27

Self-Verification Theory

William B. Swann, Jr.

ABSTRACT

Self-verification theory proposes that people prefer others to see them as they see themselves, even if their self-views happen to be negative. For example, those who see themselves as likable want others to see them as such, and people who see themselves as dislikable want others to perceive them that way. Presumably, people seek self-verification because self-verifying evaluations make the world seem coherent and predictable. In addition, self-verifying evaluations smooth social interaction by guiding action and letting people know what to expect from others. People strive for self-verification by gravitating toward interaction partners and settings that seem likely to provide self-confirming evaluations. Moreover, once in relationships, people actively evoke self-confirming reactions from their partners. Finally, people process feedback about themselves in ways that promote the survival of their self-views. In general, self-verification strivings are adaptive and functional, as they foster feelings of coherence, reduce anxiety, improve group functioning, and erode social stereotypes. Nevertheless, for those who possess inappropriately negative self-views, self-verification may thwart positive change and make their life situations harsher than they would be otherwise. In this chapter, I discuss the nature, history, and social implications of self-verification theory and research.

INTRODUCTION

It all started with a seven year old boy named Tommy. I met Tommy while working at a camp for underprivileged children following my sophomore year in college. I still have a vivid memory of our first encounter. It was my first day at the camp, and I was eager to meet the kids. As I approached the camp director's cabin, however, I was alarmed at the sound of some boys fighting. I ran over to find Tommy on the ground, pinned down by two other children who were wailing on him mercilessly. A couple of other adults (counselors, I learned later) and I stepped in to break up the fight. Someone escorted Tommy to the nurse's office to repair the damage, which was minor.

This was the first of my many memorable encounters with Tommy. Unfortunately, these encounters were rarely happy occasions. As the camp director sadly noted, Tommy was a little cloud that hung over "Camp Sunshine," reigning difficulties on almost everyone he encountered. The director then noted that my application indicated that I was a psychology major, which led her to wonder if I might be interested in trying to figure out what was the matter with Tommy. I hesitated before answering. At this point in my life I did not suffer from lack of confidence, but I had enough humility to recognize that there was little hope that I could develop a deep understanding of a character as complex as Tommy, especially in the span of a few months. Nevertheless, I was fascinated by the young boy and his seemingly bizarre behavior. Intrigued, I agreed to spend some time observing Tommy and report back to the director.

Over the next few weeks my fascination with Tommy grew, for I was completely unprepared for what I observed. In his interactions, Tommy seemed hell bent on turning everyone against him: disobeying the counselors, taunting and teasing the other kids, and being generally disruptive. His relationship with "Crazy Louis" was particularly remarkable. Louis earned his "Crazy" label by ruthlessly assaulting the other children on a daily basis. Often his aggressiveness seemed random and unprovoked. All of the children rapidly learned to steer clear of Louis – except for Tommy, that is. Tommy seemed drawn to Louis like a magnet. Louis would oblige by subjecting Tommy to a steady diet of verbal and physical abuse.

And each evening, when I talked to Tommy about his day, he remembered only the negatives – the problems he encountered and the slights that had been directed at him. In contrast, when I mentioned the positive things that had happened he seemed confused, forgetful, and anxious, returning as quickly as possible to his narrative of negativity.

What puzzled me about Tommy was that his activities seemed almost tailored made to sour his relations with others and perpetuate his incredibly negative self-image. When I probed, it seemed like he derived some comfort from the fact that his experiences at the camp were every bit as bad as he expected them to be. Tommy not only seemed convinced that the world hated him; he seemed reassured when his interactions supported this expectation.

Tommy's pathology became easier to understand after I consulted the case worker who referred Tommy to the camp. She revealed that he had been the target of a steady stream of abuse since he was an infant. Apparently, he had internalized the treatment he received. An incredibly negative identity resulted. It was not surprising to me that Tommy's negative self-views could be traced to terrible experiences with his caregivers. What was surprising was that he seemed to work actively to recreate the negative conditions that generated his negative identity in the first place. Most people would seemingly want to escape an ugly past rather than recreate it. What made Tommy different?

It would take me years before I would get a handle on this question, for as an undergraduate I lacked the sophistication to address it in a meaningful way. My efforts to acquire the training I needed jumpstarted when I gained admission to graduate school in social psychology. From my home in Pennsylvania, I headed north to the University of Minnesota. There I began working with Mark Snyder, an eminent scholar with interests in the self and social interaction. When I arrived I leaned that he was about to launch an exciting new program of research. The topic was the self-fulfilling effects of the expectations of some persons ("perceivers") on the behaviors of their interaction partners ("targets"). This phenomenon seemed to represent the flip side of the activities of Tommy, a "target" whose self-views influenced the behavior of all of the "perceivers" around him. I happily immersed myself in this project, and was later rewarded with three publications (Snyder and Swann, 1978a, 1978b; Swann and Snyder, 1980).

It was not until my final year at Minnesota that Tommy reappeared on my intellectual radar screen. In designing my dissertation, I decided to test the relative power of the expectations of perceivers and the self-views of targets. Guided by my experiences with

Tommy, I expected that targets who had firmly held self-views would repudiate expectations that challenged their self-views, even if their self-views were negative. This was precisely what happened – people with negative self-views elicited more negative reactions than people with positive self-views. Moreover, the tendency for participants to elicit negative self-confirming reactions was particularly strong when they suspected that their interaction partner held positive appraisals of them.

