social acceptance matches self-perception. Recall that Stinson et al. (2010) demonstrated that perceived relational value information directly affected self-esteem regardless of trait self-esteem, whereas perceived relational value information affected self-concept clarity depending on trait self-esteem. Ayduk et al. (2009) demonstrated that social rejection undermines self-concept clarity only for those who have a personal goal to avoid social rejection. Boucher (2011; Study 3) observed that contemplating social isolation resulted in more self-concept clarity for those with high self-esteem but less self-concept clarity for those with low self-esteem.

Although it seems as if the findings of Stinson et al. (2010) and Boucher (2011) are in conflict with each other, they may not be. It is difficult to compare the findings because a neutral control group was not employed in Stinson et al. (2010) but was employed in Boucher (2011). It could be that the reactions of those in the low perceived relational value conditions in Stinson et al. (2010) were the same as those in the social isolation conditions in Boucher (2011). But above and beyond this, as observed in Stinson et al. (2010), perceiving being valued by others may have a boosting effect for those with high self-esteem and an undermining effect for those with low self-esteem. In addition, the extremity of the perceived relational value information differed. Social isolation (Boucher, 2011) is a stronger relational value threat than is contemplating being criticized by others (Stinson et al., 2010). Strong threats to relational value can have stronger impacts on self-esteem than implied threats to relational value (Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, & Baumeister, 2009). Stronger perceived relational value threats might produce different reactions than weak relational value threats. For those with low self-esteem, social isolation may be so strong a threat as to be inconsistent with perceived relational value, thus undermining self-concept clarity. For those with high self-esteem, social isolation may be a strong enough threat to not simply shake self-concept clarity but to produce a compensatory reaction. This is consistent with the observation that uncertainty mixed with threat results in less political tolerance than does uncertainty alone (Haas & Cunningman, 2014).

Mood

Mood processes may also play a role in self-concept clarity. Negative affect (Nezlek & Plesko, 2001), anger (Bond, Ruaro, & Wingrove, 2006), stress (Ritchie, Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Gidron, 2011; Treadgold, 1999), and depression (Butzer & Kuiper, 2006) are all associated with less self-concept clarity. It's possible that negative moods signal concern over the content of the self and invoke systematic, bottom-up processing of the content of the self (Schwarz & Clore, 2003), all of which could serve to undermine self-concept clarity.

Methodological Considerations

There are important methodological considerations particular to studying sources of self-concept clarity. First, it is important to control for self-esteem, both as an antecedent and as an outcome (see, e.g., Stinson et al., 2010). Second, research on existential anxiety has shown that defensiveness tends to emerge only after a non-conscious consolidation period (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999). Similarly, experimental effects on self-concept clarity may change over time, such that immediate effects may differ from effects after a delay period. And so it is important to systematically measure self-concept clarity at different points in time following experimental manipulations. In addition, it is important to consider measurement from the perspective of the participant, particularly in experimental studies. For instance, it is quite possible that participants sometimes report being clear about who they are following an experimental manipulation (e.g., anxiety, momentary recognition of self-beliefs), simply because it is the only response option put in front of them, rather than because it is the naturalistic primary response following the manipulation.

Concluding Comments

How is it that we come to have a clear sense of who we are? A considerable amount of theory and research has shed light on its sources. To date, the research primarily points to self-confirmation, anxiety, and uncertainty as sources of self-concept clarity. Yet, there is much work on the horizon, particularly with respect to exploring the variety of conditions under which clarity may be bolstered or dampened. Concentrated future theorizing and investigations will, in time, offer a clearer picture of when self-concept clarity emerges.

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Chapter 4
Self-Concept Clarity Development Across the Lifespan

Jennifer Lodi-Smith and Elisabetta Crocetti

Abstract Self-concept clarity can and does change across the lifespan. This chapter presents a meta-analysis summarizing normative patterns of rank-order stability and mean-level change of self-concept clarity. It then reviews evidence for individual variability in the development of self-concept clarity and the mechanisms and outcomes of this variability. Specifically, we consider the current literature regarding the way in which family, identity development, and adult social roles facilitate the development of self-concept clarity. Further, we examine findings that suggest self-concept clarity promotes personality trait maturation and psychological well-being. We close with specific future directions for research in self-concept clarity development across the lifespan.

Keywords Development · Rank-order stability · Mean-level change · Individual variability · Family · Identity development · Adult social roles · Personality traits · Well-being

One of the central findings to come out of the personality development literature is the plasticity principle that personality can and does change across the lifespan (Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006b; Roberts & Wood, 2006; Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008). A growing body of evidence suggests that the plasticity principle applies to the metacognitive evaluation of self-concept clarity, "the extent to which the contents of an individual's self-concept…are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable" (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman, 1996, p. 141), just as much as it does to central aspects of the content of the self, such as personality traits (Crocetti, Moscatelli, et al., 2016; Crocetti, Rubini et al., 2016; Lodi-Smith, Cologgi, Spain, & Roberts, 2017).

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The current chapter reviews this body of evidence by drawing from published longitudinal studies of the Self-Concept Clarity Scale to consider patterns of normative stability and change as well as evidence for individual variability in self-concept clarity development across the lifespan. We then turn to the mechanisms and outcomes of individual variability in self-concept clarity development before summarizing the many future directions that are needed in solidifying our understanding of self-concept clarity development across the lifespan.

Normative Patterns of Self-Concept Clarity Stability

The normative stability of a construct is commonly indicated by the rank-order stability of that construct over time. Rank-order stability is captured by the correlation of two measurements of the same variable in the same sample at two points in time. This metric quantifies the extent to which individuals are consistent relative to other individuals in the sample over time. For example, if Briana scored higher than Jonathan on self-concept clarity when they were in their 30s and Briana still scored higher than Jonathan on self-concept clarity when they were in their 60s, then this would be a demonstration of rank-order stability.

In keeping with its conceptualization as a trait-like construct (Campbell et al., 1996) that should show a substantial degree of rank-order stability (Conley, 1984), a survey of longitudinal evidence suggests that the rank-order stability of self-concept clarity tends to be high, ranging from 0.36 for a sample of Dutch adolescent boys over a 1-year interval to 0.93 over a 1-week interval in a sample of American undergraduates (Table 4.1).

The pattern of relative robustness in rank-order stability in self-concept clarity has been demonstrated across ages, cultures, and assessment intervals, as summarized in Table 4.1. We conducted a meta-analysis of the 70 rank-order stability coefficients provided across these samples using random effects models within the metaphor package in *R* (Viechtbauer, 2010). Across these data sets, rank-order stability was 0.75 (95% confidence interval: .72, .77), comparable to peak levels of personality trait stability seen across the lifespan (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000). Both study interval and age significantly moderated these effects, accounting for 44% of heterogeneity in the effects. Specifically, the size of the rank-order coefficient decreased with study interval ($r = -.58$) and increased with age ($r = .20$). Additional heterogeneity remained, (Q_E (67) = 744.74, $p < .001$), however, and future work should examine other potential moderators of rank-order stability in self-concept clarity. It thus appears that, consistent with its trait representation, self-concept clarity has robust rank-order stability over time. Like personality trait stability, rank-order stability of self-concept clarity does decrease with longer time interval of assessment and may increase with age (Lucas & Donnellan, 2011; Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000).

Table 4.1 Development of self-concept clarity

Study	Sample	Interval	Rank-order stability (r)	Mean-level change (d)	Individual variability
Campbell et al. (1996)	61–155 Canadian undergraduates	4–5-month intervals over 9 months	.70 and.79	NA	NA
Crocetti, Moscatelli, et al. (2016)	244 Dutch late adolescents	1–2-year intervals over 6 years	.66–.76	+,.10	Yes
Crocetti, Rubini, et al. (2016)	497 Dutch adolescents and their parents	1-year intervals over 6 years	.36–.83	+,.05	Yes
Frijns and Finkenauer (2009)	278 Dutch adolescents	6-month interval	.66	NS,.03	NA
Johnson and Nozik (2011)	160 Canadian undergraduates	3-month interval	.77	+, .16	Yes
Lodi-Smith et al. (2017)	461 American adults	3-year interval	.71	NS,.02	Yes
Matto and Realto (2001)	79 Estonian adults	5 months	.67	NA	NA
Schiller et al. (2016)	119 Israeli undergraduates	3–5 months	.72 and.81	NS,.00	NA
Schwartz et al. (2012)	923 Dutch adolescents	1-year intervals over 5 years	.49–.69	+,.07	Yes
Shin et al. (2016)	227 American undergraduates	1–2-week intervals over 8 weeks	.72–.93	NA	Yes
Slotter et al. (2010)	69 American undergraduates	6 months	Not reported	Increase on single-item SCC measure, *d NA*	NA
Van Dijk et al. (2014)	323 Dutch adolescents	1–3-year intervals over 4 years	.56–.71	+,.09	NA
Wu et al. (2010)	824 Chinese adolescents	1 year	.53	+,.09	NA

Normative Patterns of Self-Concept Clarity Change

Rank-order stability of a construct does not preclude the possibility of change in this construct. Instead, rank-order stability can coexist with or be independent of mean-level change in the same construct. Mean-level change is assessed through the overall net increases or decreases in a construct over time. Returning to our previous example, if both Briana and Jonathan increased one unit in self-concept clarity over time, we would see rank-order stability in their relative standing on self-concept clarity while at the same time seeing a mean-level increase in self-concept clarity.

Longitudinal evidence for normative mean-level patterns of self-concept clarity change is less clear than the evidence for rank-order stability. While longitudinal studies of Chinese (Wu, Watkins, & Hattie, 2010) and Dutch (Crocetti, Rubini, et al., 2016; Schwartz, Klimstra, Luyckx, Hale, & Meeus, 2012; Van Dijk et al., 2014) adolescents, American (Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2010) and Canadian (Johnson & Nozik, 2011) undergraduates, and Dutch adults (Crocetti, Rubini, et al., 2016) reported mean-level increases in self-concept clarity over periods of 3 months to 6 years, other studies of Israeli undergraduates (Schiller, Hammen, & Shahar, 2016) and American adults (Lodi-Smith et al., 2017) did not find significant mean-level changes in self-concept clarity (Table 4.1).

Furthermore, recent research indicates that self-concept clarity might develop nonlinearly in transitional periods. This pattern was documented in Dutch late adolescents monitored during the transition to emerging adulthood (Crocetti, Moscatelli et al., 2016). Participants showed a decline in self-concept clarity from age 17 to 18, followed by annual increases in self-concept clarity until the final assessment at age 23, consequently resulting in an overall net gain in self-concept clarity across the 7 years of the study.

Across the studies listed in Table 4.1, the effect size of differences between the reported means over time ranges from decreases of $d = -.15$ over a 4-year interval in Dutch men (Crocetti, Rubini, et al., 2016) to increases of $d = .33$ in Dutch adolescent girls over 3 years (Crocetti, Moscatelli, et al., 2016). We again used the metaphor (Viechtbauer, 2010) package in R to compute an overall effect size across the 108 comparisons of means drawn from these studies of $d = .07$ (95% confidence interval: .05, .08), thus suggesting small normative increases in self-concept clarity over time. The effect size of mean-level change was significantly moderated by study interval ($r = .29$) but not by the average age of the sample ($r = .08$). Therefore, although there may be a normative trend toward greater self-concept clarity over time, this does not guarantee changes in self-concept clarity with age, and, certainly, individuals will vary in their trajectories of self-concept clarity development over the lifespan. As with rank-order stability, additional heterogeneity remained after controlling for age and study interval, (Q_E (105) = 128.50, $p = .06$), and additional mechanisms should be investigated.

Individual Variability in Self-Concept Clarity Development

Perhaps one of the most pervasive patterns of development seen across constructs is that, while there are normative patterns of development, there are also profound individual differences in how development occurs. Going back to Briana and Jonathan, this means that, while Briana might decrease in self-concept clarity, Jonathan may very well increase. Even if they both increase or both decrease, the magnitude of the changes likely differs. Further, if we add their spouses, children, friends, neighbors, co-workers, baristas, hairdressers, mechanics, employees, students, etc. to the mix, individual variability will be present. Not surprisingly, given

the ubiquity of such individual differences in development (Asendorpf, 1992; Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1977; Löckenhoff et al., 2008; Mcroczek, 2007; Roberts & Mroczek, 2008; Terracciano, McCrae, & Costa, 2010), recent studies that model this variability within self-concept clarity indicate that individuals differ in both in their stability (Crocetti, Moscatelli et al., 2016; Lodi-Smith et al., 2017) and change (Crocetti, Moscatelli et al., 2016; Crocetti, Rubini et al., 2016; Johnson & Nozik, 2011; Lodi-Smith et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2012; Shin, Steger, & Henry, 2016).

Understanding this variability is critical for uncovering how self-concept clarity develops and why patterns of self-concept clarity development matter. Individual differences in self-concept clarity development can be predicted in the same way as individual differences in level of self-concept clarity. In turn, these individual differences in self-concept clarity development can themselves serve as indicators of important life outcomes.

Mechanisms of Individual Variability in Self-Concept Clarity Development

Family

As psychology pioneers emphasized (e.g., Cooley, 1908; James, 1890), the development of self-concept is strongly intertwined with interactions with significant others, such as parents, peers, partners, co-workers, etc. In this context, research has focused on unveiling the importance of family for young people's self-concept (Dusek & McIntyre, 2003). Prior longitudinal studies examined two different mechanisms as the basis of family influences on youth self-concept clarity considering (a) intergenerational transmission of self-concept clarity from parents to adolescents (Crocetti, Rubini et al., 2016) and (b) associations between parent-adolescent relationship quality and self-concept clarity (Frijns & Finkenauer, 2009; Van Dijk et al., 2014).

Intergenerational transmission of self-concept clarity in families with adolescents was found to be a unidirectional process, with both fathers' and mothers' self-concept clarity having a positive effect on adolescents' self-concept clarity over the course of adolescence (from age 13 to age 18; Crocetti, Rubini et al., 2016). Interestingly, the pattern of influence in same-sex dyads (i.e., father-son, mother-daughter) was similar to the pattern of influence in opposite-sex dyads (i.e., father-daughter, mother-son). Thus, when adolescent boys and girls can count on fathers and mothers with high levels of self-certainty, they are more likely to increase their self-concept clarity over the course of adolescence.

This parental dominance in intergenerational transmission processes of self-concept clarity is consistent with intergenerational processes occurring in other domains of adolescent development (e.g., transmissions of cultural orientations;

Vollebergh, Iedema, & Raaijmakers, 2001; transmission of conflict resolution styles; Van Doorn, Branje, & Meeus, 2007) and can be explained by the fact that parental self-concept clarity is more stable (as indicated by indices of rank-order stability; Crocetti, Rubini et al., 2016) than adolescent self-concept clarity. Furthermore, this unidirectional transmission process is consistent with the perspective of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), suggesting that parents with higher self-certainty are more likely to represent consistent models for their children and, doing so, affect in a positive way their self-concept. Further, it may be the case that parents with greater self-concept clarity are more consistent in their parenting role. Consistency in parenting could then translate to greater consistency in the home environment, which may help foster greater self-concept clarity.

The type of relationship parents establish with their children can also influence adolescents' self-concept clarity. In this respect, longitudinal studies highlighted that the quality of communication with parents can foster adolescents' self-concept clarity. In fact, adolescents' disclosure to parents was related to higher self-concept clarity later on, while keeping secrets had detrimental effects for self-concept clarity (Frijns & Finkenauer, 2009). Additionally, open parent-adolescent communication was found to be positively related, both concurrently and over time, to middle adolescents' self-concept clarity (Van Dijk et al., 2014). Overall, this evidence indicates that a relationship in which parents are supportive of adolescents' viewpoints and are active listeners is beneficial for children's self-concept clarity.

Identity Development

As underscored by Erikson's (1959, 1968) psychosocial theory, it is during adolescence that the search for an enduring sense of "self" turns into a core developmental task, prompted by the biological (i.e., puberty), cognitive (i.e., the acquisition of the formal abstract reasoning), and social (i.e., the starting of new social interactions with peers and modifications in parent-adolescent relationships) changes that characterize this period of the lifespan (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). Thus, during adolescence, individuals may rethink their previous sense of self and experiment with new roles and life plans to find a set of goals and values that fits their aspirations and potentials (Crocetti & Van Dijk, 2016).

The processes by which young people address the identity developmental task are strongly intertwined with self-concept clarity. In fact, longitudinal evidence (Schwartz et al., 2012) pointed out that both initial level of self-concept clarity and rates of change in self-concept clarity were significantly related to level of and change in the identity processes of commitment (which refers to enduring choices that individuals have made with regard to various developmental domains and to the self-confidence they derive from these choices; Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008) and reconsideration of commitment (which refers to the comparison of present commitments with possible alternative commitments because the current ones are no longer satisfactory; Crocetti et al., 2008). More specifically, level of and change

in self-concept clarity were positively related to the level of and change in identity commitment and negatively related to the level of and change in reconsideration of commitment.

Recent findings indicating that self-concept clarity may first decrease and then increase in the transition from late adolescence to emerging adulthood (Crocetti, Moscatelli et al., 2016) may be informative of nonlinear patterns potentially associated with the developmental tasks faced by young people. Indeed, as late adolescents cope with the multiple transitions (e.g., from school to university, from living with family to independent or semi-independent living) typical of the passage to emerging adulthood, they might increase exploration of identity alternatives and reconsideration of their prior commitments, with this increase in exploration potentially leading to a temporary drop in self-concept clarity (Crocetti et al., 2008, 2010; Morsünbül, Crocetti, Cok, & Meeus, 2014, 2016). This is echoed in findings suggesting that changes in self-concept content after role transitions are associated with reduced self-concept clarity (Slotter & Walsh, 2016; Slotter & Emery, Chapter 5, this volume). Overall, this suggests that self-concept clarity is positively related to enactment of meaningful identity choices, whereas it is negatively related to identity transitions driven by reconsidering and discarding current commitments (Crocetti et al. 2008; Crocetti et al. 2010; Morsünbül et al. 2014, 2016; Schwartz et al. 2011).

Adult Social Roles

The adult concerns of Erikson's (1959, 1968) model are based on the core challenges of establishing intimacy in both romantic and platonic relationships as well as building generativity in connection with future generations and one's society. Numerous chapters in this volume detail in depth that acquisition of and commitment to social roles are critical to self-concept clarity and the interested reader should consult these chapters for details on role-specific processes.

In general, as transitions in context may contribute to drops in self-concept clarity in adolescents, the consolidation and stability of role identity in adulthood may be a central component of the higher self-concept clarity reported in midlife samples (Light & Visser, 2013; Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010). Indeed, the identity development principle suggests that the "process of developing, committing to, and maintaining an identity leads to greater personality consistency" (Roberts & Nickel, 2017, p. 16). A number of other theories from the personality development literature underscore this supposition. While these theories have been primarily applied to personality trait development, the principles extend well to the development of self-concept clarity.

First, the social investment model of personality development posits that investing in age-graded social roles is one of the driving mechanisms of identity development in adulthood (Roberts, Wood, & Smith, 2005; Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2007). This resonates with and builds from many theories of adult development including Erikson's stages of intimacy and generativity. Erikson's framework lays

out the importance of investing in these social roles for continued psychosocial maturation in adulthood. Social investment theories also incorporate role expectation models (Sarbin, 1967), in which individuals internalize the expectations afforded by roles, thus catalyzing behavioral change.

The essential innovation to the social investment model of personality development is that simply attaining a social role is certainly necessary to but not sufficient for providing a fulcrum of greater personality maturation. Instead, as the name connotes, *investment* in social roles is of critical import. Every role to which an individual commits to is going to carry expectations. However, an individual is going to be more responsive to the expectations and experiences of those roles that become the most central to identity. Thus, Briana and Jonathan may both get jobs, but if Briana's job is more central to her self-definition than Jonathan's job is to his, then Briana will be more likely to evidence change in accordance with the expectations of her job, whereas Jonathan will change less or change in ways that are concordant with the expectations from other more meaningful roles in his life, such as his role as a father.

Next, the corresponsive principle of personality development states that individuals select themselves into contexts and experiences that fit with their existing identity (Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008). This is similar to the phenomenon of prototype matching wherein individuals select themselves into roles in which they feel they match the prototypical individual in that role (see McIntyre et al., Chap. 6, this volume for a discussion of prototype matching and self-concept clarity). Such choices ensure that the expectations that go along with these contexts and experiences will reinforce individuals to change so that they effectively become more of who they already are. Individuals may also niche-pick (Roberts & Nickel, 2017) and select themselves into consistent roles, environments, and experiences in such a way that they do not in fact experience any change in their personality and instead remain unchanged. This consistency in identity, of becoming more of who we already are over time, is also supported by the role continuity principle of personality development that suggests that consistent role experiences facilitate consistent identity (Roberts et al., 2008).

Young Adulthood

Overall, these principles of personality development suggest that, as we enter adulthood, individuals begin a process of selecting themselves into adult social roles. Initial evidence suggests that this period of selection brings with it challenges for self-concept clarity as individuals negotiate the roles which best suit them (Crocetti et al. 2008; 2010; Morsünbül et al. 2014, 2016; Schwartz et al. 2011). Through this process, individuals will very likely select roles that are either consistent with their existing identity or with the prototype of who they would like to be. These roles then carry with them both internal and external expectations for behavior as individuals act in ways that they imagine and others expect someone in that role to behave and then are subsequently rewarded for engaging in ways that are consistent with their

role pursuits. To the extent to which these roles are or become central to the identity of the individual, the individual will evidence change through the combined socialization process of role presses and desired change.

As the individual moves through this process, young adulthood should be a period of heightened and growing self-concept clarity. For example, during this period, higher social engagement with others positively influences self-concept clarity in the transition from late adolescence to emerging adulthood (Crocetti, Moscatelli et al., 2016). This effect appears to hold in adulthood as investment in relationship and community roles are both associated with higher self-concept clarity (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010).

However, individuals with low self-concept clarity may experience disruption to selection. The lack of awareness of self that is represented in low self-concept clarity suggests that individuals with low self-concept clarity may struggle to select roles that are consistent with their identity, select roles that are discordant with their identity, or become mired in indecision. Effectively, in terms of Eriksonian development, individuals with low self-concept clarity may struggle with selection, either defaulting to a foreclosed state or maintaining a diffusion or moratorium state later than this would be normatively acceptable. Indeed, in terms of self-expansion theory, individuals with low self-concept clarity are uninterested in activities that may help them grow in relationship contexts (Emery et al., 2014).

Midlife

As with many individual differences (Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006b; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005; Visser & Krosnick, 1998), midlife appears to be the peak of self-concept clarity in the lifespan (Light & Visser, 2013; Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010). This is perhaps unsurprising as individuals have largely moved through the period of role identification and are, instead, engaging in experiences that solidify these roles. To the extent that roles remain consistent through midlife, concordant experiences within the role context likely facilitate and stabilize, if not increase, self-concept clarity. A sample of Dutch middle-aged parents suggests that self-concept clarity increases in midlife and, to some extent, rank-order stability is higher in midlife than in adolescence, particularly relative to adolescent boys (Crocetti, Rubini et al., 2016). In addition, in a sample of US adults, while change in self-concept clarity was unrelated to age, stability in self-concept clarity had a curvilinear relationship with age such that self-concept clarity was most stable in midlife (Lodi-Smith et al., 2017).

However, to the extent to which role transitions are occurring during midlife, individual patterns may contrast with normative trends. A growing body of evidence suggests that when we lose an identity-defining work (McIntyre, Mattingly, & Lewandowski, 2014) or relationship (Slotter et al., 2010, 2014) role, this loss can contribute to declines in self-concept clarity. Thus, while midlife may be a time of general stability and continued growth in self-concept clarity, individual life experiences may, as always, create contexts that generate nonnormative trends for a given person.

Older Adulthood

If midlife is a period of relative stability in self-concept clarity, older adulthood may present a new period of challenges. As the transitions in identity-defining roles become more normative with retirement transitions and the loss of loved ones, older adults may experience greater threat to self-concept clarity in late life. Indeed, cross-sectional work suggests that older adults have lower self-concept clarity (Light & Visser, 2013; Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010).

Further, both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies suggest that role loss may not be the only mechanism for declines in self-concept clarity in late life. Older adults who experience challenges to role engagement because of health limitations both concurrently and longitudinally report lower self-concept clarity (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010; Lodi-Smith et al., 2017). Thus, it appears that health concerns during older adulthood can impact self-concept clarity and that these effects are most robust when those health concerns impact an individual's ability to engage in a variety of different identity-defining role pursuits. Consequently, it may be not just retirement or widowhood that impact self-concept clarity in older adulthood but overall shifts in the ability to engage in a variety of activities that are important to the self.

These patterns of findings suggest, however, that perception is key, as these effects hold controlling for overall self-reported general health. Therefore, it is less the actual perceived health of the individual and more the extent to which health is impacting ability and desire to engage in important activities that may be critical to self-concept clarity in late life. Bringing this back to an Eriksonian perspective, challenges to self-concept clarity in late life may impair coming to the end of life with a positive feeling of ego integrity in life review. It may, therefore, be critical to maintain functional health in order to promote self-concept clarity throughout the lifespan.

Outcomes of Individual Variability in Self-Concept Clarity Development

Personality Maturation

The general relationship of self-concept clarity to the various content areas of personality is largely outside of the scope of this chapter, and interested readers should refer to Dunlop's chapter on self-concept clarity and personality in this volume (Chap. 2). However, recent evidence suggests that the development of personality content is associated with the development of self-concept clarity. The Big Five personality traits of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability are perhaps the most well-studied of personality content domains. Recent research on a longitudinal study of adults age 19–86 assessed

twice over approximately 3 years demonstrates the relationship between the development of these traits and self-concept clarity in adulthood in regard to two overarching patterns of development in personality traits over time (Lodi-Smith et al., 2017).

The cumulative continuity principle consistently shows increasing rank-order stability in personality traits with age through midlife (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000), though this pattern seems to be attenuated in later life as evidence to date suggests that stability coefficients begin to decline in older adulthood (Lucas & Donnellan, 2011). This is paralleled by findings that self-concept clarity itself has a curvilinear relationship with age (Light & Visser, 2013; Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010). Personality theorists suggested that one potential reason for the cumulative continuity pattern was variability in identity clarity with age such that "identity clarity may … contribute to increasing consistency" (Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008, p. 386–387). However, recent evidence suggests that this is not the case as stability over time in self-concept clarity is largely unrelated to a number of different indices of stability of personality traits. Instead, while patterns varied somewhat by gender and age, high self-concept clarity is associated with having more variable profiles of Big Five personality trait characteristics over time, and increasing self-concept clarity is associated with greater trait stability overall (Lodi-Smith et al., 2017).

Results of this work suggest that rather than being related to normative stability in traits over time, self-concept clarity is related to trait maturation. The maturity principle of personality trait development indicates that there are normative increases in the personality traits of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability through midlife (Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006b) though, again, there are shifts away from this pattern, particularly for conscientiousness, in late life (Lucas & Donnellan, 2011). High self-concept clarity at the start of the longitudinal study was also associated with increases in conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability as well as extraversion over time, while agreeableness and emotional stability at the start of the study predicted greater self-concept clarity over the 3-year interval. Finally, changes in conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability, and extraversion corresponded with changes in self-concept clarity. Thus, the evidence to date suggests that rather than being related to greater stability over time, self-concept clarity is a marker of and catalyst for maturation of identity content at the level of personality traits (Lodi-Smith et al., 2017).

Psychological Well-Being

Most commonly associated with self-esteem, self-concept clarity speaks to many of the nuances of self-evaluation while remaining both conceptually and empirically distinct (Belon et al. 2011; Bigler, Neimeyer, & Brown, 2001; Campbell, 1990; Campbell & Lavallee, 1993; Campbell et al., 1996; Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003; DeMarree & Rios, 2014; Emery, Walsh, & Slotter, 2014; Lewandowski, Nardone, & Raines, 2010; Nezlek & Plesko, 2001; Smith, Wethington, & Zhan, 1996;

Story, 2004; Usborne & Taylor, 2010; Wu et al., 2010). The relationship between self-concept clarity and self-esteem may be quite reciprocal (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993; Wu et al., 2010), though empirical research largely focused on the effect self-esteem has on self-concept clarity. Specifically, while the low clarity of individuals with low self-esteem has been proposed as a mechanism through which some of the negative outcomes of self-esteem are able to develop (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993), day-to-day analysis of the interrelationship of self-concept clarity and self-esteem suggests that state self-esteem may impact state self-concept clarity, though the causal sequencing was not able to be conclusively tested in the data (Nezlek & Plesko, 2001).

Beyond self-esteem, self-concept clarity correlates with a number of indices of psychological well-being, including negative affect (Campbell et al., 1996; Lee-Flynn, Pomaki, DeLongis, Biesanz, & Puterman, 2011; Nezlek & Plesko, 2001), anxiety (Bigler et al., 2001; Campbell et al., 1996; Smith et al., 1996; Van Dijk et al., 2014), depression (Bigler et al., 2001; Campbell et al., 1996; Lee-Flynn et al., 2011; Smith et al., 1996; Treadgold, 1999; Van Dijk et al., 2014), positive affect (Campbell et al., 1996; Usbourne & Taylor, 2010), perceived stress (Smith et al., 1996; Treadgold, 1999), affective balance (Bigler et al., 2001), purpose in life (Bigler et al., 2001), sense of coherence (Bigler et al., 2001), contentment (Bigler et al., 2001), perception of meaning in life (Bigler et al., 2001; Blazek & Besta, 2012), and general life satisfaction (Ritchie, Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Gidron, 2011; Usbourne & Taylor, 2010), as well as other markers of adult flourishing such as need for cognition (Campbell et al., 1996), perceived social support (Smith et al., 1996), feelings of having a meaningful career (Treadgold, 1999), adaptive coping strategies (Smith et al., 1996), and relationship satisfaction and commitment (Lewandowski et al., 2010). Notably, low self-concept clarity has been found to be associated with psychological disorders, such as body dissatisfaction (Vartanian & Dey, 2013) and eating disturbances (Perry, Silvera, Neilands, Rosenvinge, & Hanssen, 2008) as well as schizophrenia (Cicero, Martin, Becker, & Kerns, 2016) and autism spectrum disorder (Berna et al., 2016; Rodgers et al., in press). While a thorough treatment of these findings is beyond the scope of this chapter (see chapters in this volume by Light (Chap. 10); Vartanian and colleagues (Chap. 11); and Cicero (Chap. 12) for closer reviews), they clearly suggest that self-concept clarity may be an important marker of healthy functioning in adulthood.

While much of the work on self-concept clarity and well-being is cross-sectional, longitudinal studies point out that over the course of adolescence, lower self-concept clarity is associated with higher anxiety and depressive symptoms (Schwartz et al., 2012; VanDijk et al., 2014). This evidence underscores the importance of self-concept clarity for healthy adolescent development and has important clinical implications for interventions aimed at fostering youth positive development. Future work is needed to develop these findings in the context of aging, to expand our understanding of how self-concept clarity impacts a variety of different outcomes of healthy aging, from physical health to cognitive fitness and psychological well-being.

Future Directions

Much more work is needed to fully conceptualize the patterns, mechanisms, and impact of self-concept clarity development across the lifespan. Unlike research on developmental patterns in personality traits, the interval of assessment for self-concept clarity development has been relatively short. Because of this, the conclusions we can draw on the developmental patterns of self-concept clarity are necessarily limited. Just within the data available, self-concept clarity is less stable and changes more with longer intervals. A lifespan assessment of self-concept clarity development with intervals spanning decades would provide much needed data on the stability and change of self-concept clarity over extended periods of time. Additionally, no known data exists that tracks self-concept clarity development across different time periods in the lifespan. Longer assessments will allow the examination of, for example, how self-concept clarity develops from childhood to young adulthood or midlife to late life.

Further, because self-concept clarity is a relatively new construct in the context of long-term longitudinal research efforts, we will have to wait to determine if there will be meaningful cohort differences in the trajectories of self-concept clarity over time and culture. Given the preliminary empirical evidence and theoretical justification for importance of roles and role investment for the development of self-concept clarity, taking cohort differences into account will be of tantamount importance to our understanding of the development of self-concept clarity in the years to come. If self-concept clarity grows through a volitional self-expansion into socially normative roles through the selection of roles that fit the existing self or a desired prototypical self, then development may be contingent to some extent on what these roles are. In addition, it may be that for some roles and cultures, the development of self-concept clarity is nonnormative, and thus differential trajectories may be present.

Indeed, the process of selection and socialization that underlies so much of personality development theory seems to be predicated on a certain level of self-concept clarity. However, a growing body of evidence suggests that some individuals may experience fundamental challenges to self-concept clarity. To date, research investigating the development of self-concept clarity has focused on typically developing individuals. Given the growing evidence for the association of self-concept clarity with a number of clinical diagnoses such as schizophrenia, eating disorders, depression, and autism, examining the trajectory of self-concept clarity within clinical populations will be an important step in understanding the patterns, mechanisms, and impact of self-concept clarity development across the lifespan.

In investigating self-concept clarity in the context of time and culture, future work on the development of self-concept clarity should continue to leverage the latest statistical techniques to model longitudinal development. Specifically, researchers modeling self-concept clarity development over multiple time points should examine different patterns of growth and change over time that investigate both change between time points and overall growth testing the fit of both linear and

nonlinear patterns. Across these different models, investigators will have to pay close attention to fundamental assumptions of longitudinal research. Specifically, meaningful analyses on developmental changes in self-concept clarity can be conducted only after establishment of longitudinal measurement invariance (e.g., Van de Schoot, Lugtig, & Hox, 2012). Available evidence is very promising, as different hierarchical levels of invariance (configural, metric, and scalar) have been established for the Self-Concept Clarity Scale in longitudinal studies (Crocetti, Moscatelli et al., 2016; Crocetti, Rubini et al., 2016; Lodi-Smith et al., 2017). This essential assumption must be tested in future work to guarantee that observed mean-level differences are due to meaningful changes in self-concept clarity and not due to measurement drift over time. In a similar vein, as all of the work reviewed in this chapter is based on the Self-Concept Clarity Scale, heterotypic consistency research is needed to investigate how different operationalizations of self-concept clarity are similar and distinct over time.

Additionally, researchers modeling developmental change must also provide evidence for significant variance in developmental patterns. Without evidence that significant variance in self-concept clarity development exists, we cannot predict these patterns or examine the extent to which these patterns serve as indicators of downstream outcomes. Again, existing evidence for variability in development is present (Crocetti, Moscatelli et al., 2016; Crocetti, Rubini et al., 2016; Johnson & Nozik, 2011; Lodi-Smith et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2012; Shin et al., 2016), but future researchers must continue to test this fundamental assumption in modeling the longitudinal development of self-concept clarity.

Research into the lifespan development of self-concept clarity also should attend to the interplay of self-concept clarity and the larger self-system such as other indicators of self and identity development (Schwartz et al., 2011, 2012). By effectively expanding the nomological net of not just self-concept clarity but self-concept clarity development, we can begin to gain a better understanding of how patterns of self-concept clarity development co-develop with other aspects of the self such as self-esteem and personality traits, further map the mechanism of self-concept clarity development, and gain a more complete picture of how self-concept clarity impacts the trajectory of adjustment throughout the lifespan. However, while data collection is ongoing in a number of longitudinal studies, more research needs to be conducted across the lifespan, within diverse cohorts, at multiple time points, for longer intervals, also while simultaneously measuring other important variables, such as other markers of identity content including goals and narrative identity. Further, this work must examine the impact of and covariation with self-esteem, social roles, and important life outcomes such as physical health and psychological well-being in order to more fully determine the nature of the patterns, mechanisms, and outcomes of the relationship between identity development and self-concept clarity development.

Finally, given the importance of self-concept clarity for psychological health across the lifespan and its plasticity over the lifespan, future efforts should investigate interventions to promote self-concept clarity. Given recent evidence of the malleability of identity content in the face of intervention (Roberts et al., 2017) and the

trait-like patterns of stability and change in self-concept clarity demonstrated here, future research may be able to develop interventions to facilitate self-concept clarity at various points and through various modalities across the lifespan.

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Chapter 5
Self-Concept Clarity and Social Role Transitions

Erica B. Slotter and Lydia F. Emery

Abstract Major transitions in people's lives often disrupt people's understanding of who they are. This chapter reviews how people's social role transitions affect their self-concept clarity. We begin with an overview of these role transitions broadly defined, reviewing literature showing that both entering into a new social role and exiting a social role can undermine self-concept clarity. We then focus specifically on social role transition within romantic relationship contexts. In particular, we review the literature on relationship dissolution and self-concept clarity. Although, in general, the end of a relationship tends to undermine self-concept clarity, we highlight several moderators that can attenuate this effect. We then turn to the consequences of experiencing low self-concept clarity after the end of a relationship for well-being. Finally, we highlight six unresolved issues in this literature and identify directions for future research on social role transitions and self-concept clarity.

> That's the way you live your grown-up life: you must constantly rebuild your identity as an adult, the way it's been put together it is wobbly, ephemeral, and fragile. — Muriel Barbery (2008) *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*

Throughout their lifetimes, people construct their sense of who they are, in large part through the lens of their relationships or social roles (e.g., Baumeister, 2010; Cooley, 1902). Changes in our social roles can alter the content that we include as part of our identity – the "what" of who we are. Changes in our social roles can also affect the clarity of our identities – feeling like we know how all of the pieces of ourselves fit together. The central aim of the present chapter is to examine how social role transitions impact our self-concept clarity. As defined elsewhere in the

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current volume, self-concept clarity encompasses one's sense that the content and organization of one's self-concept is clear, cohesive, and consistent over time (e.g., Campbell, 1990). We examine how important transitions involving people's relationships contribute to their identities being "wobbly, ephemeral, and fragile." We focus first on the impact that social role transitions, generally speaking, have on self-concept clarity. We then consider how the transitions associated with one of our most important and impactful social relationships – our romantic relationships – relate to self-concept clarity.

The Socially Defined Self

People's self-concepts are hierarchically organized cognitive structures, developed through their self-reflections as well as their experiences. The content of the self-concept consists of the myriad attributes, aspirations, views, values, beliefs, attitudes, social roles, and even possessions that people identify as being "me" or "mine" (e.g., Baumeister, 2010, Epstein, 1977; James, 1890; Markus, 1977). This content can be organized in more or less complex ways; can contain self-aspects that are central or peripheral to an individual's sense of self; can be positively, negatively, or neutrally valenced; and can include any combination of current, past, feared, or desired selves (Linville, 1987; Markus & Wurf, 1987; McConnell, 2011). The self-concept is simultaneously durable and malleable, with some aspects fairly stable and others more prone to change across time and context (e.g., McConnell, 2011). Crucially, the self-concept is a largely socially created and defined entity; people's senses of self largely are dynamic reflections of the social worlds in which they are situated (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934) and the relationships they have with others in that world (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995; Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

People reflect on both the content of the self-concept and its consistency across time, and this assessment determines their self-concept clarity. As previously mentioned, self-concept clarity encompasses people's subjective sense that their overall identities are clear, cohesive, and consistent over time (e.g., Campbell, 1990). Although related, the objective content of the self-concept is both conceptually (e.g., Epstein, 1977) and empirically distinct from people's holistic, metacognitive judgments of self-concept clarity (e.g., Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2010). That is, people can have aspects of the self-concept that objectively seem to conflict, but as long as they can make sense of how these attributes might fit together, they can still have high levels of self-concept clarity (see MacDonald & Zanna, 1998 and Otnes, Lowrey, & Shrum, 1997 for a broader discussion of the importance of attitude ambivalence for both behavioral and emotional outcomes). To illustrate this idea, consider someone who thinks of themselves as both lazy and ambitious. These attributes might appear to conflict with one another, given that they are antonyms. However, if a person makes sense of these conflicting aspects of themselves by reconciling that they are lazy on the weekends but ambitious at work, for example, they could still maintain a high level of self-concept clarity. Higher self-concept

clarity is associated with personality traits, such as less neuroticism and greater agreeableness, as well as a host of positive well-being outcomes (e.g., Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003; Campbell et al., 1996; Lewandowski, Nardone, & Raines, 2010; Treadgold, 1999). Self-concept clarity is also often moderately positively correlated with self-esteem (e.g., Campbell et al., 1996). Although often viewed as a fairly stable characteristic that becomes more stable with age (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010), recent research has demonstrated that a variety of situational factors can alter self-concept clarity, including social factors (e.g., Emery, Walsh, & Slotter, 2015; Nezlek & Plesko, 2001).

Self-Concept Content, Clarity, and Social Role Transitions

Changes in social roles are a central catalyst of changes in self-concept content and clarity. In many ways, the social roles that we fill via the relationships that we form with other people serve important functions in constructing and understanding of our self-concepts (Aron, 2003). Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that transitions in social roles can contribute to people's understanding of their identities throughout their lives – and, specifically, to their self-concept clarity (e.g., Demo, 1992; Light & Visser, 2013). Some social role transitions include role entries or added social roles (e.g., getting married), whereas others include role exits or subtracted social roles (e.g., getting divorced). From entering the workforce, to retiring, to having children, everyone goes through shifts in social roles that alter who they are.

Research has clearly demonstrated that social role transitions impact the content of people's self-concepts. Adding social roles (e.g., taking on new hobbies, beginning a new friendship or romantic relationship, starting a new job) can expand the content of the self, such that people incorporate new attributes and characteristics into their self-concepts (Aron, 2003; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). Similarly, losing social roles can result in self-concept constriction, wherein the people lose self-aspects that they previously possessed (e.g., Lewandowski, Aron, Bassis, & Kunak, 2006; Mattingly, Lewandowski, & McIntyre, 2014).

In addition to social role transitions influencing the content of the self-concept, they also influence self-concept clarity. Most existing work has focused on the impact that role transitions involving the loss or exit from a social role have on self-concept clarity (Light & Visser, 2013). In general, a variety of role exits predict reductions in self-concept clarity (Light & Visser, 2013). For example, losing an important group membership (e.g., being a college student) is associated with lower levels of self-concept clarity (Slotter, Soto, & Winger, 2015). Similarly, having the social roles that one can participate in reduced or limited by health concerns is associated with reduced self-concept clarity over time, especially in older adults (Lodi-Smith, Cologgi, Spain, & Roberts, 2017).

