

Self-Esteem and Identities

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Abstract

While most research examines self-esteem in terms of self-worth, we suggest three dimensions of self-esteem: worth-based, efficacy-based, and authenticity-based esteem. Each of these dimensions is linked to one of the three motives of the self, and each of them primarily emerges through verification of social/group, role, and person identities, respectively. Data are examined to study these three self-esteem dimensions, including measuring the esteem dimensions and assessing their psychometric properties, investigating the effects of identity verification on the different esteem dimensions, and analyzing the causal relationship among the esteem dimensions. Overall, the results support the measurement and validity of these three dimensions as well as the role of identity verification in producing these self-esteem outcomes.

Keywords

self-esteem, identity, verification

Introduction

Self-esteem is the negative or positive attitude that individuals have of themselves (Rosenberg 1979). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg 1979), the most frequently used measure of self-esteem, largely captures people's overall feelings of acceptance and respect (Rosenberg et al. 1995). The study of self-esteem has persisted for at least 40 years because many are convinced that high self-esteem produces salutary outcomes and low self-esteem is at the root of personal and social problems. While researchers provide a dim portrait of people with low self-esteem (Baumeister 1993; Leary and MacDonald 2003; Rosenberg and Owens 2001), the positive outcomes associated with high self-esteem should not be overstated; it may have a dark side as evidenced in aggressive tendencies (Baumeister, Smart, and Boden 1996) and narcissism (Campbell, Rudich, and Sedikides 2002). Although high self-esteem may not always be beneficial, evidence that individuals hold themselves in high esteem across the globe may be an instance of a more general tendency to maintain and enhance positive information about who one is, relative to negative information (Sedikides, Gaertner, and Vevea 2005).

In the present research, we move the science of self-esteem beyond simply viewing self-esteem in terms of how worthwhile individuals feel by examining the structure of self-esteem. We maintain that self-esteem has three dimensions: self-worth, self-efficacy, and authenticity. This structure can be deduced from two important theoretical developments in the social-psychological literature. First, in both sociology and psychology, researchers have identified three motivational aspects of the self that give direction to the individual, and when satisfied, make oneself

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feel good. These aspects include the motive to feel worthwhile and accepted, the motive to see oneself as efficacious or agentic, and the motive to find meaning, validity, and coherence in one's life (Gecas 1986, 1991; Swann and Bosson 2010). These motives correspond to the three dimensions of self-esteem that we identify.

Second, we can better understand self-esteem by placing it within the context of identity theory. In identity theory, the verification of different bases of identities is linked to different self-esteem outcomes (Burke and Stets 2009). The verification of social/group identities provides a general sense of being found worthy and valuable, the verification of role identities provides a sense of efficacy or competency, and the verification of person identities generates the feeling that one is being one's true self. These two theoretical lines suggest that if people feel good for satisfying different motives or verifying different identities, these positive feelings should have multiple dimensions, corresponding to the motives and/or identities that have been satisfied.

In this research, we (1) integrate self-esteem within the theoretical context of identity theory; (2) develop measures of worth, efficacy, and authenticity-based esteem; (3) demonstrate the discriminant validity of the three dimensions; (4) show how the verification of different identities produces these different esteem dimensions; and (5) examine the causal relationship among the dimensions over time.

The Three Dimensions of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem research generally has focused on *global self-esteem*, that is, one's feelings of *self-worth*. Self-worth is the degree to which individuals feel positive about themselves, that is, they feel that they are good and valuable. It is self-acceptance or self-respect (Rosenberg et al. 1995). Self-worth is rooted in the idea that individuals desire to see themselves favorably, and they act in a way that maintains and enhances this positive self-view. This desire has been referred to as the self-esteem motive (Gecas 1982, 1986, 1991) or the self-enhancement motive (Leary 2007).

Recently, it has been argued that we prefer positive self-evaluations, in part, because they indicate our *social worth*, that is, they satisfy our desire for *communion* and interpersonal connectedness with others (Swann and Bosson 2010). The communion motive emphasizes people's acceptance and belongingness. It is consistent with the sociometer theory of esteem where esteem acts as an interpersonal monitor (sociometer) that warns individuals when they are at risk of being excluded by others (Leary and Baumeister 2000). When belongingness in a group is threatened, the sociometer evokes emotional distress as an alarm signal, and this alarm motivates individuals to behave in a way that gains and maintains acceptance from others. The need for communion prompts what has been labeled the *self-liking* component of self-esteem (Bosson and Swann 1999; Tafarodi and Swann 1995). It is people's judgment of their personal worth that becomes internalized from the responses of others.

There is a second self-motive: the desire for human agency. This has been labeled the *self-efficacy motive* (Gecas 1982, 1986, 1991) or the *agency motive* (Swann and Bosson 2010). This is connected to a second dimension of self-esteem. Self-efficacy is the degree to which people perceive that they have the ability to have an effect on the environment (Gecas 1989). It is an assessment of what they are capable of doing in situations. Efficacy is a general expectation rather than a specific expectation tied to a particular task as conceived by Albert Bandura (1977). In this way, as a general orientation, efficacy is similar to the idea of mastery or being in control of the forces that affect one's lives (Pearlin et al. 1981).

More generally, efficacy-based esteem is analogous to the *self-competence* component of self-esteem (Bosson and Swann 1999; Tafarodi and Swann 1995, 2001; Tafarodi and Vu 1997). Self-competence is the degree to which one can bring about desired outcomes in situations compared with self-liking, which reflects the internalized sense of positive regard from others (Bosson and

Swann 1999). Overall, efficacy-based esteem is about what “one can do” in a situation compared with worth-based esteem that emphasizes “who one is.”

Conceptualizing self-esteem as comprised of two dimensions, a sense of *self-worth* and a sense of *self-efficacy*, is not uncommon (Cast and Burke 2002; Ervin and Stryker 2001; Franks and Marolla 1976; Gecas and Schwalbe 1986; Owens 1993).¹ Indeed, Rosenberg (Rosenberg et al. 1995) saw self-efficacy as contributing to self-worth, but he did not feel it was the same as self-worth. One could accomplish things which might cultivate the belief that one was valuable but feeling valuable could emerge independent of one’s accomplishments. Self-worth could be derived from one’s own self-assessment.

We suggest a third dimension of self-esteem, a sense of *authenticity* that is rooted in the third self-motive discussed in the literature: the authenticity (Gecas 1986, 1991) or coherence motive (Swann and Bosson 2010). This motive reflects individual strivings for meaning, coherence, and understandings about the self. Meanings for which the individual strives take the form of identities, and some identities reflect more of who one “really is” compared with other identities. In Ralph H. Turner’s (1976; Turner and Schutte 1981) classic examination of the “authentic,” “real,” or “true” self, individuals have a vague understanding of what feelings and actions represent their real self, and for some, the real self is lodged in an institutional locus of conformity to norms, values, and roles and the personal quality of self-control, whereas for others, the real self is lodged in an impulsive locus of discovery, spontaneity, and lowered inhibitions. Others have defined authenticity as (1) the positive feeling associated with fulfilling one’s personal expectations or commitments (Erickson 1995; Trilling 1972), (2) “the unobstructed operation of one’s core or true self in one’s daily life” (Kernis and Goldman 2006:294), and (3) “expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings” (Harter 2002:382). Taking the above together, we see authenticity as involving one’s internal or personal standards as to who one really is (Erickson 1995).² It ties to the third self-motive and serves as the basis of self-evaluation about what is “real” and what is “false” about the self that is not captured in self-evaluations of worthiness and efficacy.

What are the antecedents of worth, efficacy, and authenticity-based esteem? Viktor Gecas (1991) argued that the esteem (worth), efficacy, and authenticity motives are responsive to different social domains. The self-worth motive is more responsive to the interpersonal domain of face-to-face interaction from dyads to larger groups. The self-efficacy motive is more relevant to the social structural domain involving one’s structural position and associated role performances having the intended effects. Finally, the authenticity motive is most relevant for the cultural domain when beliefs, values, and morals provide meaning for a person.