Upon completion of my dissertation, I took a job at the University of Texas at Austin. There, I conducted several follow-ups to my dissertation research with Stephen Read. Those studies were packaged together in two papers that appeared in years to follow (Swann and Read, 1981a, 1981b). The core argument that Steve and I advanced was that people were like Tommy in that they wanted to confirm their self-views. We also suggested that they expressed this preference during each of three successive phases of the interaction sequence. In Study 1, we examined attention. We recruited participants who perceived themselves as either likable or dislikable and told them that another person had likely evaluated them in either a positive or negative manner. The question was how long participants would read a passage that they (erroneously) thought that the evaluator had written about them. Participants who saw themselves as likable spent longer reading the passage when they expected it to be positive. In contrast, those with negative self-views spent longer reading the passage when they expected it to be negative. Study 2, my dissertation study, showed that people behaved in ways that elicited reactions from their interaction partners that confirmed their self-views. Study 3 focused on what participants remembered about evaluations they received. We discovered that participants preferentially recalled self-verifying evaluations. These data offered compelling support for our hypotheses: within each of three distinct phases of social interaction, people sought to verify their self-views.

In a series of follow-up studies, we tested the notion that people seek and value self-verifying evaluations because such evaluations more informative and diagnostic than nonverifying evaluations. Participants in Study 1 preferentially solicited feedback that verified their self-views, whether these self-views were positive or negative. In Study 2, participants spent more money to obtain verifying as compared to nonverifying evaluations. Study 3 revealed that participants perceived self-verifying evaluations to be particularly informative and diagnostic.

Together, the results presented in the Swann and Read papers strongly suggested that Tommy was no anomaly. Rather, there seemed to be a fairly robust tendency for people to prefer self-confirming feedback over nonconfirming feedback. In fact, this preference influenced information seeking, attention, memory, overt behavior, and even perceptions of the diagnosticity of the feedback. These studies provided the empirical foundation on which the theory would rest. The next task was to flesh out the theory and begin to explore its implications. My efforts culminated in the publication of a chapter in which I presented the essential elements of this theory (Swann, 1983).

SELF-VERIFICATION THEORY

The core idea underlying self-verification theory was first articulated by Prescott Lecky (1945). He proposed that chronic self-views give people a strong sense of coherence and they are thus motivated to maintain them. Related ideas resurfaced a few years later in several self-consistency theories (e.g., Aronson, 1968; Festinger, 1957; Secord and Backman, 1965). Nevertheless, the most prominent consistency theorists transformed Lecky's theory in a fundamental way, for the emphasis on experimentation during that era led to the abandonment of Lecky's emphasis on the role of chronic self-views in consistency strivings. Dissonance theory (Aronson, 1968; Festinger, 1957), for example, emphasized the ways in which people found consistency by bringing their transient self-images into accord with their overt behaviors. Self-verification theory (Swann, 1983) reversed this trend by reinstating Lecky's belief that stable self-views organize people's efforts to maximize consistency. Therefore, rather than changing self-views willy nilly to match behavior, self-verification theory holds that people are motivated to maximize the extent to which their experiences confirm and reinforce their self-views.

People's powerful allegiance to stable self-views can be understood by considering how and why they develop self-views in the first place. Theorists have long assumed that people form their self-views by observing how others treat them (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). As they acquire more and more evidence to support their self-views, people become increasingly certain of them. When certainty increases enough, people begin using their self-views in making predictions about their worlds, guiding behavior, and maintaining a sense of coherence, place, and continuity. In this way, stable self-views not only serve the pragmatic function of guiding behavior, they also serve the epistemic function of affirming people's sense that things are as they should be. Indeed, firmly held self-views form the centerpiece of their knowledge systems. As such, when people strive for self-verification, the viability of that system hangs in the balance. It is thus not surprising that by mid childhood, a preference for evaluations that confirm and stabilize self-views emerges (e.g., Cassidy et al., 2003).

The origins of the self-verification motive can also be understood from an evolutionary perspective. Evolutionary biologists generally agree that humans spent most of their evolutionary history in small hunter-gatherer groups. Self-verification strivings would have been advantageous in such groups. That is, once people used inputs from the social environment to form self-views, self-verification strivings would have stabilized their identities and behavior, which in turn would make each individual more predictable to other group members (e.g., Goffman, 1959). Mutual predictability would facilitate division of labor, making the group more effective in accomplishing its objectives. Ultimately, the stable self-views fostered by self-verification strivings would bolster survival rates of group members (see Leary and Baumeister's [2000] sociometer theory for another perspective on the utility of accurate self-knowledge for group functioning).

The desire for stable self-views produced by self-verification strivings may also be understood on a neurological level. Of their very nature, self-verifying evaluations will be more predictable and familiar than non-verifying ones. Such stimuli are not only more "perceptually fluent" (more readily processed) than unpredictable and unfamiliar stimuli, they have also been shown to foster positive affect (e.g., Winkielman et al., 2002). The preference for self-verifying evaluations may therefore stem, at least partially, from basic properties of the human brain.

If stable self-views are essential to human functioning, those who are deprived of them should be seriously impaired. This seems to be true. Witness a case study reported by the neurologist Oliver Sacks (1985). Due to chronic alcohol abuse, patient William Thompson suffered from memory loss that was so profound that he forgot who he was. Only able to remember scattered fragments from his past, Thompson lapsed into a state of psychological anarchy. But Thompson did not give up. Instead, he desperately attempted to recover the self that eluded him. For instance, he sometimes developed hypotheses about who he was and then tested these hypotheses on whoever happened to be present. For example, thinking he was a customer at a butcher shop, he approached another patient and tried to identify him: "You must be Hymie, the Kosher butcher next door … But why are there no bloodstains on your coat?" Tragically, Thompson could never remember the results of his latest "test." He was thus doomed to enact such tests repeatedly for the remainder of his life.

Thompson's case not only shows that stable self-views are essential to psychological wellbeing, it also shows how essential such self-views are to guiding action. Plagued by a sense of self that kept disappearing like the Cheshire Cat, Thompson did not know how to act toward people. In a very real sense, his inability to obtain self-verification deprived him of his capacity to have meaningful interactions with the people around him. No wonder, then, that people enact numerous strategies designed to elicit support for their self-views.