Role entries also predict changes in people's self-concept clarity. One study measured the relationship between 17 role exits (e.g., "got divorced," "lost job"), 15 role entries (e.g., "got married," "had a baby"), and self-concept clarity. In general,

experiencing greater numbers of both role entries (e.g., having a baby) and exits (e.g., losing a job) is negatively correlated with self-concept clarity (Light & Visser, 2013). However, when role entries and exits are analyzed simultaneously, controlling for variety of individual difference and demographic factors (gender, age, physical health, and self-esteem), only role exits predict reduced self-concept clarity. This suggests that role exits are more likely to be associated with low self-concept clarity than role entries.

Despite these findings, both gaining and losing social roles can represent disruptions in people's lives (e.g., Kiecolt, 1994). Indeed, recent work has begun to examine the conditions under which role entries may be just as disruptive to people's self-concept clarity as role exits. Greater self-concept content change in response to a role transition, regardless of whether it was an exit or entry, predicts reduced self-concept clarity (Slotter & Walsh, 2016). This association is moderated by the positivity that people attach to the role transitions in question and emerges when controlling for people's dispositional levels of self-esteem. Across various social role transitions (e.g., getting married, getting divorced, becoming a first-time parent, entering the workforce, retiring, joining a new social group, exiting a social group), greater positive effect associated with the transition moderated the effect of self-concept content change on self-concept clarity. Specifically, among people viewed the role transition less positively, greater self-change predicted reduced self-concept clarity; however, for people who viewed the role transition more positively, self-change was unrelated to self-concept clarity (Slotter & Walsh, 2016). Role transition type (entry or exit) did not moderate the effects, suggesting that both role entries and exits, broadly construed, can influence people's self-concept clarity depending on their construal of the event.

Overall, research on social role changes suggests that both entering a new social role and exiting a social role can undermine self-concept clarity. This effect is attenuated when the individual feels positively about the change. This research tends not to find differences between types of role changes. However, a large body of research has focused specifically on romantic relationship transitions as perhaps one of the most substantial role transitions that people undergo. Examining this particular role transition has enabled researchers to investigate more clearly the circumstances under which role transitions do and do not disrupt self-concept clarity, as well as the mechanisms through which this disruption occurs.

Self-Concept Content, Clarity, and Romantic Relationship Transitions

Of the social roles that people fill in their adult lives, relationships with romantic partners in particular powerfully shape people's sense of themselves (e.g., Bowlby, 1969; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Evidence for the impact of romantic partners on the self is abundant in multiple fields, and numerous theoretical perspectives

underscore the importance of relationships to the self-concept (e.g., Agnew & Etcheverry, 2006, Andersen & Chen, 2002; Aron, 2003; Kumashiro, Rusbult, Wolf, & Estrada, 2006). Thus, various lines of identity research focus on the role that romantic relationships play in shaping people's sense of self (e.g., Slotter & Gardner, 2009, 2012a, 2012b; Slotter & Lucas, 2013; Slotter, Lucas, Jakubiak, & Lasslett, 2013), including their self-concept clarity (e.g., Sbarra, Boals, Mason, Larson, & Mehl, 2013; Slotter et al., 2010). Research on the associations between self-concept clarity and broad relationship processes is reviewed elsewhere in the current volume; as the present chapter focuses on how social role transitions influence self-concept clarity, we now turn our attention to how transitioning into and out of these central romantic bonds relates to self-concept clarity.

Self-Concept Content, Clarity, and Relationship Initiation

Surprisingly, research on entering a new relationship and self-concept clarity is sparse. However, experiencing low self-concept clarity can interfere with processes that typically occur in fledgling relationships. When people begin a new relationship, or even when they are romantically interested in someone new, they self-expand, taking on attributes from that individual and incorporating them into their own self-concepts (Aron et al., 1995; Slotter & Gardner, 2009). People will even self-expand with a person they have not actually met – just reading in an online dating profile that a potential partner is artistic will make people consider themselves to be artistic, too (Slotter & Gardner, 2009). Self-expansion promotes relationship quality and persistence (Mattingly et al., 2014; McIntyre, Mattingly, & Lewandowski, 2014). However, when people are experiencing low self-concept clarity, they are less interested in self-expanding, and they are less likely to actually self-expand when encountering a potential romantic partner (Emery et al., 2015). People with low self-concept clarity resist self-expanding even when they are highly interested in a potential romantic partner. Therefore, it appears that low self-concept clarity may interfere with relationship formation processes; however, more research is certainly needed in this domain. That said, when people do have a clear sense of who they are, entering into a relationship results in changes to people's self-concepts that benefit their relationships and oftentimes themselves (e.g., Aron, 2003; see Slotter & Gardner, 2012a for an exception).

Self-Concept Content, Clarity, and Relationship Dissolution

Despite the potential benefits of entering into relationships, many relationships end. In the United States alone, nearly two million adults divorce every year, and the end of dating relationships is even more common (e.g., Tejada-Vera & Sutton, 2010). Losing a marriage or a dating relationship is typically a highly distressing

experience (e.g., Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2003; Sbarra, 2006; Sbarra & Ferrer, 2006), particularly among people whose relationships have lasted longer (Sprecher, Felmlee, Metts, Fehr, & Vanni, 1998) or among people whose relationships are an important aspect of who they are (Smith & Cohen, 1993).

Relationship dissolution predicts emotional distress, partly because transitioning out of relationships profoundly disrupts people's identities. Most obviously, people lose the self-defining social role of being "coupled" and have to redefine themselves as a singular "I" rather than a dyadic "we" (e.g., Agnew, 2000; Boals & Klein, 2005). However, beyond this broad change in identity, the specific attributes that make up the content of people's self-concepts change when a relationship ends. Participants asked to either recall a recent breakup of a dating relationship or forecast the future end of an ongoing dating relationship reported that they had changed or would change aspects of their self-concept that covered a wide variety of domains, including appearance, values, friends and social interactions, activities, and goals for the future (Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2010). These changes occur through self-concept constriction. When people recall the end of a recent dating relationship or are experimentally primed to imagine the end of a current dating relationship, they describe their self-concepts using fewer unique self-descriptors than do people whose relationships remained intact either in reality or in their imaginations (Lewandowski et al., 2006). Indeed, after the end of a romantic relationship, people report jettisoning a variety of different attributes from their self-concepts, especially when those attributes were acquired or developed due to their relationship with their now ex-partner (Slotter, Emery, & Luchies, 2014). For example, one may stop thinking of oneself as a "runner" after the end of a relationship in which one took up running 5 k's to spend time with one's partner. These changes to the content of the self after breakup all contribute to people's self-concept clarity. More general self-concept content change recalled after a previous relationship dissolution predicts lower levels of current self-concept clarity, controlling for current self-esteem (Slotter et al., 2010).

Overall, self-concept clarity tends to decrease when a relationship ends. In a 6-month study of college freshmen in dating relationships, those whose relationships ended experienced a drop in self-concept clarity at the time of the dissolution, as well as a continued reduction in self-concept clarity in the weeks following the end of the relationship (Slotter et al., 2010). This effect emerged after controlling for how rejected participants felt by the end of their relationship. In contrast, participants who did not experience a breakup showed increases in self-concept clarity over the course of the study (Slotter et al., 2010). Moreover, a breakup predicted reduced self-concept clarity over the course of the study, but that reduced self-concept clarity did not predict an increased likelihood of breakup, suggesting a temporal pathway running from relationship dissolution to lowered self-concept clarity, rather than the reverse (Slotter et al., 2010). Similarly, in coded social media posts, having recently experienced the end of a romantic relationship was associated with reduced self-concept clarity, compared to having experienced other life events that did not involve a social role transition or no life event at all (Slotter et al., 2010). This disruption in self-concept clarity after breakup may be due to changes in the

specific content of the self-concept. The extent to which people think the attributes that constitute the content of their self-concept changed when recalling a dating breakup, or will change when imagining one, negatively predicts their current self-concept clarity (Slotter et al., 2010; Slotter & Gardner, 2012b). This suggests that experiencing greater identity change after the loss of a relationship is related to people's perceived disruption in self-concept clarity.

Recent research has further investigated how changes in specific aspects of the self-concept predict self-concept clarity after relationship dissolution. In one study (Slotter et al., 2014), couples discussed for 5 min how their current relationship had changed each of them. These interactions were then coded for the extent to which each partner's self-content change was (a) due to the relationship partner (i.e., the person would not have changed in the ways they did if they had never met their partner) and (b) psychological or physical effort invested in the change. Six months later, each partner's self-concept clarity and status of the relationship were assessed. Among couples who had broken up during the course of the study, but not intact couples, an interaction between partner-induced self-change and self-change effort emerged. Specifically, experiencing higher levels of partner-induced self-change that also required higher effort was associated with less self-concept clarity at the end of the 6-month study among people whose relationships had ended. This suggests that changes that occurred to the content of peoples' selves during their relationships that were (a) due to their partner and (b) difficult or engaging predicted greater disruption to self-concept clarity in cases where the relationship ended.

However, this association between disruption in self-concept content and reduced self-concept clarity is more nuanced than it might appear at first glance. Although greater overall self-concept content change during a relationship is associated with reduced self-concept clarity after the end of a relationship, and greater general perceived self-concept content change after the end of a relationship is correlated with lower levels of self-concept clarity, not altering specific content of the self after the end of a relationship may also be detrimental for self-concept clarity. After engaging in a visual imagery task imagining the end of their relationships, people who retained specific attributes in their self-concepts that they had added to their self-concept due to their relationship with their partner exhibited reduced self-concept clarity; this association did not emerge for people who imagined their relationships continuing into the future (Slotter et al., 2014). In other words, it appears that jettisoning self-attributes that specifically are tied to the relationship is adaptive for self-concept clarity after the end of a relationship; some types of self-concept constriction therefore may be adaptive.

Overall, then, the end of a romantic relationship often damages self-concept clarity, and the change in the self-concept content that occurs after the end of a relationship certainly contributes to this impact, but the nature of this association is still under investigation. The current state of the findings suggests that large amounts of overall self-change predict instability in self-concept clarity. However, retaining particular attributes gained during a relationship, especially if they originated due to the relationship with the partner and required effort to attain, is detrimental to self-concept clarity. One interpretation to reconcile these findings is that large amounts

of self-change over multiple domains of the self disrupt people's self-concept clarity after the end of a relationship, but people should jettison specific attributes that came from their former partners in order to maintain self-concept clarity. These findings generally indicate that self-concept change after the end of a relationship is a double-edged sword – maladaptive in large quantities but beneficial under specific circumstances.

Work on loss and rediscovery of self further illustrates how changes in specific content to the self determine the effects of breakup on self-concept clarity (Lewandowski & Bizzoco, 2007). As part of this research, the authors created the Loss of Self and Rediscovery of Self scale (LOSROS) to assess whether people had lost their sense of identity (loss subscale, e.g., "I do not know who I am") or redis-covered their sense of identity (rediscovery subscale, e.g., "I have regained my iden-tity") after a life event, such as the end of a romantic relationship. Although the authors do not discuss whether the LOSROS is a measure of content or clarity change, the LOSROS scale seems most like a measure of change to self-concept clarity, as it focuses on people's subjective sense that they know who they are. In line with the research discussed above (Slotter et al., 2010), the end of a dating rela-tionship generally predicted loss of self (Lewandowski & Bizzoco, 2007). However, the amount of self-expansion people experienced while the relationship was ongo-ing moderated this association. People who had experienced more self-expansion in their former relationships – they had added new content to their self-concepts – reported feeling loss of self after breakup. In contrast, when the relationship had not provided self-expansion, dissolution was not associated with loss of self. This is consistent with research discussed above (Slotter et al., 2014) suggesting that when people retain content in their self-concepts that they had acquired from their part-ners during the relationship, they experience lower self-concept clarity after breakup. We return to the interplay between these findings in the future directions.

Moderators of the Association Between Relationship Dissolution and Self-Concept Clarity

In addition to post-dissolution self-concept content change and self-expansion dur-ing the relationship, several individual difference and relationship factors moderate the association between relationship dissolution and self-concept clarity. People who experience high dispositional levels of anxiety about their romantic relation-ship (e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003) typically report lower levels of self-concept clarity when recalling the end of a recent romantic relationship, mediated through elevated perceptions of self-concept content change (Slotter & Gardner, 2012b). Perhaps surprisingly, responsibility for initiating the breakup does not predict self-concept clarity (e.g., Slotter et al., 2010, 2014). However, people who report more love for an ex-partner also report more self-concept confusion on the LOSROS scale after the end of a relationship than do people who express less residual love (Mason, Law, Bryan, Portley, & Sbarra, 2012).

Situational factors can also moderate the association between breakup and self-concept clarity. Participating in a measurement-intensive laboratory procedure, compared to the same procedure only at the beginning and end of the study, predicts less loss of self on the LOSROS scale among participants whose dating relationships had ended within a 6-month period (Larson & Sbarra, 2015). In the measurement-intensive condition, participants completed a series of tasks, including a stream-of-consciousness speaking task about their breakup, survey measures, and a Stroop task, every 3 weeks over a 9-week period. In the control condition, participants completed the same tasks only at the first and last session of the study. Similarly, writing about the end of one's marriage with a focus on creating a coherent narrative, rather than simply writing about the event with no further instructions or engaging in a control writing task, predicts less loss of self among recently divorced people (Sbarra et al., 2013). These lines of work suggest that people reflecting on their now defunct relationship in specific ways can actually benefit self-concept clarity.

In addition to the moderators above, which rely largely on self-reports, several studies have examined physiological factors that moderate the effect of relationship dissolution on the subjective sense of the self as clear and cohesive. When reflecting on their relationship history and their experience with a recent breakup, love for an ex-partner interacted with corrugator supercilii activity in predicting people's post-breakup loss of self (Mason et al., 2012). Corrugator supercilii activity, which manifests as movement of the forehead region directly above the eyebrows and is typically measured via facial electromyography (EMG) as it is rarely visible to the naked eye, occurs when people are experiencing negative emotions (e.g., Cacioppo, Petty, Losch, & Kim, 1986). Participants who expressed high levels of love for their ex-partner exhibited greater loss of self, as noted above. However, across varying levels of love for the ex-partner, elevated corrugator activity predicted greater loss of self. The authors interpreted this to indicate that higher levels of negative emotionality after their breakup, even in the absence of love for their ex-partner, were related to greater difficulty viewing their self-concepts clearly and coherently. They noted that the best outcome scenario of the self-concept occurred when people expressed less love for their ex and exhibited less corrugator muscle activity (Mason et al., 2012).

Other work has examined the interactive roles of attachment avoidance and heart rate variability, as an index of emotional self-regulatory efforts, in predicting self-concept disturbance after a divorce. People high in attachment avoidance, who often feel uncomfortable with high levels of closeness in their relationships (e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), tend to cope surprisingly well with romantic breakup (Fraley & Bonanno, 2004). Researchers have theorized that this is because they are able to deactivate distressing thoughts and feelings (Fraley & Bonanno, 2004). Additional empirical work has shown that avoidant people have enhanced ability to regulate their emotions, measured as increases in respiratory sinus arrhythmia during a stressful task (RSA; see Hagemann, Waldstein, & Thayer, 2003 for a discussion of RSA and emotion regulation); this in turn predicts reduced depressive symptomology after a relationship dissolution (Fagundes, Diamond, & Allen, 2012). These

findings extend to identity clarity after divorce (Sbarra & Borrelli, 2013); highly avoidant people who exhibit increasing RSA while mentally reliving a recent divorce in the lab, indicating strong emotion regulation efforts, experience reductions in their post-divorce self-concept disruption – measured as less loss of self and greater rediscovery of self on the LOSROS scale – over a 3-month period. However, highly avoidant people who exhibit decreasing RSA during the same task, indicating poor emotion regulation efforts, experience no reduction in self-concept disruption. It is worth noting that this work also examined attachment anxiety, which was positively associated with self-concept disruption but not a predictor of worsening disruption over time.

Taken together, losing a romantic relationship often predicts low self-concept clarity or perceived loss of self. Changes in the content of the self due to relationship dissolution largely drive this loss of self-concept clarity; however, exactly what types of content change – specific and localized versus general and broad – which predict low self-concept clarity still requires additional clarification. Additionally, the way people manage emotional bonds and stressful circumstances, as well as the characteristics of their dissolved relationships, alters the impact of relationship dissolution on self-concept clarity.

Social Role Transitions, Self-Concept Clarity, and Well-Being

Despite these findings, why should people care about how social role transitions influence self-concept clarity? Understanding how transitions into and out of important social roles alter self-concept clarity is a crucial task for researchers, as self-concept clarity predicts important well-being outcomes. This is true in general (e.g., Campbell et al., 1996), but self-concept clarity also is related to people's well-being in the wake of social role transitions, including exiting a romantic relationship.

Both role entries and exits can be stressful events in people's lives (e.g., Hertel, current volume, Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Even when the outcome of a transition is objectively positive, the transition itself may predict heightened anxiety, depression, and general distress (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Jetten, O'Brien, & Trindall, 2002). Perhaps, the reductions in self-concept clarity that are sometimes associated with role transitions contribute to the distress that people experience. Indeed, reductions in self-concept clarity mediate the association between stressful life events and reduced psychological well-being (Ritchie, Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Gidron, 2011).

Although associations between self-concept clarity and well-being should generalize across a variety of social role transitions, most existing research has examined the well-being consequences of changes in self-concept clarity associated with the specific transition of exiting a romantic relationship. Overall, reduced self-concept clarity after the end of a romantic relationship predicts well-being decrements in the

form of elevated emotional distress. Lower self-concept clarity when recalling the end of a dating relationship predicts emotional distress among undergraduates (Slotter et al., 2010). Along the same lines, lower self-concept clarity as coded from online blog entries predicts more negative emotions in those entries. In the longitudinal study featured in the same research, steeper declines in self-concept clarity after the end of a romantic relationship predicted higher levels of nonclinical depressive symptomology at the conclusion of a 6-month period. These effects emerged controlling for participants' reports of how rejected they felt by the end of their relationship. Furthermore, these declines in self-concept clarity mediated the direct association between breakup status and depressive symptomology (Slotter et al., 2010). This longitudinal work argues for a temporal pathway wherein reduced self-concept clarity predicts elevated depressive symptomology over time.

Other research converges on this point. Greater loss of self after a marital separation, as measured on the LOSROS scale, correlates with higher levels of nonclinical depressive symptomology (Sbarra & Borelli, 2013). Research in undergraduate samples has demonstrated that feelings of self-concept clarity loss, but not the loss of the relationship itself, predict elevated nonclinical depressive symptomology after the breakup of a dating relationship (Drew, Heesacker, Frost, & Oelke, 2004). People in the measurement-intensive condition in the study described previously reported less loneliness and less negative emotional intrusion regarding their breakup than people engaged in their control condition; the reduced self-loss reported by people in the measurement-intensive condition mediated this effect (Larson & Sbarra, 2015). Moreover, it appears that it is self-concept clarity that predicts enhanced psychological well-being and not psychological well-being that predicts enhanced self-concept clarity. Specifically, in a longitudinal study of people whose dating relationships had recently ended, less loss of self and greater rediscovery of self in any given week, measured via the LOSROS scale, predicted greater psychological well-being the subsequent week (Mason et al., 2012). However, psychological well-being in a given week did not predict loss and rediscovery of self the subsequent week.

Taken together, the loss of self-concept clarity that people experience after social role transitions, including the loss of a romantic relationship, contributes to the amount of psychological disturbance people experience in the wake of the event. Furthermore, across several lines of research, the disruption people experience to self-concept clarity mediates the direct association between social role transitions and well-being. Thus, increasing our understanding of how shifts in the roles that people fill in their lives impact self-concept clarity, and how this relates to their psychological health, is a crucial task for researchers moving forward. Specifically, future research should seek to examine factors that increase or decrease people's risk of psychological distress after an identity-disrupting role transitions with the long-term goals of both identifying people at the highest risk for well-being decrements and intervening to prevent those well-being decrements.

Unresolved Issues and Directions for Future Research

As research moves forward on the consequences of social role transitions for self-concept clarity, including romantic relationship transitions, a number of unresolved issues emerge as directions for future research. In this section, we suggest the areas of future research that we believe would be the most fruitful and theoretically interesting to investigate with the aim of addressing some of the unanswered questions. Although perhaps not an exhaustive list, the avenues for future research we describe would provide a better understanding of how social roles alter self-concept clarity and how these changes influence people's well-being.

Unresolved Issue 1: Expanding Our Consideration of Role Transitions

The current chapter focused on how social role transitions impact self-concept clarity, with a primary focus on the influence of romantic relationship transitions (specifically dissolution) on self-concept clarity, simply because there is more existing research on romantic relationship transitions and self-concept clarity than on other transitions. However, future research should examine the impact of other types of social role transitions on the self-concept. As discussed elsewhere in the current chapter, recent work has begun to examine how other role transitions (i.e., loss of group memberships, transitioning to parenthood, etc.) relate to self-concept clarity, especially reduced self-concept clarity, but this work is limited. Thus, future work should examine whether romantic relationship transitions are just another case of role transition that disrupts the self or whether romantic relationship transitions are special in some way. As discussed, people's self-concepts, including self-concept clarity, are profoundly impacted by their romantic relationships while they are ongoing (e.g., Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Aron, 2003), such that our romantic relationships constitute some of the most fundamental emotional bonds that we have as adults (e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Reis & Collins, 2004; Trinke & Bartholomew, 1997) and that we experience reduced self-concept clarity and elevated distress when our romantic ties dissolve (e.g., Davis et al., 2003; Monroe, Rohde, Seeley, & Lewinsohn, 1999; Sbarra, 2006). We would argue that the romantic relationship transitions may be, if not unique from other role transitions that impact the self, then events that are especially likely to impact self-concept clarity. However, future research should investigate this idea.

Unresolved Issue 2: The Interplay Among Self-Concept Content Change, Self-Concept Clarity, and Self-Esteem

Although changes to self-concept clarity in the wake of social role transitions, specifically romantic transitions, are fairly well-understood, there are places where this work could benefit from future investigation. Specifically, research could use clarification with considering self-concept content change and its relationship to self-concept clarity at the broad level of overall amount of self-content disruption versus the localized level of specific attributes after the end of a relationship. Some of the studies discussed in this chapter focus on broad levels of overall self-content change (e.g., Slotter et al., 2010) and find that higher levels of content change after the transition of ending a relationship predict reduced self-concept clarity. However, other work (e.g., Slotter et al., 2014) demonstrates that keeping specific relationally driven attributes after the end of a relationship also predicts reduced self-concept clarity, even though keeping attributes should represent less change to the self. How do we reconcile these findings?

As suggested earlier, perhaps the answer lies in the level of analysis. Broader self-change can represent greater upheaval to the overarching structure of the self, whereas jettisoning one or two specific attributes may not. Similarly, broad self-change could represent changes in attributes that people possessed prior to their now defunct relationship or added to their self-concepts through their own individual efforts, whereas, to date, the work on specific attribute rejection has focused on attributes added to the self-concept during the ex-relationship due to the ex-partner. Another potential explanation might be that broader self-concept change is confusing due to the sheer amount of upheaval occurring within the content of the self-concept. In contrast, jettisoning specific attributes may be more like pruning a houseplant – healthy in the long run as it allows for further growth. If people retain specific attributes from an ex-partner, this retention may contribute to reduced self-concept clarity, as it may be distressing to possess aspects of their identities that remind them of a defunct relationship. Future research investigating these nuances would add and further illuminate how the content of the self and self-concept clarity interface following relationship transitions.

An additional issue to explore here is how self-concept content and clarity after role transitions relate to self-esteem. In many of the studies discussed in the current chapter, the effects of role transitions on subsequent self-concept clarity and associated well-being outcomes emerged while controlling for participants' dispositional levels of self-esteem. This is important as self-concept clarity and self-esteem, although theoretically and empirically distinct, are often modestly correlated (e.g., Campbell, 1990). Despite the efforts of researchers to account for this correlation when examining these constructs, not all studies do. Future research should endeavor to more consistently examine self-concept clarity beyond the effects of self-esteem and should even consider potential areas where self-concept clarity and self-esteem might moderate each other's effects on individual outcomes, including psychological and physical well-being.

Unresolved Issue 3: Expanding Our Understanding of Moderators

The moderators of the association between role transitions and self-concept clarity constitute another unresolved issue that emerged throughout the current chapter. As discussed earlier, some factors, such as attachment anxiety or self-expansion opportunities in the ex-relationship, did alter the associations between the transition of the end of a relationship and self-concept clarity. However, some potentially sensible moderators did not emerge. Most notably, no gender differences emerged in the studies reviewed here. Research demonstrates that women often place more weight on their dyadic bonds, such as romantic relationships, whereas men place greater importance on their collective, or group, bonds (Gabriel & Gardner, 1999). Thus, the lack of gender differences is somewhat unexpected in the association between romantic relationship dissolution and self-concept clarity. Similarly, the effects discussed emerged similarly across different types of relationships (dating vs. marital). Finally, responsibility for initiating the end of the relationship did not moderate how the transition related to self-concept clarity. These effects suggest that the impact of the specific role transition of relationship loss is a fairly general one at least with regard to some personal and relational factors. Future research should expand the investigation into whether there are particular people for whom or particular circumstances under which role transitions such as the end of a relationship exert an especially powerful effect on their self-concept clarity.

Unresolved Issue 4: Better Understanding Well-Being Outcomes

Additionally, future research should expand the investigation into how self-concept clarity changes post-transition relate to well-being. Simply put, the existing research on how changes to self-concept clarity predict well-being after role transitions has focused almost exclusively on people's reports of emotional distress or dysfunction. Indeed, much of the research on the consequences of role transitions, relationship loss, specifically, focuses on the negative emotional sequelae of the event (e.g., Davis et al., 2003; Sbarra & Ferrer, 2006), so it is not surprising that identity-based research also focuses on the role of identity disruption in these negative emotional reactions. However, role transitions, specifically relationship loss, can also sometimes be associated with positive identity changes, such as feelings of rediscovered identity and identity growth (e.g., Lewandowski & Bizzoco, 2007). Perhaps, when the identity changes associated with a role transition are positive, the emotional well-being consequences would also be positive. Future research should investigate this idea.

Furthermore, the field should examine the influence of role transitions and self-concept clarity on well-being beyond the typically employed self-report measures of psychological or affective well-being. Specifically, people's physical health can

also suffer after the transition of romantic relationship loss (e.g., Rook & Zettel, 2005; Williams & Umberson, 2004). Thus, future research should investigate whether the changes that occur to self-concept clarity after role transitions relate to physical as well as emotional well-being. This further investigation would also have the added benefit of including outcome measures that move beyond self-reports of well-being to incorporate physiological markers of stress and health. As the field moves forward, we should endeavor to incorporate more of these physiological markers, such as cortisol reactivity, skin conductance, or perhaps even neurological assessments like fMRI, as objective measures of the distress people experience in wake of social role transitions.

Unresolved Issue 5: Understanding Temporal Trajectories

The field also ought to gain a clearer and more cohesive understanding of the time courses and trajectories associated with self-concept clarity and well-being after a social role transition. Among the studies reviewed here, only a few examined trajectories of self-concept clarity after romantic relationship transitions, and none examined self-concept clarity trajectories after other types of role transitions (e.g., Mason et al., 2012; Slotter et al., 2010). Even the studies that examine the time course of reduced self-concept clarity do so over short periods of time – typically a few weeks or a couple of months. Although these studies have certainly added to our understanding of how selves change after a specific role transition, broader longitudinal scopes would bring additional understanding to these processes as well as examining longitudinal trajectories of self-concept clarity, including self-concept clarity recovery, after other types of role transitions. Beyond understanding the trajectories of self-concept clarity, understanding how these trajectories relate to well-being over longer periods is an open question. Reduced self-concept clarity predicts reduced well-being in the immediate aftermath of a role transition, but perhaps, over the longer term, reductions in self-concept clarity represent individuals going through a necessary process to restructure their identities and may be related to enhanced well-being outcomes. It would be interesting to examine not only longer periods of time post-transition but some amount of pre-transition time as well. Examining the time course of self-content change and self-concept clarity across multiple related role entries and exits (e.g., relationships or jobs) would provide a more cohesive understanding of how self-concept clarity changes when people's roles change.

Furthermore, the vast majority of existing research on the self-concept clarity after a relational loss, as well as role transitions more generally, treats role transitions as a discrete event. Some work examines emotional recovery after the end of a relationship from a temporal process perspective (e.g., Sbarra & Ferrer, 2006); however, little work in the psychological literature examines whether role transitions themselves function as a process that unfolds over time as well (e.g., Lee & Sbarra, 2013). Treating role transitions as discrete events rather than processes may

not be an accurate characterization of how these transitions occur. Future research should examine this aspect of role transitions.

Examining the effects of self-concept clarity after role transitions across developmental periods or stages would also be fruitful for future research. Most of the existing research discussed in the current chapter focuses on changes in self-concept clarity after role transitions in college-aged adults or during middle adulthood (e.g., Light & Visser, 2013; Slotter & Walsh, 2016; Slotter et al., 2010, 2014). As self-concept clarity tends to increase and become more stable as individuals age (e.g., Light & Visser, 2013), examining how social role transitions impact self-concept clarity across the life span is an important task. Recent work does show that role limitations based on health concerns negatively predict self-concept clarity in older adults (Lodi-Smith et al., 2017). However, more substantial research into self-concept clarity changes and their association with well-being in older, as well as younger, people would be illuminating.

Unresolved Issue 6: Beginning Again

Related to the understanding of trajectories of self-concept clarity in the wake of social role transitions, specifically romantic relationship dissolution, existing research typically treats any particular relationship as independent from other relationships people may have had in their lifetimes. Given that most people, at least in industrialized Western societies, will have multiple dating, or even marital, relationships within their lifetimes, examining relationships as independent of one another seems to be a key limitation of the existing work on romantic processes. Essentially, little to no research has examined how people begin again after a relationship ends. How long do we take to be on our own between our romantic relationships? And how do our romantic choices over time influence our identities?

One line emerging research on how people transition from one relationship to the next focuses on the nature of rebound relationships. Rebound relationships are defined as a new relationship that is initiated shortly after the end of another relationship (Brumbaugh & Fraley, 2015). Colloquially, the general perception of rebound relationships is that they have negative consequences for people and represent misguided attempts to recover emotionally and move on after a breakup or divorce (Lue, 2011; Meyer, 2012). Rebound relationships can take different forms, ranging from casual sexual partners to new monogamous relationships (Barber & Cooper, 2014; Brumbaugh & Fraley, 2015); however, the research on why people become involved with new romantic partners of any kind and the consequences of these relationships for people is only just emerging.

Generally speaking, the findings on the relational and emotional consequences of rebound relationships are mixed, suggesting that these relationships may be beneficial for individuals in some cases and harmful in others (Brumbaugh & Fraley, 2015; Spielmann, Joel, MacDonald, & Kogan, 2012; Spielmann, MacDonald, &

Wilson, 2009; Wolfinger, 2007). A central uninvestigated question, however, centers on how the amount of time that people take to be single between romantic relationships influences people's self-concepts. An emerging line of research investigating this question builds off work demonstrating that people are less likely to engage in new self-expansion if they were experiencing low trait or state self-concept clarity (Emery et al., 2015) and that new relationships entail high levels of self-expansion and change (e.g., Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Andersen & Chen, 2002; Slotter & Gardner, 2009). Thus, we posited that getting involved in a new relationship quickly after the end of a different relationship would negatively influence people's self-concept clarity, compared to people who wait longer to become re-involved. Moreover, re-involvement may be detrimental for longer for people whose selves were more strongly impacted by their relationships while ongoing.

Across several studies, research in our laboratory has found that rebound relationships have negative consequences for people's identities, but these consequences depend on how quickly people get re-involved after the end of a relationship and how malleable their self-concepts are in relationships in general (Slotter & Emery, 2017). Starting a new relationship extremely quickly after a breakup or divorce – within 1 to 3 weeks – predicted less self-concept clarity. Waiting slightly longer before getting re-involved – between a month and 5 months– only predicted less self-concept clarity among people whose self-concepts tended to be more malleable in romantic relationships. Thus, the amount that people change during relationships may impact how they are able to regulate their self-concept clarity from one relationship to the next and perhaps as they transition from one social role to another more generally (e.g., Mason et al., 2012; Slotter et al., 2010).

Of course, there are numerous open questions regarding how people start over after the end of a romantic relationship or after other sorts of role transitions. The work discussed in this section represents an initial attempt at understanding how we navigate our lives from one social role to the next; however, there are many directions for future work to clarify both areas of research. For example, researchers would benefit from investigating whether people tend to prefer certain temporal dating patterns – to remain single for a while between relationships, to date casually, to quickly jump into a new monogamous relationship, etc. – and whether these preferences predict different self-concept relevant outcomes. Other directions for future research might include looking at other role transitions, such as transitioning from one job to another quickly or with more time in between, to establish whether the effects that describe rebound romantic relationships also accurately capture other sorts of rapid transitions between related social roles. Finally, future work should examine whether people are aware of how they handle role transitions such as the loss of a relationship. Are people making conscious choices to transition between social roles? To what extent do people control these choices? If people are aware of their patterns, it may suggest points of intervention that may be useful in interrupting maladaptive processes. If people are not aware of or cannot control patterns, it would provide fascinating insight into the ways that our social roles can alter how we see ourselves, even to our detriment, without our awareness.

Conclusions

People experience a myriad of social role changes throughout their lifetimes – leaving one relationship and beginning a new one, having children, changing jobs, and eventually retiring. Although research examining how these transitions affect people's understanding of themselves is relatively nascent, it suggests that the self-concept is especially vulnerable to disruption during these role upheavals. Much of this work has focused on how romantic relationship dissolution affects self-concept clarity. It is our hope that future research will continue to investigate these questions, as well as expanding the scope of inquiry to other types of role transitions, in order to establish when and how people succeed at rebuilding their identities as adults.

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Chapter 6
Self-Concept Clarity and Romantic Relationships

Kevin P. McIntyre, Brent A. Mattingly, and Gary W. Lewandowski Jr.

Abstract This chapter reviews the empirical evidence examining the link between self-concept clarity and close romantic relationships. Overall, increased self-concept clarity among partners predicts a variety of positive relationship outcomes, including relationship quality (e.g., satisfaction and commitment), investment, and self-other correspondence that may facilitate relationship functioning. Moreover, relationship dissolution leads to the reduction of self-concept clarity (i.e., self-concept confusion) and subsequent emotional distress. We also review the literature examining the mediating variables in the association between self-concept clarity and romantic relationships, including psychological well-being, self-esteem, identity construction, and prototype matching. Finally, we examine the moderating role that self-concept clarity plays in romantic relationships, specifically related to relationship-induced self-concept change (e.g., self-expansion). This review suggests that self-concept clarity is a valuable construct, which is ripe for future research on the dynamic interplay of self-concept and romantic relationships.

Keywords Romantic relationships · Self-concept clarity · Satisfaction · Commitment · Self-expansion · Investment · Self-concept change · Self-esteem · Identity · Self-other · Significant-other clarity · Prototype matching

Mental representations of the self-concept are complex and multifaceted (Markus & Kunda, 1986; McConnell, 2011), and there are diverse and disparate areas within social psychology that explore the ways in which other people can influence the self-concept. Social identity theory, for example, proposes that individuals derive part of their sense of self-esteem from their group memberships and group

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achievements (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). Social comparison theory further states that individuals can learn about and change their self-perceptions by comparing their traits and abilities to those of other people (Festinger, 1954). Importantly, self-conceptions are intricately intertwined with the development and maintenance of close relationships (Aron, Lewandowski, Mashek, & Aron, 2013; Mattingly, McIntyre, & Selterman, in press). Aspects of the self can affect relationship outcomes, just as relationships can affect dimensions of the self. In this chapter, we examine the links between self-concept clarity and romantic relationships. Just as with other dimensions of the self (e.g., self-esteem, self-perceptions), we address the ways in which self-concept clarity affects relationship processes and how relationships can alter self-concept clarity.

We organize the chapter into two parts. In Part I, we examine *first-generation* questions, which address the basic issue of whether or not there is an association between the focal constructs (see Higgins, 1999). For example, these questions include: *Is there an association? What is the nature of the association?* In Part II, we explore *second-generation* questions, which address more complex issues of processes and boundary conditions (Higgins, 1999). These questions include: *Why is there an association? When (and for whom) is there an association?* In this section, we focus particularly on the mediators that may underlie the self-concept clarity-romantic relationship association, as well as the possibility that self-concept clarity serves an important role as a moderator between relationship functioning and relational outcomes. In arranging the chapter in this way, we synthesize the developing literature on the interplay between romantic relationships and self-concept clarity and identify new avenues for future research.

Part I: First-Generation Questions: Exploring the Association Between Self-Concept Clarity and Romantic Relationship Processes

Perhaps surprisingly, there is scant prior research addressing the basic association between self-concept clarity (i.e., whether a person views the contents of their self-concepts in a clear and confident manner and maintains self-beliefs that are internally consistent and stable across time; Campbell et al., 1996, see the introduction of this volume for an overview) and involvement in romantic relationships. The evidence that exists, however, supports the notion that self-concept clarity and romantic relationship involvement, functioning, and maintenance, broadly construed, are positively associated. In particular, individuals in more committed romantic relationships (e.g., marriage) tend to have greater self-concept clarity than those in less committed relationships (e.g., dating relationships; Mattingly, McIntyre, & Lewandowski, 2016). Relationship length, moreover, is significantly correlated with self-concept clarity, such that those who have been with their partner for longer

report higher self-concept clarity (Mattingly et al., 2016).[1] Additional research reveals that individuals who report greater importance of their relationship in their lives have higher self-concept clarity and also perceive their partners to have higher self-concept clarity (Gurung, Sarason, & Sarason, 2001). Lodi-Smith and Roberts (2010) also report that self-concept clarity is weakly (but significantly) correlated with relationship investment, such that greater levels of self-concept clarity are associated with higher relationship investment.

Beyond the associations between self-concept clarity and relationship involvement, there is emerging evidence that self-concept clarity is associated with relationship functioning, as past research also reveals that having high self-concept clarity promotes better relationship quality. Specifically, self-concept clarity positively correlates with both relationship satisfaction and commitment (Lewandowski, Nardone, & Raines, 2010), as well as dyadic adjustment (Gurung et al., 2001). The importance of clarity in relationship quality is bolstered by the finding that how clearly a person views his or her *partner's* self-concept, also known as significant-other-concept clarity, can also have an impact on relationship quality (Gurung et al., 2001). Specifically, partners who hold more clearly and confidently defined views of their partner's self-concept report greater relationship satisfaction, less conflict, and greater inclusion of partner in self. Interestingly, significant-other clarity is only moderately correlated with self-concept clarity (Gurung et al., 2001), suggesting that dyadic aspects of clarity are also important for understanding relational functioning.

Moreover, individuals in romantic relationships form more accurate expectations for their partners' behaviors when their partners have high self-concept clarity (Lewandowski & Nardone, 2012). Partners who have high self-concept clarity should be more consistent in their thoughts, opinions, and behaviors (Campbell et al., 1996), and this consistency with self-views is important for relationship satisfaction and longevity, possibly due to the negative effects of emotional unpredictability on relationship functioning (Fisher & McNulty, 2008). Simply put, partners who have higher self-concept clarity may behave more consistently and thus make it easier for others to form expectations and predict their behavior.

In a test of this hypothesis, Lewandowski and Nardone (2012, Study 1) recruited college students (the target) and their closest friend to answer questions about the target's personality. Results revealed that a close friend's personality ratings of the target were more similar to the target's own ratings when the target had higher self-concept clarity. Greater self-concept clarity coincided with greater accuracy and agreement between close friends. Furthermore, this level of agreement was not due

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[1] It is worth noting that these associations may be attributable to age effects (e.g., Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010; Lodi-Smith et al., 2017), considering that involvement in long-term committed relationships is correlated with age. Indeed, the associations between relationship involvement and self-concept clarity are significantly weakened when controlling for age.

to how well the friends knew each other. Rather, it seems that having higher self-concept clarity makes it easier for close others to know each other and make accurate assessments of their personalities.

A second study (Lewandowski & Nardone, 2012, Study 2) replicated these findings, again showing that those with higher self-concept clarity were more likely to have friends who agreed with their own self-descriptions, and this association was not due to how well these individuals knew each other. Importantly, it added to Study 1 by finding that friends of targets with high self-concept clarity also had more agreement for behavioral descriptions of personality (e.g., "can't take criticism," "always wants to be the center of attention"), effectively showing that friends are confirming or verifying how the target sees their self. This agreement is beneficial partly because it allows each person to verify one another's self-concepts, and self-verification is important to relationship stability (Swann, Chang-Schneider, & Angulo, 2008) but also because it allows for partners to better identify each other's personality traits, which may be helpful for dyadic-level relationship functioning. For example, high self-concept clarity may allow couples to better facilitate movement toward the ideal self (in line with the Michelangelo phenomenon; DiDonato & Krueger, 2010), may better promote dyadic goal setting, pursuit, and outcomes (Finkel, Fitzsimons, & vanDellen, 2015), and may better allocate cognitive resources in line with research on transactive memory (Wegner, Guiliano, & Hertel, 1985).

Finally, a third study (Lewandowski & Nardone, 2012, Study 3) used an objective behavioral task and revealed that participants with high self-concept clarity demonstrate greater agreement between predicted and actual behavior. Specifically, individuals high in self-concept clarity were better at predicting their own performance on an unfamiliar task. The ability to accurately predict behaviors and reactions may be beneficial in a variety of relationship situations and contexts, such as knowing how a partner will react to relationship transitions (e.g., moving in together, getting married), as well as relationship conflicts (see Gurung et al., 2001). Overall, the findings from Lewandowski and Nardone (2012) suggest that higher self-concept clarity individuals may be at an advantage in developing relationships because they allow their partners to form more accurate assessments of their personalities, better expectations for their behavior, and an increased ability to anticipate how they may react to future situations.

As much as an individual's self-concept clarity can influence a romantic relationship (via increased accuracy of partner perceptions and relationship quality), it is also clear that relationship experiences impact self-concept clarity. Research by Luchies and colleagues (2010), for example, suggests that forgiving a partner's transgression has the potential to both increase and decrease an individual's level of self-concept clarity. Specifically, forgiving a partner's transgressions when a partner has made amends for their actions increases an individual's own self-concept clarity; however, forgiving a partner's transgressions in the absence of conciliatory behavior decreases self-concept clarity (Luchies, Finkel, McNulty, & Kumashiro, 2010). Thus, continuing on in a relationship following a partner's betrayal can undermine

a person's self-concept clarity, especially if a partner has not apologized or shown remorse for their actions and thereby calls into question a person's value within the relationship.