Analogous to Gecas’ idea that different social domains serve as the source for the different self-motives, we suggest, from the point of view of identity theory, that worth, efficacy, and authenticity-based esteem are linked to the verification of *social/group*, *role*, and *person* identities, respectively (Burke and Stets 2009). We appeal to several principles to show this relationship. We then develop measures of each of these dimensions across a large student sample, show their discriminant validity by examining how each esteem dimension is differentially predicted by the verification of different identities, and investigate how the esteem dimensions are causally related to each other over time. More generally, we attempt to advance self-esteem research empirically by demonstrating three dimensions and theoretically by linking these three dimensions of self-esteem using identity theory.

Identity Theory

Early on, William James (1890) indicated that self-esteem was an outcome that depended upon the relationship between one’s successes relative to one’s pretensions as reflected in the following equation:

$$\text{self-esteem} = \frac{\text{successes}}{\text{pretensions}}.$$

If pretensions or aspirations were greater than one's successes, self-esteem would be low. Even if one's successes were many, low self-esteem would still emerge if one's aspirations were greater still. Similarly, modest successes could lead to high self-esteem when one's aspirations were even lower. Identity theorists have suggested that James' ideas correspond very closely to the idea of identity verification in which "pretensions" correspond to people's identity standard and "successes" correspond to their perception as to how they think others see them in the situation (given others' feedback; Cast and Burke 2002).³ A match between their standard and their perception is *identity verification* and results in individuals feeling good. There is a correspondence between who they perceive themselves to be in a situation and how they define themselves vis-à-vis their identity standard. This is similar to James' idea that there would be high self-esteem when one's successes matched one's pretensions.

Research supports the idea that self-esteem is an outcome of the identity verification process. For example, analyzing data from a longitudinal study on marital dynamics during the early years of marriage, individuals report increased feelings of self-esteem when their spousal identity is verified and decreased feelings of self-esteem when their spousal identity was not verified (Burke and Stets 1999; Cast and Burke 2002). In the following, we outline the identity process including how it forms the basis of identity verification. Then we discuss how the verification of different identities gives rise to the different dimensions of self-esteem (Burke and Stets 2009).

The Identity Process

An identity is a set of *meanings* that defines individuals in terms of the roles they occupy, the social categories or groups they belong to, and the individual characteristics that define them as unique persons. In other words, the emphasis is on what it means, for example, to be a student (a role identity), a male or female (a social identity), or an honest person (a person identity). Here, meaning is in the sense defined by Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum (1957) as a *mediation response* to a stimulus. For example, the stimulus in the above social identity would be the self as a male or female. As a female, the person may view herself as "helpful to others," "not competitive," and "gentle." These would be some of the dimensions of meaning that she holds when she views herself as a woman.

As Peter J. Burke and Donald C. Reitzes (1981) pointed out early in the development of identity theory, meaning provides the connection between identities, perceptions, and behaviors. This follows the dictates of the symbolic interaction framework within which identity theory grew. Identities do not predict particular behaviors. Rather, identities predict the meanings that are conveyed by behaviors. For example, if a woman holds the meaning of being very "helpful to others," we might find that she frequently donates food, clothing, and money to the needy, she is a constant source of emotional and instrumental support to family and friends, and she often volunteers in her community. All these actions "give off" the meaning that she is very "helpful to others." Thus, the meanings implied by her behavior match the meanings in her identity. Furthermore, others observe her behavior and respond to her on the basis of the meanings that her actions convey. Their response signals to the person whether the meanings implied by the person's behavior as seen by others match her knowledge of the meanings held in her identity.

In identity theory, when an identity is activated in a situation, the meanings that define the identity serve as the standard for individuals and a feedback loop is activated (Burke and Stets 2009). This loop has several components: (1) an identity standard (the meanings defining the identity), (2) output (meaningful behavior), (3) input (how people *think* others see them in the

situation, that is, reflected appraisal meanings), and (4) a comparator (which compares the meanings in the input with the meanings of the identity standard to assess the degree of correspondence between these two sets of meanings).

The *identity standard* contains the meanings people apply to themselves when they claim an identity—their individual responses as to who they are when they reflect upon themselves in an identity. For example, a man may apply the meanings of being “studious” and “diligent” when he thinks about himself in the student identity. When he interacts with others, he will control the self-meanings of “studiousness” and “diligence” so that they are maintained at the level (e.g., high, medium, or low) set by him.

When an identity is activated in a situation, the person begins to monitor how he or she is coming across in the situation and the kinds of meanings that are being displayed. Others react to the meaning of individuals’ behavior and, in turn, individuals interpret these others’ reactions. Individuals’ interpretation forms the *input* in the identity process. It is how they *think* others see them in a situation given the feedback others provide. These are the reflected appraisals. For example, if a woman sees herself in the mother identity as “caring” and “helpful,” she should enact behaviors consistent with these meanings such as tending to her children’s physical and emotional needs. Others who observe her as she engages in these actions may tell her that she is a caring and helpful mother. She will then interpret these words/feedback and compare these perceptions of how she is coming across in the situation with the meanings in her identity standard. This is the comparison process.

The reflected appraisals are continuously fed into the *comparator*. The comparator relates these input meanings to the stored identity standard meanings; it calculates the difference between the two. To think about this numerically, consider the friend identity. A person may associate the meaning of “loyalty” with being a friend, and the person’s identity standard of “loyalty” may be set at 8 (on a scale of 0–10). If the person *thinks* that others observe the person acting as an “8” in terms of being a loyal friend, there is a perfect match between input and identity standard meanings. This is *identity verification*. However, if the person *thinks* that others perceive the person as acting as a “5” in terms of being a loyal friend, there is a mismatch between input meanings and identity standard meanings. This is *identity nonverification*. The difference in meanings between the perceptions (reflected appraisals) and the identity standard then guides the behavior of the person. If the reflected appraisals of “loyalty” are too low, the person will act to increase those meanings in the situation. If they are too high, the person will act to decrease them. Essentially, verifying an identity means controlling meanings in the situation so that reflected appraisals match the identity standard.

The Bases of Identities

In identity theory, identities are organized around three bases: social/group, role, and person. While *social identities* are the meanings that individuals claim as members of a social category such as being female or Latino, *group identities* are the meanings that emerge in interaction with a specific set of others like one’s family, work group, or clubs (Stets and Serpe 2013). The social categories are created by society for stratification purposes and often are ascribed rather than achieved. Social identities highlight the status (e.g., high or low) of groups in the social structure and the way they are treated. Group identities highlight being involved with others, acting in ways that attempt to fulfill the expectations of others, and working toward shared goals. Essentially, social identities underscore *identification* with others, and group identities emphasize *interaction* with others.

In identity theory, social and group identities are not just the membership in categories and groups, but rather are the sets of *meanings* that a person claims given their category and group memberships (Stets and Burke 2000). Social and group identities involve displaying meanings

that make the person act like other members and see things from other members' perspectives. In turn, when individuals' social and group identities are verified, they receive recognition, approval, and a sense of value and acceptance from other members.⁴ Given that social and group identities offer a sense that one is valuable and is socially integrated, it can raise feelings of being a worthwhile member in society (Burke and Stets 2009, 2000). This is the self-worth dimension of self-esteem.

Roles are the second basis for identities. A *role identity* is the set of meanings individuals attribute to themselves while taking on a role that is attached to a position in society such as student, worker, friend, or spouse (Stryker [1980] 2002). The role of spouse, for instance, may involve listening to one's spouse, helping with the chores, and contributing to the household income. Thus, roles require specific performances to meet the expectations associated with the position. The meanings of the spousal identity that relate to the above performances may include being "supportive," "tolerant," and "hardworking." But different people may have different meanings for the same role. For example, the spouse identity for some may mean being "directive" and "assertive" rather than "supportive" and "tolerant."