How self-verification strivings shape social reality

People may use three distinct processes to create self-verifying social worlds. First, people may construct self-verifying "opportunity structures"; that is, social environments that satisfy their needs (McCall and Simmons, 1966). They may, for example, seek and enter relationships in which they are apt to enjoy confirmation of their self-views (e.g., Swann et al., 1989) and leave relationships in which they fail to receive self-verification (Swann et al., 1994).

A second self-verification strategy involves the systematic communication of self-views to others. For example, people may display "identity cues" – highly visible signs and symbols of who they are. Physical appearances represent a particularly potent class of identity cues. The clothes one wears, for instance, can advertise numerous self-views, including one's political leanings, income level, religious convictions, and so on (e.g., Gosling, 2008; Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997). Even email addresses can communicate identities to others (Chang-Schneider and Swann, 2009).

People may also communicate their identities to others though their actions. Depressed college students, for example, were more likely to solicit unfavorable feedback from their roommates than were nondepressed students (Swann et al., 1992d). Such efforts bore fruit in the form of negative evaluations. That is, the more unfavorable feedback they solicited in the middle of the semester, the more their roommates derogated them and convinced them to make plans to find another roommate at the end of the semester. Furthermore, if people suspect that someone does not perceive them in a manner that befits their self-views, they will redouble their efforts to acquire self-verifying reactions. As noted earlier, in one study, participants who perceived themselves as either likable or dislikable learned that they would be interacting with someone who probably found them likable or dislikable. When participants suspected that their partner saw them either more or less favorably than they perceived themselves, they ramped-up their efforts to elicit self-verifying evaluations (e.g., Brooks et al., 2009; Swann and Hill, 1982; Swann and Read, 1981a, Study 2).

And what if people's efforts to obtain self-verifying evaluations fail? Even then, people may still cling to their self-views through the third strategy of self-verification: "seeing" nonexistent evidence. Self-views may guide at least three stages of information processing: attention, recall, and interpretation. For example, an investigation of selective attention revealed that participants with positive self-views spent longer scrutinizing evaluations they expected to be positive and people with negative self-views spent longer scrutinizing evaluations when they expected them to be negative (Swann and Read, 1981a, Study 1). Participants in a follow-up study displayed signs of selective recall. In particular, participants who perceived themselves positively remembered more positive than negative statements and those who perceived themselves negatively remembered more negative than positive statements. Finally, numerous investigations have shown that people tend to interpret information in ways that reinforce their self-views. Consider evidence that people with low self-esteem perceive their partners' sentiments toward them as being more negative than they actually are (e.g., Murray et al., 2000).

Together, attentional, encoding, retrieval, and interpretational processes may stabilize people's self-views by allowing them to "see" their worlds as offering more confirmation for their self-views than actually exists (for a review, see Swann et al., 2003c). These strategies therefore represent a special case of the tendency for expectancies to channel information processing (e.g., Higgins and Bargh, 1987; Shrauger, 1975).

Interestingly, most investigations of self-verification processes have reported nearly symmetrical preferences of participants with positive and negative self-views. That is, just as participants with positive self-views displayed a preference for positive evaluations, participants with negative self-views displayed a preference for negative evaluations. In the early days of my research on self-verification, I had no idea how controversial this evidence would prove to be. I was soon to discover, however, that most of my colleagues were skeptical of the notion that people with negative self-views preferred negative evaluations. In fact, some of them would not buy a word of it.

The backlash from self-enhancement advocates

In the early 1980s, I noticed a baffling phenomenon. The more evidence for self-verification I published, the more skeptical my critics grew. The full magnitude of the problem, however, did not occur to me until an encounter with the great Stanley Schachter. After I had given a colloquium to the Psychology Department at Columbia (where he was the resident icon), I was excited to see him striding toward me. My excitement morphed into apprehension, however, when I noticed a scowl on his face. This was not just any scowl; it was so menacing that I instantly became convinced that he was about to take a swing at someone. Worse yet, judging from his trajectory, it seemed likely that that someone would be me. Stopping just short of my nose, he demanded, "So, are you telling me that people with negative self-concepts actually *want* negative evaluations?" I felt trapped. I sensed that if I caved, I would lose face, but if I stood my ground, I would lose my entire head. In the end I persuaded myself that I should hang tough, as my relatively youthful reflexes (he was more than twice my age) and wrestling experience would surely save me from serious injury. So convinced, I answered "At some level, yes" and prepared to duck. He stared at me in disbelief; I defiantly stared back. After what seemed like an eternity (spectators later told me the entire interaction was less than a minute), he announced loudly "I don't believe it" and marched off in a huff.

For a host of reasons, Schachter's reaction was deeply troubling. It was bad enough that one of the world's most eminent social psychologists found my findings unpersuasive. More worrisome was the possibility that his concerns represented the tip of a much more ominous iceberg. Indeed, I would soon realize that for an increasingly vocal group of critics, my findings were not simply counterintuitive; they had been thoroughly discredited more than a decade earlier. The focal point of their concerns was an early study by Aronson and Carlsmith (1962). In this study, the experimenter asked a group of Harvard students to determine if the people pictured in series of photographs suffered from schizophrenia. After each of 100 trials, he delivered either positive or negative feedback to subjects. The crucial group received predominantly negative feedback for the first 80 trials followed by positive feedback on the last 20 trials. Shortly thereafter the experimenter indicated that there had been an oversight and asked subjects to take the final 20 trials of the test again.