Interpersonal rejection can also reduce state self-concept clarity (Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerssen, 2009), presumably because individuals possess a positive self-image (e.g., Taylor & Brown, 1988) that includes being accepted by others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and interpersonal rejection provides feedback that this self-knowledge may be invalid. In a study examining the impact of rejection on self-concept clarity (Ayduk et al., 2009), participants experienced rejection via an email sent from a confederate who indicated that they did not wish to interact with the participant. Those in a control condition did not get an opportunity to interact either, but this time, the lost opportunity was due to a computer failure. Although the experience of rejection itself did not significantly impact the participant's state self-concept clarity, participants who were particularly sensitive to rejection reported significantly lower state self-concept clarity in the rejection condition compared to those in the control condition (Ayduk et al., 2009). A follow-up study with couples examined the impact of rejection in the form of interpersonal conflict on self-concept clarity, and again, results indicated that those with greater rejection sensitivity also reported lower self-concept clarity. This was especially true when high rejection sensitivity individuals reported experiencing conflict in their relationship the previous day (Ayduk et al., 2009). Future research should explore whether rejection from close others has more of a detrimental impact on self-concept clarity than rejection from less close others (e.g., acquaintances).

Rejection may compromise self-concept clarity in large part because it threatens key roles that comprise the self-concept (e.g., caregiver). Changes to key roles, including both the loss of existing roles (e.g., losing a friendship) and the addition of new roles (e.g., becoming a parent), may affect self-concept clarity. In a study testing this idea, Light and Visser (2013) analyzed a nationally representative sample of over 3000 individuals who answered questions about their role transitions (exits and entries) during the past year, along with their self-concept clarity. Results show that although role *entries* did not significantly influence self-concept clarity, experiencing role *exits* was associated with reduced self-concept clarity. Follow-up analyses suggest that decreased self-concept clarity may be due to reduced stability in behavior routines and greater social isolation.

A particularly serious role exit involves the loss or dissolution of a close relationship entirely. The impact of relationships on the self-concept more generally is well documented (Aron, 2003), as is the negative impact of relationship dissolution on the self-concept (Lewandowski, Aron, Bassis, & Kunak, 2006). Importantly, the experience of romantic relationship loss also undermines self-concept clarity, with less clarity associated with experiencing greater emotional distress following breakup (Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2010). These effects of relationship loss on self-concept clarity extend beyond romantic relationships and also occur when individuals think about losing membership in a group (Slotter & Emery, this volume; Slotter, Winger, & Soto, 2015).

Summary

In addressing first-generation questions, the empirical evidence reviewed here suggests that there is a link between self-concept clarity and relationship-related variables, such that increased self-concept clarity among partners predicts positive relationship outcomes. Self-concept clarity is positively associated with relationship investment, quality, and ability to form accurate expectations of a partner. Moreover, the evidence also supports the notion that relationships can affect self-concept clarity. Interpersonal rejection and the dissolution of a relationship can indeed undermine a person's self-concept clarity. We next turn our attention to second-generation questions.

Part II: Second-Generation Questions: Understanding the Association Between Self-Concept Clarity and Romantic Relationship Processes

Why Is There an Association?

We next explore three possible reasons *why* the association between self-concept clarity and relationship functioning exists, that is, potential mediators and mechanisms that further explain this association. In particular, we examine the roles that personal well-being, identity construction, and prototype matching play in linking self-concept clarity to romantic relationship functioning. Although there are undoubtedly additional possible mediators (e.g., self-regulation (e.g., Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2011), conflict management (e.g., Bechtoldt, De Dreu, Nijstad, & Zapf, 2010), we focus on these specific variables due to their emphasis within the existing literature.

Psychological Well-Being and Self-Esteem One reason that self-concept clarity may be associated with enhanced relationship functioning is that high self-concept clarity is associated with better psychological adjustment and well-being (Campbell, Assanand, & DiPaula, 2003), and well-being is associated with desirable relationship outcomes (Kamp Dush, Taylor, & Kroeger, 2008). In particular, previous work reveals that self-concept clarity is positively associated with self-esteem (Bigler, Neimeyer, & Brown, 2001; Blazek & Besta, 2012, Campbell, 1990; Campbell & Lavallee, 1993; Campbell et al., 1996; Campbell et al., 2003), positive affect (Bigler et al., 2001), and meaning in life (Bigler et al., 2001; Blazek & Besta, 2012). Conversely, studies link *low* self-concept clarity with reduced personal well-being including increased depression and loneliness (Richman et al., 2016), insecure attachment (Wu, 2009), and increased neuroticism and anxiety (Bigler et al., 2001). Additionally, self-concept clarity mediates the relationship between stress and subjective well-being (Ritchie, Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Gidron, 2011), such that

when individuals encounter stressors, they also experience a temporary reduction in self-concept clarity which contributes to a reduction in well-being. One reason for this may be that individuals encountering stressors, especially those due to interpersonal conflicts, may benefit from high self-concept clarity in that it enables them to engage in more proactive problem-solving strategies (Bechtoldt et al., 2010).

Given the impact of self-concept clarity on well-being, one possibility is that self-esteem serves as a mediator of the link between self-concept clarity and relationship quality. Although self-concept clarity is distinct from self-esteem, conceptually, in that self-concept clarity captures a structural aspect of the self, whereas self-esteem captures an evaluative aspect of the self (Campbell et al., 2003), it is nevertheless possible that the importance of self-concept clarity for relationship quality is primarily due to the links between these structural and evaluative components. Self-esteem is an important predictor of relationship satisfaction (e.g., Hansson, Jones, & Carpenter, 1984; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988) and overall marital happiness (Hawkins & Booth, 2005), so it stands to reason that the association between self-concept clarity and relationship quality may be partly due to the role that self-esteem plays in enhancing or undermining partners' evaluations of each other and themselves. Consistent with this notion, experimental manipulations of self-concept clarity result in increased relationship quality, and this association is mediated by self-esteem (Lewandowski et al., 2010). Thus, this evidence suggests that individuals with high self-concept clarity may positively evaluate their relationships to the extent they are experiencing high self-esteem at the time.

Relationships as Identity Construction When examining the question of why there is an association between self-concept clarity and relationship outcomes, it is also important to recognize the central role that relationships play in shaping individuals' self-concepts. Individuals' identities are continually changing (McConnell, 2011; Roberts & Caspi, 2003), and romantic relationships have a particularly potent impact on identity development (Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Aron, Ketay, Riela, & Aron, 2008; Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009). Consistent with this, relationship experiences affect a wide variety of self and identity perceptions, including attachment orientation (Arriaga, Kumashiro, Finkel, VanderDrift, & Luchies, 2014), self-esteem (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995), sexual identity development (Furman & Collins, 2008), and self-efficacy (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). Given that individuals' identities are not static, it is not surprising that their levels of self-concept clarity are fluid as well. For example, cross-sectional research reveals that self-concept clarity differs across the lifespan in a curvilinear fashion. As individuals transition from young adulthood to middle age, they typically experience increases in self-concept clarity, whereas when individuals transition to older adulthood, they typically experience decreases in self-concept clarity (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010). More recent longitudinal research provides further evidence for this curvilinear relationship (Lodi-Smith, Cologgi, Spain, & Roberts, 2017). Self-concept clarity can also fluctuate as a result of life experiences (Nezlek & Plesco, 2001), especially when those experiences call into question a person's identity. For example, research reveals that losing a job that is central to a person's sense of self

(i.e., a highly self-expanding job) can reduce a person's self-concept clarity (McIntyre, Mattingly, Lewandowski, & Simpson, 2014).

Importantly, an individual's level of self-concept clarity may affect his or her choices and behaviors within a relationship in ways that ultimately undermine the relationship. One way this can occur is if individuals low in self-concept clarity avoid engaging in self-expanding experiences with their partner. The self-expansion model (Aron et al., 2013) states that individuals experience a cognitive reorganization of the self-concept when couples engage in novel and challenging experiences together (e.g., Aron, Norman, & Aron, 2001; Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000) or when they include aspects of their partner into their own self-concept (e.g., Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). These self-expanding experiences allow romantic partners to gain new perspectives, traits, resources, and abilities, each of which may contribute to the construction of an individual's self-concept, and self-expansion within a relationship is associated with greater satisfaction and commitment (Aron et al., 2013; Mattingly, Lewandowski, & McIntyre, 2014).

However, the prospect of relationship-induced self-change may threaten the limited sense of self that people with low self-concept clarity have, such that they may try to avoid self-expansion within their relationship. In support of this notion, research reveals that individuals who are low in self-concept clarity have a reduced interest in self-expansion activities, due to the threat to the limited self-concept clarity that they already have (Emery, Walsh, & Slotter, 2015). As a consequence of avoiding engaging in self-expanding experiences with their partners, individuals low in self-concept clarity may prevent their relationships from benefitting from potential self-expansion opportunities (see Aron et al., 2013). Over time, the lack of expansion may contribute to a sense of relationship boredom (Reissman, Aron, & Bergen, 1993) and ultimately dissolution (Le, Dove, Agnew, Korn, & Musto, 2010). Thus, low self-concept clarity may negatively impact relationship functioning by impairing otherwise beneficial identity construction behaviors.

Although low self-concept clarity may inhibit interest in self-expansion, low self-concept clarity individuals may still use their relationships as an opportunity to construct their public identities. People frequently engage in impression management via their relationships, choosing which aspects of their relationship to disclose publicly (Loving & Agnew, 2001), as well as the extent to which they publicize their relationships on social media (Emery, Muise, Dix, & Le, 2014). Although, in general, low self-concept clarity is associated with more effortful self-presentation (Duffy, 2014), romantic relationships may facilitate these impression management efforts. Specifically, individuals who are lower in self-concept clarity tend to have higher levels of relationship visibility on social media, such as Facebook, perhaps as a means of shaping their public identity and enhancing their self-esteem or as an attempt to become more clear and confident in their relationship beliefs (Emery et al., 2014).

Another aspect of identity construction that may have particular implications for romantic relationships is sexual identity. As individuals form new relationships, they may explore new aspects of their sexual identity, which may contribute to their

overall sense of self-concept clarity if those aspects match or conflict with the other components of their identity. In support of this possibility, research reveals that self-concept clarity is positively associated with sexual well-being, and this association is mediated by the extent to which a person has a clear and integrated sexual identity (Hucker, Mussap, & McCabe, 2010). Similarly, research reveals that sexual identity confusion is associated with low self-concept clarity (Talley & Stevens, 2017) and contributes to self-stigma among gays and lesbians (Feinstein, Davila, & Yoneda, 2012), as well as evidence that greater sexual identity clarity is associated with fewer anxiety and depression symptoms (Talley & Stevens, 2017). Future research should examine whether the sexual identity confusion associated with low self-concept clarity mediates the association between clarity and relationship quality.

Prototype Matching Self-concept clarity may also lead to longer-lasting and higher-quality relationships because having greater clarity helps people choose among various potential partners that enable self-consistency, a phenomenon called prototype matching (Niedenthal, Cantor, & Kihlstrom, 1985; Setterlund & Niedenthal, 1993). Prototype matching describes the decision-making strategy whereby individuals make choices with the intent of maximizing the match between the self-concept and the prototypical person or situation. For example, a student may choose to pursue a particular major because she believes she matches the prototypical student in that major (see Cheryan & Plaut, 2010). In the context of close relationships, prototype matching involves individuals selecting relationship partners based on maximizing self-to-partner similarity. For example, a person may choose to date a particular partner because they match in key personality dimensions. Moreover, when evaluating their relationships, prototype matching may involve evaluating the match between individuals' actual relationships and the prototypical relationship (Hassebrauck & Aron, 2001).

An individual's satisfaction with their decisions (e.g., whom to date) thus depends partly on the accuracy and clarity of self-knowledge (see also Schlegel, Hicks, Davis, Hirsch, & Smith, 2013; Showers, Ditzfeld, & Zeigler-Hill, 2015). To the degree that individuals have high self-concept clarity, they should be better able to use the match-to-prototype strategies as a basis for decision-making. In a test of this hypothesis, Setterlund and Niedenthal (1993) manipulated self-clarity by asking participants to either describe three times that they acted in self-consistent ways (self-clarity prime) or self-inconsistent ways (self-confusion prime). Results revealed that participants in the self-clarity prime condition were more likely to use prototype matching with respect to making consumer decisions.

In line with these findings, we suggest that individuals with high self-concept clarity may be better able to choose among potential partners in such a way that maximizes relationship satisfaction (e.g., Luo & Klohnen, 2005). Although more research is needed to directly test the role of self-concept clarity in making relationship choices, Hassebrauck and Aron (2001) found that individuals use prototype matching when evaluating their current relationships, so it seems reasonable that self-concept clarity and prototype matching would play a role in partner selection as well.

When (Or for Whom) Is There an Association?

Although there are many potential answers to the question of why self-concept clarity is associated with relationship functioning, we think that the three mechanisms described above (well-being, identity construction, and prototype matching) are likely contributors. Assuredly, more research is needed to examine each of these mediators, both in isolation and in comparison with one another. We next turn our attention to the question of *When (or for whom) is there an effect?* That is, we explore the possibility that self-concept clarity plays a moderating role in romantic relationships. Specifically, we propose that the benefits and consequences of various relational processes may be dependent upon (i.e., moderated by) individuals' self-concept clarity.

In particular, we suggest that self-concept clarity is likely to moderate relational processes when individuals' self-concepts change as a result of romantic relationships. Specifically, according to the two-dimensional model of relationship-induced self-concept change (TDM; Mattingly et al., 2014; McIntyre, Mattingly, & Lewandowski, 2015), relationships can alter individuals' self-concepts across two primary dimensions (see Fig. 6.1).

The first dimension, illustrated by the horizontal axis in Fig. 6.1, is the direction of self-concept change, such that relationships may lead individuals to gain or lose self-concept content. The second dimension, illustrated by the vertical axis, is the valence of self-concept content, which is the subjective positivity or negativity of the modified self-concept content. In general, when these two dimensions interact to create self-concept improvement – via self-expansion (addition of positive self-concept content) or self-pruning (loss of negative self-concept content) – individuals experience positive relational outcomes, whereas when the self-concept degrades – via self-contraction (loss of positive self-concept content) or self-adulteration (addition of negative self-concept content) – individuals experience negative relational outcomes (Mattingly et al., 2014; McIntyre et al., 2015). Notably, the direct associations between self-concept clarity and relationship-induced self-concept change in intact relationships are inconsistent (e.g., Aron et al., 1991; Bobrowski, Mattingly, Lewandowski, & DeMarree, 2016; Emery et al., 2015; Nardone, 2012). However, there is evidence that associations between self-concept clarity and relationship-induced self-concept change are more robust in the context of relationship dissolution (see Lewandowski et al., 2006, and Slotter et al., 2010), which suggests self-concept clarity may instead play a moderating role.

There are several ways in which self-concept clarity might moderate the manner in which relationship-induced self-concept change affects relationship functioning. Having a clear self-concept may cause relationship-induced self-concept changes to become more salient and consequently may amplify the outcomes of these changes. For example, self-expansion is robustly positively associated with relationship quality and maintenance behaviors (e.g., Aron et al., 1995; Aron et al., 2000; Graham, 2008; McIntyre et al., 2015). Individuals with clear (vs. unclear) self-concepts may be better able at identifying the improvements to the self-concept and the resulting

Positive Qualities

Self-Contraction   Self-Expansion

Decrease ← → Increase

Self-Pruning   Self-Adulteration

Negative Qualities
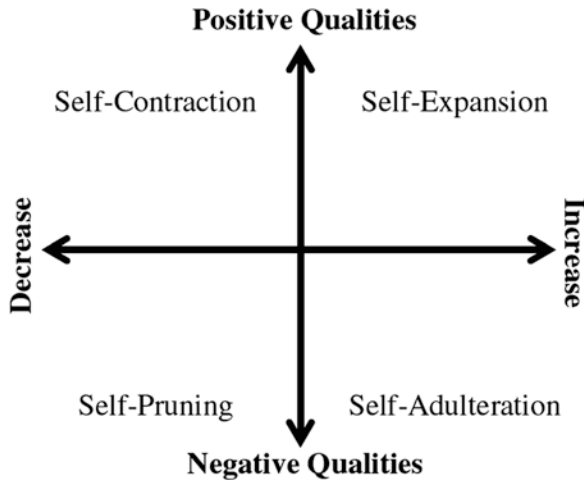
Fig. 6.1 Two-dimensional model of relationship-induced self-concept change

relational benefits, as evidenced by research showing that individuals with high self-concept clarity desire future self-expansion (Emery et al., 2015). Additionally, research on the Michelangelo phenomenon reveals that individuals can help their partners work toward their ideal selves through a process of interpersonal affirmation (e.g., Drigotas, Rusbult, Wieselquist, & Whitton, 1999; Rusbult, Finkel, & Kumashiro, 2009). When partners facilitate this ideal-self movement, individuals experience greater personal and relational well-being (Drigotas et al., 1999). Implicit in these findings is the notion that individuals have a clear sense of their ideal selves. In fact, self-concept clarity is directly associated with individuals' ability to recognize movement toward their ideal self (DiDonato & Krueger, 2010), and greater self-concept clarity is associated with smaller perceived discrepancies between the actual and ideal selves (Demarree & Rios, 2014), as well as discrepancies between self-views and perceptions of others' views about the self (Campbell et al., 2003). Thus, the benefits of the Michelangelo phenomenon may change, to some degree, based upon individuals' self-concept clarity.

However, an individual's greater sensitivity to self-concept change may come at a cost. Being more attuned to self-concept degradation could lead individuals to be more vulnerable to the corresponding negative relational and intrapersonal outcomes (Mattingly et al., 2014; McIntyre et al., 2015). For example, imagine Sally begins a romantic relationship with Tom, who is somewhat messy. As their relationship develops, Sally may begin to take on aspects of Tom's messiness. If Sally has high self-concept clarity, she may be quicker to detect this undesired acquisition of Tom's bad habit, therefore creating a potential source of conflict between her and Tom, which may ultimately negatively affect their relationship quality. Accordingly, in one study examining how self-concept clarity moderated the association between loss of self-concept content and psychological adjustment, individuals with high

self-concept clarity experienced stronger responses to self-concept loss than those low in self-concept clarity (Mattingly, Straughn, & McIntyre, 2016). Specifically, the positive association between self-pruning (loss of negative self-concept content) and psychological adjustment was stronger for those high (vs. low) in self-concept clarity (indicating amplification of positive outcomes); however, the negative association between self-contraction (loss of positive self-concept content) and adjustment was also stronger for those high (vs. low) in self-concept clarity (indicating amplification of negative outcomes).

Alternatively, there is evidence that self-concept clarity may broadly protect individuals from negative outcomes (e.g., Bechtoldt et al., 2010; Richman et al., 2016). Consequently, high self-concept clarity may buffer against the potentially negative effects of relationship-induced self-concept degradation. For example, even though Sally may take on aspects of Tom's messiness, because she already has a clear sense of who she is, this acquisition of a bad habit may be less detrimental to her identity (and thus is less of a source of potential conflict with Tom) because she has ample contradictory self-knowledge on which to base her identity (cf. Eisenstadt, Hicks, McIntyre, Rivers, & Cahill, 2006; see also Gardner & Garr-Schultz, this volume for detailed discussion of how individuals navigate collective identity clarity). This is consistent with previous research that has found that though the loss of positive self-concept content sometimes results in negative relational outcomes, there are times in which these negative outcomes can be avoided (e.g., Impett, Gable, & Peplau, 2005).

Yet another possibility is that individuals *low* in self-concept clarity may actually benefit the most from relationship-induced self-concept improvement in that they potentially have more to gain from self-concept change than those high in clarity. For example, self-expansion occurs when individuals cognitively reorganize their self-concepts to include new or augment existing resources, identities, capabilities, and perspectives (Aron et al., 2013). Though individuals high in self-concept clarity would benefit from self-expansion (as the self-concept is improving nonetheless), those low in self-concept clarity – who may have difficulty identifying existing positive self-concept content – may be particularly benefitted, as the potential novelty of self-concept improvement would be especially salient. In support of this possibility, a recent study examining how self-concept clarity moderates the links between self-concept improvement processes (i.e., self-expansion and self-pruning) and relationship quality revealed that the association between relationship-induced self-concept change and relationship satisfaction was stronger for those low (vs. high) in self-concept clarity (Mattingly & McIntyre, 2016). Though both self-expansion and self-pruning were associated with greater relationship satisfaction for individuals high in self-concept clarity, these associations were significantly stronger for individuals low in self-concept clarity.

Though the literature is still in its infancy, there is emerging support for the hypothesis that the consequences of relationship-induced self-concept change may be further dependent upon self-concept clarity. Specifically, individuals high in self-concept clarity may be more sensitive to their self-concept changes, and to the degree that romantic partners are the source of these changes, relationships may

benefit or suffer as a consequence. However, high self-concept clarity may protect individuals from relationship distress. Certainly, additional research examining the moderating role of self-concept clarity in relational processes is needed.

Conclusions and Future Directions

This chapter sought to provide answers to first- and second-generation questions concerning the link between self-concept clarity and romantic relationship functioning. Overall, the empirical literature reveals that self-concept clarity is positively associated with desirable relationship outcomes. Specifically, the literature shows that self-concept clarity is associated with relationship quality and allows individuals to hold more accurate expectations for their partners' behaviors, and loss of a relationship can undermine a person's self-concept clarity. The literature also suggests several reasons why self-concept clarity is associated with relationship outcomes: self-concept clarity enhances personal well-being, relationships shape identity, and self-concept clarity allows individuals to make better relationship choices via prototype matching. Finally, we found evidence to support the notion that self-concept clarity serves a moderating role in relationship processes, especially in the context of broader relationship-induced changes to the self-concept.

Future research should examine the role of self-concept clarity at different stages of relationship development, especially relationship initiation. Although research has examined the role of self-concept clarity during a relationship (e.g., Lewandowski et al., 2010; Luchies et al., 2010) and following breakup (Lewandowski et al., 2006; Slotter et al., 2010), very little work has examined the impact of self-concept clarity prior to (and during) relationship formation. Yet, there are several possible ways that self-concept clarity might impact relationship initiation. One possibility is that when individuals have a clear sense of self, they may feel more comfortable in sharing aspects of the self with potential relationship partners, as well as relationship expectations (e.g., exclusivity, responsiveness), which may facilitate relationship development. Prior research highlights the important role that self-disclosure plays in relationship initiation (Aron, Melinat, Aron, Vallone, & Bator, 1997; Collins & Miller, 1994; Sprecher, Treger, Wondra, Hilaire, & Wallpe, 2013), and research also reveals that being the recipient of self-disclosure increases liking to a greater degree than being the giver of self-disclosure (Sprecher et al., 2013). So, for individuals to get potential partners to like them, they should provide some information about themselves. Of course, this presumes that individuals have a clear and coherent self-concept that they are able to share during getting acquainted interactions. An individual low in self-concept clarity may avoid self-disclosure in general or may unintentionally disclose incorrect or inconsistent information (e.g., that she/he has a great sense of humor, when in actuality she/he does not) that the partner later discovers to be untrue; consequently, this disclosure of inaccurate information could potentially undermine trust and hinder post-initiation relationship development.

Although we are unaware of any research examining the association between self-concept clarity and self-disclosure in a romantic context, previous research by Valkenburg and Peter (2008) found a positive correlation between self-concept clarity and self-disclosure during adolescents' online communications, indicating that individuals with clear self-concepts were more likely to self-disclose when communicating with others.

Another possible way that self-concept clarity could affect relationship initiation is by shaping individuals' beliefs about relationships. For example, work on implicit theories of relationships (Knee, 1998; Knee, Patrick, & Lonsbary, 2003) reveals that most people ascribe to either romantic destiny beliefs or romantic growth beliefs. Destiny beliefs are based on the notion that romantic partners are either destined to be together or they are not. Relationship conflicts are therefore signals that the couple is not meant to be together and are predictive of dissolution (Knee, 1998). Growth beliefs, conversely, are based on the idea that individuals become more compatible over time and that relationship conflicts cannot only be overcome but may even strengthen a relationship (Knee, 1998). Given the increased tendency for people high in self-concept clarity to use prototype matching (Setterlund & Niedenthal, 1993), people high in self-concept clarity may have a clearer understanding of what they are looking for in a potential partner. Thus, they may have a greater tendency to hold destiny beliefs, relative to those who are low in self-concept clarity. If this is the case, then high self-concept clarity may further benefit individuals holding destiny beliefs in that self-concept clarity is also associated with more adaptive conflict styles, and conflict is particularly problematic for individuals holding destiny, as opposed to growth, beliefs (Bechtoldt et al., 2010).

Finally, the literature examining the association between self-concept clarity and relationship-related variables would benefit by examining more diverse samples. The vast majority of research reviewed here uses samples from "WEIRD" cultures (i.e., western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). As such, we do not know whether the current patterns of results will generalize across cultures or across age cohorts. The possibility remains that such perspectives would impact both the first- and second-generation questions addressed in this chapter.

Although the extant literature provides a great deal of insight into the link between self-concept clarity and romantic relationships, there is still much to learn. We hope that the present chapter helps spur future research in this interesting and important area.

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Chapter 7
Understanding Our Groups, Understanding Ourselves: The Importance of Collective Identity Clarity and Collective Coherence to the Self

Wendi L. Gardner and Alexandra Garr-Schultz

> *Although we assume a constant striving for unity, we do not assume that the outcome of the striving is necessarily successful…If we accept definitions of ourselves as members of groups, it is just as necessary to maintain these definitions as to maintain definitions of ourselves as isolated individuals.*

> Prescott Lecky (1945).

Abstract The multiple group identities we all maintain (gender, cultural, religious, or professional) are critical to both self-knowledge and self-understanding. However, consideration of self-concept clarity at the collective level is in its infancy. The current chapter introduces two constructs that are integral to collective self-concept clarity. First, "collective identity clarity" refers to one's understanding of the norms and values of each of the individual groups to which they belong. Second, "collective coherence" refers to the process of integrating all of one's distinct group identities in a coherent structure. We review research relevant to each of these two components, highlight evidence linking collective self-concept clarity to psychological well-being, and outline avenues for future study.

Keywords Self · Identity · Self-concept clarity · Group identity · Collective identity · Well-being

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Few ideas have been as quietly influential as Prescott Lecky's insight that self-consistency was a fundamental human motive (Lecky, 1945). His collected writings, *Self-Consistency: A Theory of Personality*, were groundbreaking in their reexamination of psychological topics as varied as habitual behavior, learning, emotional processes, and clinical disorders through the distinct lens of a person's quest for subjectively coherent selfhood. Lecky (1945) rebelled against the dominant schools of psychological thought during his career, rebuking both Freudian and Pavlovian accounts of human motives. In their place, he offered an elegantly simple idea: humans need to understand themselves as stable and predictable, and will continuously strive for consistency among their existing self-views and behavior. Thus, a full decade or more before Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, Roger's (1959) notions of self-congruence, Heider's (1960) balance theory, Swann's (1983) self-verification theory, or Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory, Lecky (1945) had identified self-consistency as the primary driver of both behavior and self-evaluation and had posited that an individual's most fundamental goal was to craft and maintain a self that they subjectively understood to be coherent, temporally stable, and internally consistent. In other words, Lecky's all important "striving for unity" represented the pursuit of what Jennifer Campbell and her colleagues (1990, 1996; current volume) would later refine into the construct of self-concept clarity.

Equally important, Lecky (1945) understood that the self encompassed more than individual characteristics. In this, he echoed James (1890) in discussing how close relationships and group memberships were incorporated into and as important to the self as were individual characteristics and values. Social self-representations were largely neglected in the modern study of the self-concept until the seminal work of Markus and Kitayama (1991) describing interdependent self-construals as a self-system. Though the initial focus was largely on interdependent selves as a cultural variable, because humans are universally socialized in relationships and groups, all humans maintain an interdependent or social self-system that is as powerful but distinct from the independent or individual self system—the two systems are motivated by distinct values (e.g., Gardner, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999), gain esteem through different mechanisms (social reflection rather than comparison; Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild, 2002), and operate through different regulatory foci (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000). However, research that explores self-concept clarity beyond the level of the individual self remains rare. How do our relationships and group memberships contribute to a clear, consistent, and coherent understanding of ourselves?

The interdependent self can be further subdivided into distinct relational and collective levels of self-representation (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Cross, Hardin, & Swing, 2009), and the interplay of self-concept clarity within each of these levels is in its infancy. For example, research has begun to investigate how couples may form coherent relational identities, how relationships may boost clarity in the face of threat, and how relationship transitions influence self-concept clarity over time (see Slotter & Emery, this volume; McIntyre, Mattingly, & Lewandowski, this volume, for review). Similar initial forays have attempted to examine self-concept

clarity through the lens of the collective self, although there is a comparative dearth of empirical literature in the collective domain compared to the relational domain. As such, this chapter will be speculative rather than definitive, pulling together research that we see as potentially relevant for understanding the interplay between self-concept clarity and collective identities, and raising questions that we believe are ripe for future exploration.

The field currently lacks a definition of "collective self-concept clarity," but given how the construct of self-concept clarity is defined at the individual level, a parallel construct at the collective level would require at least two critical components. The first component of collective self-concept clarity reflects the person's understanding of the meaning of each of his or her distinct group identities (e.g., understanding "who we are" as Americans). We will refer to this component as "collective identity clarity" and define it as the degree to which one's beliefs about the meaning, norms, values, and prescriptions of a given collective identity are clearly and confidently held. The second component of collective self-concept clarity reflects the person's understanding of how their multiple group identities (e.g., American, female, scientist, Asian, etc.) fit together. We will refer to this component as "collective coherence" and define it as the degree to which an individual's multiple collective identities are subjectively perceived as harmonious and/or complementary, allowing for a unified and coherent sense of self. Both components are needed to understand how collective self-concept clarity may contribute to individual, intragroup, and intergroup well-being.

The current chapter will review existing research relevant to each of these two components of collective self-concept clarity in turn as well as evidence linking collective self-concept clarity to well-being. We will additionally raise future research questions needed to both establish each component of collective self-concept clarity and illuminate how they might combine to contribute to general self-concept clarity.

Collective Identity Clarity: Understanding a Single Group Membership

Collective Identity Clarity and Individual Well-Being

People can extend their identities beyond the individual level in multiple ways, including elements from their closest dyadic relationships (e.g., Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998) to their broadest identifications with all of humanity (McFarland, Brown, & Webb, 2013). The majority of a person's social identifications, however, are maintained at a level of "optimal distinctiveness" wherein a person feels both included and unique. This balance is most commonly filled through identification at the group level and particularly in the context of groups that are large enough to engender a sense of belonging yet still maintain clear group

boundaries (i.e., in contrast to an outgroup; Brewer, 1991). Bearing this in mind, our discussion of collective identity clarity will focus on specific identifiable group memberships, whether small social groups or larger clearly delineated cultural or ethnic groups.

Just as having a clear sense of self in terms of one's traits and attributes has been associated with greater psychological well-being (Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, 1990), one might expect that having a clear sense of self at the collective level would offer similar benefits. In line with these predictions, clarity regarding a single collective identity is associated with improved individual well-being. In one series of studies, Usborne and Taylor (2010) measured participants' clarity regarding their cultural group membership and found that those who reported higher levels of cultural identity clarity or "the extent to which beliefs about one's cultural group are clearly and confidently defined" (Usborne & Taylor, 2010, p. 883) also reported higher satisfaction with life, higher levels of self-esteem, and lower levels of negative affect compared to participants with lower levels of cultural identity clarity. These relationships between collective self-clarity in terms of one's cultural group membership and improved psychological outcomes were found for individuals from a variety of cultural groups including Anglophone Quebecers, Francophone Québécois, Chinese Canadians, Chinese Americans, and members of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation.

Interestingly, the relationship between cultural identity clarity and improved well-being was proposed to be mediated by increases in self-concept clarity at the individual level (Usborne & Taylor, 2010). Theoretically, the authors propose that clarity at the collective level precedes individual-level self-concept clarity by providing a reference group against which to evaluate personal qualities (Taylor, 2002; Taylor & Kachanoff, 2015; Taylor & Usborne, 2010; Usborne & Taylor, 2010). In a subsequent experiment (Usborne & Taylor, 2012), cultural identity clarity was manipulated by asking participants to either reflect or write about a time when their cultural group provided them clear and consistent behavioral norms and guidelines (clear-consistent condition), provided them multiple competing norms and behavioral guidelines (clear- inconsistent condition), or did not provide any norms or behavioral guidelines at all (unclear condition), followed by measures of individual well-being. As expected, participants high in identification with their cultural group reported significantly higher levels of positive affect and self-rated competence in the clear-consistent as opposed to either the inconsistent or unclear conditions. Personal uncertainty mediated these effects, but only for participants high in cultural group identification; no significant differences in well-being were found among those who were not strongly identified.

Future work will be needed to replicate these results and definitively determine the mechanism by which collective identity clarity contributes to well-being. For example, while the authors' claim that collective identity clarity precedes individual-level self-concept clarity is one possibility, it is also possible that collective identity clarity leads to higher overall self-concept clarity simply by increasing clarity at one of the three levels of self (individual, relational, or collective; Brewer & Gardner, 1996). The boundary conditions of such work will also need to be explored, as

collective identities outside cultural groups have not been examined. Lastly, additional investigation should provide more detail about the relationship between collective identity clarity and the strength of one's personal identification with a group. While we view these as orthogonal constructs, they are likely to interact.

Collective Identity Clarity and Individual Understanding

In addition to not being predicated on identification strength, collective identity clarity also does not require the group or beliefs regarding the group in question to be universally conceptualized, simple, and/or unchanging. Just as self-concept clarity at the individual level refers to the *subjective* clarity and consistency of one's individual traits and attributes (Campbell, 1990), collective self-concept clarity also relies on a *subjective* assessment of understanding a given group. Within a group, individual members may define or understand the group differently, though groups whose members share higher rates of consistency are likely to more easily lend themselves to higher levels of identity clarity on average.

The idea that people have individualized understandings of group norms is not a new one. Lapinski and Rimal (2005) distinguish between collective norms and perceived norms, for instance. In this framework, collective norms are those which truly emerge and exist at the collective level for a given group. One might consider these to be the objectively accurate norms. However, because group norms are transmitted with varying degrees of explicitness and consistency, the way that a given individual understands a group's collective norms may or may not entirely align with such an objective viewpoint. These personal understandings of collective norms are referred to as perceived norms, and they exist at the level of an individual group member.

From this perspective, one could speculate that clear perceived norms, as opposed to clear collective norms, are necessary to achieve collective identity clarity regarding a specific group. Two group members may hold very different beliefs about the norms of the same group, yet if both individuals are confident in their knowledge and perceive it to be a clear understanding of their group, they may both experience high levels of collective identity clarity. The degree to which members of a group vary in their understanding of group norms may differ between groups as a function of norm explicitness, enforcement mechanisms, etc. and could be investigated as a possible influence on the development and manifestation of collective identity clarity. Furthermore, the coexistence of multiple understandings of a given group that are simultaneously held with high subjective clarity and confidence by different members would likely have implications both for the individuals in question and for group-level outcomes. Beyond the benefits of a clear personal understanding of one's collective identity, it is possible that additional benefits of collective identity clarity accrue when that group understanding is shared with other group members. We would also expect that, regardless of whether individual-level benefits are based on perceived or collective norms, group-level initiatives should be more easily achieved when understandings are shared and held with a higher degree of consensus.

Collective Identity Clarity and Group Dynamics

Collective identity clarity does not preclude the possibility of change in one's under-standing of a group over time. While groups that can be understood with greater consistency across time may more easily lend themselves to sustained clarity, it should also be possible for a person to maintain high moment-to-moment collective identity clarity while still developing or deepening understanding of the identity in question. Just as individuals can create cohesive personal narratives combining mul-tiple different (and even seemingly conflicting) self-aspects and acknowledging adjustment across the life span, so too can collective identity clarity exist despite complicated nuance and continual development of a group's concept (McAdams, 2001). This understanding allows for considerations of norm formation, alteration, and influence to play out as they are known to do in group settings (i.e., Hogg & Reid, 2006). While collective identity clarity does not prevent or preclude group-level changes, the dynamics of group influence and norms themselves are certainly related to the clarity of understanding one's collective identity. For example, one way that group expectations, values, and norms can be communicated is through prototypes and exemplars (Hogg & Reid, 2006). This may mean that groups with available examples of one or more highly prototypical members for reference may prove easier subjects for the development of collective identity clarity because behavioral norms are more readily apparent. It may also be that individuals with high collective identity clarity selectively allocate their attention and emphasis to items compatible with his or her confidently held perceived norms, creating a rein-forcing process (cf. self-verification; Swann, 2011).

However, while prototypical members may readily highlight group norms, hav-ing multiple highly influential parties may also cause a decrease in collective iden-tity clarity. In a group with multiple prototypical members or a highly visible and influential minority, the presence of conflicting cues may cause "an acute sense of identity threat and self-conceptual uncertainty, impermanence, and instability" (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 22). Either the challenging of a previous group norm or introduction of a new group norm that is perceived as misaligned with the current collective identity may cause schisms within the group (Sani, 2008). In such cases, a group may either attempt to reconstruct a unified identity through negotiation and resolution or split into multiple entities, each with its own distinct set of norms. Given that challenges to group norms inherently represent an identity threat at the collective level, they would surely have a significant effect on an individual's confi-dence and clarity regarding what his or her collective identity truly means. Maintaining a high level of collective identity clarity in these circumstances would require either finding a way to perceive the new and old group norms as compatible and coherent as a whole, updating one's group definition to exclude one set of the conflicting norms, or potentially changing one's identification altogether.

Collective Identity Clarity Development and Maintenance

Individuals possess a variety of tools for coming to understand and maintaining a sense of meaning for their collective identities. Researchers Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, and Bámaca-Gómez (2004) propose a three-component model of ethnic identity development that includes identity exploration (the extent to which individuals are seeking knowledge about their identity), resolution (the extent to which they understand their identity), and affirmation (the extent to which they feel positively about their identity). Based on different combinations of exploration and resolution, they propose four types of resulting identities: diffuse (low exploration, low resolution), foreclosed (low exploration, high resolution), moratorium (high exploration, low resolution), and achieved (high exploration, high resolution). If we extend this classification to collective identities more generally, one might predict that both foreclosed and achieved identifications would be more likely to manifest collective identity clarity due to their high levels of resolution. However, achieved identifications might be predicted to be more stable across time because they have been more fully explored and therefore may more easily maintain collective identity clarity across time.

Importantly, affirmation, or the extent to which an individual feels positively toward his or her group, is orthogonal to clarity about one's identification. While collective identity clarity may help form a foundation from which to build positive views of one's group and collective self-esteem (it is likely difficult to feel positively about a group that one does not clearly understand), clarity does not necessarily lead to positivity. In other words, it is possible to have a clear sense of a collective identity that is either highly positive or highly negative, just as it is possible to have clear and stable individual-level self-beliefs that are positive or negative. Self-verification theory (Swann, 2011) proposes that individuals prefer verifying the identities they hold clearly regardless of their positivity or negativity. In line with self-verification theory, people prefer interacting with others who share their view of a given collective identity and thereby provide verifying feedback, particularly for those identities that are held strongly (Chen, Chen, & Shaw, 2004).

It may also be the case that different types of groups are easier to develop collective identity clarity for than others. Discrepancies may arise from different group contents, similarly to the way that individual characteristics in different domains are likely to be held with differing levels of self-concept clarity on average (Stinson, Wood, & Doxey, 2008), or from differences in group structure and perception. For example, collective identity clarity might be greatest for highly entitative groups with easily perceived group boundaries (Lickel et al., 2000). A perceived match between core group attributes and individual attributes may also contribute to an enhanced sense of collective identity clarity. In a way similar to the recent finding by Bleidorn et al. (2016) that city residents whose levels of personality traits of openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were a better match to the group-level characteristics of the city's population at large had higher self-esteem, it is likely that a closer match between an individual member's attributes and the

characteristics of a group overall would enhance both collective identity clarity and ease of identification. It may also be that although identification and clarity are not redundant, people are generally more likely to develop a clear understanding of collective identities that are more chronically salient or are considered central to one's overall self-concept. This may be cyclical, such that people are also more likely to increase the strength of their identification with groups for which they are able to develop and maintain higher levels of collective identity clarity versus those for which they are unable to do so. Past work has shown that individuals are likely to increase both their group-level identifications and perceptions of group entitativity following rejection and personal uncertainty (Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007; Knowles & Gardner, 2008), but to the best of our knowledge, this phenomenon has not been examined with collective self-concept clarity measures. It may be the case that clear collective identities provide more effective buffering of one's personal well-being than do unclear collective identities. Lastly, if feedback from others is influential, it may be easier to develop a sense of clarity for visible as opposed to non-visible group memberships (Goffman, 1963).

Overall, collective identity clarity appears to be a promising construct that remains underexplored. Initial examinations of cultural identity clarity provide evidence of predicted associations between clarity at the collective level and individual well-being outcomes. Future work should examine similar associations for other types of collective identities as well as examine a variety of additional outcome variables. For example, though collective identity clarity is tied to individual self-esteem, its implications for identification, collective self-esteem, self-presentation, and behavioral outcomes like commitment to pursue group-related goals have yet to be examined. Perceived agency in collective definition also provides a ripe area for future investigation, as this has been found to be associated with greater individual well-being (Taylor & Usborne, 2010) and would likely accelerate the development of collective identity clarity. Further research is needed to better understand both the antecedents and consequences of collective identity clarity.

Collective Coherence: Understanding How Multiple Collective Identities Combine

The History of Studying Multiple Collective Identities

Maintaining collective identity clarity, a clear understanding of the meaning, norms, and values of the individual groups to which we belong, is only the first component of collective self-concept clarity. Collective self-concept clarity also requires understanding the impact of *multiple* collective identities for an individual's overarching sense of self-concept coherence. All of us maintain and manage multiple group identities, based on sources as diverse as nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social class, political ideology, gender, sexual orientation, profession, and/or social

groups. It would not be unusual, for example, to meet someone who identifies as a woman, as a Christian, as an African American, as middle class, as a liberal, as a psychologist, and as a member of her rugby team. Although we naturally identify with multiple groups, maintaining such a large portfolio of collective identities presents a challenge to the pursuit of a unified self. Indeed, this challenge has been recognized since James (1890) astutely noted that every person had multiple "social selves" and that showing different sides of the self to different audiences could lead to internal discord.