Irrespective of the content of role identity meanings, the meanings of one's behavior in a role should correspond to the meanings in one's role identity. When this correspondence occurs, one should feel a sense of accomplishment. In this way, role identities are more about one's performance and whether that performance accomplishes the internalized meanings as compared with social and group identities that focus more on receiving recognition and approval from others. Consequently, when individuals' role identities are verified, it should increase feelings of competence (Burke and Stets 2009; Stets and Burke 2000). This is the self-efficacy dimension of self-esteem.

A *person identity* is the set of meanings people claim as individuals that set them apart from others (Burke and Stets 2009). Person identities involve culturally recognized characteristics that are internalized and held core to the individual, and that define the person in distinct ways. These include not only one's values (Hitlin 2003) or morals (Stets and Carter 2012), but they also include characterization of the individual, for example, being "controlling" (Stets 1995) or "gregarious" (Stets and Cast 2007). The unique self-meanings held core by individuals guide their behavior across situations. Because person identities are always with the person, they are almost always activated and are thus very salient, influencing the meanings held in the various role identities or group identities that individuals claim (Burke 2004).

As person identities are those meanings that represent what is central or core to the individual, when person identities are verified, individuals should find that their "real" self is being acknowledged. This is the authenticity dimension of self-esteem. Thus, person identities are more about whether one's "true self" is revealed and verified in a situation rather than whether one's performance is effective (role identities) or one is accepted by others (social/group identities).

Taken together, the above discussion suggests that social/group identities and person identities are less about performance or "doing" (role identities), and they are more about "being," that is, these identities reference one's character (a "me" in person identities) and sense of belongingness (a "we" in social/group identities). "Being" someone as opposed to "doing" something is accomplished more by appearance (gestures, clothing, or attitude) than by performance. The above also suggests that social/group and role identities reference the social structure more than person identities. Social/group and role identities orient individuals to their ties to others in the social structure through the social positions that they hold. In addition, person identities, because they are frequently activated within and across situations, influence the meanings held in one's role and social identities more than the other way around (Burke 2004; Burke and Stets 2009; Hitlin 2003). For example, if one sees herself as having a "caring" identity, she may choose roles that carry this meaning such as nurse or social worker, and she may belong to groups that denote care such as "The Red Cross." Furthermore, because person identities refer to important aspects of the

self, individuals are not as likely to “put on” and “take off” these characteristics as they might “take on” and then “exit” particular roles or membership in particular groups.

Identity Verification and Self-Esteem Outcomes

What is central in the identity process is identity verification. Meanings of the self in the situation (based on reflected appraisals) are controlled to match the meanings in one’s identity standard. In identity theory, it is theorized that the three bases of identities are associated with the three dimensions of self-esteem through the identity verification process. This connection, and others, can be derived from three general principles consistent with the symbolic interactionist view that meaning connects identities, behaviors, and feelings (Burke and Reitzes 1981).

1. Verification of identity meanings having to do with social belongingness and integration, including being accepted and valued, increases feelings of self-worth.

This first principle would apply to most social/group identities because these identities tend to share the meanings of being socially accepted and valued. Social belongingness and integration means identifying with central social categories and participating in groups that are socially recognized, familiar, valid, and known by others in society. Given membership in these categories/groups, others come to accept the individuals, and when individuals perceive this acceptance (their identity is verified), they feel self-worth. Identifying with central social categories such as gender or race or being involved in groups that have a common purpose such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) integrates individuals into society and fosters feelings of being a valuable and contributing member of society. However, it is not just the claim of a social/group identity. It is importantly the display of meaning through dress, behavior, demeanor, and attitudes that convey these membership meanings to self and others so that they and others come to identify and accept their place in the social structure.

The first principle would also apply to *some* person identities and *some* role identities *if* they share the meaning of being socially accepted and valued. For example, the “open-minded” or “friendly” person identities and the mother and teacher role identities may carry meanings of being socially valued and accepted in society. This is consistent with their higher levels of evaluation on the evaluation, potency, and activity (EPA) profiles when we examine them. Evaluation is high for the person identity of being “open-minded” (2.84, 2.42, 0.85) and “friendly” (3.04, 2.38, 1.46), and for the role identity of “mother” (2.80, 2.47, 1.3) and “teacher” (2.65, 2.09, 0.96; Francis and Heise 2006). When these identities are verified, they should also generate feelings of self-worth.

2. Verification of identity meanings having to do with agency and accomplishment increases feelings of self-efficacy.

This second principle would apply to most role identities because these identities tend to share the meanings of agency and accomplishment. In a role identity, identity verification occurs through performances/behavior in a situation that carries meanings that are consistent with one’s role identity meanings as well as the expectations associated with the corresponding position. When individuals’ behavior accomplishes the intended effect of confirming their role identities, they should feel competent and efficacious. For example, an individual may see herself as having meanings of being “caring” and “intelligent” in the physician role. Others may provide her with feedback that she is “considerate” and “smart” when they observe her listening to her patients’ symptoms and accurately diagnosing their ailments. This verifying feedback should foster in her a feeling of mastery or control as a doctor.

In addition to role identities, this principle would also apply to *some* person identities and *some* social/group identities *if* they share meanings of agency and accomplishment. For example, the person identities of being “intelligent” or “creative,” and being a member of the local ski-patrol or church choir carries meanings of having a particular skill or competence. Verification of these identities should generate feelings of self-efficacy.

3. Verification of identity meanings that represent a self that is “real” or “true” increases feelings of authenticity.

This third principle would apply to most person identities because these identities are generally core to the self. When person identities are verified, people should feel that they are living out their “true” self. They are being who they “really” are at their core and others are confirming this. This idea is similar to the idea that authenticity is experienced when individuals honor their commitments to particular self-values, for example, being “honest” (Erickson 1995; Hitlin 2003). Rebecca Erickson’s idea of self-values can be understood as individuals’ person identities. Steven Hitlin (2003) made this connection explicit by arguing that values are the core of one’s personal identity, and we feel authentic when we behave according to our values. We agree that values are an important component to person identities and that these can form the basis of authenticity, but we conceptualize person identities as including additional dimensions of meanings that define core aspects of the self, such as one’s friendliness, morality, dominance, and intelligence such that when these are verified, authentic feelings also emerge.

In addition to its application to person identities, the third principle would also apply to *some* social identities such as one’s race, age, or social class *if* the identities become so strongly internalized and recognized by others that they become “master” identities, influencing the meanings of other identities. They may take on a master status because they are frequently activated in situations given their visibility and the fact that they form a core part of both the individual and the social structure. Verifying these highly visible social identities should give rise to the same feelings of authenticity as verifying a person identity because these meanings become core to the individual.

Similarly, this third principle should also apply to *some* role identities *if* they are involved in what Ralph H. Turner (1978) called the “role-person” merger. When a role merges with the person, individuals play out the role in situations where it does not apply; they resist abandoning the role for advantageous, viable alternative role in the situation, and they take on the attitudes and beliefs of the role. Correspondingly, the identities associated with these roles should become so central to individuals that when the meanings that represent these role identities are verified, the true person is revealed.

In sum, these three principles give rise to a connection between each of the identity bases and self-esteem dimensions. Each of the identity bases shares meanings with one of the self-esteem dimensions; it is this sharing of these meanings that provides the connection. However, for each of the self-esteem dimensions, other identity bases *may* be associated with the self-esteem dimensions *if* the meanings of the identity bases and self-esteem dimensions are shared. We have discussed how this might be possible for each of the self-esteem dimensions.

While previous research has demonstrated that identity verification is associated with increased self-esteem, we empirically examine whether the verification of the different identity bases corresponds to the different esteem outcomes in accord with the above three principles. In addition, we investigate whether an identity basis that is associated with a self-esteem outcome on the basis of shared meaning is supported. Remember that what links identities to self-esteem outcomes is shared meanings.