Aronson and Carlsmith's (1962) dependent measure was the extent to which subjects modified their responses to the final trials. Surprisingly, those who received unexpectedly positive feedback undermined their good fortune by modifying their responses! Theoretically, 80 trials of negative feedback had caused these participants to develop negative self-conceptions so that the positive feedback on the final trials produced dissonance. They accordingly altered their responses on the last 20 trials to reduce the dissonance created by the unexpectedly positive feedback.

Unfortunately, the results of the Aronson and Carlsmith study proved to be as difficult to replicate as they were provocative, with only 4 of 17 replication attempts succeeding (Dipboye, 1977). This rather dismal track record was enough to convince most people that Aronson and Carlsmith's findings were a fluke. More generally, critics argued that in a fair fight, self-consistency strivings were no match for self-enhancement strivings. This belief remains firmly entrenched among many social psychologists to this day, with most contemporary theorists tending either to subsume self-consistency strivings within a self-enhancement perspective (e.g., Schlenker, 1985; Sedikides and Gregg, 2008; Steele, 1988; Tesser, 1988) or to ignore them altogether.

My critics, noting a superficial similarly between the Aronson and Carlsmith (1962) findings and self-verification effects, dismissed evidence for self-verification. This was misguided, for it is inappropriate to link the two sets of findings. Most important, if one looks closely at the procedures employed in the two sets of studies, one sees a crucial difference. In the self-verification studies, the experimenters *measured* the self-concepts of participants. This allowed them to tap into people's desire for self-stability and coherence. In contrast, Aronson and Carlsmith sought to *manipulate* self-views (by presenting participants with feedback indicating that they were unable to diagnose schizophrenics). Surely, providing negative feedback to a 20-year-old Harvard student is not likely to convince him that he does not know a crazy person when he sees one. For this reason, such a manipulation may put people in a bad mood, but it will not produce the chronic negative self-views needed to motivate self-verification strivings.

From this perspective, difficulties in replicating the Aronson and Carlsmith findings have no bearing on the replicability of self-verification effects. And, in fact, subsequent research bolstered this conclusion. Indeed, over the next several years, researchers in other labs and my own students replicated the basic self-verification effect (i.e., people with negative self-views preferred and sought negative over positive evaluations) dozens of times (e.g., Hixon and Swann, 1993; Robinson and Smith-Lovin, 1992; Swann et al, 1989, 1990, 1992c, 1992d). Figure 27.1 shows an exemplary set of findings: just as

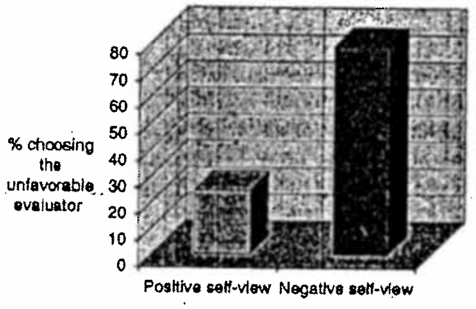

Figure 27.1 Desire to interact with a negative evaluator as a function of self-view. (Adapted from Swann et al. (1992))

people with positive self-views preferred to interact with a positive evaluator, people with negative self-views preferred to interact with someone who evaluated them negatively. Further, people with negative self-views seem to be truly drawn to self-verifying interaction partners rather than simply avoiding nonverifying ones. For example, when given the option of being in a different experiment, people with negative self-views chose to interact with a negative evaluator over participating in another experiment. Similarly, they chose being in a different experiment over interacting with a positive evaluator (Swann et al., 1992c).

Both men and women displayed this propensity, whether or not the self-views were easily changed and whether the self-views were associated with qualities that were specific (intelligence, sociability, dominance) or global (self-esteem, depression). People were particularly likely to seek self-verifying evaluations if their self-views were confidently held (e.g., Pelham and Swann, 1994; Swann and Ely, 1984; Swann et al., 1988) and important (Swann and Pelham, 2002), or extreme (Giesler et al., 1996). Moreover, in recent years researchers have shown that people also strive to verify negative (and positive) self-views associated with group membership. Such strivings emerge for both *collective* self-views (which are identities that characterize the person as well as the typical group member; Chen et al., 2004) and *group identities*, which refer to qualities of typical group members that may or may not characterize individual group members; Gómez et al., in press; Lemay and Ashmore, 2004).

In the face of such converging evidence, most adherents of the assumption that self-enhancement is the prepotent motivator of human behavior eventually relinquished their assertion that self-verification effects were not robust. Instead, they began to assert that the tendency for people with negative self-views to prefer and seek negative evaluations is counter-intuitive and bizarre. To counter such claims, I realized that I needed to show why people seek self-verification.

Why people self-verify

It is obvious why people work to maintain some negative self-views. After all, everyone possesses flaws and weaknesses and it makes perfect sense to develop and maintain negative self-views that correspond to these flaws and weaknesses. For example, people who lack some ability (as in those who are tone-deaf or cannot jump) will have numerous reasons for bringing others to recognize their shortcomings. For instance, when the appraisals of relationship partners square with objective reality, such partners will develop realistic expectations that the person can confirm and thus avoid disappointing the partner.

The adaptiveness of self-verification strivings, however, is much less obvious when people develop globally negative self-views (e.g., "I am worthless") that have no clear objective basis. Active efforts to maintain such negative self-views by, for example, gravitating toward harsh or abusive partners, is surely maladaptive. At the very least, such activities seem to directly contradict the predictions of one of social psychology's most prominent approaches, self-enhancement theory. In fact, one of the greatest challenges to self-verification researchers is understanding how the motive interacts with the self-enhancement motive (e.g., Kwang and Swann, 2009).