The benefits and costs of maintaining multiple selves were first examined in the early 1990s. The social-cognitive perspective of the self as a knowledge structure implied that protective psychological benefits were provided by increased complexity and compartmentalization (e.g., Linville, 1987; Showers, 1992). In contrast, personality-based views of the self emphasized how self-fragmentation often led to poorer mental health (e.g., Block, 1961; Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993). For example, Linville (1985, 1987) argued that to the extent an individual's spontaneous self-concept was composed of multiple domain-specific aspects (e.g., defining the self as a parent, at work, as a neighbor, as a friend, etc.) that were relatively non-overlapping in their attributes, he or she would have high self-complexity. Higher self-complexity was demonstrated to buffer the individual from the stress of failure in any individual domain. In contrast, Donahue et al. (1993) demonstrated that an individual's level of self-concept differentiation, defined as high levels of unshared variance in personality characteristics across five different experimenter-chosen social roles, predicted higher levels of concurrent depression and lower levels of esteem.

It was during the timeframe of this debate that Campbell and colleagues (1990, 1996) introduced the construct of self-concept clarity. Rather than focusing on objective similarities among specific aspects of the self, self-concept clarity represented an emergent understanding of whether aspects of the self subjectively fit together into a coherent and consistent whole. Specifically, to the extent that an individual has beliefs about the self that are certain, internally consistent, and stable across time, that individual has high self-concept clarity. Self-concept clarity reflects the perceived structure of self-knowledge more than the content of self-knowledge. Importantly, it is the *subjective sense* of clarity rather than patterns in any specific structural features that is associated with higher self-esteem and emotional well-being. From a clarity perspective, the potential benefits of self-complexity versus the costs of self-differentiation may depend upon the individual's subjective understanding of him or herself across roles. Indeed Campbell, Assanand, and DiPaula (2003) demonstrated that measures of self-complexity and compartmentalization were independent of measures of self-concept clarity—implying that multiple self-structures, varying in complexity, could lead to similar levels of self-understanding. Lutz and Ross (2003) showed that self-complexity and self-concept differentiation were similarly independent. In another demonstration of the nonredundant nature of self-differentiation and self-concept clarity, Diehl and Hay (2011) used cluster analysis to examine combinations of the two constructs, finding five clusters that were differentially associated with age and well-being. Finally, Pilarska (2016) recently

revealed that the negative impact of high self-concept differentiation on positive aspects of identity was fully mediated by lower levels of self-concept clarity. Taken as a whole, this work strongly implies that the maintenance of multiple "social selves" is only problematic to the extent that it impedes the establishment of a clear and coherent sense of the self as a unified entity.

The prior debate focused predominantly on the number and distinctiveness of multiple social roles, which are not identical to maintaining multiple collective identities. Self-concept differentiation is most commonly measured by having the participant either imagine themselves in a specific social context (e.g., for a professional role, the participant may be asked to imagine themselves in the workplace) or with a specific other or group of people (e.g., imagining interacting with colleagues). This type of measurement may encourage the reporting of a self-presentational persona (e.g., Leary & Allen, 2011) rather than an actual professionally based collective self. Indeed, when examining the association between self-concept differentiation and well-being, Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, and Ilardi (1997) reported that self-concept differentiation was associated with feelings of inauthenticity and that both negatively influenced mental health. Their work implies that self-concept differentiation, as typically measured, may reflect multiple distinct self-presentations at least as much as multiple distinct identities. An examination of how multiple collective identities contribute to self-concept clarity and well-being will require defining and measuring collective identities in a way that differentiates them from role-bound self-presentational personae. Although we are unaware of specific work that examines the relationship between the number or distinctiveness of collective identities and an individual's level of self-concept coherence, numerous studies explore the distinctiveness of collective identities and related aspects of well-being. In fact, there are collective-level analogues of both self-complexity (e.g., Roccas & Brewer, 2002) and self-concept differentiation (e.g., Downie, Mageau, Koestner, & Liodden, 2006), and we would propose that adapting a construct borrowed from the multiculturalism literature, collective identity integration, may serve as a proxy for what we refer to as collective coherence (e.g., Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005).

The Benefits of Collective Coherence

Roccas and Brewer (2002) introduced the construct of social identity complexity to refer to how an individual organizes and conceptualizes his or her multiple collective identities. In a way that parallels how self-complexity examines the overlap of traits across various social roles, social identity complexity examines the overlap of group membership and prototypes across a person's various collective identities. From this perspective, low complexity occurs when a person perceives his or her multiple groups as similar in members and representation (e.g., Italian and Catholic—membership in both groups is common, and prototypes of the two groups are often overlapping), whereas high complexity occurs when the groups

are perceived as having little overlap in either (e.g., female and engineer—shared membership is uncommon, and prototypes are distinct). Higher social identity complexity lowers anxiety when membership in any specific ingroup is threatened (Ruvolo, 2004) as well as enhances intergroup tolerance (Brewer & Pierce, 2005), thus potentially boosting both individual and societal well-being. However, maintaining high social identity complexity may sometimes impede collective coherence. Because social identity complexity is determined by the subjective representation of identities, individuals with "objectively" non-overlapping identities ("female" and "engineer") may simplify their identity, for example, by isolating their ingroup to the intersection ("female engineers") or by choosing one or the other as the dominant identity. Simpler collective identity structures are preferred when feelings of uncertainty are either situationally evoked or chronically high (Grant & Hogg, 2012; Roccas & Brewer, 2002), implying that individuals may simplify the organization of their collective identities in pursuit of certainty or coherence.

The benefits of a more unified collective identity structure are also consistent with Downie et al. (2004, 2006) who examine a phenomenon akin to collective self-concept differentiation that they term "cultural chameleonism." Cultural chameleonism refers to the ways in which multicultural individuals negotiate multiple cultural settings and is measured with items such as "How I present myself changes based on the cultural context of a particular situation." It parallels self-concept differentiation in its emphasis on differing self-presentational behavior across cultural contexts instead of role contexts and comes to similar conclusions. Individuals lower in chameleonism, thus feeling as if they have a more unified self across cultural contexts, show better emotional well-being (Downie et al., 2004), as well as feel more authentic in their daily social interactions (Downie et al., 2006). Similar research has examined feelings of connection to different communities and demonstrated how simply feeling connected to two communities with opposing values (i.e., jail inmates who feel close connection to the community at large as well as the criminal community), even in the absence of differential self-presentation, is detrimental to well-being (Mashek, Stueweg, Furukawa, & Tangney, 2006).

Just as the level of self-concept clarity appears to resolve whether maintaining multiple distinct selves across roles is a boon or bane for individual well-being, a corresponding construct, collective identity integration, may share similar explanatory power. Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005) have found that multicultural individuals' subjective perceptions concerning their multiple cultural identities' closeness vs distance to one another, as well as beliefs about their conflicting vs harmonious nature, determine both bicultural competence and individual well-being. In other words, rather than any specific overlap between membership or representation of the distinct identities (e.g., Roccas & Brewer, 2002) and the consistency versus distinctiveness of behavior enacted in different cultural contexts (e.g., Downie et al., 2006), it is the person's own beliefs concerning the compatibility of these identities that matter in determining how maintaining multiple collective identities influence well-being. Moreover, just as self-concept clarity reflects the

subjective perception of the coherence of the self across a combination of traits or roles, collective identity integration reflects the subjective perception of the coherence of one's combination of collective identities.

The Maintenance of Collective Coherence

How does one maintain a subjectively integrated view of the self across multiple collective identities? What factors lead to an overall sense of collective coherence while still allowing identification with many distinct ingroups? We speculate on two complementary pathways to maintaining both overall coherence and multiple collective identifications; the first focuses on the stability of the representations of each collective self, and the second focuses on self-narratives, how the stories we tell "make sense" of the society of collective selves within each individual.

A successful collective self-structure needs to both allow for the flexibility of activating ingroup prototypic aspects of the self in appropriate collective contexts and allow the maintenance of a sense of stability across time and consistency within context. McConnell's (2010) multiple self-aspects framework (MSF) conceives of the self-concept as an associative network containing multiple and interlinked context-dependent selves. Each smaller "self" is associated with various traits and behaviors, such that when that specific "self" is activated, a person will represent and enact that "self" in a consistent manner. The MSF thus predicts consistency in behavior and self-knowledge when a social identity is activated and has been supported by multiple streams of experience. For example, Shih, Pittinsky, and Ambady (1999) showed that activating Asian-American women's "female" vs "Asian" identities led to distinct patterns of performance in prototypically female (verbal) versus Asian (math) relevant tasks. Similarly, Hong, Morris, Chiu, and Benet-Martinez (2000) showed that priming Asian-American biculturals with culturally relevant symbols (e.g., a dragon versus Mickey Mouse) led them to both think and behave in a culturally consistent manner. Finally, in a relational rather than collective context, English and Chen (2007) demonstrated the coexistence of cross contextual variability in self-representations and behavior with strong temporal stability—in other words, individuals may think of themselves in highly distinct ways across relational contexts (with my best friend, with my father, with my romantic partner, etc.) but in consistent ways within these contexts across time. This combination of both variability and stability was magnified the more important the distinct relationships were to the self.

The MSF explains these types of phenomena through calling upon distinct and stable relational or collective self-representations that are activated within each relevant context. As such, the MSF allows for both the variability of the self across collective identities and the stability of the self-structure overall. From this standpoint, collective coherence would be an emergent property of the associative network as a whole—reflecting the stability and coherence of each collective identity, weighted by each collective identity's centrality. In this sense, collective "selves"

are treated similarly to any other "self" (e.g., role based, relationship based), and the stability and internal consistency of each smaller "self" contribute to the sense of coherence across the network more generally.

The second pathway through which multiple collective identities can be integrated into a coherent whole focuses on conscious "meaning making" rather than impressions of underlying self-structure. More specifically, we focus on the self as a narrative, a continuously evolving "life story" that connects diverse life experiences into a meaningful sequence (e.g., McAdams, 2001). Life stories encourage continuity of the self across time and explain how the self is consistent despite conflicting values, traits, or events (e.g., McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006; McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007). Life stories are particularly important in interpreting contradictory information about the self (e.g., a transgression that belies core values), because placing this information within a narrative sequence can allow for resolution of such conflicts through perceptions of growth (e.g., Mansfield, McClean, & Lilgendahl, 2010). Recent research highlights how life stories that focus on collective identities may result in collective coherence.

When multicultural individuals were asked to tell the story of their cultural identity development, markers of narrative coherence were positively associated with identity integration (Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Sablonnière, 2013), implying that collective coherence includes being able to tell a sensible story about the development and interplay of multiple collective identities. Moreover, collective identities may each carry particular narrative features. Researchers have just begun to explore "master narratives," defined as episodic similarities within specific groups (e.g., the "coming out" story for sexual minorities, the resisting prejudice story for African Americans, etc., McLean & Syed, 2016). In this context, we would predict that the extent to which there is overlap between a master narrative and one's personal narrative, collective identification and coherence may follow. For example, if being gay is a core collective identity, the personal narrative will likely highlight "coming out" as an important turning point in the life story. As multiple collective identities carry distinct master narratives, we speculate that crafting a personal life story to include all of the narrative features important to one's various collective identities may instill a sense of collective coherence. The "life story" of a gay Jewish New Yorker, for example, might highlight the Bar Mitzvah, the "coming out" story, and where he was/what he was doing on 9/11 as episodic features. By incorporating these master narratives and combining them with more idiosyncratic triumphs and tragedies, this individual would have crafted a coherent story of the self that is at once both personal and collective, in that it reflects his individual psychological experiences interwoven with events of shared significance for his ingroups.

Although the MSF takes a social-cognitive perspective in contrast to the personality-based perspective of narrative models of self, the accommodation of idiosyncratic and thus cross-culturally applicable models of selfhood is a shared strength of both. In allowing the individual to define his or her most important self-aspects, the MSF easily allows for cultural differences; in an independent cultural context, self-aspects in the MSF may be most closely represented by aspects of the individual self, but in an interdependent cultural context, the most important

self-aspects will be defined by relationships and groups (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This flexibility of the MSF allows for idiosyncratic self-structures, as does the representation of the self as a narrative. The stories through which we define the self are similarly idiosyncratic and can therefore be told through from any cultural perspective. Being applicable across cultures, both the MSF and the narrative model of self-representation allow for a broadening of the "self" in the exploration of self-concept clarity. Although individual-level self-concept clarity has been shown to be more strongly associated with well-being in individualistic or independent cultures (e.g., Campbell et al., 1996), collective coherence is likely to play a larger role in well-being for more interdependent or collectivist cultures.

Collective Self-Concept Clarity: Conclusions and Future Directions

Consideration of self-concept clarity at the collective level is in its infancy. The current chapter has introduced two constructs that we believe are integral to any conception of collective self-concept clarity. One cannot clearly understand the self without understanding the individual groups to which we belong; "collective identity clarity" reflects this understanding. Similarly, one cannot clearly understand the self without making sense of how all our distinct group identities combine; "collective coherence" reflects the necessity of unifying a multi-identified self. While many aspects of both collective identity clarity and collective coherence remain currently unexplored, these constructs provide a framework with numerous future directions.

For example, does collective self-concept clarity have a greater impact for certain types of people as compared to others? One might anticipate that collective clarity would be most important for individuals who, either situationally or chronically, emphasize their collective levels of self. This might include those who are higher in interdependent self-construals, for instance, or those who may have often find themselves in situations where a particular collective identity is made salient. Other individual differences may also contribute, such as the need for cognitive closure or one's tolerance of ambiguity.

Moreover, we believe the two constructs of collective identity clarity and collective coherence are separable but likely non-orthogonal. Future work should investigate the ways in which people seek to establish and maintain both collective coherence and identity clarity and the ways in which changes in each of these constructs relate to the other. For example, we would expect that higher levels of collective identity clarity should often assist with both pathways toward collective coherence. A clearer sense of group norms and values should lead to greater consistency in self-representation when interacting within those groups. Because we propose that this type of temporal consistency within ingroup contexts is a foundation of collective coherence, to the extent that collective identity clarity increases this

consistency, it should correspondingly increase collective coherence. Similarly, higher collective identity clarity should be associated with higher collective coherence to the extent that it is accompanied by a clearer and more accessible understanding of the distinct "master narratives" characterizing important ingroups and thus the higher likelihood of integrating those narratives into one's personal life story. In some instances, however, increases in collective identity clarity could threaten collective coherence. When an altered or enhanced understanding of one collective identity leads to recognition of conflicts with other collective identities, collective coherence may suffer.

Striving for collective coherence may, in turn, influence collective identity clarity. Because the process of identity integration requires recognizing similar or complementary aspects of distinct identities, it may fine-tune one's understanding of the meaning of each group membership, boosting collective identity clarity. Alternatively, the quest for collective coherence may sometimes reduce collective identity clarity. Consider the case of the female engineer who initially has high collective identity clarity for female and for engineer but struggles with integration; simplifying her identity by viewing her ingroup as existing only at the junction of the two will boost collective coherence due to jettisoning an obvious conflict, but will temporarily lower collective identity clarity as she seeks to understand the idiosyncratic meanings and norms of this "new" ingroup at the intersection.

It is worth noting that while we have highlighted two components that we believe to be central to self-concept clarity at the collective level, other factors are likely to play a role as well. For example, in addition to understanding the meaning of one's group and establishing collective identity clarity, it might also help to have a specific understanding of oneself as a group member—the attributes that are most closely associated with that self-aspect and the role that one as an individual plays in the larger group structure. Note that additional influences such as this may also interact with the two factors we have already highlighted. For example, having a clear understanding of one's role and function within a group may help form a concept of the group's goals which would enhance collective identity clarity. Depending on the role that you occupy within a group, power structures and points of view may also lead to different concepts of the same group for different members. Additionally, one may be likely to join and develop a particularly high sense of collective identity clarity for groups that emphasize attributes similar to those that an individual already possesses, and these groups may in turn be easier to integrate into one's overall sense of self leading to higher collective coherence. It should be noted, however, that a person does not necessarily choose to belong to all groups of which he or she is a member, harkening back to the interplay of individual-level influences and qualities of the group in question.

Social influences at every level (interpersonal, intragroup, intergroup) should also be explored for their role in the development of collective self-concept clarity. For example, what is the role of feedback from others in people's understanding of themselves? We would expect that people who receive more consistent feedback and verification from others are likely to have higher levels of collective self-concept clarity and that inconsistent feedback should be most damaging when it is received

from ingroup members or close others. On an intergroup level, how might stereotypes or comparison groups impact one's understanding of a collective self?

While many of these questions relate to the internal experiences of the individual whose collective self-concept is being examined, one may also examine the implications of collective self-concept clarity for the way we present ourselves and are perceived by others. It is likely that people engage in self-presentational tuning to engender collective identity consistent feedback. Collective self-concept clarity may also impact the way we communicate about our group memberships, perhaps reflected in the labels we choose to use for ourselves. The way we refer to our groups and our confidence in doing so may, in turn, impact the way that others perceive us, including stereotyping.

Finally, self-concept clarity, though often studied as an individual difference variable, is also recognized as a developing and dynamic process. Individuals add new experiences and new self-knowledge, they change relationships and shift in roles, and each may require an updated self-view. Similarly, the addition of new group identities, as well as the integration and refinement of existing group identities, continues across the life span, presenting parallel challenges to self-conceptions and coherence. In the self's evolution, understanding Lecky's (1945) "constant striving for unity" would be incomplete without considering self-concept clarity at the collective level.

Collective self-concept clarity is critical to understanding the complete psychological experience of individuals seeking to maintain a coherent and meaningful sense of self. Including both collective identity clarity, or the understanding of an individual collective identity, and collective coherence, or the understanding of how all of one's collective identifications fit together, collective self-concept clarity has potential implications not only for the psychological well-being of individuals in question but also for behavior, social perception, and intragroup and intergroup functioning. It is our hope that this chapter has provided a generative introduction into this exciting area of self research, and we look forward to shared insights as the field moves forward.

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Chapter 8
Who Am I and Why Does It Matter? Linking Personal Identity and Self-Concept Clarity

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Abstract The present chapter discusses the overlap and interplay between personal identity and self-concept clarity. Personal identity is framed as an active agent, the "I," that sorts through and organizes self-relevant information. Self-concept clarity is framed as the object, the "me," that represents the self-conception being constructed. The I is framed as creating the me through a process of self-authorship, where self-verification processes assist in this authorship and create turning points when the me is *not* verified and is in need of change. Personal identity processes, such as exploration, commitment, and reconsideration, are posited as mechanisms through which self-concept clarity is developed and maintained. The chapter also examines domain specificity of personal identity and self-concept clarity, such that a person may be clearer about her−/himself in some areas but less so in others. The chapter concludes with implications for developing interventions to strengthen individuals' sense of personal identity and self-concept clarity.

Keywords Personal identity · Self-concept clarity · Exploration · Reconsideration · Commitment · Narrative

Life is full of important choices and decisions. Among the most important of these is figuring out who one is and where one's life is going. Such questions are asked throughout the lifespan, although they may be most commonly asked during adolescence and emerging adulthood – the life stages when young people are beginning to establish themselves in terms of determining who and what they wish to be.

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Deciding who one is, and where one wishes to go in life, helps to establish a "roadmap" through which one will have a sense of which choices are, and are not, consistent with one's "true self" (Waterman & Schwartz, 2013). But how does this occur? How does the person's story get written? We know that older people can look back and recount their life stories, but how is the story composed along the way?

Further, is there a difference between the individual who is writing the self-story and the self whose story is being written? As we discuss below, psychological theorists have distinguished between the "self as author" and the "self as story." Our goal in this chapter is to take these ideas further, and to explore the interplay between personal identity and self-concept clarity, where personal identity represents the self-as-author, and self-concept clarity represents the self-as-story. Self-concept is similar to Erikson's notion of identity synthesis, in that it represents positive valence, internal consistency, and continuity over space and time.

This delineation between self-as-author and self-as-story rests on a critical assumption – namely, if *I* am writing a story about *me*, there is a difference between the I and the me. This assumption is important not only from a theoretical point of view, but also from a more practical and applied perspective. If we want to help people to have healthier life stories, how would we do that? Is there a difference between intervening with the author (the I) and intervening with that which is being authored (the me)? Put differently, why should we care whether my experience of *creating* my life path is the same as my perception of how I am *traveling* that life path? We contend that the delineation of personal identity and self-concept clarity is important only to the extent that the self-as-author is meaningfully different from the self-as-story, in a developmental and clinical sense. In the remainder of the chapter, we make the case that such a distinction is important to draw and that doing so will provide important theoretical, developmental, and clinical insights.

Theoretical Foundations: James, Erikson, and Cooley

The distinction between the "I" and the "me" dates back to William James (1890), one of the founders of American psychology. Broadly, the I is the subject, the part of the self that is telling the story, and the me is the object, the part of the self about whom the story is being told. Subsequent writers have proposed that the I creates the me in various domains. For example, McAdams (2013) proposed that one's traits (what one believes one "is like") are largely independent from one's story (how one came to be "who one is" today). McAdams proposes a developmental model where the I begins as an actor – creating the me by playing roles and portraying specific traits. For example, if someone wants to project an image of being a kind person, s/he might share toys with other children, hold doors for others, or compliment people on their appearance or actions. In later childhood and into adolescence, the I expands to also become an agent – creating the me by developing and revising specific goals. For example, being a good student involves completing homework assignments, studying for tests, and prioritizing schoolwork over other activities in which one

might rather be engaging. Finally, in adolescence and emerging adulthood, the I expands further to include the role of author – creating the me in terms of a specific, unique life path that illustrates "who I truly am" and "how I got here." So, for McAdams, the I can create the me through self-presentation (see also Leary & Allen, 2011), through planning and carrying out a sustained course of action (see also Harter, 2012), and through constructing a (hopefully) coherent narrative where the events of one's life come together to tell a story (see also McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007). The I can also choose to internalize values and beliefs from important others such as mentors, parents, teachers, etc. (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001).

Origins of the I So where does the I come from? How does the person begin to create and manage (consciously or otherwise) her/his sense of self? Attachment theory suggests that the self begins to emerge within interactions with caregivers – where the young child "sees" her/himself through the caregivers' actions (Lyons-Ruth, 2007). This process of internalization represents what Cooley (1902) termed the "looking-glass self." If a person's caregivers are kind to her, respond when she calls, and validate her, then she will likely begin to view herself as a person who is worthy of love and positive regard. On the other hand, if her caregivers are inconsistent, harsh, and/or rejecting, then she might be more likely to internalize an image of herself as someone who does not deserve to be treated well. The I therefore emerges from early interactions with important others and continues to be shaped by such interactions throughout the lifespan.

However, the person is not merely a passive recipient of social influences. Beginning in early childhood, individuals may attempt to *shape* their interactions with others according to their existing self-beliefs (even at earlier ages when these beliefs are largely implicit and unconscious; Yeung & Martin, 2003). For example, extraverted people may seek out positions of leadership (Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011), and people with securely high self-esteem may elicit favorable reactions from others (Swann, Chang-Schneider, & Larsen McClarty, 2007). So the self is constructed through interactions with the social and cultural environment, but it also then *acts on* that environment to produce specific outcomes. The "I" may also observe the "me" and decide that it does (or does not) like what the me looks like, and change course accordingly.

Even after the self has been constructed, it is still open to revision through social influences. Self-verification theory, for example, holds that individuals' views of themselves are most secure when they are validated by others (Swann, 2005). One might think of oneself as intelligent, but if others do not endorse one's intelligence, one's self-view might become more tenuous or begin to change. Individuals often seek verification for *negative* views of themselves – such as people with low self-esteem seeking out abusive and damaging relationships (North & Swann, 2009). Self-verification represents a cycle, where one seeks out situations and relationships that reinforce one's preexisting self-views – and where these external influences then further solidify one's self-views. Change then becomes quite difficult without purposeful intervention, such as counseling or therapy (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003).

Self-authorship Returning to the interplay between the I and the me, self-verification can be viewed as a kind of self-authorship where the product (in this case the me) is marketed primarily to audiences who will provide reviews (interpersonal and relational feedback) that are consistent with how the product was previously evaluated. Kerpelman and Pittman (2001) have found that, within close relationships, feedback that is inconsistent with the self leads to anxiety and distress – and, in some cases, ultimately to revisions to one's self-conception. However, in most cases such discordant feedback is not deliberately sought, especially by individuals who are less secure or are less open to constructive criticism.

One may sense a fundamental inconsistency between McAdams's (2013) self-authorship model and Swann's (2005) self-verification theory. If we strive primarily to verify and maintain our self-views, how can our self-story continue to evolve? If the primary human tendency is to avoid feedback that will cause us to doubt or change our view of ourselves – even if this view is negative or harmful – how can people create stories of triumph and redemption?

One possible answer may lie in the concept of turning points and self-defining memories (McLean et al., 2007). Broadly speaking, a turning point or self-defining memory is a life event (or series of events) that, when recounted, represents a "fork in the road" when one's path changed course. Examples include recovery from addiction, leaving an abusive relationship, or changing careers. Examined more closely, turning points represent times when one's existing self was *not* verified. One's spouse may threaten to leave if one does not stop drinking or one may finally realize that one's line of work is unsatisfying. Alternatively, someone with low self-esteem may encounter a mentor or friend who affirms the person's sense of self and provides life-changing positive feedback. There are likely a series of events that are not self-verifying (either verifying an existing positive sense of self or an existing negative sense of self) and that lead to the realization that something needs to change. Alternatively, external events – such as the death of a spouse or parent – may lead to a turning point because a primary source of self-verification is no longer available (Bennett, 2010). Following the turning point, new sources of self-verification may emerge to solidify and reinforce one's revised sense of self.

It is also possible that self-verification processes within different domains may lead to conflicts within the self (Jun & Kyle, 2011). For example, one's friends may reinforce one's identity as a golfer, worker, etc., whereas one's partner and family may be more interested in verifying one's identity as a spouse and parent. In cases such as these, self-verification processes may lead to conflicts where the person must balance the two conflicting aspects of her/his identity. In cases such as this, a clear sense of self – where one's priorities are clearly established – can help in deciding which domain (or what combination of the two domains) would best fit one's overall goals and the life situations in which one is embedded.

The interplay between self-verification and self-authorship illustrates a set of larger principles: (1) momentary social-psychological processes often occur outside of conscious awareness; (2) these momentary processes are aggregated to create a life path and story; and (3) there are moments of clarity when unconscious social-psychological processes *become conscious* and lead to fundamental changes in the

self. Other writers (e.g., Klimstra et al., 2010; Syed & McLean, 2016) have also noted the ways in which smaller, "microlevel" self-processes contribute to more "macrolevel" change (or stability) in the self over longer periods of time. The sum total of decisions made from one hour, day, or week to the next contribute to long-term change or stability in one's life path. A turning point represents a time when the self-system is disrupted long enough – and consistently enough – that one's life course is redirected. The I begins a new chapter in its authorship of the me. The types of conflicts noted earlier in this paragraph – such as incompatibilities among different life domains, clashes between commitments in some domains and commitments in other domains, and dissatisfaction with who one is or sees oneself as becoming – can serve to redirect one's process of self and identity development in the long term.

Identity Synthesis *with* **Confusion** This interplay between social interactions and one's developmental course is fundamental to Erikson's (1950) theory of identity development. Indeed, each of Erikson's eight life stages is framed as an interplay between two opposing polar attributes. Erikson (1950, 1968) posited synthesis (also known as coherence) and confusion as the polar attributes during adolescence, when identity represents the primary psychosocial challenge. According to Erikson, identity is created through the person's continuous and repeated transactions with the social environment. Like Cooley (1902), Erikson believed that young children learn how to view themselves based on their experiences with their caregivers. Caregivers who are consistent, responsive, and warm facilitate a sense of trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, and identity in their children – whereas caregivers who are inconsistent, cold, unresponsive, and/or harsh facilitate a sense of mistrust, shame, guilt, inferiority, and confusion in their children (Erikson, 1968).

Of course, there are many "shades of gray" between these two extremes, and in many cases young people will develop some trust and some mistrust, some autonomy and some shame, some initiative and some guilt, etc. As such, adolescents are likely to be sure of themselves in some ways and confused in other ways. An adolescent may have a firm idea of what s/he wants to do for a career but may be confused regarding what kinds of romantic partners s/he might want to date. Even within a single domain – such as career – an adolescent may have a general sense of what s/he wants to be but may not know the specifics of that choice. For example, knowing that one wants to go to medical school is different from knowing that one wants to be a cardiac surgeon.

Indeed, empirical research indicates that identity synthesis and confusion are negatively interrelated, but are not complete opposites and can coexist within a single individual (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Wang, & Olthuis, 2009). Synthesis and confusion predict well-being both collaboratively and independently (Syed et al., 2013) – that is, confusion predicts well-being negatively even after the positive effects of synthesis on well-being have been taken into account. From an Eriksonian perspective, there is an overall "sense" of identity that emerges at the intersection of synthesis and confusion, but synthesis and confusion continue to predict outcomes over and above this overall sense of identity (Schwartz et al., 2009). For example,

someone who is "trying out" different types of dating relationships may feel sure of the type of person he wants to date, but less sure about the specific parameters of the relationship (e.g., casual sexual relationship versus serious committed partnership). These aspects of certainty and uncertainty may be important over and above the person's general sense of self as a dating partner.

Although confusion may be viewed as undesirable and harmful to one's sense of self, it is nonetheless important because total self-knowledge is neither possible nor desirable. Specifically, if someone were to know, and be sure of, every possible aspect of her/himself, there would be no room for that person to revise, update, or change her/his sense of self, and turning points would be virtually impossible. Thus, given that the self continues to develop throughout adulthood (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Pals, 2006), it is essential to maintain at least some confusion – some areas in which further self-development remains possible.

Mechanisms of Identity Development With that said, Erikson (1950) was largely silent in terms of the specific mechanisms through which one's sense of identity is developed. However, Marcia (1966; Kroger & Marcia, 2011) extracted from Erikson's writings the assumedly independent dimensions of *exploration* and *commitment*. Exploration refers to sorting through a set of potential choices, and commitment represents making a decision to move forward with one or more of these choices. Early writings building on Marcia's work (e.g., Grotevant, 1987) described exploration as the primary process underlying identity development, with commitment conceptualized as an outcome of that process. More recent work has (a) cast commitment as a dynamic process rather than as an outcome and (b) delineated multiple variants of exploration and of commitment (Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, & Beyers, 2006). Such work has also redefined exploration as a process of questioning commitments – while also proposing that one can consider new commitments *without* discarding one's existing identity elements (e.g., Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008; Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani, Klimstra, & Meeus, 2012). For example, someone who has decided that she wants to become a doctor can then consider *what type* of doctor she wants to be, without discarding the original choice to become a doctor.

More specifically, identity development involves a two-phase process of forming and evaluating commitments. Options are explored in breadth, where the person considers a range of possible alternatives, and if this search is successful, the person will select one or more of these options. The person then examines the selected options in depth and decides whether these options fit with her/his overall sense of self. If they do, the person will likely identify with these choices and integrate them into her/his identity. If they do not, they may be discarded – initiating a new process of exploring new options in breadth. Luyckx, Klimstra, Duriez, Van Petegem, and Beyers (2013) provide a more comprehensive review of these identity processes.

Another key identity process is *reconsideration of commitment*, whereby the person may question or discard choices that are no longer functional or that do not fit with her/his present or anticipated sense of self (Crocetti et al., 2008). Although reconsideration appears to be a key mechanism through which identity is revised, it

is nonetheless linked with symptoms of anxiety and depression (Schwartz, Klimstra, Luyckx, Hale, & Meeus, 2012). That is, discarding or loosening one's commitments may be developmentally appropriate, but it is destabilizing nonetheless. In some cases, counseling may be helpful (or necessary) to help the person move forward through the process of making commitments.

On the other hand, *ruminative exploration* represents a counterproductive identity process that does not appear to serve essential developmental functions (Luyckx et al., 2008). More or less, ruminative exploration occurs through obsessive questioning of one's choices, a feeling of paralysis and pervasive self-doubt, and a sense that whatever one does will not be good enough (Luyckx, Soenens, Goossens, Beckx, & Wouters, 2008). Ruminative exploration undermines the process of healthy identity development and is associated with a sense of confusion, anomie, and low self-esteem (Luyckx et al., 2013). In essence, ruminative exploration interferes with the I's ability to develop and refine the me.

We do not yet know exactly what predicts which individuals will follow a "reconsideration" route, which individuals will follow a "rumination" route, and which individuals will follow some combination of the two. However, it may be possible to put forth some speculations. Reconsideration is engaged purposefully as a way of shedding commitments that are no longer functional and no longer fit with one's current sense of self. As such, reconsideration may reflect a "developmental individualization" strategy where the person agentically maps out and follows a life path (Côté, 2000). On the other hand, ruminative exploration reflects an underlying sense of being lost, unable to sustain identity exploration, and "stuck" in the identity development process (Luyckx et al., 2008) – or what Côté (2000) terms "default individualization." In other words, reconsideration is a somewhat painful but purposeful – but nonetheless agentic – process, whereas ruminative exploration is unproductive, frustrating, and damaging to one's self-esteem. One's sense of agency and self-direction is very likely a key determinant in terms of which route one will follow.

Identity and Self-Concept: Contemporary Versions of the I and the Me?

Based at least in part in James's and Cooley's pioneering work on self as knower (the I) and as that which is known (the me), and on Erikson's work on the development of identity across the lifespan, largely separate literatures have developed on "self" and "identity." Whether or not self and identity are distinct or overlapping has been a subject of some debate (see Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011, for an extended discussion). At least some "self" concepts are reflexive – that is, the self is an object to which something is done (i.e., the me; Leary & Tangney, 2003). For example, self-esteem represents the valence with which the self is regarded (Swann et al., 2007), and self-regulation represents ways in which one's behavior is

managed and controlled (Zimmerman, 2008). On the other hand, other "self" constructs reflect an active role – that is, the I. For example, self-determination represents the ways in which one enacts and pursues choices and life paths (e.g., intrinsically or extrinsically; Deci & Ryan, 2008). As we discuss later in this chapter, self-concept is largely reflexive but may, to an extent, straddle the demarcation between author (I) and story (me).

Identity, at least from an Eriksonian perspective, is generally assumed to be an active process (i.e., initiated by the I). According to neo-Eriksonian identity theories, processes of exploration and commitment are used to develop a sense of self. Exploration involves both sorting through a range of potential alternatives (exploration in breadth) and examining choices one has already enacted (exploration in depth). Commitment involves both the act of making a choice (commitment making) and the process of integrating that choice into one's overall sense of self (identification with commitment). Commitments can be revised through reconsideration, which is destabilizing but often developmentally necessary. Rumination and worry during the process of exploration tend to interfere with one's ability to sustain the exploration through the formation of commitments.

If identity – and the processes that underlie it – represents the agent, or the I, then self-concept represents the me that is created through this process. Specifically, self-concept represents a theory of who one is and how one came to be where one currently is in one's life (Harter, 2008). Although the process is more complex than this, a useful heuristic might be to portray identity as the painter and the self as the canvas. The choices and commitments one enacts create the portrait that represents who one is. As such, self-concept clarity represents, to some extent, the extent to which one's various identity contents (e.g., identity elements selected in various domains) fit together into a coherent whole.

At the same time, however, we should note that the social and cultural environments constrain the choices that one is able to make – that is, the properties of the canvas constrain the options available to the painter. One cannot select an identity alternative that is not available within one's sociocultural context. For example, Oyserman and Destin (2010) found that young inner-city adolescents did not view college and professional occupations as compatible with their socioeconomic and cultural realities. Indeed, the intervention that Oyserman and Destin developed (see also Destin & Oyserman, 2010) was designed to help these adolescents to *change* their views of what is possible and to pursue goals that they had thought were impossible for them. There may be other scenarios, however, such as girls and women in patriarchal and theocratic societies, where many options are simply not available to be selected. The person must then select from the range of options that are available – and in some cases, the selecting will largely be done for the person by parents and other elders (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001).

Further, it is possible that there is a "reciprocal direction of effects" between identity (the I) and self-concept (the me). According to the "self-system" proposed by Schwartz et al. (2012), self-concept clarity is developed, at least in part, through establishing identity commitments. However, the me also influences the I – the I is able to observe the me and decide "Is this who I wish to be?" Such a process is not

unlike a carpenter looking at a house s/he is building and asking "Am I happy with the job I have done thus far?" If the answer is no, a process of reconsideration is likely to ensue so that the self-concept (me) can be revised.

One of Erikson's (1950) core propositions was that an internally consistent sense of self is required to support an agentic, self-directed, and purposeful life. Campbell et al. (1996) largely echo this principle in their definition of self-concept clarity: "the extent to which the contents of an individual's self-concept (e.g., perceived personal attributes) are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable" (p. 141). Self-concept clarity appears to represent more "me" than "I," given that it represents a self-image that is *created* rather than the process of *creating* that self-image. Nonetheless, self-concept clarity represents a positive and internally consistent sense of self that can then direct future choices and behaviors.

Not surprisingly, research has found that self-concept clarity is strongly related to indices of well-being (positively) and maladjustment (negatively) (Błażek & Besta, 2012; van Dijk, et al., 2014). Self-concept clarity may also play an intervening role in the link between stress and well-being, such that individuals with greater self-concept clarity may be better equipped to handle stressful situations (Ritchie, Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Gidron, 2011). As is the case with identity synthesis, self-concept clarity provides a sense of continuity and knowledge about who one is – and is not. A clear and stable sense of self may help to ground the person and to provide internal resources to protect against potentially disequilibrating situations.

An important theme of the present chapter has been the similarities and differences between processes underlying personal identity and self-concept clarity. Only a small number of studies have empirically investigated the links between these two constructs. At the daily level, Schwartz et al. (2011) found that personal identity commitment and self-concept clarity were mutually reinforcing – predicting one another across days within a week. At the "macro"level (i.e., assessed over longer intervals such as annually or semiannually), Schwartz et al. (2012) found similar effects between personal identity commitment and self-concept clarity. Interestingly, although personal identity commitment and self-concept clarity were only modestly intercorrelated within time (r's ranged from 0.11 to 0.26), linear change slopes for these two variables over a 5-year span were correlated at $r = 0.47$. Further, reinforcing Campbell et al.'s (1996) framing of self-concept clarity as a stable sense of self, self-concept clarity ($r = 0.47$ between years 1 and 2 and 0.69 between years 4 and 5) was significantly more stable across years than were identity commitments ($r = 0.33$ between years 1 and 2 and 0.48 between years 4 and 5). Although Campbell et al. (1996) did not explicitly state that self-concept clarity would be stable over time, results from Schwartz et al. (2012) suggest that it may be more stable than personal identity commitment is.

There is also an important inverse interchange between self-concept clarity and reconsideration. At both the daily and macrolevels, the interplay between self-concept clarity and reconsideration of commitments suggested that instability in or dissatisfaction with one's self-concept appeared to prompt the process of reconsidering (and potentially revising) one's current commitments. The "self-system" (Schwartz et al., 2012) appeared to operate in such a way that commitments

facilitate a stable and internally consistent sense of self, which in turn protects against internalizing problems. When one's commitments are no longer functional or satisfying, self-concept clarity is likely to erode, and the resulting feelings of distress may serve as a signal that one's sense of self is in need of revision.

This empirically supported portrayal of the self-system – where identity commitments (the I) facilitate self-concept clarity (the me) – is largely consistent with early theorists (e.g., Cooley, 1902; James, 1890) who posited such a demarcation between "self as subject" and "self as object." Further, this self-system supports Luyckx et al. (2006), who postulated that commitments exert a protective and promotive function only if they are internalized into the person's sense of self. The self-system construct is also wholly consistent with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) and with eudaimonic theories of well-being (Waterman & Schwartz, 2013) – which state that identity commitments are most likely to contribute to well-being and to protect against internalizing symptoms if those commitments provide a sense of competence, mastery, and self-realization. Self-concept clarity appears to be one mechanism through which identity commitments can contribute to flourishing and optimal adjustment. In turn, self-concept clarity (or lack thereof) serves as the "barometer" that indicates whether revisions to one's sense of self (i.e., identity exploration and reconsideration) are necessary.

So it appears that we know some of the details regarding the ways in which personal identity and self-concept clarity work together and contribute to psychosocial functioning. However, the literature linking personal identity and self-concept clarity is in its relative infancy, and there is much that we do not yet know. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to sketching out some of these areas where more work is needed. Broadly, we address two such areas – the domain specificity of self and identity and mechanisms of change in self and identity processes.

Domain Specificity of Self and Identity

Thus far we have referred to self-concept and personal identity in general processes. However, there are many content domains in which self and identity processes operate. Some examples of such domains include career, friend and partner relationships, religiosity, morality, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, and family (see Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011, for a collection of reviews). Because these content domains are part of one's general sense of self, demarcations between and among domains are at least somewhat arbitrary (e.g., Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008). For example, the religion and sexuality domains are clearly related, as are the ethnicity and nationality domains (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Schachter, 2004). Religious individuals may perceive (or place) restrictions on their sexual expression and relationships, and some immigrant and minority individuals may perceive incompatibilities between their ethnic group and the larger country in which they live.

The issue of domain specificity is important because "overall" identity is not simply the sum of domain-specific identity components. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the concept of *identity centrality* (Cheek & Briggs, 1982; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) holds that not all dimensions of identity are equally important for everyone (see Meca et al., 2015, for empirical support) and that a given identity domain is most likely to influence psychosocial and health outcomes if the person considers that domain to be important (see Brittian et al., 2013, for empirical support). Second, there is evidence that identity processes within specific content domains may predict psychosocial adjustment over and above the effects of global/overall identity processes (Vosylis, Erentaitė, & Crocetti, in press). For example, commitments in areas such as relationships, career, and morality can carry importance that is not necessarily reflective in one's "global" or "overall" sense of self.

Self-concept has also been considered in a number of content domains. Harter (2012), for example, examines self-concept in areas such as academic performance, athletic competence, and social relationships. Academic self-concept, for example, is often operationalized as one's evaluation of one's educational abilities and achievements (Marsh & O'Mara, 2008). In this regard, self-concept has often been framed and assessed in terms of the person's perceived competence in a given task or pursuit (or her/his feelings about this level of competence) – and as such, it is not surprising that self-concept in a given domain is closely related to the person's performance in that domain (Denissen, Zarrett, & Eccles, 2007). Even in light of findings that self-concept in a given domain appears to have causal precedence vis-à-vis performance in that domain (e.g., Marsh & Martin, 2011), it is clear that self-concept – at least as operationalized in much of the literature – carries a very different meaning than identity does.