A series of studies, conducted over several years, form the basis of this research. In all of the studies, the items that measure the three dimensions of self-esteem are obtained. The composite

sample, pooled across all of the studies, serves as the basis for Part 1 of our results. We discuss the measures of each of the three dimensions of self-esteem and examine their psychometric properties. Part 2 is based on a subset of respondents for whom we investigate the effects of identity verification on the different esteem dimensions in light of the three principles above. Finally, Part 3 is based on another subset of respondents from whom we obtained esteem measures at two points in time to examine the causal relationship among the esteem dimensions. These two points in time are three months apart and allow us to investigate how worth, efficacy, and authenticity-based esteem may mutually influence one another.

Part I

Sample

The data used to measure the three esteem dimensions were obtained from a series of different studies in which surveys were administered in upper and lower division undergraduate courses at a large, ethnically diverse, southwestern university from 2006 to 2011. All of these surveys included the self-esteem items. Students were offered extra course credit for their participation. The response rate across the studies was 85 percent for a total of 1,799 pooled individuals. The respondents were 65 percent female and 35 percent male. The average age was 21. They were ethnically diverse with 36 percent Asian, 33 percent Latino, 15 percent white, 8 percent black, 6 percent who classified themselves as multiracial, and 2 percent other. Parental income was coded at the midpoint of a category that was identified (out of eight categories ranging from \$7,500 to \$125,000). Respondents filled out three self-esteem scales (worth, efficacy, and authenticity).

Measures

The goal was to develop measures of each of the three dimensions of self-esteem with six to eight items for each dimension.⁵ We did not want any of the items to load on more than one factor. We began with 10 to 12 items for each dimension. For the worth dimension, we included some of the RSES items that measured worth (as opposed to efficacy) as well as several new items. For the efficacy dimension, we included some of the items from Pearlin and his colleagues' mastery scale (Pearlin et al. 1981) as well as a number of new items.

All of the items for the authenticity scale were newly created drawing on the conceptualizations of authenticity in the literature. Most important for this is the research by Ralph H. Turner and his collaborators (Turner and Billings 1991; Turner and Gordon 1981; Turner and Schutte 1981) who, using a qualitative approach, elicited from respondents a detailed account of a situation in which their "real" self or a situation in which their "spurious" self was revealed. For the open-ended question on the "real" self, respondents were to think of occasions when their actions or feelings expressed their "true" self and showed "who I really am." For the open-ended question on the "spurious" self, respondents were to think of occasions when their actions or feelings did not express their "true" self, generating the feeling following the occasion that "I wasn't really myself when that happened." When constructing the authenticity scale, we used self-characterizations that were consistent with the above conceptualizations such as "I just wish I were more able to be myself," "I feel people expect me to be different than who I really am," and "I feel the way in which I generally act reflects the 'real' me."

Two pretests were carried out before achieving the three scales. In the first pretest, all of the items were presented in the form of self-statements (e.g., "I feel . . .," "I wish . . .," "I think . . .") to which respondents indicated their strength of agreement. Each statement used the four choice categories that were used in the RSES and Pearlin et al.'s scale of "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Agree," and "Strongly Agree" (coded 1–4). These items were administered to an initial sample

of 156 respondents. The responses were factor analyzed, and three factors were retained and rotated to form a simple structure using the promax method to allow the factors to correlate. Based on the initial results, items that did not load highly on any of the three factors and items that loaded strongly on more than one factor were removed or modified. The resulting set of items was pretested in the same way on a second sample of 208 respondents.

After minor modifications were made on the basis of these second results, the final items were obtained. Seven items were selected that best measured each of the three self-esteem dimensions for a total of 21 items. The final scales were then administered to a series of samples totaling 1,799 individuals. To create the scales, the 7 items for each dimension were aligned so that a high score on each item represented high esteem on the dimension. Then the scores on the 7 items were summed. Thus, scale scores could range from a low of 7 to a high of 28. The items for these scales are presented in Table 1.

As the scales developed, best items on the worth scale were all positively worded while best items on the efficacy scale were negatively worded, and best items on the authenticity scale were mixed. This raises the issue of a possible response bias in the scales, that is, individuals may acquiesce to a positively worded set or negatively worded set. Extensive studies by Ellen Greenberger et al. (2003) revealed that altering the RSES by creating all positively worded items in the scale, all negatively worded items, or using the original items that have a mix of negatively and positively worded items showed no differences in the reliability or validity of the different versions. In addition, these different versions did not differentially correlate with other constructs that have been associated with self-esteem such as optimism and life satisfaction. Essentially, they found no advantage to counterbalancing positive and negative items. However, others have found that when the RSES items were administered over time (a variation not considered by Greenberg and her associates) better test–retest stability was obtained when using a mixture of positively and negatively worded items (Marsh, Scalas, and Nagengast 2010).

To check whether our results may be partly due to a method effect of either positively or negatively worded items, we identified persons who had a stable response set, that is, always chose a response of “one” or “two” or “three” and so forth on all of the worth items or on all of the efficacy items, respectively. If individuals had a response set in answering the worth items and the efficacy items (though not necessarily the same set in both), we counted them as having stable response sets. The total number of such individuals was 135 or about 7.5 percent of the respondents. We compared the factor results that included and excluded these persons who had stable response sets. Results for the factor loadings showed very minor differences between the samples that included and excluded these persons. There were only about 16 differences of 21 possible, and the factor loadings were different by only $\pm .02$. While we conclude that there are minimal problems with items in one scale being positively worded, items in a second scale all negatively worded, and mixed positive and negative items in the third scale, we encourage continued research on this issue.⁶

Results

We begin with a confirmatory factor analysis, the results of which are presented in Table 1. The model contains three independent but correlated dimensions of self-esteem and allows each item to relate only to the underlying factor dimension that it was supposed to measure while maintaining a zero loading for other factor dimensions. The fit of this model is very good as shown at the bottom of Table 1. Additionally shown at the bottom of Table 1 are the omega reliabilities (Heise and Bohrnstedt 1970) as measures of internal consistency among the seven items of each scale. These are quite high. Finally, the correlations among the dimensions are reported and are moderately high showing each of the dimensions is related to the other two.

Table 1. Factor Loadings from Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Self-Esteem Dimensions ($N = 1,799$).

| Items | Worth ^a | Efficacy ^a | Authenticity ^a |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. I feel I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others. ^b | .58 | .00 | .00 |
| 2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities. ^b | .64 | .00 | .00 |
| 3. I take a positive attitude toward myself. ^b | .79 | .00 | .00 |
| 4. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. ^b | .75 | .00 | .00 |
| 5. I usually feel good about myself. | .83 | .00 | .00 |
| 6. I feel I have much to offer as a person. | .67 | .00 | .00 |
| 7. I have a lot of confidence in the actions I undertake in my life. | .69 | .00 | .00 |
| 1. There is no way I can solve some of the problems I have. ^c (R) | .00 | .66 | .00 |
| 2. I have little control over the things that happen to me. ^c (R) | .00 | .65 | .00 |
| 3. There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life. ^c (R) | .00 | .61 | .00 |
| 4. I feel as if what happens to me is mostly determined by other people. (R) | .00 | .53 | .00 |
| 5. I certainly feel helpless at times. (R) | .00 | .75 | .00 |
| 6. Sometimes I feel that I am not able to accomplish what I want. (R) | .00 | .74 | .00 |
| 7. I often feel unable to deal with the problems of life. (R) | .00 | .77 | .00 |
| 1. I feel most people don't know the "real" me. (R) | .00 | .00 | .65 |
| 2. I find I can almost always be myself. | .00 | .00 | .67 |
| 3. I feel people expect me to be different than I really am. (R) | .00 | .00 | .60 |
| 4. I think most people accept who I really am. | .00 | .00 | .66 |
| 5. I just wish I were more able to be myself. (R) | .00 | .00 | .75 |
| 6. I feel the way in which I generally act reflects the "real" me. | .00 | .00 | .64 |
| 7. I often do not feel I am myself. (R) | .00 | .00 | .79 |
| Omega reliabilities | .92 | .89 | .88 |
| Test-retest reliabilities ($N = 305$) | .87 | .87 | .86 |

Note. RMSEA = .034, GFI = .95, AGFI = .94. (R) = Item reverse coded; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; GFI = goodness of fit; AGFI = adjusted goodness of fit; RSES = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

^aCorrelations: worth and efficacy, $r = .77$; worth and authenticity, $r = .68$; efficacy and authenticity, $r = .72$.