Self-enhancement versus self-verification

Self-enhancement theory can be traced back at least as far as Allport (1937). By positing a vital and universal human need to view oneself positively, Allport sowed the seeds for what would develop into a patchwork of loosely related propositions dubbed "self-enhancement theory" (Jones, 1973). Today this theory has received considerable support, including evidence that people are motivated to obtain, maintain, and increase positive self-regard. There are people with positive self-views preferred to interact with a positive evaluator, people with negative self-views preferred to interact with someone who evaluated them negatively. Further, people with negative self-views seem to be truly drawn to self-verifying interaction partners rather than simply avoiding nonverifying ones. For example, when given the option of being in a different experiment, people with negative self-views chose to interact with a negative evaluator over participating in another experiment. Similarly, they chose being in a different experiment over interacting with a positive evaluator (Swann et al., 1992c).

Both men and women displayed this propensity, whether or not the self-views were easily changed and whether the self-views were associated with qualities that were specific (intelligence, sociability, dominance) or global (self-esteem, depression). People were particularly likely to seek self-verifying evaluations if their self-views were confidently held (e.g., Pelham and Swann, 1994; Swann and Ely, 1984; Swann et al., 1988) and important (Swann and Pelham, 2002), or extreme (Giesler et al., 1996). Moreover, in recent years researchers have shown that people also strive to verify negative (and positive) self-views associated with group membership. Such strivings emerge for both *collective* self-views (which are identities that characterize the person as well as the typical group member; Chen et al., 2004) and *group identities*, which refer to qualities of typical group members that may or may not characterize individual group members; Gómez et al., in press; Lemay and Ashmore, 2004).

In the face of such converging evidence, most adherents of the assumption that self-enhancement is the prepotent motivator of human behavior eventually relinquished their assertion that self-verification effects were not robust. Instead, they began to assert that the tendency for people with negative self-views to prefer and seek negative evaluations is counter-intuitive and bizarre. To counter such claims, I realized that I needed to show why people seek self-verification.

Why people self-verify

It is obvious why people work to maintain some negative self-views. After all, everyone possesses flaws and weaknesses and it makes perfect sense to develop and maintain negative self-views that correspond to these flaws and weaknesses. For example, people who lack some ability (as in those who are tone-deaf or cannot jump) will have numerous reasons for bringing others to recognize their shortcomings. For instance, when the appraisals of relationship partners square with objective reality, such partners will develop realistic expectations that the person can confirm and thus avoid disappointing the partner.

The adaptiveness of self-verification strivings, however, is much less obvious when people develop globally negative self-views (e.g., "I am worthless") that have no clear objective basis. Active efforts to maintain such negative self-views by, for example, gravitating toward harsh or abusive partners, is surely maladaptive. At the very least, such activities seem to directly contradict the predictions of one of social psychology's most prominent approaches, self-enhancement theory. In fact, one of the greatest challenges to self-verification researchers is understanding how the motive interacts with the self-enhancement motive (e.g., Kwang and Swann, 2009).

Self-enhancement versus self-verification

Self-enhancement theory can be traced back at least as far as Allport (1937). By positing a vital and universal human need to view oneself positively, Allport sowed the seeds for what would develop into a patchwork of loosely related propositions dubbed "self-enhancement theory" (Jones, 1973). Today this theory has received considerable support, including evidence that people are motivated to obtain, maintain, and increase positive self-regard. There are also indications that the desire for self-enhancement is truly fundamental. First, there is the apparent ubiquity of this desire. Whether one examines people's social judgments, attributions, or overt behaviors, there appears to be a widespread tendency for them to favor themselves over others (for a review, see Leary, 2007). Second, traces of a preference for positivity emerge at a tender age. Indeed, within mere weeks of developing the ability to discriminate facial characteristics, five-month-olds attend more to smiling faces than to nonsmiling ones (Shapiro et al., 1987). Similarly, as early as four-and-a-half months of age, children preferentially orient to voices that have the melodic contours of acceptance (Fernald, 1993). Third, among adults, a preference for positive evaluations emerges before other preferences (Swann et al., 1990). In particular, when forced to choose between two evaluators quickly, participants selected the positive evaluator even if they viewed themselves negatively. Only when given time to reflect did participants with negative self-views choose the negative, self-verifying partner.

Yet, as potent as the desire for positivity may be, the results summarized earlier in this chapter indicate that self-verification strivings are quite robust. In fact, contrary to self-enhancement theory, people with negative self-views display a clear tendency to seek and embrace negative rather than positive partners. Furthermore, although the early demonstrations of self-verification strivings were conducted in the laboratory, later field studies showed a parallel pattern that was, in many respects, even more remarkable than the initial studies. The first study in this series was designed to compare how people with positive self-views and negative self-views react to marital partners whose appraisals varied in positivity (Swann et al., 1994). The investigators recruited married couples who were either shopping at a local mall or horseback riding at a ranch in central Texas. The researchers approached potential participants and invited them to complete a series of questionnaires. They began with the Self-Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ; Pelham and Swann, 1989), a measure that focused on five attributes that most Americans regard as important: intelligence, social skills, physical attractiveness, athletic ability, and artistic ability. Then participants completed it again. This time, however, they rated their spouse. Finally, husbands and wives completed a measure of their commitment to the relationship. While each person completed these questionnaires, his or her spouse completed the same ones. The researchers thus had indices of what everyone thought of themselves, what their spouses thought of them, and how committed they were to the relationship.

How did people react to positive or negative evaluations from their spouses? As shown in Figure 27.2, people with positive self-views responded in the intuitively-obvious way–the more favorable their spouses were, the more committed they were. By contrast, people with negative self-views displayed the opposite reaction; the more favorable their spouses were, the *less* committed they were. Those with moderate self-views were most committed to spouses who appraised them moderately.