The domain specificity of self-concept also appears to be quite different from the domain specificity of identity. Whereas identity domains refer to content areas in which the person may or may not have considered options and made choices, self-concept domains refer to content areas in which the person feels more versus less competent and able to succeed. This distinction between identity domains and self-concept domains again appears to reflect the difference between the I and the me. The I is an active agent that makes choices, observes how well those choices fit with one's overall sense of self, and revisits these choices when necessary. The me is more of a recipient of self-relevant information – for example, how good of a student am I? How well do I fit in with other people? Am I good-looking or proficient at playing sports? Of course, the me can relay information back to the I, which can then revise its choices so that they fit better with the self-relevant information received and processed by the me. But identity – at least in the Eriksonian and neo-Eriksonian sense of the term – appears to function as a "subject," whereas self-concept appears to function as an "object."

Similarly, identity domains appear to be those in which the person is charged with making choices, identifying with groups, and plotting a course of action – whereas self-concept domains appear to be those in which the person performs a self-evaluation and appraises how competent s/he is at performing tasks in that

domain. Domains such as career choice, religious affiliation, ethnicity, and nationality are relevant to identity and *may be* (but are not necessarily) relevant to self-concept. However, in some cases, self-concept domains can also be identity domains – for example, academics is a self-concept domain in that the person must evaluate how well s/he performs in school, but academics is also an identity domain in that the person must select courses and decide how invested s/he will be in schoolwork. Similarly, individuals have career identities that direct behavior, but at the same time, self-conceptions within the career domain may inform how the person chooses to pursue identity-related goals.[1]

It should be noted, however, that self-concept clarity was designed as a global measure rather than as a domain-specific one. Similar to Erikson's identity synthesis, self-concept clarity refers to how the various aspects of oneself fit together – where these aspects may be domain-specific identity elements or self-evaluations. For example, Schachter (2004) notes that highly religious people may find themselves wanting to engage in sexual relationships that are forbidden by their faith. The domains of career and family may also conflict for people who are planning to have children and who therefore must reconcile their occupational aspirations with their parenting goals (Cinamon, 2006). Such conflicts may reduce one's sense of self-concept clarity, especially if there does not appear to be a clear resolution to the dilemma.

However, can self-concept clarity be domain-specific? For example, if one considers oneself Christian but is ambivalent about some aspects of Christian religious doctrine, might this be reflected in one's sense of self-concept clarity *as a Christian*? Similarly, if one wanted to be a doctor but had some reservations about ethical practices in the medical profession, might these reservations undercut one's self-concept clarity as a future doctor? Some empirical work is underway in this direction: Talley and Stevens (in press) have developed a self-concept clarity measure for sexual identity.

Self-concept clarity might also be used to link domain-specific self-concept dimensions with the identity choices that might have the potential to change one's self-concept in a given domain. For example, whereas academic self-concept refers to how one views oneself as a student, *academic self-concept clarity* might be coined to refer to the ways in which one's various self-as-student evaluations fit together into a coherent whole. Academic self-concept clarity might further integrate these self-evaluations with the potential choices that one could make to better capitalize on the academic areas in which is strongest. For example, if an adolescent believes that she is not good at math but is very good at science and history, might it be beneficial for her to develop a clear sense of what she is and is not good at, and how that defines her as a student in general? This sense of academic self-concept clarity can then inform identity choices in terms of academic concentration and future career goals.

Such a process is consistent with the self-system proposed and validated by Schwartz et al. (2012), in that self-concept clarity (or lack thereof) serves as an

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[1] Thanks to Kenneth DeMaree for suggesting this example.

indicator whether one's current sense of self is in need of revision. Our hypothetical adolescent who realizes (or believes) that she is bad at math may develop a sense of herself as "good science and history student but bad math student." This adolescent may then reconsider the college majors that she had been contemplating to ensure that they do not require strong math skills.

Mechanisms of Change in Self and Identity Processes

The mechanisms through which identity changes have been investigated with increasing frequency in recent years. As noted earlier in this chapter, Marcia (1966) began by proposing exploration and commitment as the primary dimensions underlying identity development. Luyckx et al. (2006) and Crocetti et al. (2008) expanded on these dimensions in a number of ways, and these two models are remarkably consistent with one another. However, one notable inconsistency is the way in which exploration is conceptualized. Luyckx et al.'s dual-cycle model provides an explicit role for exploration in breadth as the vehicle through which one sorts through potential alternatives before settling on an initial set of commitments. Crocetti et al., however, in their three-process model, do not explicitly acknowledge exploration in breadth. Rather, their model represents a balance between certainty (commitment) and uncertainty (reconsideration). Commitments are revised by revisiting and potentially revising them, but not necessarily through a process of sorting through a new set of potential choices.

A possible integration between these two models might involve some kind of interplay between reconsideration and in-breadth exploration (Klimstra, Luyckx, & Meeus, 2012). The process of reconsideration may or may not involve letting go of one's existing commitments – in some cases it may be possible to reevaluate existing commitments without relinquishing them. For example, someone looking for a new job likely must remain committed (at least to some extent) to her/his current job until s/he is offered another job opportunity. Some form of exploration in breadth – not unlike a wide-ranging job search – may take place even while one's current commitments are still in place. It may also be possible to *add* new commitments to those one has already enacted, rather than replacing existing commitments with new ones. For example, having a child adds the role of parent to one's existing roles (e.g., husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend), and although these existing roles will likely be reworked to accommodate the parenting role, they are less likely to be abandoned (Katz-Wise, Priess, & Hyde, 2010).

Narrative identity research has also introduced a set of larger-scale change processes into the personal identity literature (see McAdams & McLean, 2013; McLean et al., 2007, for reviews). These change processes generally involve meaning-making, introspection, and a reframing of past events and relationships. For example, Adler (2012) studied adults in psychotherapy and asked them to write personal narratives after each therapy session. He found that a sense of agency, or control over one's life, emerged in the narratives just before improvements in mental health

were reported. Similarly, Pennebaker (1997) found that writing about and understanding the past – in other words, clarifying and integrating the "me" – also improves mental and physical health. Such findings are consistent with self-determination theory, in that a sense of autonomy and improved understanding of the self facilitates in making decisions that improve one's mental health. Importantly, agency can also involve control over how one views the past, even though the past itself cannot be changed.

Reframing negative events as learning experiences, growth opportunities, or turning points is also a form of identity change – a form that is linked with improved mental health (McLean & Pratt, 2006). For example, getting divorced, losing a parent, or suffering from addiction can be cast as critical points in one's life that prompted wholesale changes in how one views oneself. Narrative research has found that the way in which the past event is viewed *presently*, rather than how it was viewed when it occurred, most strongly predicts current well-being.

Similarly, research has indicated that people may develop a clearer and more integrated sense of self when they are reminded of their eventual mortality (Landau, Greenberg, Sullivan, Routledge, & Arndt, 2009). That is, prompting people to view life through a "big-picture" lens appears to lead them to develop a coherent narrative about themselves and their lives. This big-picture focus is similar to Erikson's (1950) concept of ego integrity, which refers to older people looking back on their lives and developing a positive, coherent story about the path they have traveled. Erikson postulated that impending death was what prompted older individuals to formulate a coherent life narrative – and Landau et al.'s findings suggest that such an effect can also be simulated by asking younger people to think about their deaths.

Although self-concept clarity has not been directly studied in relation to narrative identity processes, it stands to reason that increased agency, recasting negative experiences as turning points, and developing an integrated life story in the face of death would lead to greater clarity in one's self-concept. That is, returning to the subject-object model of the self put forth by James, Cooley, and others, when the I looks back at its experiences and "connects the dots" between and among these experiences – and identifies itself as the author of the story being written about itself – the me being created becomes clearer and easier to interpret. The basic needs enumerated within self-determination theory – autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2008) – are all provided through the process of self-authorship. In the most optimal scenario, the person recasts the life story in an agentic and self-directed way, chronicles important interpersonal relationships, and demonstrates ways in which s/he has achieved mastery and expertise during her/his life (McAdams, 2013). This definition of self-authorship and self-determination is quite parallel to the operational definition of self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996).

It is also essential to note that there are at least two general time scales at which identity operates (Lichtwarck-Aschoff, van Geert, Bosma, & Kunnen, 2008) – and we will add a third here. The "micro" level refers to hours and days – in other words, the ways in which identity processes change across short periods of time. The "macro" level refers to longer time intervals, such as months or years. A third level, the "lifetime" level, may come into play when one is looking back on one's life and

recounting one's story. Identity processes may operate *differently* at each of these levels, and as a result, self-concept clarity *may manifest itself differently* at each level. What does it mean to have a clear, consistent self-concept today, this afternoon, or one hour from now? When we look at self-concept clarity over a span of months or years, it is likely to represent an ability to "remain the same person" despite changing circumstances, relationships, and challenges. When an aging person looks back at her life and constructs a story to trace her experiences, decisions, and relationships over a lifetime, self-concept clarity may represent an ability to extract meaning from difficult experiences, to pinpoint a set of overarching themes, and to impart wisdom to others. Although the primary thrust of self-concept clarity remains constant across time scales, the way in which it would be conceptualized and measured appears to differ. So the ways in which self-concept clarity would need to be assessed – both empirically and clinically – differ across periods of the lifespan.

So the specific processes that one chooses as indices of personal identity and of self-concept clarity are likely to depend on the time scale(s) that one is examining, the type of research (e.g., quantitative, narrative, mixed method) in which one is engaging, and the specific objectives that the research is designed to pursue. Is the research focusing on the consistency of one's self-concept at a single point in time, across microlevel time, across macro-level time, or over a lifetime? It is essential to keep in mind that self- and identity-related constructs may take different forms depending on how, and for what purpose, they are being measured.

Conclusion: Practical and Intervention Considerations

In this chapter we have examined the interplay between personal identity and self-concept clarity. We have cast identity as analogous to the I, and self-concept clarity as analogous to the me, in James and Cooley's subject-object models of self (see Fig. 8.1). We have also drawn strong parallels between self-concept clarity and Erikson's notion of identity synthesis. To the extent to which identity is constructed in an active and agentic way, one's self-concept is likely to be well organized and coherent. The functions of identity (Adams & Marshall, 1996) include selecting targets toward which one's attention will be directed, providing a sense of coherence and constancy, offering direction for the future, enumerating goals, and providing a sense of control and agency. All of these functions appear to be associated with self-concept clarity and with Erikson's (1950) casting of identity synthesis. Specifically, self-concept clarity and identity synthesis involve a focus on both present and future, a sense of self-direction, and identifying those objectives on which one will focus one's energy.

One specific topic we have saved for the end of the chapter is implications for intervention. The identity intervention literature is fairly sparse, and only a small number of programs have been designed. Among these are strategies for helping young people to sort through available life alternatives and select those that are sup-

IDENTITY (I)   SELF (ME)

- Subject (Agent)   • Object (Construction)

- Storyteller   • Story

- Self-Determination   • Commitments Formed

- Painter   • Canvas
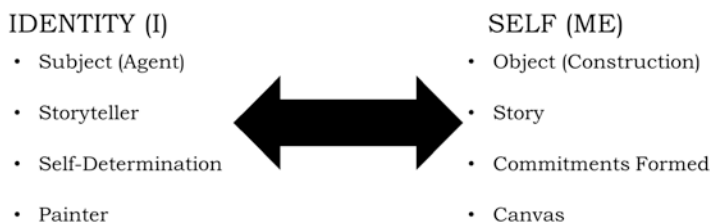
Fig. 8.1 Distinctions between the I and the me

ported by the strongest arguments (Ferrer-Wreder et al., 2002) and to identify the life goals that feel most consistent with one's "true self" (Schwartz, Kurtines, & Montgomery, 2005). Although these strategies have been able to promote the identity processes that they target, it is not known whether they also promote a clearer and more synthesized sense of self. It should be noted that intervention programs provide important opportunities to test theory by allowing for direct tests of process-outcome relationships (i.e., manipulating the active ingredient should produce changes in the outcome variables; Michie, Johnston, Francis, Hardeman, & Eccles, 2008). As a result, one strategy for examining the links between personal identity and self-concept clarity would be to promote personal identity (especially commitment processes) and ascertain the effects of these intervention strategies on self-concept clarity. Such intervention work would also tell us whether it is possible to promote coherence and consistency in one's sense of self through participatory exercises, group workshops, serious gaming, or other avenues through which identity interventions might be delivered.

A number of other intervention methods have been tried within the broader (not necessarily neo-Eriksonian) identity literature. For example, Destin and Oyserman (2010) conducted a randomized experiment where they either did (experimental condition) or did not (control condition) present low-income early adolescents with information linking educational attainment with adult earnings. Adolescents in the experimental condition were significantly more likely than those in the control condition to complete a schoolwork assignment following the experiment. That study suggests that connecting present identity choices with future life outcomes can change the behavior that is potentially linked with activating those future life outcomes. It would be important to know whether self-concept clarity, especially in the educational and occupational domains, increased among adolescents in the experimental condition. A clear sense of one's educational present and occupational future might potentially help adolescents to continue persisting in their schoolwork.

Work such as the various research directions we have proposed here will be important in advancing the literature on self-concept clarity and its links with personal identity. This link is more than just an academic exercise – establishing identity as the I and self-concept clarity as the me would provide clear targets and outcomes for intervention programs. We know that self-concept clarity is associated with a wide array of positive psychosocial and health outcomes, so a finding that personal identity interventions also increase self-concept clarity would then provide

a means for improving psychological (and perhaps physical) health. It is *essential* to increase the applied importance of the self-concept and identity literatures by linking these variables with important health and illness outcomes.

We also hope that this chapter will encourage a further "meeting of the minds" between the self-concept and identity literatures. The various literatures on "self" and "identity" have been talking past one another for many years (Vignoles et al., 2011), likely precluding important theoretical, empirical, and applied advances that could be facilitated by an integrative perspective. It is our hope that our chapter will inspire further collaboration between researchers working in these closely related fields of study.

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Chapter 9
Leadership, Work Careers, and Self-Concept Clarity

Seth M. Spain and Jayoung Kim

Abstract High self-concept clarity helps an individual to ground their behavior in consistent applications of their preferences, values, and principles. This consistency helps others to trust them and view them as being authentic. Both facilitate high-quality relationships that allow the individual to be comfortable and effectively assume leadership positions. Much of the existing literature on authenticity, however, assumes that the underlying character of the person is positive or socially valued. Many leaders have negative or socially reviled characteristics. We address questions about whether authenticity is still valuable in these cases. In all cases, we argue that it is best to know one's self well.

Keywords Authenticity · Authentic leadership · Destructive leadership · Personality · Self-concept clarity · Narcissism

Leadership, Work Careers, and Self-Concept Clarity

"If they don't stand for something, they'll fall for anything." This quotation is probably a kind of modern proverb, of unknown provenance (http://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/02/18/stand-fall/), but it seems to have first appeared in print in the writings of medical doctor Gordon A. Eadie (1926), about the mental well-being of industrial workers. The idea being that relatively young WWI veterans working in factories might not have understood that the war they fought in was only part of a larger conflict of ideas – of *meaning* – and, lacking said understanding, might not have the conviction to contribute positively toward their own *side*. That is, Eadie viewed understanding their own principles and values as essential to positively

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contributing to a shared enterprise. This is the essence of conviction. Below, we will argue that to stand for something, to have such conviction, it is necessary to, as Socrates taught, *know thyself* (Plato, 2005).

This fundamental concern – knowing oneself – haunts questions throughout a person's career. Should you remain in your current job or move laterally in the same organization? Should you move to a new employer in a similar job or relocate nationally or internationally? Should you change careers or start your own business, take a leadership position you're unsure about? Resolving such questions can be challenging, in that the answers can often have comparatively vast impact on a person's life, affecting where you live, who you know, and whether you have access to family support structures. How a person answers these questions depends, in most cases, on a variety of social, economic, and personal features. Such work-centric questions can potentially cause one to confront much more personal questions about fundamental values and preferences that might help cement self-knowledge. For instance, consider someone perfectly contented with her current job but given the opportunity to move to a new place with greater opportunity for personal development and career advancement. This person may not even have realized that such growth opportunities were important to her until confronted with this possibility.

In no domain of work do issues of self-knowledge and identity come up more than in leadership (e.g., Engle & Lord, 1997; Lord & Brown, 2001; Lord & Hall, 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). For instance, consider a recent write-up concerning US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement, "The speech was striking in its demonstration of how Trump has melded his self-conception to his vision of the nation he leads," (Waldman, 2017). Trump has never been described as particularly self-aware, so it may not be by design that his vision of the United States so closely reflects his personality (see McAdams (2016) for a discussion of Trump's lack of coherent personal narrative). *Vision* is, for many writers, *the* critical component separating leadership from mere *management* (e.g., Isaacson, 2011; Rowe, 2001; cf., Drucker, 2008). That is, leaders articulate a picture of the future, a direction for their group to work toward, whereas managers technically or bureaucratically implement the means of pursuing the goals manifest in the vision. Lacking a clear understanding of himself and his values or beliefs, Trump's presidency is described, even by conservative commentators, as *chaotic* (Goldberg, 2017) – the overarching vision is unclear, so informed primarily by Trump's idiosyncratic and *fleeting* perceptions and in-the-moment needs.

We might contrast such an inconsistent and unmoored leader with someone with consciously and tightly held principles like Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt's early childhood ill health led to a studied commitment to a kind of "manly virtue" that he held to throughout his adult life (e.g., Watts, 2003). This may have been a crafted persona, but Roosevelt committed to and developed it through habit and action, and his narrative of leading the strenuous life informed much of his politics, notably his conservationism and the Panama Canal construction (e.g., Powaski, 2017).

This gives us some idea about what *leaders* (contra-managers or administrators) do – they present a vision of what their social group should do; they give a goal to pursue or a destination to drive toward. But that function does not, in itself, give a
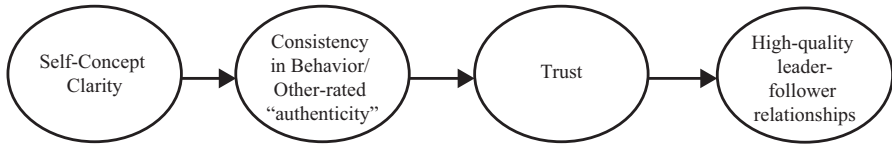
Fig. 9.1 Conceptual model of self-concept clarity to leader-follower relationship quality process

strong indication about *who* fulfills the leadership role. Questions about what sort of person can be a great leader date to antiquity. Answers have differed throughout history. In the twentieth and twenty-first century, the influence of psychology has helped to place the focus on personal characteristics of the individuals inhabiting leadership roles (e.g., Bass, 1990; cf., Burns, 1978). One idea is that great leaders often have a nearly unshakeable faith in themselves (Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 2003; cf., Lilienfeld, Waldman, Landfield, Watts, Rubenzer, & Faschingbauer, 2012). These leaders clearly know what they want, what they value, and *who they are*. For instance, Walter Isaacson presented a portrait of the late Apple co-founder and CEO Steve Jobs as a man of strong beliefs and high standards for himself and others (Isaacson, 2011). In an interview with the New York Times, Jobs' biographer Walter Isaacson discussed this, saying, "[H]is petulance was not some isolated thing. It was part of his passion for perfection. I think *he truly knew* that by being demanding, he was being inspiring. He created incredibly loyal teams. He *convinced people that they could do the impossible*" (Bilton, 2011). This example helps to see Isaacson's belief in Jobs' self-understanding and its impact on the loyalty and effectiveness of his subordinates.

Such understanding helps to underline that the most fundamental skills that a would-be leader must master are *intrapersonal skills* (Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 2003) – it is almost axiomatic that leaders know their own characters and motivations clearly. Hogan and Warrenfeltz argued that, of all the domains of skills that a manager needs (intrapersonal, interpersonal, leadership, and business skills), intrapersonal skills are the most difficult to develop and therefore require considerable effort and time. In this chapter, we will argue that self-concept clarity is a useful conceptual tool for examining this self-knowledge and placing individuals' careers and ascent into leadership roles into context.

In the following discussion, we will lay out a model of leadership that fundamentally depends on self-understanding and self-awareness. We will use self-concept clarity as the lens through which we view these domains. We will try to show how self-concept clarity facilitates authenticity and consistency in behavior, which helps to foster trust in interpersonal relationships. In the end, it is trust that facilitates strong, positive leadership to occur (see Fig. 9.1).

The Self, Leadership, and Careers

We begin by setting the definitions of our terms. By careers we mean the everyday usage, which we specify as the life history of a person's work. That is, every serious job that an individual has, and the historical arrangement of those jobs within the

person's life, is the person's career. We take this fairly large view of careers because it will help us to understand the overall picture of how the individual functions in leadership roles. Hogan and Warrenfeltz discussed the importance of the whole of a person's experience in managing others by quoting the humorist Will Rogers, "Good judgment is the result of experience, which is often the result of bad judgment." A person's previous work experiences, good and bad, help shape their overall approach to leadership.

There are many definitions and conceptual frameworks that we could apply to leadership. We will focus on discussing leadership within formal work roles. That is, a person is a leader when they have formal supervisory authority of others. Some writers enforce a distinction between the activities of leadership per se and those of *management* or *administration*. By focusing on formal supervisory roles, generally the purview of "management," we might be accused of ignoring this difference. We believe, however, that leadership as a concept is inextricably practically linked to more formal managerial roles (Rowe, 2001; cf., Drucker, 2008; Jex, 2002, p. 269). Further, we will focus on the concept of *authentic leadership*, which, while broadly defined, generally emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, self-discipline, and conviction in following and espousing one's true values in their leadership role (cf., Northouse, 2016). The key for the present discussion is that an authentic leader needs to be true to him- or herself, to know who they are, what they value, and what their principles are. By knowing this, the authentic leader can align his or her behavior with their core character.

Finally, our conception of self-concept clarity is a meta-cognitive view of an individual's *certainty* about the contents of their identity (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman, 1996). Self-concept clarity "is concerned with the degree to which individuals have clear, well-defined, and stable perceptions of who they are on a day-to-day basis. Captured with questionnaire items such as, 'In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am,' self-concept clarity provides a proxy for the clarity and certainty individuals have in the structure of their identity," (Lodi-Smith, Spain, Cologgi, & Roberts, 2017, p. 756). A person low in self-concept clarity might hem and haw when asked, "who are you?," but a person high in self-concept clarity should, typically, have no problem answering. Such people *know* what they know about themselves; they have confidence in their self-knowledge (whether such knowledge is *objective knowledge* is, however, a more delicate question, e.g., Guerretaz & Arkin, 2016). We therefore see self-concept clarity as encompassing self-knowledge, self-understanding, and self-awareness. We will argue that high self-concept clarity allows an individual to articulate a clear point of view and demonstrate *conviction* in their beliefs, each of which can help the person to provide a clear and compelling vision, which in turn, rallies followers (e.g., Rowe, 2001).

Leadership and Aspects of the Self

Why do people follow some other people? That is, what makes a leader a leader? Multiple personality characteristics predict who emerges as the leader of a group, especially intelligence, self-monitoring, and the dominance aspect of extraversion

(Rueb, Erskine, & Foti, 2008; cf., Lord, De Vader, & Alliger, 1986). In general, the suggestion is that individuals who correctly perceive the social situation they are embedded in and adapt their behavior to those circumstances are likely to emerge as leaders (e.g., Jex, 2002; cf., Bedeian & Day, 2004). Additionally, those who want *power* are likely to acquire it (e.g., Pfeffer, 2010; Russell, 1938/2004), so the fact that relatively greater social dominance is associated with leader emergence should come as no surprise.

How does *knowing* about your own values, motives, and other characteristics help with leadership? Two key functions that leaders provide are *making sense* and *providing a vision* (Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski, & Senge, 2007). That is, leaders act as filters and interpreters of their groups' circumstances and situation, helping to determine meaning for the group and to articulate a view of the future. Leaders with a clear sense of themselves are more likely to do each of these functions in a compelling way. That is, leaders with high self-concept clarity can more easily understand how new or unfolding events relate to their current circumstances and have a more clearly held picture of their desired end-state and goals. In this way, leaders with high self-concept clarity are likely to communicate with followers about these matters in an authentic way that shows conviction. For instance, individuals high in self-concept clarity tend to proactively engage and use cooperative problem-solving when their group has social conflict (Bechtoldt, De Dreu, Nijstad, & Zapf, 2010).

Skills for Leadership

Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) outlined a domain model of *competencies* or skills that are necessary for leadership in business and organizations: (1) intrapersonal skills, (2) interpersonal skills, (3) leadership skills, and (4) business skills. These competencies can be thought of as an ascending ladder of skill domains, with each layer depending on those that came before it. This means that the most fundamental, most foundational aspect of such skills are those in the intrapersonal domain, which Hogan and Warrenfeltz described as consisting of three areas: core self-esteem (or resilience), which involves being self-assured, stable, emotionally positive, and not easily upset versus self-critical, emotionally unstable, unhappy, in both easily upset, and in frequent need of positive reassurance (p. 78); attitudes toward authority, such that people with positive attitudes are conforming and compliant and easy to manage, while those with negative attitudes are rebellious, nonconforming, and difficult to manage; and self-control such that individuals with high self-control are self-disciplined, planful, and abstemious, against those who lack self-control and who are self-indulgent, impulsive, and undisciplined.

For the present consideration, it is important to understand the purpose that Hogan and Warrenfeltz had in discussing intrapersonal skills. They were arguing about the best way to educate managers. In this spirit, they discuss how important it is to accurately assess and provide feedback about students' intrapersonal skills. Why? Because *knowing* the content of one's identity is useful for leveraging

strengths, combatting weaknesses, and committing to a clear perspective (see also, Light, this volume). Lacking such self-knowledge or having little confidence in one's self-knowledge is a recipe for indecisiveness and inconsistent behavior.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is a concept without a clear definition (cf., Bennis, 2003; George, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Northouse, 2016) but that at its core identifies authentic leaders as those who possess self-knowledge and a distinct point of view that reflects clarity about their fundamental values and beliefs (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Various perspectives emphasize self-awareness and openness about one's self, values, and motives with followers (e.g., Northouse, 2016). For our purposes, leaders are authentic when they behave and present themselves in ways that are consistent with their core character and values, with their deepest sense of who they *are* (cf., Heidegger, 1927/ 1962). This is like Polonius's advice, "To thine own self be true" (Shakespeare, 1975/ 1990; however, readers of Shakespeare should know to be cautious of following advice from Polonius).

For instance, consider the following thought experiment. Think of a nasty, rude, self-absorbed leader. *Most* well-socialized individuals would work to cover these characteristics up, but should that be the case for leaders (Bedeian & Day, 2004)? Consider Richard Nixon, for instance, who loudly declared that he was "not a crook!" and presented himself as seldom drinking, while the Watergate scandal belied the former claim and staffers recall putting a drunk Nixon back to bed regularly (e.g., Summer, 2000; Weiner, 2015; indeed, it seems that Nixon had a spectacularly low tolerance for alcohol and that it functioned as a sort of "truth serum" for him, cf., Summer, 2000, pp. 3–4). This is in contrast with Donald Trump, who during his presidential campaign claimed to be "so greedy" (Klein, 2016). Both Nixon and Trump possessed characteristics that are not generally valued by society, but Nixon tried to hide his darker side by habitually lying, while Trump enthusiastically laid claim to (at least some of) his darker characteristics (while Trump has a reputation for not telling the truth, this is often implied to be "bullshitting," not lying, per se. While the liar understands what is true and lies to some purpose, the bullshitter is not interested in what is "true." For the bullshitter, "truth" is only what is needed now; he will say anything at all; e.g., Frankfurt, 2005). Nixon was not acting authentically, where it can be argued, Trump was. As we can see, authenticity is not an unambiguously good concept (e.g., Varga & Guignon, 2016) – a person can be authentic about destructive characteristics of the self, an "authentic asshole" (cf., James, 2012, 2016).

In an exchange of letters with Dave Day in 2004, Art Bedeian argued that trust was essential for leadership, which is a relationship between leader and follower (Bedeian & Day, 2004). He further argued that high self-monitors, leaders who do not follow their "true north," their principles and convictions, are difficult for followers to trust and, in essence if not in effect, are not "true leaders" (cf., George,

2003). So, Bedeian was essentially arguing that even if they are in a position of authority (management), high self-monitors are not *authentic* leaders. In response, Day argued that high self-monitors are flexible and responsive to interpersonal cues, which can make them effective in leadership roles.

It seems individuals who are high in self-concept clarity tend to be more authentic in this sense, that is, that their self-presentations are aligned more closely with their identities than are those of individuals with low self-concept clarity. For instance, among adolescents, online self-presentations were reported as more consistent with their self when they had high self-concept clarity than low (Fullwood, May, & Chao-Hwa, 2016). In addition, individuals with high self-concept clarity have been found to have higher self-other agreement in ratings of their own personalities and other measures (Lewandowski & Nardone, 2012).

Why should we value consistency so highly? For one, socially inconsistent leaders take up a lot of our resources. For instance, consistently socially supportive leaders are generally good, and socially undermining leaders (those whose criticism appears personal and vindictive or who otherwise present obstacles to their subordinates' performance) are generally bad (e.g., Vinokur & van Ryn, 1993). What is interesting is that "fickle" leaders (in Landy & Conte's 2007 terminology), those who are inconsistently social undermining, sometimes being supportive and sometimes obstructive, are the worst leaders, worse even than the consistently undermining ones (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002). In this case, the inconsistent social undermining requires more emotional resources to deal with than the consistent social undermining. That is, a boss who is always awful is easier to dismiss (*he's just terrible, I don't need to worry, it's not about me!*) than one who is only frequently supportive but also often undermining (*who will I get today, Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde?* cf., Landy & Conte, 2007, p. 512). Since the behavior of these sorts of leaders is hard to predict, it is essentially impossible for their subordinates to develop even the rudiments of trust in them. Worse, they are more difficult to construct socioemotional defenses against than consistently difficult leaders. This may not be a general result, however. We might expect that individuals in high-power distance country might tolerate more radical behaviors in their leaders than those from lower power distance cultures – this seems to be the case for the "benevolent dictatorship" of the otherwise authoritarian *paternalistic leadership* style (e.g., Aycan, Schyns, Sun, Felfe, & Sahar, 2013).

And there lies the essence of self-concept clarity in authentic leadership. Since individuals with high self-concept clarity act with consistency and a clear sense of who they are, they are easier for their subordinates to (a) understand and (b) predict. This makes trust relatively easy to develop and allows the subordinate to have a clear idea of who the boss is, above and beyond being about to anticipate the boss's behavior. And this is the answer to the riddle of the authentic asshole mentioned above. When a person is clear about being a cad, we might be disturbed or even disgusted by their behavior, but we should never be *surprised*. We will now consider a paradigm case of assholes – the narcissist (cf., James, 2012) – and consider authenticity versus a lack thereof in their career dynamics.

Authenticity, Narcissism, and Managerial Progress Consider how relatively destructive managers progress in their careers (e.g., Spain, Harms, & Wood, 2016). These leaders often display narcissistic characteristics (e.g., Spain, Harms, & LeBreton, 2014). There are two basic pathways for such narcissistic leaders to advance: the *competence* path (e.g., Napoleon, see below) and the *bluster* path (e.g., Donald Trump; cf. Spain et al., 2016). In the competence path, the narcissist's great confidence in him- or herself provides motivation to strive for excellence in the domain. In the bluster path, the narcissist's self-enhancement efforts take primary emphasis, allowing him or her to impress others and convince them to follow, without demonstrating (or even necessarily *possessing*) competence.

The competence path is authentic, in that the narcissistic leader really believes in their own greatness. They are motivated to *prove* the greatness to others. The bluster path is inauthentic, in that the narcissistic leader fails to demonstrate any good reason to follow them. We might speculate that the competence approach is more likely in grandiose narcissists, since the grandiose narcissist's self-image more or less matches with their larger-than-life presentation and the bluster approach more likely in vulnerable narcissists, since their self-presentation is a reaction to their weak self-image and unperformed self-doubt (cf., Spain et al., 2016; see Miller, Gentile, Wilson, & Campbell, 2013 for further elaboration of the two varieties of narcissism). Both paths could lead to derailment, but the competent narcissist is likely to derail only due to ordinary failure, while the blustering narcissist can be *exposed* – shown to be less great than they presented themselves. That is, the grandiose narcissist is presenting himself as he truly sees himself, with great confidence. The vulnerable narcissist likely has weak (true) confidence that they are as great as they wish other people to believe, and they are likely unwilling to put forth the effort to develop the competency needed to be truly great, getting by on bluster.

For instance, consider Napoleon again, a grandiose narcissist if ever there were one. Napoleon was not known for being a particularly great student, but he was a voracious reader (de Bourrienne, 1829), especially classics, history, and military matters. He truly dedicated himself to learning everything needed to be the greatest general in history. And his successes seemed to indicate that he had. Nonetheless, his trusted lieutenants strongly advised him not to march into Russia, and in an act of monumental hubris, he sacked those lieutenants instead of listening to them (Kroll, Toombs, & Wright, 2000). And the rest is left to history. Napoleon cannot be accused of inauthenticity here. He was true to his conviction of his own greatness – if anything, he was too confident in his own abilities.

Future Directions

The explicit role that self-concept clarity plays in the emergence of leaders and their effectiveness is a new area, with essentially no direct empirical evidence one way or the other. We have several concrete proposals for future empirical research. First, we proposed that a leader's self-concept clarity should be related to the level of trust

a subordinate places in the leader. While important in itself, this does not clearly mean that leaders high in self-concept clarity are likely to be effective, leaving us with the question, does self-concept clarity have a relationship with leader effectiveness or only subordinate trust? That is, we would expect higher levels of trust, but does that trust "automatically" translate into more effective leadership?

Second, we would also expect that leaders high in self-concept clarity should be perceived as more authentic by their subordinates, implying a strong positive relationship between leader-rated self-concept clarity and subordinate-rated authentic leadership. Are there boundary conditions on such a relationship, and does the relationship flow from the process model outlined in Fig. 9.1? As for boundary conditions, the Bedeian and Day (2004) dialogue discussed above implies that there are two possible outcomes for "inauthentic" leaders – high self-monitors, whom they call chameleons. They can be flexible and responsive to subordinates and others and, therefore, effective (Day's position) or they can be seen as inauthentic and shallow, unprincipled, resulting in low levels of trust from subordinates (Bedeian's position). Self-concept clarity can inform that discussion: for instance, consider someone who is a high self-monitor who is either (a) low in self-concept clarity or (b) high in self-concept clarity. Situation (a) sounds the most like Bedeian's position, a person with no "core" to dictate the longer-term objectives of their behavior, and therefore likely to act in an instrumental and unprincipled way. Situation (b) might be more like Day's position – a person with core convictions/principles, who adjust their behavior in a manner that accommodates rather than acquiesces to others. These two self-relevant variables seem likely to have important interactive effects in a leader's relationship quality, such that leaders for high self-monitors, those lower in SCC, have lower subordinate relationship quality (as measured by leader-member exchange or trust in the leader) than those high in self-concept clarity.

Third, we argued above that the importance self-concept clarity plays in leader emergence is to encourage subordinates to see the leader as confident and competent, as well as authentic. This idea can be unpacked by comparing the role that self-concept clarity plays in leader emergence with two self-relevant constructs that might play analogous roles: self-esteem and narcissism. That is, for instance, self-concept clarity and self-esteem both have implications for appearing "confident and competent" to subordinates (i.e., they help the person "give the appearance of 'leaderness'" to subordinates; cf., Lord & Dinh, 2014). How do the effects of these constructs compare with one another? Since they represent distinct paths to a leaderly appearance, do the two interact in predicting subordinate outcomes, such leader satisfaction, subordinate performance/leader effectiveness, or trust? Similar questions could be asked for narcissism, in that grandiose narcissists appear full of confidence and believe in themselves and their own ideas (e.g., Spain et al., 2014, for a review), so they often appear leader-like – at least early on in a relationship – and, therefore, emerge as leaders in leaderless situations (cf., Dinh & Lord, 2014). We might suspect that self-concept clarity could help protect narcissists from some of their worst excesses in interpersonal relations (e.g., Stucke & Sporer, 2002).

Conclusion

High self-concept clarity is a very useful characteristic for an aspiring leader to possess. The bedrock of leadership skills involves confident knowledge of one's self: strengths, weaknesses, values, principles, and so on (e.g., Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 2003). Understanding one's self and developing confidence and clarity in that understanding should, under most circumstances, help to clarify one's vision, to help give one a consistent basis for behavior, and to project a steadiness that allows others to better anticipate your actions and understand your point of view. This facilitates trust, which grounds the leader-follower relationship. Knowing oneself was an important element of Socratic philosophy for all these and other reasons. Deep and confident conceptions of the self ground behavior, providing a foundation that can help prevent falling for foolish fads or fancies, as Dr. Eadie warned against decades ago.

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Chapter 10
Self-Concept Clarity, Self-Regulation, and Psychological Well-Being

Alysson E. Light

Abstract Previous research finds a robust positive relationship between self-concept clarity and well-being. However, the causal direction and mechanism of this relationship remains ambiguous. I propose that self-concept clarity may foster well-being by facilitating successful self-regulation and goal pursuit. This chapter outlines the role of the self-concept in several prominent theories of self-regulation, and details how, given these mechanistic roles, an unclear sense of self might undermine self-regulation and goal pursuit. Focusing on self-regulation may help to differentiate self-concept clarity from its close correlate, self-esteem, as low self-esteem and low self-concept clarity are associated with unique predictions in the domain of goal pursuit. I argue that thinking about the mechanisms linking self-concept clarity to positive outcomes can help us to better understand self-concept clarity more generally.

Keywords Self-concept clarity · Self-regulation · Goal pursuit · Well-being

From its origination, self-concept clarity—the subjective sense of clarity and certainty about one's self-beliefs—has been understood to be closely linked to psychological well-being (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996). Indeed, self-concept clarity was first identified as a means of understanding the behavior of its close correlate, self-esteem. Since the development of the construct and methods for measuring it, subsequent research has repeatedly demonstrated that people who feel clear and confident in their self-definition feel more positively about themselves (Campbell et al., 1996), experience greater subjective well-being (i.e., happiness; Ritchie, Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Gidron, 2011) and less social anxiety (Stopa, Brown, Luke, & Hirsch, 2010), report higher trait emotional stability (Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003; Campbell et al., 1996), perceive greater purpose and meaning to

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their lives, and experience fewer depressive symptoms (Bigler, Neimeyer, & Brown, 2001). Moreover in my own research, I have found that people with high self-concept clarity report better physical health, lower levels of loneliness (Light & Visser, 2013), more frequent experience of positive emotions and less frequent experience of negative emotions, and are higher in trait resilience and more likely to be psychologically "flourishing" (Light & Visser, unpublished data). With such a glowing record, one might be tempted to run out and buy one of the many self-help books purporting to increase self-knowledge in the hopes of gaining some of the benefits of high self-concept clarity!

Of course, one of the difficulties of studying trait-like individual differences like self-concept clarity concerns identifying the causal mechanism(s) underlying its association with life outcomes. The vast majority of studies looking at key outcomes of self-concept clarity have used cross-sectional correlational designs that do not provide empirical evidence regarding causal direction (e.g., Bigler et al., 2001; Campbell et al., 1996, 2003; Diehl & Hay, 2011; Hanley & Garland, 2017; Ritchie et al., 2011). It is also relatively easy to hypothesize a range of causal models regarding these associations—having clarity about oneself may make people happy, happiness may make people feel more confident in their beliefs about themselves, or both may occur in an iterative, upward spiral. In addition to these cross-sectional studies, a few longitudinal studies have used cross-lagged panel designs to explore the temporal dynamics of self-concept clarity's relationship to adaptive functioning. Two studies focusing on self-concept dynamics in adolescents found that self-concept clarity prospectively predicted levels of anxiety (Schwartz, Klimstra, Luyckx, Hale, & Meeus, 2012) and depression (Schwartz et al., 2012; van Dijk et al., 2014) at later time points, consistent with the hypothesis that higher self-concept clarity improves (and that lower self-concept clarity erodes) well-being. However, in addition to concerns that results with this younger sample may not generalize to other age groups, these study designs cannot rule out the possibility that associations with self-concept clarity are driven by other related variables, such as self-esteem.

Although further research using such longitudinal designs will certainly help to clarify the role of self-concept clarity in relation to well-being, another complementary approach is to explore the social, behavioral, and cognitive consequences of having high (vs. low) self-concept clarity in order to flesh out theory regarding the mechanisms by which self-concept clarity might impact well-being. In this chapter, I will discuss one possible pathway through which self-concept clarity may impact well-being—namely, through fostering strong self-regulation. In elaborating on this particular proposed mechanism, I do not mean to suggest that this is the only possible pathway by which self-concept clarity impacts well-being. Indeed, given the centrality of the self-concept to human cognition, the consequences of lacking clarity about oneself are likely to be diverse and far reaching. Thus there are likely to be multiple mechanisms linking self-concept clarity to well-being to be explored in future research.

The causal model I propose suggests that having a clear, confident, and consistent sense of self fosters effective self-regulation and, conversely, that experiencing uncertainty and confusion about oneself undermines self-control and the process of goal pursuit. While limited empirical work has directly addressed this hypothesis,

numerous theories of self-regulation have posited a central role for the self-concept in self-regulation (e.g., Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986), suggesting that disruption to the self-concept—in the form of uncertainty and doubt about the contents of the self-concept—would have deleterious consequences for self-control and goal pursuit, and that maintaining high self-concept clarity would thus be necessary for one to effectively self-regulate.

Effective self-regulation in turn (a) improves psychological well-being by facilitating the balancing of multiple goals, which improves affect and reduces stress (Hofmann, Luhmann, Fisher, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2014), and increasing goal attainment, which increases positive affect and subjective well-being (Emmons, 1996; Sheldon, Jose, Kashdan, & Jarden, 2015); (b) improves social well-being by fostering pursuit of relationship goals (Brunstein, Dangelmayer, & Schultheiss, 1996), reducing conflict and smoothing daily interactions (Vohs, Finkenauer, & Baumeister, 2011), inhibiting aggression (DeWall, Finkel, & Denson, 2011), and facilitating constructive responses to close others' negative behavior (Finkel & Campbell, 2001); and (c) improves physical health by increasing consumption of nutritious food, promoting engagement in physical activity (Wills, Isasi, Mendoza, & Ainette, 2007), fostering medication adherence (de Bruin et al., 2012), and decreasing the use of unhealthy coping strategies, such as the use of drugs/alcohol (Boals, vanDellen, & Banks, 2001). Thus if high self-concept clarity does indeed facilitate effective self-regulation, this pathway may explain many of the positive outcomes associated with possessing clarity about the self.