^bItems from the RSES.

^cItems from the Pearlman et al.'s scale.

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the three self-esteem dimensions. Given that the scale scores could range from 7 to 28, individuals generally report scores that are in the upper half on each scale as has been found in studies using the RSES (Schmitt and Allik 2005). However, the coefficients of skewness are small ($-.40$ for worth, $.02$ for efficacy, and $.05$ for authenticity). The mean for self-worth is 22.5, the mean for self-efficacy is 20.0, and the mean for self-authenticity is 19.7.

Also reported in Table 2 are the means across age, gender, ethnicity, and income. When we regress each of the esteem dimensions on age, we find small increases in self-worth ($b = .12, p \leq .05$) and authenticity ($b = .14, p \leq .05$).⁷ These effects are quite small. It would take an age increase of about eight years to increase the worth score one point, and it would take about a seven-year increase in age to increase the authenticity score by one point. In general, the increase in worth and authenticity is consistent with recent work that finds that there is a moderate increase in global self-esteem during adolescence, which then slows during young adulthood (age 18–30; Erol and Orth 2011). There are no significant trends for efficacy.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Self-Esteem Dimensions ($N = 1,799$).

| Variables | Worth | | Efficacy | | Authenticity | | N |
|---------------|-------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|-------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | |
| All data | 22.5 | 3.2 | 20.0 | 3.5 | 19.7 | 3.8 | 1,799 |
| Age | | | | | | | |
| 18 | 22.0 ^a | 3.4 | 19.5 ^a | 3.7 | 19.4 ^a | 3.7 | 145 |
| 19 | 22.4 ^a | 3.2 | 19.8 ^a | 3.6 | 19.5 ^a | 3.8 | 270 |
| 20 | 22.3 ^a | 3.2 | 19.8 ^a | 3.4 | 19.5 ^a | 3.9 | 408 |
| 21 | 22.6 ^a | 3.1 | 20.0 ^a | 3.4 | 19.9 ^a | 3.7 | 487 |
| 22 | 22.8 ^a | 3.1 | 20.3 ^a | 3.5 | 20.0 ^a | 3.3 | 227 |
| 23 | 22.2 ^a | 3.9 | 20.2 ^a | 3.5 | 20.0 ^a | 4.0 | 86 |
| 24 | 22.6 ^a | 3.3 | 20.2 ^a | 4.1 | 19.4 ^a | 3.6 | 52 |
| 25+ | 23.1 ^a | 3.2 | 21.0 ^a | 4.4 | 20.3 ^a | 4.1 | 123 |
| <i>b</i> | .12* | | <i>ns</i> | | .14* | | |
| Gender | | | | | | | |
| Male | 22.6 ^a | 3.6 | 20.3 ^a | 4.1 | 19.2 ^a | 3.6 | 590 |
| Female | 23.0 ^a | 3.4 | 20.4 ^a | 3.8 | 19.9 ^b | 3.8 | 1,209 |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | | |
| Asian | 21.9 ^a | 3.3 | 18.9 ^a | 3.4 | 19.2 ^a | 3.4 | 662 |
| Black | 23.3 ^b | 3.0 | 20.5 ^b | 3.3 | 19.7 ^{a,b} | 3.6 | 149 |
| White | 22.6 ^b | 3.3 | 20.3 ^b | 3.7 | 20.0 ^b | 4.1 | 282 |
| Latino | 22.8 ^b | 3.2 | 20.7 ^b | 3.4 | 20.2 ^b | 3.9 | 597 |
| Multiethnic | 22.8 ^b | 2.3 | 20.4 ^b | 3.5 | 19.8 ^{a,b} | 3.7 | 110 |
| Family income | | | | | | | |
| \$7,500 | 22.2 ^a | 3.4 | 18.5 ^a | 3.8 | 18.8 ^a | 3.9 | 105 |
| \$12,000 | 23.0 ^a | 3.2 | 19.9 ^a | 3.3 | 19.7 ^a | 4.1 | 109 |
| \$20,000 | 21.8 ^a | 3.7 | 19.7 ^a | 3.7 | 19.6 ^a | 3.7 | 180 |
| \$32,500 | 22.4 ^a | 3.2 | 19.5 ^a | 3.5 | 19.5 ^a | 3.5 | 241 |
| \$42,500 | 22.4 ^a | 3.2 | 20.1 ^a | 3.4 | 20.1 ^a | 3.8 | 255 |
| \$62,500 | 22.8 ^a | 3.0 | 20.2 ^a | 3.6 | 20.1 ^a | 3.7 | 367 |
| \$87,500 | 22.3 ^a | 3.3 | 20.3 ^a | 3.5 | 19.7 ^a | 3.8 | 215 |
| \$125,000 | 22.6 ^a | 3.1 | 20.0 ^a | 3.5 | 19.6 ^a | 3.8 | 328 |
| <i>b</i> | <i>ns</i> | | .006* | | <i>ns</i> | | |

Note. Entries with the same superscript letter do not differ from each other.

* $p \leq .05$. Two-tail tests.

There were no differences between males and females in worth and efficacy. Previous research has found either very small differences in self-esteem by gender (with men showing slightly higher levels than women; Kling et al. 1999; Orth, Trzesniewski, and Robins 2010) or no gender differences (Erol and Orth 2011; Major et al. 1999). There was a very small but significant difference between males and females on the authenticity scale with females showing a slightly higher score than males. As this has not been studied in the past and because the difference is very small (a little more than half a point on the 28-point scale), we decline to discuss the meaning or source of this difference. With respect to income, we found trends only on the efficacy scale such that those earning more have higher levels of efficacy. Again, the effect was very small. It would take an income increase of about \$160,000 to move one point on the 28-point scale.

We find that worth and efficacy are lower for Asians compared with all the other ethnic groups, but there are no differences among the other groups. For authenticity, Asians are lower than

whites and Latinos, but the other groups do not differ among themselves. This is consistent with other research that finds that while Asians show positive self-evaluations as they are well above the midpoint on the RSES, relative to other ethnic groups, they are slightly lower (Schmitt and Allik 2005; Twenge and Crocker 2002). Researchers maintain that Asians have a more interdependent than independent self-construal in which one seeks to fit in with others and have harmonious social relations rather than stand out or show one's superiority (Schmitt and Allik 2005). They are more likely to engage in modesty of self-presentation and in self-criticism in the service of self-improvement, which promotes harmonious relationships. Thus, they may be loath to promote the good qualities of the self.

Finally, for family income, there is no trend for worth or for authenticity. However, those with higher income have a slightly higher level of efficacy ($b = .006, p \leq .05$). Overall, the demographic patterns that emerged for the three esteem dimensions revealed few differences along ethnicity, gender, income, or age. Those patterns that did appear are consistent with previous research findings.

In summary, we have achieved a satisfactory factor structure among the items measuring the three self-esteem dimensions. Not unexpectedly, the correlations among the dimensions are moderately strong, though the correlations are significantly different from unity meaning that the three scales are not substitutable measures of a single construct. At issue is whether the three dimensions correlate differentially with different constructs, showing discriminant validity. We explore this issue in Part 2.

Part 2

Overview

Here, we examine the discriminant validity of the three self-esteem dimensions by testing how each is influenced by the verification of different identities. Such a demonstration would advance both the measurement and identity theory, on which the tests are made. For this part of the study, we chose one social identity, one role identity, and one person identity. For these, we choose identities that most if not all of our respondents would possess and for which there are existing measures. We chose gender identity as our social identity, which is also a "master" identity involved in almost all interactions and situations. In addition, we chose the student identity as a role identity and the moral identity as a person identity.