Subsequent researchers attempted to replicate this effect (e.g., Cast and Burke, 2002; De La Ronde and Swann, 1998; Murray et al., 2000; Ritts and Stein, 1995; Schafer et al., 1996). Although the strength of the effect varied, each study reported some evidence that people preferred self-verifying spouses, even if their self-views were negative. A meta-analysis revealed that among married persons, the self-verification effect was stronger than the self-enhancement effect (Kwang and Swann, 2010). Moreover, a parallel finding emerged in a study of college student roommates (Swann and Pelham, 2002). Nevertheless, rather than accepting such findings as evidence of a desire for self-verification, advocates of self-enhancement theory refused to give up the fight. Instead, they insisted that what appeared to be self-verification strivings were, ironically, self-enhancement strivings gone awry.

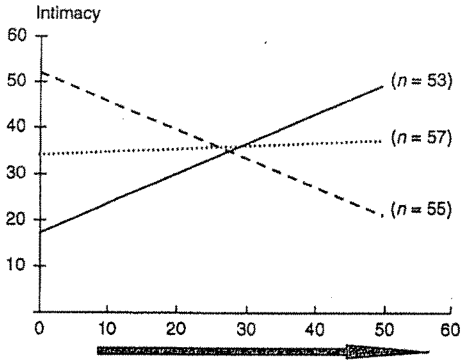

Figure 27.2 Marital intimacy as a function of participants self-views and spouses' appraisals. (Based on Swann et al. (1994))

Are self-verification strivings actually self-enhancement strivings in disguise?

One variation on this argument has been that self-verification effects are driven by a tiny segment of the population who suffer from flawed personalities such as masochism or self-destructive tendencies. From this vantage point, it was the personality flaw rather than the negative self-view that caused people with negative self-views to embrace negative evaluations and evaluators.

One counter to such claims is offered by an interesting aspect of the results of the investigation of married couples described above. Careful inspection of the findings revealed that it was not just persons with negative self-views who eschewed overly positive evaluations, for even people with positive self-views displayed less commitment to spouses whose evaluations were *extremely* favorable (Swann et al., 1994). Thus, the self-verification effect was not restricted to people with negative self-views; anyone who sensed that a spouse appraised them in an overly favorable manner tended to withdraw from the relationship.

Although these data are consistent with a self-verification explanation, they do not explicitly show that it was the *self-views* of people who thought poorly of themselves that caused them to choose negative evaluators. In search of such evidence, we (Swann et al., 1990) hypothesized that there were differences in the cognitive operations that gave rise to self-enhancement versus self-verification strivings. In principle, self-enhancement strivings seem to require only one step: upon classifying the evaluation, people embrace positive evaluations and reject negative evaluations. In contrast, self-verification strivings logically require at least two steps. After classifying the evaluation, it needed to be compared to the self-view, for only then could the person choose to embrace verifying evaluations and avoid nonverifying ones. With this reasoning in hand, we predicted that depriving people of cognitive resources while they were choosing an interaction partner would interfere with their ability to access their self-concept. As a result, people who might ordinarily self-verify would self-enhance instead (cf. Paulhus and Levitt, 1987).

We tested these ideas by depriving participants of cognitive resources. In one study we did this by having people rehearse a phone number. While they struggled not to forget the phone number, they chose between a positive or negative evaluation. Deprived of the cognitive resources, they needed to compare the evaluation with their self-view; people with negative self-views suddenly behaved like their positive self-view compatriots – they chose positive evaluations over negative ones. When these same participants were later given several moments to access their self-views, however, they chose the negative, self-verifying evaluations. Later studies replicated this effect using other manipulations of resource deprivation, such as having participants choose partners hurriedly (Hixon and Swann, 1993). By showing that it was the ability to access their negative self-views that caused participants to choose negative evaluators, the resource deprivation studies showed that self-views rather than "flawed personalities" underlay self-verification strivings.

Another way of testing the flawed personalities hypothesis was to determine what people were thinking as they chose an interaction partner. To this end, we (Swann et al., 1992b) conducted a "think-aloud" study. People with positive and negative self-views thought out loud into a tape recorder as they chose an evaluator to interact with. As in the earlier studies, people with positive self-views tended to choose the positive evaluator and people with negative self-views tended to choose the negative evaluator. Of greatest relevance here, subsequent analyses of the tape recordings revealed no evidence that masochism or self-destructive tendencies drove the self-verifying choices of participants. To the contrary, participants with negative self-views seemed torn and ambivalent as they chose negative partners. One person with negative self-views, for example, noted that:

> I like the [favorable] evaluation but I am not sure that it is, ah, correct, maybe. It *sounds* good, but [the negative evaluator] ... seems to know more about me. So, I'll choose [the negative evaluator].

The think-aloud study also provided direct support for self-verification theory. The remarks of self-verifiers – both those with negative self-views who chose negative partners and those with positive self-views who chose favorable partners – indicated that they preferred partners who made them feel that they knew themselves. Consistent with self-verification theory, they were concerned with the match between the partner's evaluation and what they knew to be true of them:

> Yeah, I think that's pretty close to the way I am. [The negative evaluator] better reflects my own view of myself, from experience.

There was also evidence that pragmatic considerations contributed to self-verification strivings, with self-verifiers voicing a concern with getting along with the evaluators during the forthcoming interaction:

> Since [the negative evaluator] seems to know my position and how I feel sometimes, maybe I'll be able to get along with him.

In short, the results of the think-aloud study indicated that both epistemic and pragmatic considerations motivated participants to choose partners whose evaluations confirmed their self-views. As I will show below, the results of the think-aloud study, together with the marriage partner study, were also useful in addressing the possibility that people sought negative evaluations in a misguided effort to obtain positive evaluations.