In the following chapter, I will discuss existing evidence supporting an association between self-concept clarity and self-regulation. I will review the role of the self-concept in several prominent theories of the process of self-regulation and goal pursuit; based on these theories, I will describe the mechanisms by which having high (vs. low) self-concept clarity might foster (vs. hinder) self-regulation. Finally, I will discuss predictions regarding how the social environment might facilitate or hinder self-regulation for people with high vs. low self-concept clarity, thus potentially moderating the link between self-concept clarity and well-being.

As previously described, the bulk of research on potential consequences of self-concept clarity has used correlational designs, making it difficult to identify the mechanistic processes linking self-concept clarity to positive outcomes. However, some of the behavioral correlates of self-concept clarity suggest a link to self-regulation—for example, low self-concept clarity is associated with self-handicapping (Thomas & Gadbois, 2007), endorsement of passive and avoidant coping strategies (Smith, Wethington, & Zhan, 1996), and higher levels of aggression after experiencing failure or self-threat (Stucke & Sporer, 2002), all of which are similarly linked to poor self-control (Boals et al., 2001; Denson, DeWall, & Finkel, 2012; Uysal & Knee, 2012). Finally, measures of self-concept clarity have been found to correlate highly with measures of grit (Fite, Lindeman, Rogers, Voyles, & Durik, 2017) and trait self-control (Light & Hoyle, unpublished data). This evidence is bolstered by the fact that the self-concept features prominently in a number of central theories of self-regulation, indicating that self-concept clarity may actively impact self-regulated behavior.

Placing the Self in Self-Regulation

How, mechanistically, might feelings of uncertainty about the self-concept undermine self-regulation? To answer this question, it is useful to consider what active role (if any) the self-concept plays in self-regulation and goal pursuit. In structuring such an inquiry, it is useful to consider the process of self-regulated goal pursuit as encompassing four distinct phases—the predecisional phase, in which the individual compares and evaluates possible goals; the postdecisional/preactional phase, in which the individual considers hows to implement the adopted goal; the actional or goal-striving phase, in which direct action is taken to achieve the goal; and the postactional phase, in which the individual evaluates the outcome of their goal pursuit (Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987). While the predecisional, postdecisional, and actional phases have been well described in previous work, discussion of the postactional phase in the literature is limited and as such is not discussed further in this chapter.

The self-concept may first begin to influence the process of goal pursuit at the predecisional phase in which specific goals are chosen. In their discussion of "possible selves," Markus and Nurius (1986) described desired and undesired endstates—that is, approach goals and avoidance goals—in terms of representations of the self. In this model, goals themselves are conceptualized as representations of the self. A goal to improve one's athletic performance involves imagining the "self as a superior athlete," and the goal to finish college involves imaging the "self as graduate." While it could be argued that not all goals represent such a complex and self-relevant image (e.g., the goal of washing the dishes needn't involve imagining the "self as dishwasher"), such lower-order goals that seem less relevant to the self may themselves be organized by higher-order goals that reflect possible selves to a greater degree (e.g., a goal to avoid being the undesired "self as slob"), and indeed Markus and Nurius argue that it is the association with personal desired or feared outcomes that motivates effort toward routine, lower-order goals. Not all possible selves are adopted as personal goals, but they represent the pool of options that an individual considers when selecting goals to pursue. While possible selves inherently involve some degree of imaginative thinking, they are still heavily influenced by representations of the current, actual self. For example, the salience of success or failure impacts the positivity of possible selves (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992), and representations of one's ethnic group can constrain the kinds of possible selves one generates (Fryberg, Markus, Oyserman, & Stone, 2008).

Once a set of possible goals has been constructed, the individual must choose a specific goal (or goals) to pursue. This process of selecting an appropriate goal has often been described as the deliberative or predecisional phase of goal pursuit (Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987), but the processes by which it unfolds can also be considered under a decision-making framework. With that in mind, there are many ways in which the self-concept can influence the process by which specific goals are adopted. Goals may be evaluated in terms of their expected value, which is comprised of the value associated with attaining the goal and the likelihood of its attainment, as well as their appropriateness for the individual. An assessment of

either dimension requires reflection on the self-concept, either as it relates to the individual's personal ability to attain the goal (i.e., their self-efficacy; Bandura, 1986) or the extent to which an action is consistent with their sense of self, and thus identity appropriate (Case, Sparks, & Pavey, 2016). Thus typically the self-concept is used as a guide in selecting which goals to actually pursue.

After selecting an appropriate goal to pursue, an individual must determine what means they intend to use to pursue that goal. This process of planning one's goal pursuit may take place immediately after goal setting or periodically throughout the process of goal pursuit. While relatively little empirical research has addressed the issue, it seems plausible that reflection on the self-concept would play an important role in deliberation and planning prior to goal striving, as the individual decides what means are most appropriate for him/her. An awareness of one's strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and personality more broadly might aid the individual in selecting goal pursuit strategies that play to his/her strengths. Supporting this notion, inducing a deliberative mind-set (vs. implemental mind-set)—that is, motivating participants to think about how to pursue their goals (vs. motivating them to begin striving for their goals)—increases preference for accurate information about the self over positive illusions, though only among participants with high self-esteem (Bayer & Gollwitzer, 2005). Presumably accurate information about the self is valued during deliberation because it allows the individual to construct an effective and realistic plan for goal pursuit, whereas positive illusions are valued in an implemental state because they increase goal expectancy, thus increasing motivation. Thus although research in this area is somewhat limited, preliminary evidence suggests that the self-concept is actively involved in the planning stage, as well.

After the planning phase, the individual begins to actively exert effort on the goal in the actional phase of goal pursuit. This is often referred to as the process of goal striving, and many of the theories that elaborate on goal striving focus on the signals that indicate that effort is needed on a specific goal. A few major theories on goal striving and self-control identify specific roles for the self, generally as a metric of position relative to goals and personal standards. The majority of these theories are based around the claim that motivation is sparked by perceptions of a discrepancy between one's current state and one's goal or personal standard. In Objective Self-Awareness Theory (Duval & Wicklund, 1972), the motivating discrepancy is described as being between one's self-concept and one's standards. Such a discrepancy would only motivate action, however, if it became salient, which the theory describes as occurring when attention is focused on the self. Attending to such discrepancies would evoke negative affect, which in turn would motivate action to reduce this negative affect, either by acting to reduce the discrepancy (i.e., through goal pursuit, thus modifying the self to be more similar to one's standards) or by escaping from self-awareness.

Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1989) similarly highlights the role of the self-concept in self-regulation but additionally states that personal standards often take the form of desired selves—that is, representations of what one's self-concept *could* be like. Higgins further differentiated these self-standards into two primary representations—the ought self and the ideal self. While they originate from differ-

ent developmental experiences and evoke different kinds of negative affect when discrepancies are identified, the overall model functions similarly to objective self-awareness theory, with salient discrepancies between the actual self and either the ought or the ideal self evoking aversive negative affect, which in turn motivates efforts to reduce the discrepancy.

Control Theory (Carver & Scheier, 1982) can be thought of as a generalized form of such discrepancy-based models, which describes the process of self-regulation in terms of linear feedback loops in which a reference point is set, input as to the current state is received, the distance between the input and the reference point is assessed, and some output occurs either in the form of continued self-regulation (in the event that there is a remaining discrepancy between the current state and the reference point) or in the form of exiting the feedback loop (in the event that no discrepancy remains). This broader form of the discrepancy model allows for description of instances in which self-regulation occurs without reference to the self-concept, without conscious awareness, and even without a mind, as in the case of mechanical self-regulating systems like thermostats.

In models of self-regulation in which the self is compared to goals or standards, an assessment of one's self-concept is a necessary precondition for self-regulating behavior to be initiated. In these models, feelings of uncertainty and confusion about the self-concept would undermine the individual's ability to clearly assess their distance from the goal. One potential consequence of the lack of a clear signal of discrepancy between self and standards is that such discrepancies will go unidentified, and action to reduce the discrepancy will never be initiated. Consider a person who desires to be patient with others. To the extent that she is not sure how patient or impatient she is, the goal of being a patient person is never activated, and thus she does not exert effort toward that goal. Thus one way that low self-concept clarity may undermine self-regulation is by making the self-discrepancies that typically motivate self-regulated behavior less accessible.

Notably, unlike Objective Self-Awareness and Self-Discrepancy Theory, Control Theory does not specify that either the current state or the reference point be defined in terms of the self. Indeed, it is quite possible for people to pursue goals that are not relevant to the self, for which an evaluation of the self-concept is not necessary to monitor progress. Consider the example of a worker filing papers. The worker may assess his progress by counting the number of papers left to file, knowing that the reference point he is ideally trying to reach is zero. In this case, progress toward the goal is clearly assessed, distance from the goal is easily quantified, and neither dimension is central to the self-concept.[1] In such cases, a lack of clarity about the self seems unlikely to interfere with effective self-regulation. However, for more

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[1] Although such lower-order, concrete goals are likely distally linked to the self-concept by virtue of being connected to higher-order goals with greater relevance to the self, such as the goal of being a productive worker, it seems likely that the impact of the self-concept on the pursuit of a particular goal (and vice versa) will depend on the goal's position in a hierarchically organized system of goals, with goals that are more closely linked to the self-concept having a stronger bidirectional relationship to the self (e.g., Emmons, 1986).

abstract, self-defining goals and standards, the self-concept is the most likely input to compare to the desired reference point. Thus confusion about the self-concept is more likely to undermine pursuit of long-term, abstract, self-relevant goals than goals that are more short-term and concrete.

Differentiating it somewhat from other goal discrepancy theories, Objective Self-Awareness Theory also posits an additional role for the self-concept. Namely, motivation to reduce discrepancies between the self and the goal is initiated when the self becomes the object of attention. According to Duval and Wicklund (1972), this self-focused attention automatically initiates self-evaluation processes, which in turn brings discrepancies between the self and one's standards and goals into conscious awareness. Although research on Objective Self-Awareness Theory has typically focused on aspects of the situation that might result in the self becoming the object of attention—such as placing a mirror in the room—researchers have explored the possibility that individual differences may also lead people to focus more attention on themselves (e.g., Silvia, Eichstaedt, & Phillips, 2005).

In Self-Discrepancy Theory, the standards against which the current state is judged are also defined in terms of the self-concept, namely, as the ought self and ideal self. As specific types of possible selves, the ought self and ideal self are associated with yet distinct from the actual self-concept, meaning that how they are affected by self-concept clarity is potentially complex. It is possible for an individual to have a clearer sense of who he would ideally like to be or who he ought to be than who he believes himself to actually be. However, to the extent that possible selves are rooted in representations of oneself in the past and present (Markus & Nurius, 1986), beliefs and metacognition about the current self-concept are likely to influence both the ideal self and ought self. Thus in Self-Discrepancy Theory, the self-concept impacts the process of self-regulation both by potentially serving as a marker of one's current position relative to the goal and also by shaping one's standards for behavior themselves.

To summarize, discrepancy-based theories suggest three mechanisms by which the self-concept facilitates self-regulation during the process of goal striving: (a) by serving as an indicator of the current state, (b) by serving as a basis for conceptions of one's goals, and (c) by initiating motivational processes when the self becomes the object of attention. In addition, other theoretical accounts suggest that the self-concept may be involved in the process of goal setting and planning.

Self-Concept Clarity and Goal Pursuit

As has been illustrated, theories of self-regulation and goal pursuit describe the self-concept as playing an active role throughout the process of self-regulated behavior. This suggests that disturbances to the self-concept in the form of reduced clarity and increased confusion about the self have the potential to undermine self-regulation. Beginning with the role of the self-concept in the predecisional phase of goal pursuit, as is clearly illustrated in the discussion of possible selves (Markus & Nurius,

1986), the self-concept can be used both to generate and to evaluate the value of possible goals. Lacking clarity about the self-concept may undermine the individual's ability to generate possible goals, leading to a diminished set of options that are considered, thus increasing the likelihood that the individual will adopt a suboptimal goal (Gollwitzer, Heckhausen, & Steller, 1990). Alternatively, to the extent that the self-concept is used as a template for generating desired and undesired possible selves, a lack of clarity about the (actual) self-concept may translate into vaguely defined goals. According to goal-setting theory, this should place individuals with low self-concept clarity at a disadvantage, as greater specificity in set goals is associated with higher levels of goal commitment (Wright & Kacmar, 1994) and higher and more consistent levels of performance (Locke, Chah, Harrison, & Lustgarten, 1989; Mento, Steel, & Karren, 1987). Moreover, the self-concept is often used as standard in decision-making, wherein options are evaluated based on their perceived fit with the self (i.e., self-to-prototype matching). Empirical evidence suggests that low self-concept clarity reduces the use of self-to-prototype strategies (Setterlund & Niedenthal, 1993). It is unclear what people do when such decision-making strategies are not available to them—they may default to another heuristic (e.g., conformity, salience, etc.) or may simply choose to delay decision-making (Anderson, 2003). The latter outcome is particularly problematic, as it suggests that people with low self-concept clarity may be unable to move to the postdecisional and actional phases of self-regulation, meaning that goal pursuit will never actually occur. Thus individuals stand to benefit from having a relatively clear self-concept in that it may facilitate the identification of personal goals, whereas people with low self-concept clarity may find the process of selecting goals to pursue more difficult.

After identifying goals to be pursued, people typically spend some amount of time planning how to pursue the goal in the postdecisional/preactional phase of goal pursuit. During this phase, the individual ideally considers the best available strategies to pursue the goal and develops a workable plan of action. While relatively little research has explored how people choose strategies to pursue their goals, as described previously, this stage of goal pursuit is associated with a desire for accurate—rather than enhancing—information about the self, suggesting that the self-concept serves as a guide in planning for goal pursuit. As such, low self-concept clarity would be particularly distressing and detrimental during this planning phase. Uncertainty about one's strengths and weaknesses would make it difficult to assess which strategies are most personally efficacious and appealing. In the absence of clear information about one's strengths, weaknesses, and preferences, the individual may default to imitating how others have pursued similar goals or may simply fail to construct a clear plan for implementing action toward the goal. Indeed, motivational styles associated with less self-determination (and thus less relevance of the self-concept to goal pursuit) are associated with lower likelihood of spontaneously forming implementation intentions (Brickell & Chatzisarantis, 2007). Thus it is plausible that experiencing uncertainty about the self-concept will reduce the likelihood that an individual will spontaneously construct specific plans for pursuing his or her goals. Given the overwhelming evidence that forming implementation intentions increases the likelihood of success (Gollwitzer, 2014), this would place people with low self-concept clarity at a clear disadvantage for achieving their goals.

Once a plan for action has been made, a goal pursuer enters the actional phase of goal pursuit or the act of *goal striving*. This is the phase of goal pursuit in which effort is put into closing the distance between one's current state and the goal. Notably, goal striving often does not occur all at once—rather, many goals are pursued over periods of days, weeks, months, or even years, and active striving occurs in spurts over time. It is within this context of on-again/off-again striving toward long-term goals that most discrepancy models of goal pursuit are positioned. Within these models, the perception of a discrepancy initiates motivation to put active effort into a pre-existing goal; thus detection of discrepancies activates goal striving. However, as described previously, the self-concept likely plays a role in the detection of discrepancies. To the extent that one's current state is influenced by judgments of the self, people with low self-concept clarity are likely to feel less certain about their current distance from the goal. As a result, discrepancies between one's current state and the goal should be more difficult to detect. Thus people with low self-concept clarity may be less likely to identify situations in which they need to put effort into their goals, resulting in the goals never being actively pursued.

In contrast to other discrepancy-based theories of self-regulation, objective self-awareness theory posits an eliciting condition under which discrepancies are likely to be noticed—specifically, when the self becomes the focus of conscious attention. Self-concept clarity might be expected to predict the frequency of self-focused attention; indeed, self-concept clarity is negatively correlated with the self-reflection subscale of the private self-consciousness scale and negatively correlated with rumination, a form of self-focused thought (Campbell et al., 1996). Thus people who feel less clear and certain about themselves report spending more time analyzing and ruminating about themselves, which could conceivably foster greater detection of self-discrepancies. However, studies specifically testing the hypothesis that trait rumination and reflection are forms of self-focused attention that can kick-start self-regulation suggest that people who tend to ruminate and reflect about themselves are *not* more likely to be the subject of their own attention (Silvia et al., 2005). Thus low self-concept clarity is unlikely to make up for the hindrances it poses to goal pursuit by increasing the likelihood that self-discrepancies are noticed.

What Guides the Unclear Self?

Thus far I have described the elements of the process of goal pursuit during which the self-concept typically plays a role and suggested that a lack of clarity about the self may undermine goal pursuit at these points in the process (or that, conversely, having a clear sense of self will facilitate the process). But in the absence of a clear self-concept to guide action at these points, what will determine behavior? I propose that control over behavior will shift away from internal cues (such as the self-concept and personal standards) and toward external cues (such as actions primed by the environment or social influence). This follows from the observation that low self-concept clarity implies that beliefs about the self are metacognitively "weak" in

ways that are analogous to the relative strength and weaknesses of attitudes (DeMarree, Petty, & Briñol, 2007). Attitudes that are relatively strong—i.e., clear, certain, unambivalent, mentally accessible, etc.—are better predictors of behavior than are attitudes that are relatively weak, that is, unclear, uncertain, ambivalent, and less easily called to mind (Holland, Verplanken, & van Knippenberg, 2002). When attitudes are weak, behavior is less likely to be consistent with attitudes but instead more likely to be determined by situational cues (Fazio & Olson, 2014). Similarly, I suggest that the metacognitive "weakness" of self-beliefs that defines low self-concept clarity will result in behavior being determined by situational factors.

Mechanistically, such an outcome could unfold from processes similar to those described in social cognition models of social priming. In the Situated Inference Model of priming (Loersch & Payne, 2011), priming is essentially a process of misattributing the primed concept to one's own thoughts about a specific target. As such, the way in which priming influences perception and behavior depends on the target object the individual is focusing on when the primed construct is made accessible and features of the object itself that influence interpretation of the primed construct. Relevant to predictions about self-concept clarity, the situated inference model suggests that people are more likely to assimilate to primes (that is, alter their judgment or behavior to be more similar to attributes of the prime) when the object of attention is ambiguous with regard to the primed construct—for example, priming the concept of "speed" is more likely to lead to assimilative judgments of ambiguous targets (e.g., humans) and contrasting judgment of unambiguous targets (e.g., cheetahs, turtles). Since self-concept clarity renders the self-concept ambiguous with regard to *most* constructs, this suggests that people with low self-concept clarity are particularly likely to misattribute primed constructs to their judgments of themselves and their personal motivations.

Consistent with this hypothesis, people with low self-concept clarity show greater evidence of internalizing cultural ideals (Chap. 11 this volume), are more compliant to overt external recommendations in decision-making contexts (Lee, Lee, & Sanford, 2010), shift their behavior and self-ratings more based on social interactions (Cuperman, Robinson, & Ickes, 2014), and yet are less likely to undertake more purposeful self-changes like self-expansion (Emery, Walsh, & Slotter, 2015). Along with a number of related constructs like traitedness and self-monitoring, Dalal et al. (2015) recently proposed that self-concept clarity be understood as a moderator of the impact of situational influences: when self-concept clarity is low (and thus in Dalal's terms, personality is said to be weak), the influence of situational factors on behavior will be stronger, holding constant the strength of the situation. Thus although relatively little research has focused on the effects of self-concept clarity on goal-directed behavior specifically, available evidence is consistent with the hypothesis that behavior is more likely to be determined by the situation when self-concept clarity is low.

Such a claim is consistent with the observation that self-control and external control appear to be substitutable and hydraulic—when external constraints on behavior are strong and consistent with one's goals, individuals do not need to exert as much self-control in order to pursue their personal goals. Indeed, external sources

of control—such as effective parenting—seem to diminish the effect of trait differences in self-control on important outcomes like body mass index (Connell & Francis, 2014). In some cases, the presence of external control or support for goal pursuit leads individuals to withdraw self-control effort, presumably to conserve self-regulatory resources (Fishbach & Trope, 2005; Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2011). Moreover, people often take steps to create external controls when they are concerned that their self-control will not be sufficient to keep them away from temptations, for example, choosing a seat that is far from a tempting dessert table or by installing apps on their phones that prevent them from using Facebook during work hours (e.g., Ainslie, 1975; Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002; Rachlin, 2000). Thus external cues and constraints often substitute in guiding goal pursuit when self-control is weak. This implies that the deficits to self-regulation that people with low self-concept clarity experience may be buffered to the extent that their social environments prominently feature cues that can guide behavior back to their personal goals.

Indeed, the scaffolding effects of a supportive social environment could potentially account for an obvious boundary condition of the link between self-concept clarity and well-being. While low self-concept clarity is associated with poorer outcomes for people in independent cultures, people with interdependent or relational self-construals tend to exhibit little or no correlation between self-concept clarity and various indicators of well-being (Campbell et al., 1996; English & Chen, 2011; Hannover, 2002). While this has typically been explained as resulting from differing cultural ideals—an independent ideal in which a consistent, coherent, and confident self is desired and an interdependent ideal in which a flexible, varied, and responsive self is desired (e.g., Spencer-Rodgers, Boucher, Mori, Wang, & Peng, 2009)—the present model suggests an additional mechanism by which culture may moderate the outcome of self-concept clarity. Specifically, the social environments cultivated in interdependent cultures may provide more cues consistent with goal pursuit that can provide external sources of control. While there may be a broad variety of ways in which social environments can be "culturally engineered" to scaffold goal pursuit, one notable example is the level of goal-focused support provided by significant others. Research both across and within cultures has noted that an interdependent or relational self-construal is associated with both offering (Chen, Kim, Mojaverian, & Morling, 2012) and receiving higher levels of goal support from others (Gore, Cross, & Kanagawa, 2009). Thus the link between self-concept clarity and well-being may be weaker among people with an interdependent or relational approach because their significant others do a better job of supporting and scaffolding their goal pursuit, leading to higher levels of goal attainment and thus greater well-being.

Distinctions Between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem

To summarize, I propose that low self-concept clarity (as compared to high self-concept clarity) undermines goal pursuit by (a) hindering the ability to identify clear, optimal, self-concordant goals, (b) reducing the extent to which one's strengths

vs. weaknesses are taken into account when planning how to pursue the goal, and (c) reducing the salience of discrepancies between the self and goal such that active goal striving is less likely to occur. These hypotheses can potentially distinguish the consequences of low self-concept clarity from low self-esteem—while self-esteem certainly impacts goal pursuit (e.g., Di Paula & Campbell, 2002), it likely does so through quite different mechanisms. For example, underestimation of one's efficacy due to low self-esteem is generally associated with setting lower goals (Erez & Judge, 2001; Tang & Reynolds, 1993) which in turn likely lead to lower levels of achievement (Locke & Latham, 1990). Moreover, while difficult goals are typically associated with higher levels of achievement, it is also possible for goals to be set too high, and indeed high self-esteem is associated with setting unattainable, risky goals, especially following ego threats (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1993). Thus high self-esteem does not necessarily lead to setting optimal goals—especially under conditions of threat. While the consequences of self-esteem for goal setting appear to be primarily limited to a direct correlation to the level at which goals are set, low self-concept clarity, by contrast, may result in setting goals that are suboptimal for a variety of reasons—they may be as likely to be too high as too low, may lack appropriate specificity, and may be poorly calibrated to the individual's values and preferences.

Similarly, while I propose that self-concept clarity will reduce the extent to which means that are selected to pursue the goal fit with the individual's strengths and personal preferences, it less clear how low self-esteem alone would lead to a similar outcome. Some evidence links high levels of self-criticism to lesser adoption of implementation intentions (Powers, Milyavskaya, & Koestner, 2012), which the authors suggest is due to ruminative concerns about failure that presumably undermine motivation and co-opt cognitive resources. In addition, interventions in which participants are given implementation intentions are more effective when self-efficacy is high (Wieber, Odenthal, & Gollwitzer, 2010), again suggesting that positive beliefs about the self are associated with more effective planning for goal pursuit. More theoretical and empirical work is needed to elucidate the mechanisms linking negative self-beliefs like self-criticism and low self-efficacy to reduced efficacy of implementation intentions. At present, it is worth noting that high self-esteem does not seem to be immediately connected to the higher levels of specificity, and "fit" in action plans that I have hypothesized may be consequences of high self-concept clarity.

Finally, although I have described how low self-concept clarity may reduce the likelihood that self/goal discrepancies are identified and acted upon, it is not clear that low self-esteem would lead to the same outcomes. Rather, the relationship between self-esteem and identification of such discrepancies is likely to be more complex. The initiation of goal striving in response to discrepancies between the self and goals/standards depends both on the individual attending to the discrepancy and identifying the discrepancy as a signal that effort needs to be exerted to move the self closer to the goal. Work on the detection of discrepancies has primarily taken the form of research under the umbrella of Objective Self-Awareness Theory, in which features of the person or the situation lead the individual to focus attention

on him−/herself, thereby drawing attention to any potential discrepancies. While it seems plausible that people with positive opinions of themselves might be more comfortable thinking about themselves (thus leading to greater self-focused attention), evidence typically suggests that higher levels of self-reflection are in fact associated with lower self-esteem (Conway & Giannopoulos, 1993). Thus existing evidence does not support the contention that high self-esteem would aid in the detection of discrepancies between the self and goals/standards, which is in contrast to my hypothesis that greater self-concept clarity would increase the likelihood that such discrepancies are detected.

Thus while self-esteem undoubtedly influences self-regulation and goal pursuit, it is not clear that self-esteem alone would lead to the same predictions I have outlined for self-concept clarity's influence on self-regulation. As researchers exploring these two interrelated constructs seek to clarify their unique contributions to affect, behavior, and cognition, more empirical work on how the two variables impact self-regulation may aid in distinguishing the constructs.

The Mechanisms Are Key

In this chapter, I have outlined a model in which clear, coherent, and accessible self-knowledge serves as a resource for goal pursuit, leading to higher levels of goal attainment for people with high self-concept clarity and subsequently improving health and happiness. Much research still remains to test this model. For example, it is worth noting that the majority of evidence linking self-concept clarity to self-regulation is itself correlational and thus ambiguous for interpretations regarding causality and mechanism. As research in this area moves forward, we should strive to incorporate research designs that enable greater clarity regarding causality, such as growth curve analysis in hierarchical linear modeling with longitudinal designs (e.g., Duckworth, Tsukayama, & May, 2010) or experimental designs. The former method focuses on relationships between short-term changes in variables within subjects, thus eliminating the influence of time-invariant individual differences that may confound analyses (e.g., trait neuroticism). This approach has already been used to provide further evidence that self-concept clarity increases meaning in life (Shin, Steger, & Henry, 2016) and in the future could be used to explore cognitive, affective, and behavioral consequences of changes in self-concept clarity. The experimental approach presents additional challenges, as manipulations of various facets of self-concept clarity (e.g., self-uncertainty) can sometimes be perceived as threats to the self and are met with defensive conviction (e.g., McGregor & Marigold, 2003), thus masking the effects of lowered self-concept clarity. However, programs of research that both manipulate and measure self-concept clarity across studies can help to triangulate the consequences of having low vs. high self-concept clarity. Moreover, careful manipulations targeting the mechanisms of associations between self-concept clarity and well-being variables can provide further causal evidence regarding these mechanisms (e.g., DeMarree & Rios, 2014).

In addition to presenting my model linking self-concept clarity to self-regulation, my hope is that this chapter persuades the reader that any research into understanding the underlying processes linking self-concept clarity and well-being are vital to an enhanced understanding of this construct. A better understanding of these mechanisms will help to elucidate its unique effects apart from close associates like self-esteem and insecure attachment style. Moreover, as the model I propose demonstrates, a mechanistic approach may generate new empirical questions about cultural differences related to self-concept clarity. While the challenges of applying social cognitive approaches to understanding trait-like individual differences remain, I hope that future work in this area will clarify our understanding, lend coherence to the literature, and increase our confidence in research on self-concept clarity!

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Chapter 11
Self-Concept Clarity and Body Dissatisfaction

Lenny R. Vartanian and Lydia E. Hayward

Abstract In this chapter, we outline a theoretical model in which early adverse experiences lead to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating by impairing the development of a clear and coherent sense of self. We review empirical evidence linking early adversity and lower self-concept clarity. Relative to individuals high in self-concept clarity, those low in self-concept clarity are in turn more likely to have internalized societal standards of attractiveness and are more likely to compare their appearance to others. Individuals who internalize attractiveness ideals and engage in appearance comparisons report being more dissatisfied with their bodies, and body dissatisfaction is one of the most robust predictors of disordered eating. Consistent with theorizing that people low in self-concept clarity are more vulnerable to external sources of self-definition, we propose that this path to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating may be particularly likely for those people who are low in self-concept clarity and who also perceive strong external pressures to look a certain way. In sum, we propose that low self-concept clarity (potentially as a result of early adversity) can lead to harmful outcomes to the extent that it makes people vulnerable to internalizing unhealthy external identities. Thus, providing people low in self-concept clarity with *positive* sources of identity may be one way to mitigate such outcomes.

Keywords Self-concept clarity · Identity · Body dissatisfaction · Disordered eating · Early adversity

Self-Concept Clarity and Body Dissatisfaction

Body dissatisfaction refers to negative thoughts and feelings that people have about their body weight, shape, size, and overall appearance (Grogan, 2008). Body dissatisfaction is so widespread among women that, by the mid-1980s, it had been described as a "normative discontent" (Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1984).

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Indeed, recent research indicates that the majority of women weigh more than they would like to weigh (e.g., Al Sabbah et al., 2009; Frederick, Peplau, & Lever, 2006; Neighbors & Sobal, 2007) and report some degree of body dissatisfaction (Mond et al., 2013). Body dissatisfaction is of particular concern because it is associated with negative psychological outcomes, unhealthy dieting, and, at its extreme, clinical eating disorders (Johnson & Wardle, 2005; Neumark-Sztainer, Paxton, Hannan, Haines, & Story, 2006; Paxton, Neumark-Sztainer, Hannan, & Eisenberg, 2006). In fact, body dissatisfaction is one of the most robust risk factors for the development and maintenance of eating disorders (Stice, 2002).

Although body dissatisfaction was long considered the province of young women, concerns with appearance and the negative consequences of those concerns have a much farther reach. Researchers are increasingly recognizing that body dissatisfaction is also an important issue among men (e.g., Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000). Furthermore, although concerns with one's body image typically emerge in early adolescence, there is evidence that girls as young as 6 or 7 years old wish to be thinner than they are (e.g., Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006) and that body dissatisfaction among women persists across the life span (at least through middle age; e.g., Slevec & Tiggemann, 2011; Tiggemann, 2004). Body dissatisfaction therefore appears to be a significant issue for a range of populations.

The most prominent models explaining the occurrence of body dissatisfaction are sociocultural models that take into consideration social and media influences on people's body image. For example, the tripartite influence model (Keery, van den Berg, & Thompson, 2004; Shroff & Thompson, 2006) suggests that pressure from the media, parents, and peers all contribute to the development of body dissatisfaction. Parental influence can include weight-related teasing from parents and parents' own weight/shape concerns, peer influence can include peer teasing and friends' preoccupation with weight and dieting, and media influences include perceived pressure from the media and interest in media that promotes thinness and dieting.

The two primary mechanisms connecting these sociocultural pressures to body dissatisfaction are internalization of societal standards of attractiveness (i.e., a thin body for women and a lean muscular body for men) and appearance-based social comparisons. Internalization refers to the extent to which individuals take on society's attractiveness standards as personally meaningful beliefs, that is, as goals that they should strive to achieve (Thompson & Stice, 2001). There is consistent evidence from correlational and longitudinal studies indicating that internalization is associated with body dissatisfaction (Knauss, Paxton, & Alsaker, 2008; Lawler & Nixon, 2011; Stice & Whitenton, 2002; Thompson & Stice, 2001). Appearance-based social comparisons occur when individuals compare their appearance to that of another person. Much of the research has focused on the negative impact of upward appearance comparisons (i.e., comparisons to someone who is more attractive than one is) on body image because idealized images of models and celebrities are ubiquitous in the media. That research consistently shows that upward appearance-based comparisons are associated with greater body dissatisfaction (e.g., Myers & Crowther, 2009). However, research also suggests that a tendency to

engage in appearance-based comparisons (regardless of the direction of that comparison) is associated with negative body image (O'Brien et al., 2009), presumably because it signals an increased focus on one's appearance.

Overall, these models specify that appearance pressures from peers, parents, and the media predict the likelihood that an individual will internalize societal standards of attractiveness and make frequent appearance comparisons with others, which in turn predict dissatisfaction with one's own body. Body dissatisfaction can in turn significantly affect individual health and well-being. In this chapter, we build on these sociocultural models by including self-concept clarity as a predictor of internalization, social-comparison tendency, and body dissatisfaction. First, we describe the theoretical and empirical links between the more general concept of identity disturbance and body image/eating disorders. Next, we outline what is currently known about the relevance of self-concept clarity to body dissatisfaction. We then extend the basic model by outlining some potential antecedents and consequences before providing some suggestions for future research.

Identity and Disordered Eating

Much of the theorizing about a link between one's identity or sense of self and one's feelings and behaviors toward one's own body has been in the context of eating disorders. In 1974, Bruch highlighted the need to understand body image in the context of the wider self-concept, citing disturbances in self-awareness, control, and autonomy in individuals suffering from anorexia nervosa. These patients appeared to experience identity confusion, reporting difficulty in perceiving themselves as separate, self-directed individuals with the ability to define and control themselves. Bruch concluded that people suffering from eating disorders may compensate for a lack of a clear identity by turning to weight as a viable source of self-definition and engaging in extreme eating behaviors in an attempt to gain control over their weight. More recently, researchers have reiterated the link between self-concept impairments and disordered eating (e.g., Polivy & Herman, 2007; Stein & Corte, 2003), with suggestions that current therapeutic interventions may be ineffective for a significant minority of people precisely because they require the patient to give up an important, self-defining "eating disordered" identity without an adequate identity replacement (Bulik & Kendler, 2000).

Although a theoretical link between identity issues and disordered eating has been drawn, empirical evidence for this relationship is relatively sparse. Most research related to identity and disordered eating has focused on the evaluative component of the self (i.e., self-esteem). For example, individuals suffering from eating disorders report lower global self-esteem than do controls (e.g., Dykens & Gerrard, 1986; Moor, Vartanian, Touyz, & Beumont, 2004), and body dissatisfaction also predicts lower self-esteem in nonclinical samples (e.g., Tiggemann, 2005).

Although less extensively researched than self-esteem, there is mounting empirical evidence suggesting that disturbances in the structure of the self-concept are

associated with disordered eating. For example, individuals with eating disorders display greater identity confusion and instability than do healthy controls (Schupak-Neuberg & Nemeroff, 1993), and they also display disturbances in their overall collection of identities, holding fewer positive and more negative self-schemas than do controls (Stein & Corte, 2007). Furthermore, evidence suggests that self-concept impairments predict disordered eating behaviors in nonclinical samples (e.g., Wheeler, Adams, & Keating, 2001; Wheeler, Wintre, & Polivy, 2003). Chronic dieters appear to possess a fragile sense of self and see body weight and shape as central to the self-concept, with weight- and shape-based self-esteem strongly tied to global self-esteem, albeit to a lesser extent than is the case for eating disorder patients (McFarlane, McCabe, Jarry, Olmsted, & Polivy, 2001). Finally, individuals suffering from eating disorders show an overvaluation of shape and weight such that self-evaluation and self-esteem are unduly influenced by their evaluation of their body weight and shape (Geller et al., 1998; Grilo et al., 2008). Overall, although more research is needed, there is growing evidence that identity disturbances are related to disordered eating in clinical and nonclinical samples.

Given this link between identity disturbance and disordered eating, it is perhaps no coincidence that the onset of eating disorders typically occurs during adolescence and puberty, a time of significant identity discovery and confusion. Although not explicitly defined as such, much of the theorizing in this literature appears to have focused on issues related to the development and maintenance of a *clearly defined* and *coherent* self-concept (i.e., self-concept clarity). As adolescents search for ways to define themselves, they may turn to external sources to provide some guidance (Campbell, 1990; see also Hogg, 2007, for a similar theoretical argument). Given the salience of appearance in Western societies, adolescents who lack a clear sense of their own personal identity may be particularly vulnerable to internalizing societal standards of attractiveness as a means of self-definition. This is consistent with an earlier theoretical view suggesting that identity disturbance might lead to internalization of societal standards of attractiveness (Stice, 1994). As noted above, internalization of the thin ideal is associated with body dissatisfaction and disordered eating among young women (Thompson & Stice, 2001). We now turn to an overview of the research connecting the specific construct of self-concept clarity to body dissatisfaction.

Empirical Evidence Linking Self-Concept Clarity and Body Dissatisfaction

A number of studies have specifically assessed the association between self-concept clarity (as measured by the Self-Concept Clarity Scale; Campbell et al., 1996) and body dissatisfaction (illustrated in Fig. 11.1). Research in this area is not extensive, but the available evidence consistently shows that lower self-concept clarity is associated with greater body dissatisfaction. Most of these studies have been conducted
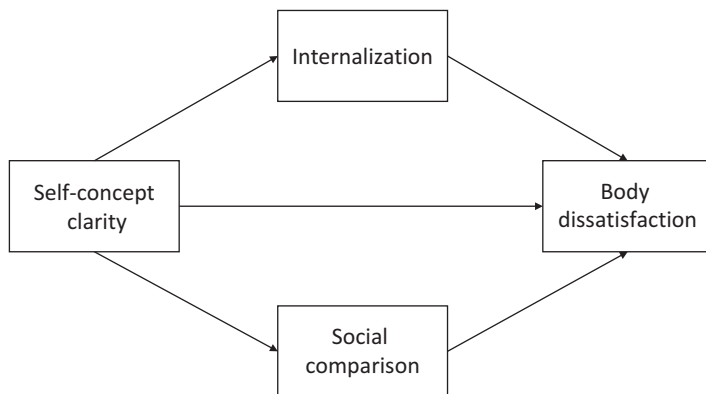
Fig. 11.1 Previously tested model linking self-concept clarity to body dissatisfaction

with female university students, and the magnitude of the correlations between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction ranged from −0.26 to −0.43 (Cahill & Mussap, 2007; Vartanian, 2009, Study 2; Vartanian & Dey, 2013; Vartanian, Froreich, & Smyth, 2016). Similar associations have also been found with women from the community who were (on average) slightly older than the university samples (Vartanian, 2009, Study 1; Vartanian et al., 2016).

Fewer studies have examined the association between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction among male participants, but those studies tend to show the same pattern as observed among female participants. Lower self-concept clarity is associated with greater body dissatisfaction among adolescent boys (Humphreys & Paxton, 2004) and among male university students (Cahill & Mussap, 2007; Vartanian, 2009, Study 2). Although Vartanian (2009, Study 1) did not show a significant correlation between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction among men from the community, the correlation was in the predicted direction ($r = -0.20$), and the sample of men in that study was small ($n = 73$). It is also noteworthy that two studies (Vartanian & Dey, 2013; Vartanian et al., 2016) had approximately equal numbers of Asian and White participants, and both studies found that the association between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction did not vary as a function of participants' ethnicity. Furthermore, some of the studies were conducted in the United States (e.g., Vartanian, 2009), whereas others were conducted in Australia (e.g., Cahill & Mussap, 2007; Vartanian & Dey, 2013), with parallel results. Overall, then, the association between lower self-concept clarity and greater body dissatisfaction appears to be quite robust and generalizable across samples.

Two of the mechanisms that feature prominently in sociocultural models of body dissatisfaction (internalization of societal standards of attractiveness and appearance-based social comparisons) have also been examined in the context of self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction. Theoretically, individuals who lack a clear sense of their own personal identity might look to external sources as a means of defining themselves (Campbell, 1990). Given the clear cultural norms surrounding

appearance and the importance placed on physical appearance in Western cultures, these cultural appearance ideals can represent one way in which people try to define themselves. If that is the case, then we would predict that individuals with low self-concept clarity would be more likely to internalize these societal standards of attractiveness. Indeed, several studies have shown that low self-concept clarity is associated with a greater degree of internalization in female university students (Cahill & Mussap, 2007; Vartanian, 2009, Study 2; Vartanian & Dey, 2013; Vartanian et al., 2016) and female community members (Vartanian, 2009, Study 1; Vartanian et al., 2016). Moreover, Vartanian and colleagues (Vartanian, 2009; Vartanian & Dey, 2013; Vartanian et al., 2016) found that internalization mediated the relationship between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction. Some studies have also shown that low self-concept clarity is associated with internalization among adolescent boys (Humphreys & Paxton, 2004) and male university students (Cahill & Mussap, 2007), although Vartanian (2009) did not find a significant correlation for either male university students or male community members. Vartanian (2009) further showed that low self-concept clarity uniquely predicted greater internalization among women, even after controlling for global self-esteem, a known correlate of internalization and disordered eating (e.g., Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005; Polivy & Herman, 2002). We will discuss the theoretical and empirical distinction between self-concept clarity and self-esteem later in this chapter.

With respect to social comparisons, early theorizing suggested that individuals who lack a clear sense of self might be highly motivated to compare themselves to others because this could provide a means for understanding how and where they fit into society (Festinger, 1954). Indeed, there is some correlational evidence that individuals low in self-concept clarity are more likely to engage in social comparisons in general (Butzer & Kuiper, 2006). Other studies have also found that low self-concept clarity is associated with appearance-based social comparisons (Cahill & Mussap, 2007; Humphreys & Paxton, 2004; Vartanian & Dey, 2013). Furthermore, Humphreys and Paxton (2004) found that self-concept clarity predicted responses to exposure to idealized media images such that lower self-concept clarity was associated with greater anxiety following exposure to idealized media images (i.e., making upward appearance comparisons). Finally, Vartanian and Dey (2013) found support for a model in which self-concept clarity predicted greater appearance comparison tendency, which in turn predicted internalization of societal standards of attractiveness and then body dissatisfaction. This latter finding suggests that social comparisons and internalization together can be important in explaining the connection between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction.