We expect identity verification to be related to the self-esteem dimensions based on the three principles we presented earlier. First, we anticipate that each of the identity bases will be centrally associated with the meanings of a distinct self-esteem dimension. Specifically, we expect that the verification of the gender social identity will increase feelings of self-worth, the verification of the student role identity will increase feelings of efficacy, and the verification of the moral person identity will increase feelings of authenticity. Second, other identities may relate to each of the self-esteem dimensions *if* these other identities share meanings with those self-esteem dimensions.

With respect to principle one, we argued that not only social identities but also role and person identities that were respected and valued in society would increase feelings of self-worth. Consequently, for the identities we consider, we anticipate that the moral person identity should also increase self-worth but not so for the student role identity that does not signal as strong a meaning of value. Indeed, the EPA profile for characteristics associated with being moral such as "honest" (3.16, 2.40, -0.31), "caring" (3.18, 2.17, 0.05), "helpful" (2.91, 2.44, 1.17), and "generous" (3.06, 2.16, 1.07) shows a higher evaluation rating than the evaluation rating for the "student" identity (1.86, 0.72, 1.13; Francis and Heise 2006).

In principle two, we do not see the gender social identity or moral person identity as carrying meanings that signal abilities or accomplishment. As we mentioned earlier, social and person identities are less about performance or “doing” (role identities), and they are more about “being” (a “me” in person identities and a “we” in social identities). Thus, we do not expect these identities to be related to efficacy-based esteem.

Finally, in principle three, because gender identity has the character of a “master” identity, that is, it is frequently activated in situations, forms a core part of the social structure, and may become core to individuals, we anticipate that it will be related to authenticity-based esteem. However, we do not see the student role as a likely candidate for a role-person merger because it is usually seen as a temporary role that is easy to exit. Consequently, we do not think the student role identity will be related to authenticity.

Sample

The data for Part 2 are based on a survey administered in upper and lower division undergraduate courses at a large, ethnically diverse, southwestern university in 2011. Students were offered extra course credit for their participation. The response rate was 85 percent. The number of respondents is 284. It is a subsample of 1,799 respondents discussed in Part 1. The average age was 21 and the median family income was \$42,500. The race/ethnic variation included 23 percent Asian, 12 percent African American, 36 percent Latino, 17 percent white, and 12 percent multiracial or other.

Measures

As discussed earlier, identity verification occurs when the meanings of reflected appraisals (how individuals *think* that others see them) match the meanings in the identity standard. To measure the degree of verification, we first identify how individuals rate themselves on a set of bipolar adjective descriptors using a semantic differential format for measuring meanings (Burke and Tully 1977; Osgood et al. 1957). While our set of possible adjective pairs captures important aspects of the identity meanings, not all of the identity meanings for an individual can be captured in a finite set of items. For the identities in this study, we use items that have been pretested and used in prior studies. We next measure the reflected appraisal meanings or how respondents *think* others see them on the same bipolar adjectives. We then take the difference between the self-ratings and reflected appraisal ratings for each identity, which is the identity discrepancy; the smaller the identity discrepancy, the more the identity verification. This discrepancy is then squared, which has two consequences. First, in accordance with identity theory, it allows a reflected appraisal that overrates the self to be equally nonverifying as a reflected appraisal that underrates the self. Second, it magnifies the effect of larger discrepancies to reflect the U-shaped functional form in identity theory that discrepancies at the extreme are more distressful in accordance with the principles of stable control systems (Powers 1973). Because verification is the opposite of the squared discrepancy, we subtract the squared discrepancy from its largest possible value so that high values represent greater identity verification.

The social identity of gender and the corresponding reflected appraisals were measured using bipolar items from the Personal Attributes Questionnaire as used in previous research (Burke and Cast 1997; Burke, Stets, and Pirog-Good 1988; Stets 1995; Stets and Burke 1996). Response categories ranged from “one” to “five,” where “one” reflected agreement with one bipolar characteristic, “five” reflected agreement with the other characteristic, and “three” placed respondents halfway between the two characteristics. A discriminant function identified eight items that best distinguished between self-ratings of males and females, thus reflecting masculine versus feminine self-meanings (see Table 3).⁸ The items were aligned, standardized, and summed with

Table 3. Items Used to Measure the Gender Social Identity, Student Role Identity, and Moral Person Identity ($N = 284$).

| Gender social identity | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Left Pole | Right Pole |
| Not at all independent | Very independent |
| Very rough | Very gentle |
| Not at all helpful to others | Very helpful to others |
| Not at all competitive | Very competitive |
| Indifferent to others' approval | Highly needful of others' approval |
| Feelings not easily hurt | Feelings easily hurt |
| Never cry | Cry very easily |
| Very little need for security | Very strong need for security |
| Student role identity | |
| Left Pole | Right Pole |
| Sensitive | Insensitive |
| Noncompetitive | Competitive |
| Studious | Nonstudious |
| Dependent | Independent |
| Hardworking | Not hardworking |
| Antisocial | Social |
| Open-minded | Close-minded |
| Immature | Mature |
| Moral person identity | |
| Left Pole | Right Pole |
| Honest | Dishonest |
| Caring | Uncaring |
| Unkind | Kind |
| Unfair | Fair |
| Helpful | Not helpful |
| Stingy | Generous |
| Compassionate | Hard-hearted |
| Untruthful | Truthful |
| Not hardworking | Hardworking |
| Friendly | Unfriendly |
| Selfish | Selfless |
| Principled | Unprincipled |

a high score representing a more feminine identity. The self-rating for gender identity had an omega reliability of .74, and the reflected appraisal rating had an omega reliability of .78.

The student role identity and reflected appraisals were measured with eight bipolar items from previous research (Burke and Reitzes 1980, 1981; Reitzes and Burke 1980; see Table 3). Responses ranged from "one" to "five" along the bipolar dimension where "one" indicated agreement on one end of the continuum and "five" reflected agreement on the other end of the continuum. The items formed a single factor with a high omega reliability for the self-ratings of

Table 4. Seemingly Unrelated Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Effects of Identity Verification on the Self-Esteem Dimensions ($N = 284$).

| Predictors | Worth | Efficacy | Authenticity |
|---------------------------|--------|----------|--------------|
| Source of verification | | | |
| Gender identity | .17** | — | .17** |
| Student identity | — | .18** | — |
| Moral identity | .21** | — | .23** |
| Controls | | | |
| Age | — | — | — |
| Female | — | — | — |
| Asian | -.21** | -.20** | — |
| Black | — | — | — |
| Latino | — | — | — |
| Multiethnic | — | — | — |
| Family income | — | — | — |
| Interaction with controls | — | — | — |
| R^2 | .18** | .21** | .22** |

** $p \leq .01$. Two-tail tests. — $p = ns$.

.78 while the reflected appraisal ratings had an omega reliability of .83. The items were aligned, standardized, and summed with a high score representing an academically responsible student.

Finally, the moral person identity and reflected appraisals were measured using 12 bipolar items used in prior research (Stets 2011; Stets and Carter 2011, 2012; see Table 3). Like the other identities, they were separated by a five-point scale, where “one” represented agreement with the response on one end and “five” represented agreement with the response on the other end. The items were factor analyzed, showed a single dimension of meaning, were standardized, aligned so that a high score represented being more moral, and summed to form a scale. The omega reliability for the self-rating was .92, whereas the omega reliability reflected appraisal rating was .94.

We used the self-worth, self-efficacy, and authenticity measures from Part 1 as the outcome measures of the dimensions of self-esteem. To examine the effects of identity verification on the self-esteem dimensions, we control for demographic characteristics including age, gender, ethnicity, and family income.

Results

We examine three regression equations, one each for worth, efficacy, and authenticity. Omitted factors that influence one self-esteem dimension in one equation might also influence the other self-esteem dimensions in the other equations. Estimating the equations separately, using ordinary least squares, would produce unbiased estimators, but they would not be efficient. Consequently, we estimate the three equations (one for each dimension of esteem) simultaneously using seemingly unrelated regression (Felmlee and Hargens 1988). This method takes into account the correlated errors of the three self-esteem equations (due to common factors omitted from the equations) and produces unbiased and efficient estimators.