Perceptiveness of the evaluator

The distinction between desiring an evaluator who seems perceptive versus one who bolsters one's feelings of coherence parallels the difference between buying a car because it looks sporty versus choosing it because it makes one feel admired. In the think-aloud study, people who mentioned a concern with perceptiveness focused on qualities of the evaluator, such as being "on the ball" or "insightful." In contrast, people who emphasized coherence stressed a concern with feeling that the evaluator made them feel that they knew themselves. Those who mentioned being concerned with the perceptiveness of the evaluator were not the same ones who expressed coherence-related concerns, indicating that the two sets of concerns were independent. In addition, results of the marriage partner study indicated that relationship quality was driven by the extent to which the spouse was self-confirming rather than perceptive. In particular, commitment to relationships correlated with confidence that their spouses' appraisals would make them "feel that they really knew themselves" rather than "confused them." Commitment was not related with estimates of the perceptiveness of spouses, however.

Self-improvement

Another rival explanation was that people with negative self-views choose interaction partners who thought poorly of them because they believed that such partners might give them critical feedback that would help them improve themselves. Participants in the think-aloud study did not mention this possibility, however. The results of the marital partners study also countered this possibility. When asked if they thought their spouse would provide them with information that would enable them to improve themselves, people with negative self-views were decidedly pessimistic, thus arguing against the possibility that this motive drew them into self-verifying relationships.

Perceived similarity

Considerable evidence indicates that people prefer those who have similar values and beliefs. For example, people typically prefer their friends and associates who share their political beliefs, tastes in music, and the like (Byrne, 1971). Given this, it may be that people find self-verifying partners appealing because they suspect that such partners will agree with them on topics and issues that are unrelated to who they are. Contrary to this possibility, participants in the think-aloud study scarcely mentioned the partners' likely attitudes. The results of the marital partner study also provided no evidence that people's affinity for self-verifying partners reflected an effort to align themselves with spouses possessing similar attitudes.

Winning converts

Converting an enemy into a friend is generally difficult, so pulling off such a stunt ought to be especially gratifying. Conceivably, this is what people with negative self-views had on their minds when they chose partners who viewed them negatively. In fact, several participants in the think-aloud study did allude to a desire to win over a partner, as evidenced by comments such as, "I kind of think that [the negative evaluator] is ... the kind of guy or girl I'd like to meet and I would like to show them." Yet, it was only people with *positive* self-views who mentioned this concern; people with negative self-views never brought it up. This stands to reason, as people with negative self-views surely lack confidence that they can readily turn an enemy into a friend.

The marriage partner study provided further ammunition against the "winning converts" hypothesis. If people with negative self-views wished to "convert" a spouse who was initially critical, they should have expressed the most interest in partners whose evaluations of them seemed likely to grow more favorable over the course of the relationship. To the contrary, people with negative self-views tended to commit themselves more to spouses whose evaluations they expected to grow slightly more *negative* over time. Clearly, people with negative self-views choose rejecting interaction partners for very different reasons than people with positive self-views did.

Self-verification versus accuracy

Some critics have asserted that evidence of self-verification processes is unsurprising because people with negative self-views are merely seeking evaluations that confirm actual deficiencies. Let me begin by acknowledging that people with negative self-views undoubtedly possess *some* negative qualities. Tragically, people sometimes develop the conviction that they are flawed when in reality they are not. Support for this idea comes from research in which the researchers examined the feedback-seeking activities of people who were clinically depressed (Giesler et al., 1996). Depressed people regarded negative evaluations to be especially accurate and were more apt to seek them. This finding is significant because there is no evidence that depressed people actually possess chronic deficiencies that would justify their quest for negative feedback. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine a convincing justification for the tendency for people with low self-esteem to feel that they are worthless and undeserving of love. Finally, if depressed persons were truly as deficient as their negative self-views would suggest, one would expect that their negative self-views would remain this way on a more-or-less permanent basis. They do not: once depression clears, the self-views of formerly depressed people bounce back to normal.

Note that I am not suggesting that people have no interest in winning the approval of their relationship partners. Indeed, the self-verification process requires that relationships survive, for there can be no self-verification if there is no relationship. For this reason, people are highly motivated to bring their relationship partners to see them positively on qualities that are essential to the survival of the relationship. Physical attractiveness is one such quality. Not surprisingly, target persons not only want their dating partners to see them as much more attractive than they see themselves, they actually take steps to ensure their partners view them this way (e.g., Swann et al., 2002). Moreover, such steps are effective, for people's partners actually develop appraisals that verify targets' more-attractive-than-usual selves. Apparently, people with negative self-views recognize that for their relationships to remain viable, they must be perceived in a relatively positive manner on relationship-relevant dimensions. We dubbed this phenomenon "strategic self-verification," as people gained verification for strategic selves that differed from their chronic selves.

How can evidence of strategic self-verification be reconciled with the research discussed earlier indicating that people seek and elicit self-verifying evaluations? Apparently, people with negative self-views prefer and seek negative evaluations regarding characteristics that are low in relationship-relevance (e.g., intelligence, artistic), presumably because verification of such negative qualities will not threaten the viability of the relationship. At the same time, on dimensions that are critical to the relationship, they strive to acquire evaluations that are more positive than those that they typically receive but which verify the self that they have presented to their partners. In this way, targets may receive verification of qualities that are low in relationship relevance as well as verification of circumscribed, highly positive selves that they negotiate with their partner on qualities that are high in relationship relevance (cf. Neff and Karney, 2005).