The Bigger Picture: Extending the Model

Having established a connection between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction, as well as two potential mechanisms underlying this relationship, it is important to consider the broader context in which these associations might occur. Doing
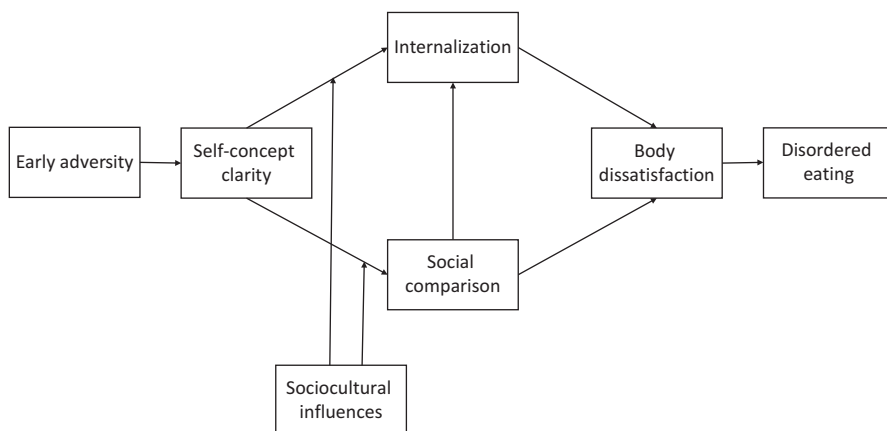
Fig. 11.2 Extended theoretical model

so can provide a richer picture of how body dissatisfaction develops and how it leads to harmful consequences and can help identify points of prevention and intervention. Below we describe theoretical extensions to the model we have described thus far and outline what is known and what remains unknown from the literature. This extended theoretical framework is depicted in Fig. 11.2.

Early-Life Experiences as a Predictor

Pulling the lens further back on the core model, an important question that emerges is: what factors predict an individual's level of self-concept clarity? One factor that might be particularly relevant in the context of body image and eating disorders is the quality of early-life experiences. Difficult early-life experiences have been identified as an important risk factor for the development of eating disorders later in life. Much of the research in this regard has focused on childhood sexual abuse (e.g., Wonderlich, Brewerton, Jocic, Dansky, & Abbott, 1997), but other research has also shown that the quality of the overall family environment plays an important role in eating pathology. For example, one meta-analysis showed that family environment has a stronger association with eating disorders than does childhood sexual abuse and that controlling for family environment eliminates the association between childhood sexual abuse and eating disorders (Rind, Tromovitch, & Bauserman, 1998). In order to explain the association between early adversity and disordered eating, Vartanian, Smyth, Zawadzki, Heron, and Coleman (2014) proposed a model in which negative early experiences were associated with lower levels of *intrapersonal resources* (including self-esteem and personal growth initiative) and further showed that these intrapersonal resources mediated the link between early adversity and body dissatisfaction; body dissatisfaction, in turn, predicted disordered eating.

Extending this perspective on intrapersonal resources, Vartanian et al. (2016) reasoned that self-concept clarity could similarly function as an intrapersonal resource (c.f. Campbell, 1990; Lee-Flynn, Pomaki, Delongis, Biesanz, & Puterman, 2011; Ritchie, Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Gidron, 2011) and further that self-concept clarity might be negatively impacted by early-life experiences. Indeed, there is some evidence that early family adversity (Streamer & Seery, 2015) and poor parental bonding (Perry, Silvera, Neilands, Rosenvinge, & Hanssen, 2008) are associated with low self-concept clarity. Vartanian et al. (2016) found support for this perspective, demonstrating that early adversity was associated with lower self-concept clarity and, importantly, that early adversity indirectly predicted body dissatisfaction via self-concept clarity and internalization. Thus, one of the potential mechanisms linking early adversity to body dissatisfaction is the negative impact of early adversity on one's sense of self. Of course, this is a tentative conclusion given the cross-sectional nature of the available data. Conversely, there is some longitudinal evidence demonstrating that *positive* family experiences may improve self-concept clarity; in a study of middle adolescents, having open communication with parents (e.g., "My parents are always good listeners") predicted greater self-concept clarity over time (Van Dijk et al., 2014). Thus, overall, there is evidence to suggest that family experiences may be important to the development of self-concept clarity and subsequent body image.

Disordered Eating Behavior as a Consequence

As noted earlier, body dissatisfaction is one of the most robust risk factors for the development and maintenance of disordered eating (Stice, 2002). Thus, any consideration of the bigger picture would need to include a discussion of the relevance of self-concept clarity to disordered eating. Clinical eating disorders are relatively rare, but incidence rates have increased among 15–19-year-old girls in recent decades (Smink, van Hoeken, & Hoek, 2012). The consequences for those suffering from eating disorders are significant, with increased mortality risk relative to the general population (Smink et al., 2012), low recovery rates (approximately 47% of patients fully recover from anorexia; Steinhausen, 2002), and high levels of comorbidities with other mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression (Hudson, Hiripi, Pope, & Kessler, 2007). Even subclinical levels of disordered eating behavior (e.g., restrictive dieting) can have a significant impact on individuals' health and well-being.

In addition to earlier research linking identity disturbance to eating pathology (which we described above), a number of studies have explicitly demonstrated a link between self-concept clarity and disordered eating. For example, among women (Cahill & Mussap, 2007; Vartanian, 2009) and men (Cahill & Mussap, 2007; but not in Vartanian, 2009), low self-concept clarity was associated with more frequent

bulimic behaviors (i.e., higher scores on the bulimia subscale of the Eating Disorders Inventory). Another study similarly found that low self-concept clarity was associated with higher scores on the Eating Disturbance Scale (a broad measure of disordered eating behaviors) for female and male university students in the United States and in Norway (Perry et al., 2008). Although none of these studies have tested whether the association between self-concept clarity and disordered eating is mediated by body dissatisfaction, we propose that body dissatisfaction will be an important mechanism underlying this relationship.

Sociocultural Influences as a Moderator

Research on body image has identified a range of sociocultural factors that are related to the development of body dissatisfaction. According to the tripartite influence model, pressures from parents, peers, and the media play a role in the development of body dissatisfaction. A number of studies have tested these influences as antecedents of internalization and social comparisons and have shown that internalization and social comparisons mediate the association between sociocultural influences and body dissatisfaction (e.g., Keery et al., 2004). Situating those sociocultural influences in our model, we propose that these influences may moderate the association between self-concept clarity and internalization/social comparisons. Specifically, we reason that it is particularly those individuals who are low in self-concept clarity and who also experience sociocultural pressures who are most likely to internalize societal standards of attractiveness and compare their appearance to others. In the absence of these body-related sociocultural pressures, individuals with low self-concept clarity might instead face difficulties in domains that are unrelated to body image (e.g., depression, substance abuse, internet addiction; Israelashvili, Kim, & Bukobza, 2012; Smith, Wethington, & Zhan, 1996). In other words, the early stages of our model (early adverse life experiences leading to low self-concept clarity) might well be risk factors for a range of psychopathologies. However, what makes this model uniquely applicable to eating disorders is how self-concept clarity in conjunction with sociocultural appearance pressures may create a perfect storm for developing body dissatisfaction and disordered eating.

Moving Forward: Suggestions for Future Research

Having outlined a broader theoretical model encompassing early predictors of self-concept clarity and consequences of body dissatisfaction, we now turn our attention to considerations for future research. In this section, we discuss several gaps in the current literature before moving on to discuss testing the current model with alternative methodologies and, finally, to considering potential intervention strategies.

Clarifying Gender Differences

The vast majority of research in the area of eating disorders and body image has focused on women, likely due to the fact that the lifetime prevalence rates for eating disorders are at least three times higher among women than they are among men (Eisenberg, Nicklett, Roeder, & Kirz, 2011; Kjelsås, Bjørnstrøm, & Götestam, 2004). However, in community samples, gender differences in disordered eating appear to be small to moderate (Striegel-Moore et al., 2009). Moreover, although women are more likely to report engaging in disordered eating behaviors (such as dieting and restrained eating behaviors; e.g., Cashel, Cunningham, Landeros, Cokley, & Muhammad, 2003; Halliwell & Harvey, 2006; Vartanian, 2009), men are more likely to report other weight control behaviors such as excessive exercise (Lewinsohn, Seeley, Moerk, & Striegel-Moore, 2002). With regard to psychological predictors of disordered eating, women consistently report greater body dissatisfaction (Feingold & Mazzella, 1998; Furnham, Badmin, & Sneade, 2002; Morry & Staska, 2001) and internalization of the thin ideal (Cashel et al., 2003; Halliwell & Harvey, 2006) than do men. Women also appear to make more appearance-related comparisons to peers and magazine models (Halliwell & Harvey, 2006; Jones & Crawford, 2006; Strahan, Wilson, Cressman, & Buote, 2006) and more commonly report feeling insecure about their bodies in response to seeing very thin or muscular models in the media (Garner, 1997). However, significant numbers of *both* genders report being dissatisfied with their weight and shape (Fallon, Harris, & Johnson, 2014; Garner, 1997; Pope et al., 2000).

Mean gender differences in internalization, social comparisons, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating may reflect a genuine gendered nature of eating disorders. However, it may also be that there are methodological issues with previous research that could account for some of the observed differences. Much of the research conducted with men has utilized the same measures that were developed for girls and women, such as internalization of a thin ideal. However, the attractive ideal body shape for men is increasingly being characterized as muscular and lean (Pope et al., 2000). Because of this muscular ideal body shape, there are as many men who want to be larger than they currently are as there are men who want to be thinner than they currently are; in contrast, women almost exclusively want to be thinner (Cohane & Pope, 2001; Silberstein, Striegel-Moore, Timko, & Rodin, 1988). Body dissatisfaction measures such as the Body Dissatisfaction subscale of the Eating Disorder Inventory (Garner, Olmsted, & Polivy, 1983) also typically capture the feeling that one's body is too big, as opposed to the feeling that one's body is not big or muscular enough (which might be more prominent among men). Recent work shows that, when assessments are designed to capture concerns that are gender-relevant, men *do* internalize societal standards of attractiveness just as much as women do (Morry & Staska, 2001; Vartanian, 2009). Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that the pattern of relationships among sociocultural factors, social comparisons, internalization, and body dissatisfaction is similar for men and

women (Cashel et al., 2003; Halliwell & Harvey, 2006; Jones & Crawford, 2006; Morry & Staska, 2001).

With respect to earlier components of our model, there is very little research examining gender differences in self-concept clarity; the few studies that exist suggest either no gender differences (Csank & Conway, 2004; Vartanian, 2009, Study 2) or a slight tendency for men to have a clearer sense of self than do women (Campbell et al., 1996; Light & Visser, 2013; Vartanian, 2009, Study 1). Thus, gender differences in body dissatisfaction and disordered eating cannot be sufficiently explained by gender differences in self-concept clarity. Instead, it may be that women low in self-concept clarity are more vulnerable than men low in self-concept clarity to incorporating societal standards of attractiveness into the self because appearance pressures are more salient and beauty standards are more uniform for women than they are for men. This is consistent with our theorizing regarding an interaction between self-concept clarity and sociocultural pressures, such that self-concept clarity will only be associated with body-related issues to the extent that societal standards of attractiveness are a personally relevant source of self-definition for the individual. Of course, there are some contexts in which appearance pressures are more salient for men, such as in extreme fitness subcultures like bodybuilding (Mosley, 2009). In those contexts, men who are low in self-concept clarity would presumably be at increased risk.

Looking back even further at the primary predictor in our model, early adverse experiences, men and women report experiencing different types of adversity throughout their lives. For example, men are more likely to report experiencing physical abuse and physical neglect, whereas women are more likely to report emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional neglect (Strine et al., 2012). Gender also appears to play a role in how these adverse experiences manifest themselves in psychological distress, with women more likely to develop depression and men more likely to express aggression and develop conduct disorders after experiencing trauma, perhaps because of attempts to conform to traditional gender-role norms (Widom, 2000). The act of experiencing any kind of trauma in childhood may be enough to lead to disturbances in the development of a clear identity later in life, but more research is needed to clarify potential gender differences in this relationship.

Overall, then, existing evidence suggests that women are likely to be particularly vulnerable to developing the problematic body-related outcomes identified in our model. However, this is likely not because they experience more early adversity or are lower in self-concept clarity but because when this is the case they are more likely than men are to turn to societal standards of attractiveness as an important source of self-definition. Incorporating such standards into the self predicts internalizing an unattainable thin ideal and comparing one's appearance to others more frequently, which in turn predicts dissatisfaction with one's weight and shape and disordered eating behaviors. Men who experience early adversity and are low in self-concept clarity may instead turn to other external sources of self-definition.

Investigating Age as a Moderator

In a review of the literature on how body image changes across the life span for women, Tiggemann (2004) noted that body dissatisfaction remains relatively stable; however the "importance" of body image to the self-concept declines with age. In fact, the association between body dissatisfaction and global self-esteem is no longer significant among older women. Although more research in this area is certainly needed, these findings suggest that age would moderate the relationships in our proposed model such that self-concept clarity may be a stronger predictor of body image issues among adolescents and young adults than among older adults. Thus, the model is likely to be particularly relevant to the *development* of self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction, more so than to its maintenance later in life.

Perfectionism as a Risk Factor

Perfectionism is a personality characteristic that is often discussed in the context of eating disorders. Research indicates that perfectionism is associated with body dissatisfaction and disordered eating in both clinical (Bulik et al., 2003) and nonclinical samples (Minarik & Ahrens, 1996; Pearson & Gleaves, 2006; Vartanian & Grisham, 2012), and there is some evidence to suggest that perfectionism might be a premorbid predictor of eating disorders (Bardone-Cone et al., 2007). There is also some evidence linking perfectionism to the various components of the model illustrated in Fig. 11.2. For example, perfectionism is associated with self-concept clarity both cross-sectionally and longitudinally, but the nature of that association varies based on the specific facet of perfectionism examined. For example, Campbell and Di Paula (2002) found that conditional acceptance (i.e., the belief that being loved is conditional on high achievement) predicted lower self-concept clarity 5 months later, whereas perfectionistic striving (i.e., actively striving for perfection) predicted an increase in self-concept clarity 5 months later. Other research has also found that perfectionism is associated with an increased frequency of making appearance-related social comparisons (Keery et al., 2004; Schutz, Paxton, & Wertheim, 2002; Van den Berg, Thompson, Obremski-Brandon, & Coovert, 2002) and with a greater degree of internalization (Keery et al., 2004; Tissot & Crowther, 2008). As in the Campbell and Di Paula study, the type of perfectionism also matters in an appearance context: a study with male university students found that higher levels of other-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism were associated with greater internalization among men, but self-oriented perfectionism was not correlated with internalization (Grammas & Schwartz, 2009). Overall, then, perfectionism (and particularly socially relevant forms of perfectionism) may be important to consider in a model that links self-concept clarity to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. The available evidence suggests that perfectionism might be an antecedent to self-concept clarity, internationalization, and social comparisons and thus

could be considered a risk factor. However, whether it operates as a mediator or moderator and whether it has both direct and indirect effects on body dissatisfaction and disordered eating are questions for future research.

Self-Concept Clarity and Other Aspects of the Self

In this chapter, we have focused on self-concept clarity as an important aspect of the self-concept and have presented evidence to suggest that a lack of clarity in the self-concept may lead to problems regarding body image and eating behaviors. Of course, there are a number of aspects of the self-concept that are likely to be associated with body-related concerns. For example, whereas self-concept clarity refers to the structure of the "knowledge" component of the self ("How clearly do I know myself?"), evaluative components of the self such as self-esteem are also associated with body image and weight control behaviors. Self-esteem has been examined extensively in the body image literature, with a vast amount of research demonstrating that greater self-esteem is associated with a more positive body image (e.g., Paxton, Eisenberg, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2006) and with lower internalization of societal standards of attractiveness (e.g., Clay et al., 2005). Moreover, individuals with eating disorders report lower self-esteem than do healthy controls (e.g., Button, Sonuga-Barke, Davies, & Thompson, 1996; Moor et al., 2004; Stice, Presnell, & Spangler, 2002). Although the structural (e.g., self-concept clarity) and evaluative (e.g., self-esteem) components of the self are, unsurprisingly, correlated and the relationship likely reciprocal (Campbell, 1990), they are considered to represent distinct aspects of the self-concept (Campbell et al., 1996). In line with the notion that structural and evaluative components of the self are distinct, self-concept clarity has been found to uniquely predict internalization of societal standards of attractiveness over and above the effects of global self-esteem (Vartanian, 2009). Self-concept clarity and self-esteem appear to play distinct (albeit overlapping) roles in the development and maintenance of poor body image and disordered eating; however, research on this issue is currently sparse, and it is not yet clear how these two aspects of the self-concept together are associated with body-related variables.

Further research is also needed to understand the causal relationships between self-esteem, self-concept clarity, and body image; the majority of research in this area has been cross-sectional in nature. There is mixed evidence from longitudinal studies regarding the causal link between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction; some studies have found that self-esteem prospectively predicts body image in certain samples (e.g., Paxton, Eisenberg, et al., 2006); however other research has failed to replicate this link and has instead found that body dissatisfaction predicts changes in global self-esteem over time (Morin, Maiano, Marsh, Janosz, & Nagengast, 2011; Tiggemann, 2005). To our knowledge, no studies have investigated the relationship between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction longitudinally; however, one study of Hong Kong adolescents over a 2-year period included measures of self-concept clarity and self-esteem, as well as crude measures of body

image (Wu, Watkins, & Hattie, 2010). Self-concept clarity and body image both uniquely predicted self-esteem over time; in a separate analysis, self-esteem predicted greater self-concept clarity over time, but body image did not. Although the aim of this study was not to investigate the link between self-concept clarity and appearance-related variables, these findings suggest that body dissatisfaction may not lead to changes in self-concept clarity, giving some evidence to the causal order of our theoretical model whereby self-concept clarity is proposed to lead to body dissatisfaction. Body image does appear to lead to shifts in self-esteem, however, and self-esteem can impact upon self-concept clarity (and vice versa), suggesting that the causal nature of these paths might be quite complex. Further research is also needed to explore other aspects of the self-concept (e.g., identity commitment, identity style, and the related concept of identity confusion) in the context of body image issues and the development of eating disorders.

Social Identity and the Self

Thus far, we have exclusively discussed identity in terms of personal identity, the way in which one sees oneself as a unique individual. However, there are other aspects of identity that are also worth considering in this context. One such important aspect of identity is social identity. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) postulates that people often define themselves in terms of group memberships (e.g., as a "woman," a "psychologist," or a "soccer player"), and the strength of this group-based identification will differ depending on the current social context (e.g., whether one is at work or on the soccer field). Because groups provide individuals with a source of identity, having a stable, meaningful group identity can have positive implications for one's sense of self, as well as for one's health and well-being (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009). Individuals low in self-concept clarity search for external sources of self-definition (Campbell, 1990). This means that they are more vulnerable to internalizing negative or harmful identities such as those described in this chapter, but it is possible that they are also more likely to internalize *positive* identities. Thus, interventions aimed at providing individuals low in self-concept clarity with positive, meaningful, stable sources of self-definition through the use of social identities may be particularly effective at reducing the rates of eating disorders in the community. Although this is yet to be tested in the context of eating disorders, there is growing evidence that group memberships play an important role in the prevention of clinical disorders such as depression (e.g., Cruwys et al., 2013, 2014) and can buffer against the negative impact of life stressors (Haslam, Jetten, & Waghorn, 2009). Moreover, disordered eating has recently been conceptualized within a social identity framework (Situated Identity Enactment model; Cruwys, Platow, Rieger, Byrne, & Haslam, 2016), and there is initial evidence that a social identity-based intervention (*Groups4Health*) can lead to better mental health, well-being, and social connectedness in young adults presenting with social isolation and affective disturbance (Haslam, Cruwys, Haslam, Dingle, &

Chang, 2016). Thus, approaches like *Groups4Health* may provide effective targeted interventions for individuals lacking a clear self-concept to prevent the onset of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. Future research is needed to explore this idea further.

Alternative Methodological Approaches

Research examining the connection between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction has primarily relied on cross-sectional/correlational designs. Although correlational studies are informative, they also leave unanswered many questions about the precise nature and direction of the association between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction. For example, although we have argued in this chapter that low self-concept clarity leads to a reliance on external sources of self-definition, it is also possible that a reliance on external sources of self-definition in turn leads to a lack of a clear and coherent self-concept. In this section, we briefly outline alternative methodological approaches that could be used to paint a richer picture of the self-concept clarity/body dissatisfaction association.

Longitudinal Studies Longitudinal studies would provide valuable information about the developmental trajectory of the variables depicted in Fig. 11.2, particularly studies that focus on adolescents. There is evidence that adolescence is a critical period for identity formation (Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010) as well as for the development of body dissatisfaction (Sands & Wardle, 2003). Furthermore, there is some evidence that self-concept clarity solidifies over the period of adolescence (Crocetti, Rubini, Branje, Koot, & Meeus, 2015). Thus, examining these constructs longitudinally among adolescents would provide insights into whether self-concept clarity prospectively predicts changes in relevant body-related constructs, such as thin-ideal internalization and body dissatisfaction. Note, however, that some longitudinal studies have found that the relationship between self-concept clarity and psychological well-being/distress (e.g., self-esteem, depression, anxiety) is bidirectional (Van Dijk et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2010). Applied to the current context, then, we might expect that low self-concept clarity would prospectively predict thin-ideal internalization or body dissatisfaction but that thin-ideal internalization or body dissatisfaction might also disrupt self-concept clarity over time.

Experimental Studies Experimental studies provide the most rigorous test of the causal associations among variables. In the body image literature, experimental studies consistently show that exposure to images of idealized bodies results in greater body dissatisfaction (e.g., Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002). A small number of experimental studies have used a form of priming manipulation (e.g., having participants write about inconsistent or consistent self-aspects) as a means of increasing participants' state self-concept clarity (e.g., Emery, Walsh, & Slotter, 2015). It would be interesting to determine whether priming self-concept clarity

could buffer against the effects of exposure to thin-ideal media images because this would provide insights into possible interventions to reduce negative body image.

Studies of Daily Life There has been increasing interest in recent years in examining processes as they unfold in daily life (e.g., Mehl & Conner, 2012). There are a range of such approaches, including the use of daily diaries, experience sampling, and ecological momentary assessments. These approaches offer many advantages over other approaches, such as reducing the likelihood of retrospective recall bias by minimizing the time between the experience and the report of that experience and collecting data in ecologically valid contexts. Furthermore, the collection of multiple data points over a period of time allows researchers to model the temporal dynamics of the relevant processes. In the current context, one question that might be of interest is whether daily fluctuations in self-concept clarity are related to daily fluctuations in body satisfaction and related processes and also whether body-relevant experiences in daily life impact one's state self-concept clarity. A few studies have examined self-concept clarity using a daily-diary approach and have found that daily negative events led to decreased state self-concept clarity (Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerssen, 2009; Lavallee & Campbell, 1995; Nezlek & Plesko, 2001). For example, Ayduk et al. (2009, Study 2) found that, for individuals high in rejection sensitivity, experiencing a conflict with their partner was associated with lower self-concept clarity the next day. In the context of body dissatisfaction, it might be that making an upward appearance comparison, for example, would lead to low self-concept clarity, particularly among individuals who are high in internalization. These daily fluctuations in self-concept clarity might, in turn, be associated with shifts in body satisfaction and disordered eating behavior. Of course, these hypotheses need to be tested in future research.

Points of Intervention

In addition to outlining the link between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction, we have also attempted to construct a broader conceptual model highlighting potential antecedents and consequences to those processes. One advantage of detailing an expanded model of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating to include earlier predictors is that it proposes new potential points of intervention. Researchers have devised a number of interventions aimed at preventing the development of eating disorders, and prevention programs that target high-risk individuals tend to elicit the largest effects (e.g., targeting individuals with high body dissatisfaction; Stice & Shaw, 2004). Thus, future interventions should attempt to focus efforts toward those most at risk. In this chapter, we have reviewed evidence that suggests that early adversity and subsequent low self-concept clarity are a risk factor for eating disorders (particularly among young women). We propose that individuals low in self-concept clarity could be a target for future eating disorder interventions, particularly during adolescence when girls and boys begin to struggle with issues of

identity. Implementing targeted interventions at this early point in the model could, in theory, prevent maladaptive thoughts and attitudes about oneself from taking hold in the first place.

In order to address the issue of low self-concept clarity, interventions will need to either (a) boost self-concept clarity or (b) present vulnerable individuals with *healthier* sources of self-definition. Improving self-concept clarity early on should, theoretically, have the flow-on effect of reducing body dissatisfaction and disordered eating, particularly for those who are subject to strong sociocultural pressures of attractiveness. If boosting self-concept clarity proves difficult, then interventions that encourage individuals to seek out healthier external sources of self-definition may also help to reduce instances of eating disorders among adolescents and young adults. In this chapter, we have discussed how lacking self-concept clarity can make individuals vulnerable to harmful external sources of self-definition, but here we propose that this vulnerability could be harnessed so that they develop positive, healthy social identities instead. The *Groups4Health* intervention (Haslam et al., 2016) involves helping individuals to map out their social identities and provides them with tools for strengthening and maintaining their social connections. Participants experience greater identification and connectedness with social groups, and this has been found to improve mental health and well-being among vulnerable populations (Haslam et al., 2016). This type of intervention has the potential to be particularly beneficial for individuals who are struggling to form a coherent self-concept; however care should be taken to assess the type of groups that individuals are identifying with. Groups can provide a positive, healthy source of self-definition to the extent that the content of the group *norms* is positive and healthy. If individuals identify with groups where harmful norms are present instead (such as unhealthy eating norms), then the intervention could in fact have the opposite effect (Hogg, Siegel, & Hohman, 2011; Cruwys et al., 2016). By presenting this expanded model of disordered eating, we hope to encourage further research on early adversity and self-concept clarity as early predictors of body image issues, with the eventual aim to develop new effective prevention program for those most at risk of developing eating disorders.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we outlined a theoretical model explaining how early adverse experiences may lead to disordered eating through impaired self-concept clarity. We reviewed empirical evidence indicating that early adverse experiences are associated with lower self-concept clarity. Furthermore, individuals low in self-concept clarity are more likely to internalize societal standards of attractiveness and compare their appearance to others than are individuals high in self-concept clarity, presumably because they are more reliant on external sources of self-definition. Internalization and appearance-related social comparisons in turn predict body dissatisfaction, and body dissatisfaction is one of the most robust predictors of

disordered eating. We propose that individuals low in self-concept clarity are particularly likely to move down a path toward body dissatisfaction and disordered eating *if* they also perceive extensive external pressure (i.e., from family, peers, and the media) to look a certain way, because this will make appearance concerns more salient and personally relevant. In this way, we purport that self-concept clarity can lead to harmful outcomes to the extent that it makes people vulnerable to internalizing negative external identities. Therefore, providing individuals who have experienced early adversity and are consequently low in self-concept clarity with *positive*, stable, and meaningful sources of identity may reduce the likelihood that they seek out harmful sources of self-definition such as unattainable societal standards of attractiveness. We hope that this chapter will spur on much needed research to test and refine our theoretical model and to examine whether interventions informed by this model can reduce the rate of eating disorders in the population.

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Chapter 12
Self-Concept Clarity and Psychopathology

David C. Cicero

Abstract Self-concept clarity refers to the coherence of an individual's identity, how confident one is about one's attributes, and how consistent and stable these attributes are (Stinson, Wood, & Doxey, 2008). Studies have linked low self-concept clarity to poor psychological adjustment and functioning and high self-concept clarity to adaptive psychological adjustment and functioning. Low self-concept clarity has also been linked to a variety of types of psychopathology, including depression, anxiety, and autism. However, the majority of work on the relations between self-concept clarity and psychopathology has focused on its role in schizophrenia spectrum disorders such as schizophrenia, attenuated psychotic disorder, and schizotypal personality disorder. In this chapter, the relations between self-concept clarity and depression, anxiety disorders, and autism spectrum disorders are briefly reviewed. Then, evidence for disturbances in self-concept clarity in schizophrenia is reviewed and linked to a long history of research dating back to the earliest descriptions of the disorder that conceptualized schizophrenia as a disorder primarily of the self.

Keywords Self-concept clarity · Psychopathology · Schizophrenia · Psychosis · Schizotypy · Psychotic-like experiences · Depression · Anxiety · Anomalous self-experiences · Autism

Self-concept clarity refers to the coherence of an individual's identity, how confident one is about one's attributes, and how consistent and stable these attributes are (Stinson, Wood, & Doxey, 2008). Studies have linked low self-concept clarity to poor psychological adjustment and functioning and high self-concept clarity to adaptive psychological adjustment and functioning. Low self-concept clarity has also been linked to a variety of types of psychopathology, including depression, anxiety, and autism. However, the majority of work on the relations between self-concept clarity and psychopathology has focused on its role in schizophrenia spectrum disorders such as schizophrenia, attenuated psychotic disorder, and schizotypal personality disorder. In this chapter, the relations between self-concept clarity and

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depression, anxiety disorders, and autism spectrum disorders are briefly reviewed. Then, evidence for disturbances in self-concept clarity in schizophrenia is reviewed and linked to a long history of research dating back to the earliest descriptions of the disorder that conceptualized schizophrenia as a disorder primarily of the self.

Self-Concept Clarity and General Psychopathology

Theorists have suggested that low self-concept clarity may be related to a number of types of psychopathology such as depression, general anxiety, social anxiety, and autism. Much of the work on self-concept clarity in depression has included general population or college student samples. For example, in the original studies in which the Self-Concept Clarity Scale was developed, self-concept clarity was negatively correlated with both negative affectivity and depression in a sample of undergraduates (Campbell et al., 1996). Other work has also found that self-concept clarity is negatively correlated with depression in a general population sample (Treadgold, 1999) and in college students (Butzer & Kuiper, 2006; Smith, Wethington, & Zhan, 1996). Moreover, a potential mechanism for this finding is that self-concept clarity is associated with coping style. People with high self-concept clarity tend to engage in more active coping strategies such as taking action, planning, and positive reinterpretation of events, while people with low self-concept clarity tend to engage in maladaptive coping strategies such as denial, behavioral disengagement, and mental disengagement (Smith et al., 1996).

In addition to being associated with depression and coping style, self-concept clarity may be related to loneliness (Richman et al., 2016). In several studies, Richman et al. found that self-concept clarity mediates the relation between loneliness and depression. In the first study, self-concept clarity mediated the relation between loneliness and depression in a cross-sectional study of undergraduates. In a second study, 98 romantic couples were followed for 6 months. Using multilevel modeling, they found that loneliness was associated with depression over time and that self-concept clarity mediated the relation. This suggests that self-concept clarity may be a potential mechanism by which loneliness leads to depression, even among people in romantic relationships. This finding was then replicated in a separate sample of heterosexual couples.

In addition to coping style and loneliness, self-concept clarity may also mediate the relation between life stress and depression. Chang (2001) hypothesized that life stress may cause depression in adolescents because it interferes with their ability to establish a coherent self-concept. In a cross-sectional study of 268 high school students, self-concept clarity was strongly negatively correlated with both stressful life events and depressed mood. Moreover, self-concept clarity partially mediated the relation between stressful life events and depressed mood, even when accounting for the effect of self-esteem on the relation. Like the finding with loneliness, this finding suggests that low self-concept clarity may be a mechanism by which life stress confers its risk for depression.

Like studies on the relation between self-concept clarity and depression, most of the research on the relation between self-concept clarity and anxiety has included unselected undergraduates as the participants, often in the same studies that measured depression. In all of these studies, self-concept clarity has been shown to be negatively correlated with generalized anxiety (Bigler, Neimeyer, & Brown, 2001; Butzer & Kuiper, 2006; Campbell et al., 1996; Smith et al., 1996).

Theorists have used the Intolerance of Uncertainty model (Dugas, Freeston, & Ladouceur, 1997) to explain the relation between self-concept clarity and generalized anxiety (Kusec, Tallon, & Koerner, 2016). The Intolerance of Uncertainty model suggests that generalized anxiety disorder is a result of excessive worry and that the excessive worry is a pathological response in an effort to deal with uncertainty (Dugas, Gagnon, Ladouceur, & Freeston, 1998). As a result, individuals with low self-concept clarity would find themselves constantly worrying in an attempt to deal with the uncomfortable feelings related to this lack of a clear self-concept. In a community sample of people screened for high and low levels of generalized anxiety disorder, the high GAD group had lower self-concept clarity than the low GAD group. Moreover, self-concept clarity was negatively correlated with all measures of intolerance of uncertainty (Kusec et al., 2016).

Along with generalized anxiety, low self-concept clarity has also been linked to social anxiety disorder. Theories of social anxiety disorder suggest that it is the result of negative mental representations of the self, coupled with a fear of exposing these core representations of the self (Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). People with low self-concept clarity may be especially likely to develop social anxiety disorder because external events are more likely to have an impact on their self-concepts. In a study including college students, self-concept clarity was negatively associated with social anxiety disorder, even when accounting for shared variance with depression and self-esteem, which are both highly correlated with self-concept clarity (Stopa, Brown, Luke, & Hirsch, 2010). In a second study, participants with high levels of social anxiety had lower Self-Concept Clarity Scale scores and lower scores on a behavioral task measure of self-concept that involved participants deciding whether adjectives did or did not describe their personalities. Participants with high social anxiety were less confident in their assessments of themselves, again suggesting decreased self-concept clarity. Along with the results of associations with generalized anxiety, these results suggest that self-concept clarity may be related to multiple types of anxiety disorders more broadly.

Another group of disorders that may be related to self-concept clarity are autism spectrum disorders. A long line of research in people with autism spectrum disorders suggests that, compared to neurotypical individuals, people with autism have limited self-knowledge (Berna, Goritz, Schroder, Coutelle, et al., 2016). However, very few studies have conceptualized this lack of self-knowledge as low self-concept clarity. People with autism spectrum disorders have decreased insight into their mental states and emotions (Williams, 2010) and tend to think of themselves in less social and psychological terms than do people without autism spectrum traits (Jackson, Skirrow, & Hare, 2012). These deficits have been primarily linked to deficits in theory of mind. Theory of mind refers to the ability of an individual to under-

stand one's own and others' perspectives, opinions, desires, and intentions. People with autism spectrum disorders and traits have been shown to have lower self-concept clarity scores than neurotypical individuals (Berna, Goritz, Schroder, Coutelle, et al., 2016). Moreover, this difference was mediated by the ability to use past events to find meaning in life (i.e., meaning making), but not by the ability to scrutinize past behavior to understand oneself. This suggests that the potential mechanism for low self-concept clarity in autism spectrum disorders may be an impairment in using autobiographical memories to find meaning.

Self-Concept Clarity and Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders

Before reviewing the research on self-concept clarity and schizophrenia, it is necessary to define schizophrenia, a heterogeneous disorder with many diverse symptoms. Modern conceptualizations of schizophrenia define the disorder by positive symptoms (i.e., a behavioral excess of something that should be absent but is present), negative symptoms (i.e., deficits in functioning of things that should be present but are absent), and disorganized symptoms. Positive symptoms include delusions (fixed, false beliefs that are not endorsed by the individual's culture or subculture) and hallucinations (sensations in the absence of external stimuli). The most common type of delusion is persecutory, in which individuals believe someone or something is out to get or harm them (Appelbaum, Robbins, & Roth, 1999), but delusions can take many other forms. The most common hallucinations are auditory and visual, but tactile, olfactory, and gustatory hallucinations are also present in schizophrenia. Negative symptoms include avolition, amotivation, affective flattening, alogia, social isolation, lack of interest or pleasure drawn from social situations, and a lack of emotion. Disorganized symptoms include disorganized speech (e.g., tangential, circumstantial, incoherent speech patterns) and disorganized or bizarre behavior or affect. Historically, schizophrenia was conceptualized as primarily a disorder of the self, in which an individual has an incoherent, unclear, or otherwise disturbed sense of self (Bleuler, 1911; Sass & Parnas, 2003). Recent theorists have noted that disturbances in self-processing are conspicuously absent from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM 5; Park & Nasrallah, 2014).

The prevalence of schizophrenia in the general population is estimated to be around 1 percent (Saha, Chant, Welham, & McGrath, 2005; van Os, Hanssen, Bijl, & Vollebergh, 2001). However, this 1 percent only includes people meeting full criteria for schizophrenia, which includes the presence of continuous symptoms for more than 6 months and a high degree of impairment related to these symptoms (American Psychological Association, 2013). Recent research suggests that psychotic symptoms are more common than was previously thought, with estimates as high as one in five, or even one in four, people experiencing at least one psychotic symptom at some point in their lives (van Os, Hanssen, Bijl, & Ravelli, 2000). Moreover, psychosis is thought to exist on a spectrum, with full-blown psychotic

symptoms on one end and milder, subclinical psychotic-like experiences on the other end (van Os, Linscott, Myin-Germeys, Delespaul, & Krabbendam, 2009). Along the spectrum are schizophrenia spectrum personality disorders, or "cluster A" disorders, including schizotypal, paranoid, and schizoid personality disorders. Theorists have debated whether this continuum is completely dimensional and semi-dimensional or if there is a categorical taxon of people who experience sub-clinical psychotic-like symptoms, but there is a universal agreement that people without full-blown schizophrenia can experience subclinical psychotic-like symp-toms (Korfine & Lenzenweger, 1995; Kwapil, Barrantes-Vidal, & Silvia, 2008; Lenzenweger, 1999).

Schizophrenia is generally considered to have several phases. The first phase, the premorbid phase, is the period from birth until symptoms begin to appear (Keshavan et al., 2009; Stoffelmayr, Dillavou, & Hunter, 1983). The second phase is the pro-dromal phase in which the individual begins to experience clinically significant attenuated psychotic symptoms (Moller & Husby, 2000; Yung & McGorry, 1996). This period can last for days, weeks, months, or even years. The prodromal phase is synonymous with the DSM 5 diagnosis of attenuated psychosis syndrome. Attenuated psychosis syndrome is included in Section III of the DSM, which is a section for disorders and classification strategies in need of more research before being included in the main text of the document. The third phase is the acute phase in which the individual develops frank psychotic symptoms. It is in this phase that most people with schizophrenia first have the need for inpatient treatment, and peo-ple experiencing this for the first time are referred to as "first episode" (Yung, 2003). The fourth and final phase of the disorder is the recovery phase. In the recovery phase, people with schizophrenia experience better functioning and fewer acute psychotic symptoms. People tend to fluctuate between the acute and recovery phases when they have a relapse of psychotic symptoms (Andresen, Oades, & Caputi, 2003; Bellack, 2006; Romano, McCay, Goering, Boydell, & Zipursky, 2010). Self-concept clarity may play a role in each of these phases of the disorder.

Self-Concept Clarity and Schizophrenia

The idea that schizophrenia is primarily a disorder of the self has a long history in psychiatry (Bleuler, 1911; Parnas, 2011). Schizophrenia was originally termed dementia praecox, which reflects early thinking that schizophrenia was a form of early-onset dementia (Moskowitz & Heim, 2011). Later, Bleuler coined the term "schizophrenia" consistent with his conceptualization of schizophrenia as a "split-ting of the mind" (Moskowitz & Heim, 2011), stating "I call dementia praecox schizophrenia because, as I hope to show, the splitting of the different psychic func-tions is one of its most important features. In each case there is a more or less clear splitting of the psychological functions: as the disease becomes distinct, the person-ality loses its unity" (Bleuler, 1911, p.8). This suggests that Bleuler put the distur-bance in the self at the center of his definition of schizophrenia. Moreover, the

description of the personality losing its unity can be interpreted as the individual losing self-concept clarity. As the disorder progresses, the self gets more and more disturbed, and the person's self-concept becomes less clear, to the point where they may find it difficult to accurately describe their personalities.

The construct of self-concept clarity has been examined in many different ways related to schizophrenia spectrum disorders. These studies have aimed to examine whether people with schizophrenia and people with attenuated psychotic syndrome have lower self-concept clarity than healthy controls and whether these symptoms are associated with a number of other symptoms and characteristics in people with schizophrenia.

Several studies have examined whether people with schizophrenia spectrum disorders have lower self-concept clarity in the chronic, first-episode, and attenuated psychosis syndrome phases of the disorder. In one study, people with chronic schizophrenia and a healthy control sample matched on age, sex, ethnicity, and parental education were given two measures of self-concept clarity (Cicero, Martin, Becker, & Kerns, 2016). In addition to the commonly used Self-Concept Clarity Scale, participants completed the Me Not-Me Decision Task (MNMDT; Campbell et al., 1996) in which participants are shown 60 adjectives and asked to choose, as quickly and accurately as possible, whether the adjective does (i.e., "ME") or does not (i.e., "NOT ME") describe themselves. Embedded among these 60 adjectives are 30 pairs of antonyms. Self-concept clarity is conceptualized as two separate indicators including the number of consistent responses to these pairs (e.g., answering "ME" to extroverted and "NOT ME" to introverted) and the reaction time in which these judgments are made. Compared to healthy controls, people with schizophrenia had lower Self-Concept Clarity Scale scores, fewer consistent responses, and a longer mean reaction time on the Me Not-Me Decision Task. This result is consistent with the hypothesis that people with schizophrenia have low self-concept clarity.

As mentioned, schizophrenia is thought to have several phases including the premorbid, prodromal, and acute phases. In addition to these phases, researchers also often examine people in the early acute stage, often referred to as "first episode." One advantage of investigating the role of self-concept clarity in these phases is that it can aid in understanding schizophrenia development while removing confounds associated with chronic schizophrenia such as long-term medication use. The prodromal phase of schizophrenia is characterized by the presence of attenuated psychotic symptoms (i.e., symptoms similar to delusions and hallucinations but in a diminished form). One recent study found people with high levels of attenuated psychotic symptoms have lower self-concept clarity than matched control groups (Berna, Goritz, Schroder, Coutelle, et al., 2016). Participants were German-speaking individuals who completed the study online through WiSo-Panel, a research group similar to Amazon Mechanical Turk but based in Germany. Participants with attenuated psychotic symptoms were 49 people with high scores (above 1.5 SD above the mean) on the Community Assessment of Psychic Experiences (Stefanis et al., 2002) questionnaire. These participants had a mean age of 41.9 (SD = 11.3) and where 63.3% female. Although only two participants had a schizophrenia spectrum diag-

nosis, 67.3% had a psychiatric diagnosis, with the most common being depression (57.1%) and anxiety disorders (30.6%). Forty-nine percent were currently in outpatient psychotherapy, and 46.9% were currently taking psychotropic medications. The study also included a comparison group of 147 participants with low scores (below 0.5 SD above the mean) who were matched on age, sex, education, and employment status. These results suggest that self-concept clarity may be related to increased psychotic-like symptoms both in community samples and in people at risk for the development of psychosis.