The results are presented in Table 4. Overall, our expectations are confirmed. Verification of the gender social identity increases self-worth ($\beta = .17, p \leq .01$), verification of the student role identity increases self-efficacy ($\beta = .18, p \leq .01$), and verification of the moral person identity increases feelings of authenticity ($\beta = .23, p \leq .01$). In addition, verification of the moral identity, which carries meanings of social value, increases self-worth ($\beta = .21, p \leq .01$),

and verification of the gender identity, because it has the character of a “master” identity that is frequently activated in situations and may become core to individuals, increases authenticity ($\beta = .17, p \leq .01$).

In general, the verification of each of the identities differentially affected the self-esteem dimensions in accordance with the general principles we outlined earlier. Thus, we have enhanced the validity of the self-esteem dimensions. While the errors among the self-esteem dimensions are moderately correlated, each relates to the verification of different identities in a different way. We tested that null hypothesis that the verification coefficients for each equation were equal, that is, that the effects of each type of discrepancy cannot be distinguished from others. We found that the equality of the worth coefficients could be rejected, $F(2, 282) = 6.68, p < .01$; that the equality of the efficacy coefficients could be rejected, $F(2, 282) = 4.91, p < .01$; and that the equality of the authenticity coefficients could be rejected, $F(2, 282) = 4.88, p < .01$. We conclude that there is structure and distinctiveness among the self-esteem dimensions and at the same time the dimensions share the fact that they each result from the verification of identities and are hence unified by that fact.

Finally, we might mention that while the overall *r*-squares for the equations are not extremely large, they are reasonable given the specific nature of the three identities that were measured. Overall esteem should be a function of the verification of all of the identities one possesses. The fact that just one or two have the effect found is notable.

Part 3

Overview

Aside from the reliability and discriminate validity of the three esteem dimensions, we were also interested in their causal ordering. As noted, it is generally accepted that worth and efficacy mutually influence each other (Rosenberg et al. 1995), but the relation of authenticity to the other two dimensions is unclear, largely because of the lack of empirical research on this dimension of self-esteem. Part 3 tests the mutuality of worth and efficacy and investigates the relationship of authenticity to worth and efficacy. We start with the most general model in which each dimension could mutually influence the others. This model is identified in structural equation modeling with measures of each concept at two points in time where the time one measure can serve as an instrument for the time two measurement. This model for the analysis is shown in Figure 1. Such an analysis provides a measure of the stability effect or the influence of each measure from time one to time two, as well as the effects of each dimension on the other in the time two measures.

Sample

The data for Part 3 are based on respondents filling out a survey twice, three months apart. It was administered in upper and lower division undergraduate courses at a large, ethnically diverse, southwestern university. Students were offered extra course credit for their participation. The number of respondents is 305. It is a subsample of 1,799 respondents discussed in Part 1. The average age was 22, the median family income was \$42,500, and 70 percent were female. The race/ethnic variation included 36 percent Asian, 8 percent African American, 35 percent Latino, 15 percent white, and 8 percent multiracial or other.

Results

Before examining the causal structure, we used the measures at two time points to calculate test-retest reliabilities on each of the scales. The reliabilities are high: .87 for worth, .87 for efficacy,

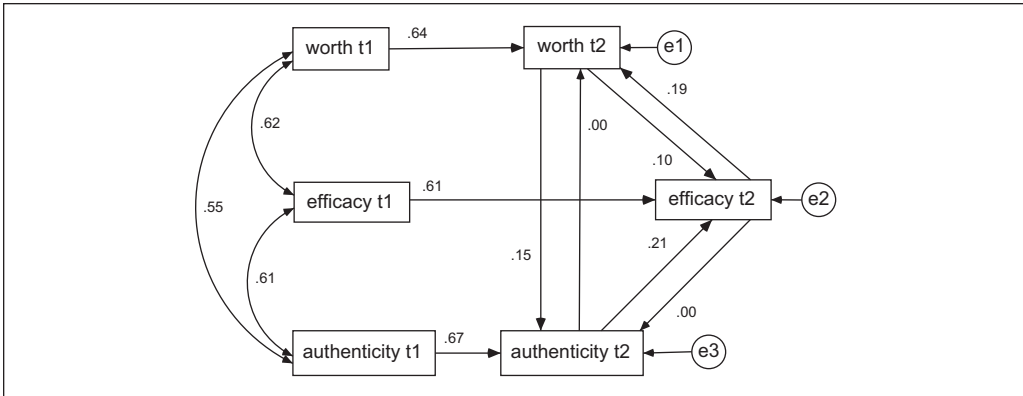


Figure 1. Causal relationships and path coefficients among the self-esteem dimensions.

and .86 for authenticity. Turning to the causal structure among the three dimensions, Figure 1 presents the model for the results that test the mutual influence among the self-esteem dimensions where each of the dimensions is measured at two points in time, three months apart. Each of the measured dimensions at time two depends upon its time one measure and the other dimensions at time two. Thus, it was possible for each of the dimensions to affect the others. The results show that not only does self-efficacy have an influence on self-worth as anticipated ($\beta = .19, p \leq .01$), but there is a reciprocal effect of approximately the same magnitude of self-worth on self-efficacy ($\beta = .10, p \leq .05$). The difference between the coefficients is not significant ($\chi^2 = .64, ns$). Furthermore, authenticity depends upon self-worth ($\beta = .15, p < .001$) but not the reverse, and authenticity influences self-efficacy ($\beta = .21, p < .001$) but not the reverse.⁹ Thus, there is a clear direction of the effects involving authenticity. It is influenced by self-worth, and it influences self-efficacy. Only self-worth and self-efficacy influence each other. The estimated final model fits the data very well with an root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of .041, a goodness of fit (GFI) of .99, an adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI) of .97, and a chi-square of 10.6 with 7 degrees of freedom ($p = .18$).

Because there is not strong theory to guide our understanding of the causal relationships among the dimensions of self-esteem, our interpretations are only suggestive. When we think about the causal structure among the dimensions of self-esteem, we need to think about possible mechanisms that might connect one to another, positively or negatively, and we follow that line of reasoning. Alicia D. Cast and Peter J. Burke (2002) suggested that having self-esteem from prior verification of identities allows one to persevere in verifying other identities thereby being more likely to counteract disturbances to the verification process. This is the buffering hypothesis for the effects of self-esteem. When one feels of value (self-worth) by having a social/group identity verified, we think that this self-worth provides security and allows one to pursue the verification of other identities including both role- and person-based identities, even where that may be difficult. Successfully verifying these other role and person identities should then increase feelings of efficacy and authenticity, thus linking self-worth to both efficacy and authenticity. However, people with low levels of self-worth would feel less inclined to take risks and attempt to verify other identities, so that lower self-worth and its lack of buffering may make it difficult to gain the efficacy and authenticity from the further verification of role and person identities. This reasoning is consistent with the results we obtained showing self-worth increases both self-efficacy and authenticity.

We have shown that verifying a role identity leads to feelings of self-efficacy, that one has ability and can accomplish what one sets out to do. We suggest that this feeling of efficacy can

lead one to successfully attempt a number of enterprises, and some of these are likely to make contributions to the groups one belongs to. Such group contributions in turn lead to feeling of value in the group and raising one's level of self-worth. This line of reasoning would explain the connection from efficacy to worth. The lack of a causal connection from efficacy to authenticity, however, suggests that being efficacious does not provide support for either revealing or not revealing deeper aspects of the self through verification of the person identity. The above post hoc reasoning provides at least one scenario for the connection of efficacy to worth but not to authenticity.

Verifying the person identity by acting in ways that reveal the unique self generates feelings of authenticity as we have shown, but revealing these personal characteristics may or may not be appreciated by members of the groups to which one belongs. If they are accepted and deemed beneficial for the group, then one's group identity is verified and one feels self-worth, but if they are not accepted, then verifying person identities may undermine verification of group identities. Thus, persons may or may not have their group identities verified by having their person identity verified. Thus, while there may be a positive connection for some individuals whose personal identities are verified, there may be a negative connection for other individuals whose revealed person identities are not accepted. The mixture of such positive and negative effects would reveal no causal connection from authenticity to self-worth. However, when one feels authentic, "in tune with one's real self," and able to draw upon one's own inner resources by having one's person identities verified, one may then have the freedom to perform well in any role. This enhanced role performance would bring about role identity verification and the accompanying feelings of efficacy. In this way, we have a connection from authenticity to efficacy.

Taken together, the above ideas on the relationships among self-worth, self-efficacy, and authenticity are somewhat speculative. However, they do provide future research with hypotheses for further testing, which we encourage. Only in that way can these hypotheses be affirmed or shown to need modification.

Discussion

While self-esteem has been studied for some time, it has only slowly undergone clarification in its conceptualization. One of the first clarifications was the distinction between global and specific self-esteem. Over time, this distinction was transformed to a differentiation between self-worth and self-efficacy. Worth and efficacy were conceptualized as two dimensions of self-esteem. A third dimension of self-esteem, authenticity, has emerged in recent years. We have suggested that these three dimensions of self-esteem, worth, efficacy, and authenticity are tied to the three self-motives that are thought to underlie behavior. We then introduced the idea from identity theory, based on three underlying principles of shared meanings that these three esteem dimensions generally emerge from the verification of social, role, and person identities, respectively. In this way, we attempt to establish a theoretical foundation for the three esteem dimensions: each is tied to one of the fundamental self-motives and arises primarily from verification of one of the bases of identities.

In the research presented in this article, we examined the measurement issues surrounding the three dimensions. In Part 1, we developed seven-item scales to measure each of the three dimensions. These scales had high reliability, both in terms of internal consistency and test-retest properties. The confirmatory factor analysis of each of the scales measured only the dimension for which it was proposed. There were no cross-loadings of individual items onto other scales. Although each of the scales was independent, there were moderate correlations among the scales showing between 40 and 50 percent in common.

To differentiate each dimension and show their discriminant validity, we carried out Part 2. We proposed three general principles derived from identity theory concerning the verification of

various identity meanings and their tie to the dimensions of self-esteem. The principles suggested that (1) verification of identity meanings having to do with social belongingness and integration, being accepted and valued increases feelings of self-worth; (2) verification of identity meanings related to agency and accomplishment increases feelings of self-efficacy; and (3) verification of identity meanings that represent a self that is "true" increases feelings of authenticity. From these identity theory principles, we suggested that, in general, verification of social/group identities increases self-worth, verification of role identities increases self-efficacy, and verification of person identities increases feelings of authenticity.

These same principles suggested that other identity bases may be associated with the self-esteem dimensions *if* the meanings of the identities and self-esteem dimensions are shared. For example, verification of role and person identities that are respected and valued in society might also generate self-worth such as the moral person identity. The verification of social and person identities that are tied to accomplishments might also influence feelings of self-efficacy. Finally, the verification of social and role identities that become highly visible and core to the individual might increase feelings of authenticity such as one's gender identity. Overall, because the findings supported the three general principles and their corresponding hypotheses, identity theory appears to be an effective theory that distinguishes among the different self-esteem dimensions and their separate origin.

In Part 3, we investigated how the esteem dimensions were causally related to each other over time, thus giving rise to their correlations. We discovered that while self-worth and self-efficacy mutually influenced each other, the relationships between authenticity and self-worth and authenticity and self-efficacy were both one-way, with worth influencing authenticity and authenticity influencing efficacy. We suggested that the effect of one dimension of esteem on another did not occur directly. Rather, we suggest the effect of one dimension of self-esteem on another is mediated through high esteem on one dimension facilitating the verification of identities with other bases. This esteem-facilitated verification, in turn, gives rise to other dimensions of esteem where they occur.

For example, verification of a group-based identity affirms one's connection to society and leads one to feel of value. This feeling, in turn, allows one to take risks to pursue the verification of both role- and person-based identities (Cast and Burke 2002). Feeling worthy and supported allows one to verify role identities and thus feel a sense of efficacy. Having the support of others and feeling worthy also allows one to act on and reveal aspects and meanings of the "real" self that are held in the person identity. The effect of esteem on the facilitation of verification, however, is not uniform across dimensions of esteem. Verifying the person identity by acting in ways that reveal the unique self may not always be appreciated by members of the groups to which one belongs and therefore does not facilitate verification of social/group identities. Similarly, it appears that feelings of efficacy do not necessarily facilitate the revealing and verification of the "true" self to promote authenticity. However, feeling authentic may allow a person the freedom to perform well in any role with consequent role identity verification and the accompanying feelings of efficacy. In general, the presence of the causal connections we observe help us understand some of the relationships among these different dimensions of self-esteem.

Overall, we have made progress in using identity theory to understand self-esteem. We have developed measures of the self-esteem dimensions, and, again using identity theory, developed a better understanding both of distinctiveness of the self-esteem dimensions as outcomes and their mutual influence (or the lack thereof) over time. Yet, more is needed to advance our theoretical understanding of self-esteem as well as replicate these results. First, while our results were strong, they need to be replicated on samples that go beyond college students. We need a broader range of ages, incomes, and social statuses to assess the generalizability of the findings.

Second, it is important to investigate the consequences of the self-esteem dimensions. Cast and Burke (2002) suggested that self-esteem acts as a reservoir of energy that allows people to

persevere in seeking identity verification when that is difficult. Greater persistence will be more likely to result in identity verification because the periodic failures are not devastating to high self-esteem individuals. They have a reservoir of good feelings and strong beliefs about their capabilities that they have stored up and can draw upon as they persevere toward identity verification. Indeed, research reveals that high levels of worth and efficacy operate to accomplish identity verification (Stets and Cast 2007). Although this speaks to the effects of overall self-esteem, it is important to examine whether perseverance in identity verification also exists as a result of each dimension of self-esteem.

We have expanded our understanding of self-esteem by proposing three dimensions. Although these three dimensions are moderately correlated, they are distinct concepts with their own patterns of relationships to each other and to other theoretical processes. With these new measures of the self-esteem dimensions, and a theoretical way of understanding them based on identity theory, we look forward to a new era of research on self-esteem.

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Notes

1. Another view is to separate self-esteem into positive and negative components (Kohn and Schooler 1983; Owens 1993, 1994; Owens and King 2001; Schooler and Oates 2001). In this research, rather than focusing on the valence of the self-esteem dimension, we focus on the meanings or content of the different dimensions.
2. Authenticity is not the same as sincerity. While sincerity is representing one's true self *to others*, authenticity is being true *to oneself* (Trilling 1972). In this way, authenticity refers back to the self while sincerity does not (Erickson 1995).
3. How individuals *think* others see them in a situation is termed *reflected appraisals*. Morris Rosenberg (1979; Rosenberg, Schooler, and Schoenbach 1989) indicated that reflected appraisals were important in self-esteem formation because how people felt about themselves was influenced by their judgments of what others thought of them. This is grounded in Charles H. Cooley's ([1902] 1964) idea of the "looking-glass self" and George H. Mead's (1934) understanding of the role-taking process.
4. It does not matter whether the category or group is stigmatized; a feeling of acceptance and belongingness still should emerge because members compare themselves with others who are members of their own stigmatized category or group (in-group members) rather than with those who are not members of their stigmatized category or group (advantaged out-group members; Rosenberg et al. 1995).
5. This would produce scales that would have adequate content coverage but would not be so lengthy as to generate fatigue for the respondent.
6. In Part 3, to be discussed later in which a subsample of individuals responded twice to the survey approximately three months apart, there were only 13 individuals of the 305 respondents, or about 4.3 percent, who showed a stable response set over time. Again, analyses were run that both included and excluded persons who showed a stable response set. The results changed only two coefficients, lowering them by .01.

7. As is often the case in a college student sample, age is quite restricted.
8. The discriminant analysis is available upon request.
9. The nonsignificant reverse paths were set to zero in the final model.

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