In addition to people in the prodrome, previous work has found that people experiencing their first episode of psychosis had lower Self-Concept Clarity Scale scores than a matched control group (Evans, Reid, Preston, Palmier-Claus, & Sellwood, 2015). This sample included 28 participants recruited from several early interventions for psychosis teams across the United Kingdom and 31 nonclinical comparison participants who were matched on sex, age, ethnicity, and education. Participants ranged from 18 to 38, and first-episode psychosis was defined as people who had their first episode of psychosis requiring treatment within 3 years prior to the beginning of the study. Taken along with the prodromal findings, these results suggest that low self-concept clarity is present from the early stages of the disorder.

Self-Concept Clarity and Symptoms in Schizophrenia

In addition to examining whether people with schizophrenia have lower self-concept clarity than comparison groups of people without schizophrenia, several studies have examined whether self-concept clarity is associated with symptoms and other related constructs among people who have schizophrenia. Theorists have suggested that self-concept clarity should be negatively correlated with both positive and negative symptoms, which is consistent with views of self-concept disturbances in people with schizophrenia (Sass & Parnas, 2003). However, results have been somewhat mixed, and several studies have found more nuanced relations between self-concept clarity and symptoms. In one study, self-concept clarity was negatively associated with both positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia (Cicero, Martin, et al., 2016) as measured with the Peters et al.'s Delusions Inventory (Peters, Joseph, & Garety, 1999), the Cardiff Anomalous Perceptions Scale (Bell, Halligan, & Ellis, 2006a), and the Revised Social Anhedonia Scale (Eckblad, Chapman, Chapman, & Mishlove, 1982).

In contrast, a longitudinal study following 101 people with schizophrenia for 6 months found that self-concept clarity at Wave 1 was associated with an *increase* in positive symptoms at Wave 2 (Weinberg et al., 2012). This association was particularly strong among people who experienced frequent stress during the 6 months between measurements. It is unclear why self-concept clarity would be associated with an increase in positive symptoms. Moreover, the results also seem inconsistent with another finding in the study, suggesting that self-concept clarity was associated with an increase in quality of life between measurements. However, in the study,

positive symptoms at Wave 1 were associated with higher quality of life at Wave 2, suggesting that more symptomatic individuals experienced a higher quality of life than less symptomatic individuals. This finding was especially strong for individuals with low levels of stress.

The finding that positive symptoms were associated with a higher quality of life is inconsistent with most research on quality of life and psychopathology (Bobes, Garcia-Portilla, Bascaran, Saiz, & Bouzoño, 2007; Galuppi, Turola, Nanni, Mazzoni, & Grassi, 2010; Norman et al., 2000). One explanation for this finding could be that the results are a statistical artifact related to the way the variables were entered into the hierarchical linear regression model. Regardless of the explanation, research on the relation between self-concept clarity and positive and negative symptoms is not completely clear, and more research is needed to understand this potentially nuanced relation.

A third study examining the relations between self-concept clarity and symptoms of schizophrenia spectrum disorders found that, among people with attenuated psychosis, self-concept clarity was negatively correlated with negative symptoms, but not associated with positive symptoms (Berna, Goritz, Schroder, Coutelle, et al., 2016). However, in a broader sample including people with and without attenuated psychotic symptoms, self-concept clarity was negatively associated with total psychosis scores, negative symptoms, and depressive symptoms, but still not with positive symptoms (Berna, Goritz, Schroder, Coutelle, et al., 2016).

In addition to positive and negative symptoms, people with schizophrenia also experience more general psychopathology symptoms such as depression and anxiety. In a study of 31 inpatients with schizophrenia, self-concept clarity was strongly negatively correlated with the severity of depression and anxiety symptoms (Bigler et al., 2001). Overall, research on the relations between self-concept clarity and symptoms of schizophrenia suggests that low self-concept clarity is associated with severity of symptoms. One potential explanation for these inconsistent findings is that other variables, as discussed below, moderate the relation between self-concept clarity and symptoms in schizophrenia. Regardless of the explanation, these varying results suggest that more research is needed to understand the relation between self-concept clarity and symptoms of schizophrenia.

Self-Concept Clarity and Trauma in Schizophrenia

Previous research suggests that childhood trauma is common in people with schizophrenia (see Read, van Os, Morrison, & Ross, 2005, for a review). Some research suggests that people who experience trauma may have lower self-concept clarity and that low self-concept clarity may be the mechanism for the relation between trauma and psychosis. One study found that self-concept clarity was negatively associated with childhood emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, emotional and physical neglect, and total abuse/neglect (Evans et al., 2015). Moreover, self-concept clarity mediated the relations between emotional abuse, physical abuse, emotional

neglect, physical neglect, total abuse/neglect scores, and psychosis. This suggests that self-concept clarity may be a mechanism by which childhood trauma results in the emergence of psychosis in adolescence/early adulthood. Moreover, this finding provides support for previous proposed theories that childhood trauma leads to a fractured and unclear sense of self (Lutz & Ross, 2003). Other work suggests that negative early childhood experiences, such as having neglectful, cold, or unsupportive parents, may serve as chronic negative social feedback on the developing individual, which could lead to low self-concept clarity (Streamer & Seery, 2015). According to self-verification theory, if this social feedback is inconsistent with the individual's self-concept, it can inhibit the development of a coherent self-concept. In turn, low self-concept clarity may lead to the development of several types of psychopathology including dissociative disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and schizophrenia. With respect to schizophrenia, this incoherent sense of self may lead to the deficits in reality testing or disorganization that are common in schizophrenia (Allen, Coyne, & Console, 1997). One limitation of this work is that it has all been cross-sectional, which limits causal interpretations of the data. Future research could follow people longitudinally and test whether reductions in self-concept clarity occur after a traumatic event.

Self-Concept Clarity and Stigma in Schizophrenia

In addition to positive and negative symptoms, many people with schizophrenia are exposed to stigma related to their illness. Stigma refers to the negative stereotypes people have about other people with mental illness, such as people with mental illness being weak or violent (Boyd, Adler, Otilingam, & Peters, 2014). Stigmatization refers to exposure to stigma from other people or organizations (Noyman-Veksler, Weinberg, Fennig, Davidson, & Shahar, 2013) and can include things like loss of employment or housing opportunities. Some people with schizophrenia experience self-stigma, in which they internalize these societal ideas and begin to believe them about themselves (Corrigan, Larson, & RÜSch, 2009). In numerous studies, self-stigma has been associated with poor outcomes in these populations. In a correlational study, self-concept clarity has been found to be negatively associated with internalized stigma including the Alienation, Stereotype Endorsement, social withdrawal, and discrimination experience subscales of the Internalized Stigma of Mental Illness Scale (Hasson-Ohayon et al., 2014). Low self-concept clarity was also associated with a decrease in meaning in life, but the relation was mediated by self-stigma.

In a longitudinal study, self-concept clarity has been found to be associated with a decrease in self-stigmatization in people with schizophrenia (Noyman-Veksler et al., 2013). This relation may be due to self-concept clarity protecting against negative life events such as social rejection (Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerssen, 2009), the use of adaptive rather than passive or maladaptive coping styles (Smith et al., 1996), or reductions in general life stress. Moreover, self-concept clarity was negatively

associated with a tendency to view the self as ill (Noyman-Veksler et al., 2013). In other words, people with schizophrenia viewed themselves as healthier if they had high self-concept clarity compared to if they had low self-concept clarity. Taken together, the results of the relations between self-concept clarity and stigma in schizophrenia suggest that high self-concept clarity may protect against the harmful effects of stigma and may be related to better long-term outcomes as a result.

Self-Concept Clarity, Aberrant Salience, and Psychotic-Like Experiences

Social-cognitive models of psychotic-like experiences suggest that the maladaptive processing of information related to the self plays a central role in the development and maintenance of psychosis and psychotic-like experiences, particularly for delusions and subclinical magical ideation (Bentall, Corcoran, Howard, Blackwood, & Kinderman, 2001; Freeman, Garety, Kuipers, Fowler, & Bebbington, 2002). However, these models suggest that maladaptive self-information processing alone may not result in a delusion-like experience (Bell, Halligan, & Ellis, 2006b; Freeman, 2007). Psychosis and psychotic-like experiences begin with an anomalous perceptual experience, which becomes a psychotic experience when it is interpreted. An anomalous perceptual experience is a strange or unusual experience involving the senses that can be auditory, visual, olfactory, or gustatory. One such experience may be aberrant salience (Cicero, Becker, Martin, Docherty, & Kerns, 2013; Kapur, 2003).

Aberrant salience is the incorrect assignment of salience, significance, or importance to otherwise innocuous stimuli (Kapur, 2003). The theory of aberrant salience comes from a long line of research suggesting that dopamine dysregulation is related to the development and maintenance of psychosis (Howes & Kapur, 2009). First, antipsychotic medication's mechanism of action is blocking dopamine D_2 receptors, and the clinical dose is related to their potency to block the receptors (Nikam & Awasthi, 2008). Second, dopamine agonists like methamphetamine precede symptoms of psychosis in otherwise healthy individuals or cause a relapse in people with schizophrenia who are not acutely psychotic (Harris & Batki, 2000). Finally, imaging research has found that dopamine levels are increased in subcortical brain regions in people in the schizophrenia prodrome and people who are experiencing an acute psychotic episode (Howes et al., 2009; Laruelle & Abi-Dargham, 1999).

In healthy individuals, dopamine is thought to regulate incentive salience (Berridge, 2007; Depue & Collins, 1999). Incentive salience is the motivational or "wanting" part of learning from rewards, as opposed to the purely hedonic or "liking" part. Since there is excessive dopamine activity in subcortical brain regions, the aberrant salience theory suggests this activity is related to unusual or incorrect attributions of incentive salience to stimuli. This theory is supported by phenomeno-

logical accounts of psychosis and the schizophrenia prodrome. People report that seemingly innocuous things in the environment suddenly take on an importance or significance (e.g., Bowers & Freedman, 1966; Moller & Husby, 2000). As people experiencing aberrant salience try to make sense of these experiences, they develop compelling explanations that manifest as delusional beliefs (Cicero, Kerns, & McCarthy, 2010; Kapur, 2003).

According to these social-cognitive models of psychosis, individuals who experience aberrant salience then engage in a search for meaning in which an explanation for the experience is selected. The processing of self-relevant information influences this search for meaning and maladaptive beliefs about the self may lead people to select maladaptive or delusional explanations for these experiences. For example, if someone experiencing aberrant salience begins to notice that there are many people walking in the neighborhood at night, this situation would feel very important and relevant to the individual personally, which will trigger a search for meaning. Although this situation would be objectively irrelevant to the individual, the aberrant experience of salience makes the situation appear relevant to the self, and the individual will try to incorporate it into his or her self-concept.

If the person has low self-concept clarity, the person may have trouble integrating this information into self-concept and select a delusional explanation for the experience. The person may come to believe that the people walking in the neighborhood are monitoring the person. In contrast, high self-concept clarity may serve as a protective mechanism that prevents the individual from maladaptively incorporating information into the self-concept. As a result, individuals with high self-concept clarity may be more likely to select a situational explanation (e.g., there is a special event in the neighborhood) because they are confident that the delusional explanation is inconsistent with their self-concepts.

Moreover, the unclear self-concept itself may trigger people to search for meaning, which, coupled with aberrant salience, may produce more psychotic and psychotic-like experiences. Thus, social-cognitive models of psychosis suggest that self-concept clarity alone might not be associated with psychotic-like experiences but that self-concept clarity may only be associated with psychotic-like experiences in people who have high levels of aberrant salience. In other words, there should be an interaction between aberrant salience and self-concept clarity in predicting psychotic-like experiences.

In a series of studies, this expected interaction has been found (Cicero et al., 2013). In a large sample of undergraduates, aberrant salience and self-concept clarity interacted to predict psychotic-like experiences as measured with the Perceptual Aberration (i.e., a measure of subclinical hallucinations; Chapman, Edell, & Chapman, 1980) and Magical Ideation Scales (i.e., a measure of subclinical delusions; Eckblad & Chapman, 1983). Self-concept clarity was significantly negatively correlated with perceptual aberration and magical ideation at high levels of aberrant salience but was unassociated with perceptual aberration and magical ideation at low levels of aberrant salience. Thus, people with high levels of aberrant salience and low levels of self-concept clarity had the highest levels of psychotic-like experiences.

As previously mentioned, self-concept clarity is negatively related to a number of maladaptive behaviors, traits, and psychopathologies. Thus, it is important to test whether this interaction is specific to psychotic-like experiences. Aberrant salience and self-concept clarity did not interact to predict scores on the Revised Social Anhedonia Scale (Eckblad, Chapman, Chapman, & Mishlove, 1982), a measure of the subclinical symptom of a lack of interest in or pleasure drawn from social interactions, which is considered to be a negative symptom (Kwapil, Miller, Zinser, Chapman, & Chapman, 1997). This suggests that the interaction between self-concept clarity and aberrant salience is specifically related to the positive, as opposed to negative, subclinical psychotic-like symptoms. Like studies with people with schizophrenia, this study found a main effect for a relation between subclinical negative symptoms and self-concept clarity, but this relation was not moderated by aberrant salience.

In a second study, this interaction was replicated in a separate sample and extended to another dependent variable, the Peters et al. Delusions Inventory (PDI; Peters et al., 1999). The PDI is a measure of delusions and delusion-like experiences that can be used in both clinical and nonclinical populations. In a third study, the interaction was replicated again, but aberrant salience and self-concept clarity did not interact to predict paranoia (Cicero et al., 2013). This suggests that the interaction is specific to delusion-like and hallucination-like experiences, but not to paranoia or other aspects of psychotic-like experiences.

In addition to being specific to psychotic-like experiences, it is important to examine whether the interaction is specific to self-concept clarity. Since self-concept clarity has been shown to be related to poor psychological adjustment, such as high levels of neuroticism (Bigler et al., 2001), and psychotic-like experiences are also strongly associated with neuroticism (Barrantes-Vidal, Ros-Morente, & Kwapil, 2009; Macare, Bates, Heath, Martin, & Ettinger, 2012), it is possible that it is the overlap between these constructs that is driving the interaction between aberrant salience and self-concept clarity. In this third study with undergraduates, there was a significant main effect between neuroticism and psychotic-like experiences, but neuroticism did not interact with aberrant salience or self-concept clarity to predict psychotic-like experiences (Cicero et al., 2013). Moreover, the interaction between aberrant salience and self-concept clarity was still significant when removing shared variance with neuroticism and shared variance with a neuroticism by aberrant salience interaction term. Taken together, these findings suggest that the interaction between aberrant salience and self-concept clarity is specific to psychotic-like experiences and that it cannot be accounted for by shared variance with other maladaptive traits such as high levels of neuroticism.

In a fourth study, these results were replicated in a separate sample of people at risk for the future development of schizophrenia. Using a comprehensive interview measure of psychotic-like experiences, the Structured Interview for Prodromal Syndromes (Miller et al., 2003), self-concept clarity was again associated with psychotic-like experiences in people with high levels of aberrant salience, but not in people with low levels of aberrant salience (Cicero, Docherty, Becker, Martin, & Kerns, 2015). Like the previous studies, this finding suggests that the highest rates

of psychotic-like experiences are found in people with low self-concept clarity but high aberrant salience. These results were specific to perceptual anomalies, unusual thought content, and grandiosity, but not paranoid ideation or disorganized communication. The interaction between aberrant salience and self-concept clarity was further extended by including an additional interview measure of anomalous perceptual experiences, the Structured Interview for the Assessment of Perceptual Anomalies (SIAPA; Bunney et al., 1999), for which the same interaction was found. Moreover, there was not a significant interaction between aberrant salience and self-concept clarity in predicting negative or disorganized symptoms. In addition to finding that these results were specific to positive symptoms of schizophrenia spectrum disorders, the results of this study showed that it was specific to self-concept clarity and not self-esteem. Previous research has found that self-esteem is strongly correlated with self-concept clarity (Campbell, 1990). Thus, one alternative explanation for the results could have been that overlap with self-esteem was driving the interaction. However, this study found that self-esteem did not mediate the moderation (Cicero et al., 2015). In other words, self-esteem could not statistically account for the interaction, suggesting that it is self-concept clarity and not self-esteem that is related to psychotic-like experiences.

Finally, in another study, the interaction between self-concept clarity and aberrant salience was replicated again, this time in a diverse sample of European-American, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial participants (Cicero & Cohn, 2017). Like in the previous four studies, self-concept clarity was negatively associated with psychotic-like experiences in people with high levels of aberrant salience, but not significantly associated with psychotic-like experiences in people with low levels of aberrant salience. This study further extended the aberrant salience by self-concept clarity interaction findings, by linking it to a long line of research on the connection between schizophrenia and disturbances in self-concept. The interaction between aberrant salience and self-concept clarity in predicting psychotic-like experiences was mediated by anomalous self-experiences, suggesting that this interaction could be accounted for by the presence of self-disturbances (Cohn & Cicero, 2016).

Anomalous Self-Experiences and Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders

As mentioned, the idea that schizophrenia is related to disturbances in self-concept has a long history in psychiatry (Bleuler, 1911; Parnas, 2011). Modern psychopathologists have termed this construct "anomalous self-experiences," which have been extensively studied from a phenomenological perspective. With respect to psychiatry and psychology, phenomenology refers to a description of symptoms from the first-person perspective of an individual experiencing the disorder. Based on the phenomenological perspective, Sass and Parnas (2003) developed the

ipseity-disturbance model. "Ipseity" is derived from the Latin term for the self or itself, "ipse." They define ipseity as "the experiential sense of being a vital part and self-identical subject of experience or first person perspective on the world" (Sass & Parnas, 2003, p. 428). The two primary aspects of the ipseity-disturbance model are hyper-reflexivity and diminished self-affection. Hyper-reflexivity is an exaggerated self-consciousness in which things that are normally experienced implicitly suddenly require attention to be carried out or the self may be experienced as an external object. For example, someone experiencing hyper-reflexivity may feel that they need to concentrate on the explicit steps of carrying out an action, such as turning a door knob to open a door, which would normally be carried out without conscious awareness of these details. Diminished self-affection refers to a lack of basic subjective self-presence or that one exists and has self-agency. People experiencing diminished self-affection may feel that they no longer exist or are no longer the person inhabiting their bodies and acting out their behaviors.

Phenomenological researchers have suggested that anomalous self-experiences are among the core experiential features of the schizophrenia prodrome (Moller & Husby, 2000). Many people experiencing their first episode of psychosis report feelings of not truly existing, not being alive, not having an inner self, or being somehow entirely different from everyone else. This experience may be at a lower cognitive level than self-concept clarity, such that people who have these experiences have trouble reflecting on themselves, which results in low scores on self-report measures of SCC such as the Self-Concept Clarity Scale. People who have anomalous self-experiences do not experience a complete loss of self-concept. Rather, they experience a disordered or unstable basic sense of self. These experiences have been shown to be very common, with some estimates suggesting more than 70% of people with schizophrenia spectrum disorders report anomalous self-experiences (Parnas et al., 1998).

In contrast to deficits in self-concept clarity, which is related to a variety of types psychopathology, research suggests that anomalous self-experiences are specific to schizophrenia spectrum disorders (i.e., schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, schizotypal personality disorder, etc.). Schizophrenia spectrum diagnoses are the most common diagnoses for people who experience psychosis. However, psychosis is also relatively common in people with other diagnoses, such as major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, substance use disorders, and dementia. It is important to establish whether anomalous self-experiences are common in people with these other disorders or if they are specific to the schizophrenia spectrum.

In several studies, the presence of anomalous self-experiences has been shown to discriminate between people who have a schizophrenia spectrum diagnosis and people who have no mental illness (Raballo, Saebye, & Parnas, 2011), as well as between people who have a schizophrenia spectrum diagnosis and another psychotic disorder that is not on the schizophrenia spectrum (Haug, Lien, et al., 2012; Parnas, Handest, Saebye, & Jansson, 2003). In contrast, people with schizotypal personality disorder have been found to have similar levels of anomalous self-experiences to people with schizophrenia, and both are higher than people without a schizophrenia spectrum diagnosis (Parnas, Handest, Jansson, & Saebye, 2005;

Raballo et al., 2011). Since schizophrenia is generally considered a more severe disorder on the schizophrenia spectrum than schizotypal personality disorder, this suggests that the presence of anomalous self-experiences may not be related to the severity of the disorder but are present across the spectrum. Likewise, people with schizotypal personality disorder tend to have higher scores than people with other personality disorders (Raballo & Parnas, 2010). Anomalous self-experiences are also relatively common in the general population and are related to subclinical schizotypal symptoms.

Another important topic in schizophrenia research is the assessment of risk for psychosis and the prediction of the future development of psychosis. Research suggests that identifying people at risk for the development of psychosis may delay the onset of the disorder, improve prognosis, and potentially prevent the onset of the disorder altogether (Addington & Heinssen, 2012; Melle et al., 2008; Stafford, Jackson, Mayo-Wilson, Morrison, & Kendall, 2013). Several recent studies have shown that anomalous self-experiences may be useful in predicting the development of psychosis in at risk samples. In one study, participants identified as having a high clinical risk for "transition" to psychosis were assessed for anomalous self-experiences in addition to more typical risk criteria such as attenuated positive symptoms (i.e., ideas of reference, odd beliefs or magical thinking, perceptual disturbances, paranoid ideation, odd thinking and speech, odd behavior, and odd appearance), intermittent psychotic symptoms (i.e., transient psychotic symptoms), and the presence of schizotypal personality disorder and a genetic risk for psychosis. After a 2-year follow-up, the presence of anomalous self-experiences at baseline was associated with the development of psychosis even when controlling for baseline levels of functioning and symptoms (Nelson, Thompson, & Yung, 2012). In another study, 155 first time inpatients with a variety of diagnoses were followed for 5 years. Participants with diagnoses other than schizophrenia spectrum disorders were more likely to develop a schizophrenia spectrum diagnosis at follow-up if they have high levels of anomalous self-experiences (Parnas et al., 2011). Despite this potential importance for prediction of psychosis, anomalous self-experiences have not been included in proposed diagnostic criteria for attenuated psychosis syndrome.

In addition to being more common in people with schizophrenia spectrum disorders and predicting the development of psychosis, anomalous self-experiences have been shown to be associated with poor outcomes in people with schizophrenia. Like self-concept clarity, anomalous self-experiences are associated with increased depressive symptoms in people with schizophrenia spectrum disorders (Haug, Oie, et al., 2012). In addition, anomalous self-experiences have been found to be associated with social-cognitive deficits, particularly with deficits in emotion processing (Cicero, Martin, Becker, & Kerns, 2016). More broadly, anomalous self-experiences have been found to be associated with poor social functioning (Haug et al., 2014), as well as with increased suicidal ideation, social isolation, and inferiority feelings in people with schizophrenia (Skodlar & Parnas, 2010). These findings suggest that anomalous self-experiences are not only more prevalent in schizophrenia spectrum disorders but are also predictive of worse functioning and prognosis.

Phenomenological researchers have suggested that the sense of self can be further broken down into a "minimal" or "basic" sense of self and a higher-level "narrative" or "social self" (Nelson, Parnas, & Sass, 2014). The minimal self refers to the implicit experience of existing or inhabiting one's body and having agency in actions. The stream of consciousness, self-awareness and presence, and somatization factors of anomalous self-experiences may be on this basic level of self-experience. The narrative or social self refers to the self that is the object of introspection and includes constructs such as personality, self-concept, self-esteem, and self-concept clarity. These aspects of the self-concept may be arranged in a hierarchy such that people with disturbances in minimal or basic self also have higher-level disturbances in self-concept. Thus, if this theory of self-organization is correct, then we should expect to find that measures of basic anomalous self-experiences are correlated with self-concept clarity.

Despite this strong theoretical rationale, few studies have examined the correlations among these constructs in either the general population or schizophrenia spectrum samples. In a large sample of undergraduates, anomalous self-experiences were strongly correlated with self-concept clarity as measured with the Self-Concept Clarity Scale and were moderately correlated with scores on the Me Not-Me Decision Task (Cicero, Neis, Klaunig, & Trask, 2017). Moreover, in a sample of people with schizophrenia, anomalous self-experiences were also correlated with scores on the Self-Concept Clarity Scale and the Me Not-Me Decision Task (Cicero, Martin, Becker, & Kerns, 2016). These correlational results are consistent with a hierarchical model in which anomalous self-experiences occur at a more basic level, while self-concept clarity is a higher-level process. Future research could continue to explore these relations using experimental methods to see if anomalous self-experiences could actually *cause* reductions in self-concept clarity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, low self-concept clarity has been shown to be related to a variety of types of psychopathology including depression, generalized anxiety, social anxiety, and autism spectrum disorders among others. The type of disorder with the most research on self-concept clarity is schizophrenia spectrum disorders. This research is complemented by a long tradition of research suggesting that schizophrenia is primarily a disorder of the self. The finding that self-concept clarity is low in so many different types of psychopathology suggests that low self-concept clarity may be a risk factor for psychopathology generally, rather than any specific disorder. Future research on the relations between self-concept clarity and psychopathology may focus on 1) examining the mechanisms that mediate these relations and 2) determining whether self-concept clarity is a cause or a sequela of psychopathology.

First, previous research has suggested several potential mechanisms that may explain the relations between self-concept clarity and various types of psychopa-

thology. These proposed mechanisms include trauma (Evans et al., 2015), early childhood experiences (Streamer & Seery, 2015), loneliness (Richman et al., 2016), coping style (Smith et al., 1996), life stress (Chang, 2001), intolerance of uncertainty (Kusec et al., 2016), impairment in autobiographical memories (Berna, Goritz, Schroder, Coutelle et al., 2016), mental illness stigma (Noyman-Veksler et al., 2013), and anomalous self-experiences (Cicero, Neis, Klaunig, & Trask, 2017). Critically, nearly all of the findings indicating potential mechanisms for self-concept clarity have included just a single study. Thus, future work replicating these results is important to increase confidence in the findings. Moreover, many of these studies included college student participants who may or may not have been experiencing clinically significant psychopathology. Two exceptions are work with people with autism spectrum disorders and people with schizophrenia (Berna, Goritz, Schroder, Coutelle et al., 2016; Cicero, Martin, Becker, & Kerns, 2016). Future work could examine these mechanisms in clinical populations of people with major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and social anxiety disorder, among others. In addition to replicating and clarifying the mediating variables, this work could help to determine if self-concept clarity is specific to certain types of psychopathology or is a broad correlate of many types of maladaptive functioning.

In addition to exploring the mechanisms of the relations between self-concept clarity and psychopathology, future research could attempt to determine whether low self-concept clarity is a cause or a consequence of psychopathology. This research could be carried out in two ways. First, researchers could follow general population samples, or people found to be at risk for psychopathology longitudinally to determine whether self-concept clarity decreases prior to the development of psychopathology. Although these correlational studies would not be able to rule out all alternative casual variables, they could determine the temporal order of self-concept clarity and psychopathology. If low self-concept clarity is present prior to the development of psychopathology, then it is unlikely to be a sequela of psychopathology. Conversely, if low self-concept clarity is present only after the development of psychopathology, then it is unlikely to be a causal factor in its development. Ecological momentary assessment (EMA) studies could be used to understand the maintenance of psychopathology by examining whether fluctuations in self-concept clarity are related to fluctuations of psychopathology. For example, some EMA research has found that reductions in self-esteem precede increases in paranoia in daily life (Thesissen, Bentall, Lecomte, van Os, & Myin-Germeys, 2008). Future research could examine similar questions with regard to self-concept clarity and determine whether the effects are specific to self-concept and separate from self-esteem.

A second way researchers could attempt to determine whether low self-concept clarity causes psychopathology is to experimentally lower self-concept clarity and measure whether psychopathology increases as a result. For example, Proulx and Heine (2009) asked participants to write a series of essays in which they described a situation in which they were shy and a situation in which they were outgoing. They then wrote an essay using the previous essays as evidence that they had two selves inhabiting the same body. In the control condition, the third essay was

replaced by an essay indicating that the participant had a unified self. Proulx and Heine found that participants in the experimental condition were more likely to accurately identify pattern congruent letter strings in a subsequent task, indicating that they found more "meaning." These results were interpreted within a Meaning Making Model (MMM) framework in which the experimental essay was a threat to meaning and the letter string task was an effort to reinstate meaning. Another interpretation that would also be consistent with the MMM is that the essay task manipulated self-concept clarity (i.e., the threat to meaning was low self-concept clarity) and that the letter task represented an effort to reinstate meaning to compensate. A similar process may occur in people with psychosis in which a delusional explanation develops as a way to compensate for the threat to meaning created by low self-concept clarity. Future research could use a task similar to Proulx and Heine's to experimentally reduce self-concept clarity and test whether it results in an increase in delusion-like beliefs in an effort to reinstate meaning. Moreover, social-cognitive models suggest that this effect is strongest in people with high levels of aberrant salience. Previous work has found that experimentally manipulating dopamine levels with a gambling task, which in turn should increase aberrant salience, results in delusion-like beliefs and behaviors (Karcher, Cicero, & Kerns, 2015). Future research could manipulate self-concept clarity and either manipulate or measure aberrant salience to see if the effect of self-concept clarity on psychotic-like beliefs is moderated by aberrant salience.

This research clarifying the causal relations between self-concept clarity and psychopathology and the mechanisms by which they are related could be further used to create a developmental model of the role self-concept clarity in psychopathology. As mentioned, self-concept clarity may fit well as a variable within social-cognitive models of psychosis, but more work is needed to understand its relations to other types of psychopathology. At the same time, more work is needed even within social-cognitive models of psychosis to understand the causal structure and mechanisms of action. Future research may determine whether one model is appropriate to explain the relations between self-concept clarity and all forms of psychopathology or if a separate model is needed for each distinct type of psychopathology.

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Chapter 13
Common Themes and Future Directions for Self-Concept Clarity Research

Jennifer Lodi-Smith and Kenneth G. DeMarree

Abstract In this chapter, we reflect on the chapters contained in this volume. We document several themes that emerged across multiple chapters. Themes apparent in the current self-concept clarity literature include the centrality of the person *in context* in understanding the origins and effects of self-concept clarity and the potential benefits of higher levels of self-concept clarity. Common themes in the future directions proposed by individual chapter authors are also reviewed, such as the need to further develop theory and understanding as well as testing the extent to which the self-concept clarity construct and findings generalize beyond individualistic or unitary conceptions of the self.

Keywords Future directions · Measurement · Nomological net · Self-esteem · Social identity · Life outcomes · Generalizability · Self-concept clarity

Each chapter in this volume considered self-concept clarity, people's evaluation of "the extent to which the contents of [their] self-concept … are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable" (Campbell et al., 1996, p. 141). These chapters covered a diverse array of topics from the nomological net of self-concept clarity to its development and relation to social roles to its implications for psychological health in nonclinical and clinical contexts. Across these chapters, a number of common themes emerged concerning both the current state and the future possibilities for research investigating self-concept clarity. These future directions make it clear that the construct has much potential in the years to come. Although we asked each chapter author to discuss future directions with respect to their focal topic, we use this final chapter to discuss and integrate some common themes that emerged across this volume. The interested reader is encouraged to mine the many excellent and specific future directions within each chapter of this volume.

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Measuring Self-Concept Clarity

Perhaps one of the most common themes to emerge across the preceding chapters is the ubiquity of the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (Campbell et al., 1996). We reproduce this measure here in Table 13.1. This scale has proved to be very generative since its publication over 20 years ago with over 1300 citations of the original publication as of 2017 per Google Scholar. Clearly this short 12-item scale has resonated among psychological researchers.

The scale is not, however, without flaw. Item 6, for example, sometimes demonstrates relatively weak relationships with other scale items and consequently can be problematic when examining the factor structure of the scale (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010). Given these prior findings, it becomes doubly important to follow best practice when working the Self-Concept Clarity Scale. Scholars must check the factor structure of the scale or the fit of the measurement model (when using latent variable methods) and adjust their operationalization of the construct accordingly providing full documentation of this measurement evaluation. Similarly, when comparing across groups or over time, it is imperative that researchers establish measurement invariance in the Self-Concept Clarity Scale to ensure that observed differences can be attributed to actual mean differences and not to measurement drift.

Table 13.1 Before each statement, please circle a number indicating the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by using the following rating scale:

						Disagree strongly 1	Disagree somewhat 2	Neither 3	Agree somewhat 4	Agree strongly 5
1	2	3	4	5	My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another.
1	2	3	4	5	On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion.
1	2	3	4	5	I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am.
1	2	3	4	5	Sometimes I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be.
1	2	3	4	5	When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I am not sure what I was really like.
1	2	3	4	5	I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality.
1	2	3	4	5	Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself.
1	2	3	4	5	My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently.
1	2	3	4	5	If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another day.
1	2	3	4	5	Even if I wanted to, I don't think I could tell someone what I am really like.
1	2	3	4	5	In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.
1	2	3	4	5	It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want.

The Self-Concept Clarity Scale is also not the only way to operationalize self-concept clarity. As is reviewed elsewhere in this volume, a number of other approaches have been used, including other metacognitive measures (e.g., certainty) as well as more structural indicators of clarity (e.g., accessibility or consistency; all measures appeared in Campbell, 1990; for a review see DeMarree & Bobrowski, Chap. 1, this volume). These measurement approaches do not appear to be equivalent, and little existing research includes multiple measures to compare the predictive utility of various measurement approaches. Thus, researchers are encouraged to investigate and think about how they measure self-concept clarity as they design future work with self-concept clarity with a particular consideration put toward using multiple measures.

The Nomological Net of Self-Concept Clarity

One of the most common themes across the chapters in this volume is identifying the nomological net of self-concept clarity, or situating it in the broader context of psychological constructs. One of the most apparent aspects of self-concept clarity that comes across in the preceding chapters is its clear place at the intersection of multiple disciplines of psychology blending social and personality conceptions of the self to provide insight into clinical and nonclinical functioning alike. Chapter authors connect self-concept clarity to the modern personality domains of traits, characteristic adaptations, and narrative identity while also finding grounding for self-concept clarity in social psychological theories from self-expansion to self-verification. Further, most of the chapters in this volume emphasize the importance of self-concept clarity for broad and varied conceptualizations of psychological health.

Across these reviews, perhaps the most consistent theme is that our understanding of self-concept clarity is still emerging. For example, in his review of self-concept clarity in the context of modern personality psychology, Dunlop (Chap. 2) theorizes on what self-concept clarity can do to help us understand fundamental issues in personality psychology like the regulation of behavior and creating continuity in the self over time. Hertel (Chap. 3) suggests we can examine self-verification theory, moderators of self-concept clarity, and determine the influence of situational and mood factors on the manifestation of both trait and state self-concept clarity.

Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Esteem

A central part of building this nomological net is touched on by nearly every chapter in this volume and goes back to the roots of self-concept clarity research – its relationship to self-esteem. Campbell states in the foreword to this volume:

> I initially explored the idea of self-concept clarity and its relation to self-esteem because it provided a more cogent explanation for some findings in the self-esteem literature than the self-esteem trait itself. That is, a simple consistency explanation using self-esteem could not account for the fact that LSE people appeared to be generally susceptible to environmental cues, both positive and negative. And similar to the construct of self-esteem, I conceptualized clarity as a relatively stable personality variable trait and speculated that self-esteem and self-concept clarity were probably confounded and causally related on one another in a reciprocal manner.

And yet, over 20 years later, these constructs are still often confounded. Though excellent work has set the foundation for our understanding of the interrelationships of these constructs (Nezlek & Plesko, 2001; Wu, Watkins, & Hattie, 2010), large gaps remain in our understanding of the reciprocal nature of self-concept clarity and self-esteem as both microlevel and macrolevel processes.

To maintain its viability as a construct, we must confirm the incremental validity of self-concept clarity above and beyond self-esteem. This must be done through both rigorous statistical models in our correlational data and through experimental designs in our laboratory studies. Future research on self-concept clarity must not measure it in isolation but must measure it side-by-side with self-esteem to provide more precise insights into the causes, effects, and correlates of these two components of the self.

This measurement brings forward a central future direction that cuts across all of the themes of this volume – the field needs more empirical and longitudinal studies of self-concept clarity. We are beginning to have a firm grasp on descriptive aspects of self-concept clarity. One important theme that emerges across the chapters in this volume is that the psychological processes and temporal dynamics surrounding clarity are not yet well understood. To lend insights into these issues, future studies will have to use methods that go beyond cross-sectional correlational studies, ranging from experimental manipulations to microlevel daily diary-type assessments. The field is already moving in these directions, and continued investigation of the processes and dynamics of self-concept clarity will allow for the development and testing of new theory surrounding self-concept clarity.

Self-Concept Clarity and Social Identity

A great deal of the work reviewed in this volume returns to the importance of social identity and interpersonal relationships for self-concept clarity (e.g., Gardner & Garr-Schultz, Chap. 7; Lodi-Smith & Crocetti, Chap. 4; McIntyre et al., Chap. 6; Schwartz et al., Chap. 8; Slotter & Emery, Chap. 5; Vartanian & Hayward, Chap. 11, this volume). This emphasis speaks to the profound importance of social experiences for the development of the self and echoes the theoretical grounding of self-concept clarity at the intersection of social and personality psychology. As a number of chapter authors point out, early socialization experiences from parents and peers play a key role in the development of self-concept clarity among adolescents.

Romantic relationships are clearly of central importance to the development and maintenance of self-concept clarity in adulthood. Emerging research suggests work roles may be similarly critical. Self-concept clarity appears to, in turn, have an impact on the quality of social relationships.

As is commonly the case in research on social roles, research on self-concept clarity and social roles falls largely into the period of role acquisition in late adolescence, emerging adulthood, and young adulthood. This is unsurprising as the importance of role attainment to the developing sense of self is a critical component to Eriksonian models of identity development and individual lived experience. Social roles and social identity are, however, a central part of the self at all points in the lifespan. Thus, the chapters in this book and our own summary encourage future work to expand our focus both in age and roles. Self-concept clarity is likely relevant across the lifespan and has the potential to impact and be impacted by acquisition and loss of a variety of identity defining roles beyond family and career roles. Critically, we must study the diversity of human experiences that can occur across the lifespan as both the nature of experience and self-concept clarity change across the lifespan.

Another issue related to people's social lives is whether or not self-concept clarity can also be thought of as a feature of social identity rather than just of the individual self. Gardner and Garr-Shultz (Chap. 7, this volume) introduce the idea of collective self-concept clarity. Future research should explore whether the clarity of social selves will be similar or different than the clarity of individual selves (see also DeMarree & Bobrowski, Chap. 1, this volume).

Self-Concept Clarity and Life Outcomes

A similar expansion is needed in the literature linking self-concept clarity to life outcomes. Nearly every chapter in this volume connects self-concept clarity to life outcomes in some way. Chapters relate self-concept clarity to potential benefits for self-regulation, relationship quality, psychological well-being, and mental health. Some of these benefits are posited direct effects of self-concept clarity whereas others have clarity playing a moderating or buffering role.

Again, this work can be developed further. When we look across the lifespan, there is a broad potential array of outcomes self-concept clarity might influence. We can theorize that self-concept clarity has the potential to be linked to not just psychological health but physical and cognitive health as well. Each of these can then be unpackaged for a given population. Optimal physical health, cognitive fitness, and psychological well-being in adolescence look very different from these same constructs later in life. Further, better understanding the processes by which self-concept clarity confers its effects may lend insights into how these effects may manifest in different contexts. Self-concept clarity, for example, may provide insight into the essential knowledge of the self that promotes self-regulation and authentic decision making.

Given the potential benefit of high levels of self-concept clarity for psychological well-being and mental health, one interesting next step includes exploring whether it is possible to intervene on self-clarity and, if so, what such an intervention would look like (see Schwartz et al., Chap. 8, this volume). As a number of chapters in this volume suggest and elaborate, future work must build on what we know of the processes and mechanisms underlying self-concept clarity to develop interventions to promote self-concept clarity. Many of the effects discussed in this book that impact clarity (for a review, see Hertel, Chap. 3, this volume) could potentially be leveraged, at least in part, into a clarity intervention. Regardless of the approaches taken to investigate potential ways to promote self-concept clarity, they must be grounded in best practice in intervention design. Therefore, we recommend that all scholars planning to develop a self-concept clarity-based intervention integrate the National Institutes of Health's stage model for behavioral intervention development (Onken, Carroll, Shoham Cuthbert, & Riddle, 2014) in the envisioning of their programs of research in this domain.

Generalizability

In reading the preceding chapters, perhaps the most common theme that emerges as an essential future direction for our field is the need to test the generalizability of self-concept clarity. At a very basic level, a number of chapters touch on the importance of investigating gender differences in self-concept clarity and the implications of self-concept clarity in a broader array of clinical populations than those currently being studied. For example, recent research suggests that the implications for self-concept clarity and well-being vary by social class (Na, Chan, Lodi-Smith, & Park, 2016). This evidence for moderation of a fundamental finding within self-concept clarity research underscores the importance of testing generalizability and replicating our findings within diverse groups.

The chapters in this volume also encourage a movement beyond "WEIRD" (i.e., western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) cultures. Continuing to expand self-concept clarity to other nations and diverse samples ranging across ethnicities and ages that integrate different values is perhaps the most important way that we can both learn more about self-concept clarity and about individual lives. As DeMarree and Bobrowski (Chap. 1, this volume) note, this may involve making sure that constructs of interest, including self-concept clarity, are measured or manipulated in a culturally meaningful manner (for a review, see Hardin, Robitschek, Flores, Navarro, & Ashton, 2014). As we move forward in replicating and expanding research in self-concept clarity, researchers are encouraged to use the new best practices in these pursuits such as preregistering their replications and, whenever possible, providing access to study materials, data, and analytic scripts.

Conclusion

In sum, self-concept clarity has enjoyed a robust 20+ years bringing together personality and social psychological research to better understand individuals, their social experience, and well-being. As we look forward to the next 20 years, we encourage both direct and conceptual replication of the work that has gone before in diverse samples. We need to extend prior work with additional process-based micro- and macro-longitudinal research, stringent experimental designs, and well-developed intervention studies. In doing so, we can facilitate continued deliberate and thoughtful examination of self-concept clarity and its broad import on day-to-day life.

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