Interestingly, this evidence for the moderating role of relationship-relevance is consistent with self-verification theory's notion that people strive for convergence between their self-views and the social realities that maintain them. Nevertheless, it is inconsistent with the theory's assumption that people strive to negotiate identities that match their chronic self-views (Swann, 1983). Apparently, people will seek verification of their negative self-views only if doing so does not risk being abandoned, for abandonment would completely cut off the supply of verification (cf. Hardin and Higgins's, 1996, discussion of people's unwillingness to embrace epistemic truth if it undermines the relationship aspect of shared realities). While enacting such relationship-specific selves departs from the assumptions of classical trait and self theory, it is quite consistent with Mischel and Shoda's (1999) notion that people strive for intra-individual consistency and with my suggestion that people strive for circumscribed accuracy (e.g., Gill and Swann, 2004; Swann, 1984). It is also consistent with conceptions of the self in East Asia in which people eschew self-descriptions that emphasize abstract traits in favor of self-views that emphasize responsiveness to social roles and cross-situational flexibility (e.g., Choi and Choi, 2002; Kanagawa et al., 2001; for a discussion, see English et al., 2008).

Returning to the more general point here, our research has uncovered little support for various ironic explanations of self-verification strivings. Instead, it appears that a desire for self-stability and associated feelings of coherence motivates people to strive for self-verification. If self-verification strivings are indeed built into our psychological architecture, one would expect two things. First, self-verification strivings should act as a powerful counterpoint to self-enhancement strivings. A recent meta-analysis supports this possibility, indicating that self-verification strivings trumped self-enhancement strivings on measures of feedback seeking and relationship quality while self-enhancement strivings prevailed only when researchers focused on affective reactions (Kwang and Swann, 2010). Second, researchers should find that self-verification is associated with various personal and social benefits.

THE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL UTILITY OF SELF-VERIFICATION

There is growing evidence that self-verification strivings predict a host of important outcomes. These outcomes occur at several different levels of analysis, including the individual, interpersonal, and societal level of analysis.

Individual outcomes

For the roughly 70 percent of people who have positive self-views (e.g., Diener and Diener, 1995), the case for the personal adaptiveness of self-verification strivings is clear and compelling. Self-verification strivings bring stability to people's lives, rendering their experiences more coherent, orderly, and comprehensible than they would be otherwise. Success in acquiring self-verifying evaluations may bring with it important psychological benefits. For example, insofar as people's partners are self-verifying, their relationships will be more predictable and manageable. Such predictability and manageability may not only enable people to achieve their relationship goals (e.g., raising children, coordinating careers), it may also be psychologically comforting and anxiety reducing.

For people with negative self-views, however, the fruits of self-verification strivings are adaptive in some instances but not in others. In most instances, seeking verification for negative self-views will be adaptive when such views accurately reflect immutable personal limitations (e.g., lack of height). Despite contentions to the contrary (Taylor and Brown, 1988), there is no convincing evidence that self-delusions are adaptive (Kwang and Swann, 2010).

The picture is much cloudier, however, when people develop *inappropriately* negative self-views – that is, self-views that exaggerate or misrepresent their limitations (e.g., believing that one is fat when one is thin, or dull witted when one is bright). On the positive side, eliciting negative but self-verifying evaluations has the virtue of holding anxiety at bay. For example, one set of investigators (Wood et al., 2005) contrasted the reactions of high and low self-esteem participants to success experiences. Whereas high self-esteem persons reacted quite favorably to success, low self-esteem participants reported being anxious and concerned, apparently because they found success to be surprising and unsettling (cf. Lundgren and Schwab, 1977). Similarly, others (Ayduk et al., 2008) observed participants' cardiovascular responses to positive and negative evaluations. When people with negative self-views received positive feedback, they were physiologically "threatened" (distressed and avoidant). In contrast, when they received negative feedback, participants with negative self-views were physiologically "challenged" or "galvanized" (i.e., cardiovascularly aroused but in a manner associated with approach motivation). The opposite pattern emerged for people with positive self-views.

If people with negative self-views are stressed by positive information, over an extended period such information might actually produce debilitation. Empirical support for this possibility comes from several independent investigations. An initial pair of prospective studies (Brown and McGill, 1989) compared the impact of positive life events on the health outcomes of people with low versus high self-esteem. Positive life events (e.g., improvement in living conditions, getting good grades) predicted increases in health among high self-esteem participants but decreases in health among people low in self-esteem. Recent investigations by Shimizu and Pelham (2004) replicated and extended these results while controlling for negative affectivity, thereby undercutting the rival hypothesis that negative affect influenced both self-reported health and reports of symptoms. Remarkably, in all of these studies, positive life events were apparently so unsettling to people with low self-esteem that their physical health suffered.

But if receiving verification for negative self-views may be beneficial in some respects, the costs may outweigh the benefits in cases in which the self-views are more negative than warranted by objective reality. For instance, self-verification strivings may prompt people with negative self-views to gravitate toward partners who mistreat them, undermine their feelings of self-worth, or even abuse them. Once ensconced in such relationships, people may be unable to benefit from therapy because returning home to a self-verifying partner may undo the progress that was made in the therapist's office (Swann and Predmore, 1985). And the workplace may offer little solace, for the feelings of worthlessness that plague people with low self-esteem may make them ambivalent about receiving fair treatment, ambivalence that may undercut their propensity to insist that they get what they deserve from their employers (Wiesenfeld et al., 2007). Moreover, such tragic outcomes are not limited to global negative self-views. As mentioned above, people who are thin sometimes develop the mistaken impression that they are fat, a perception that gives rise to *anorexia*, a major killer of teenage girls (Hoek, 2006). Clearly, for those who develop erroneous negative self-views, it is important to take steps to disrupt the self-verifying cycles in which they are often trapped (Swann, 1996; Swann et al., 2006). More generally, such instances illustrate how the process of self-verification can sometimes have negative consequences even though it is adaptive for most people most of the time.

Interpersonal outcomes

Earlier, I speculated that during human evolutionary history, self-verification strivings may have increased inclusive fitness by making successful self-verifiers more predictable to other group members. Modern humans may benefit from self-verification strivings for similar reasons. In fact, research indicates that when members of small groups receive self-verification from other group members, their commitment to the group increases and performance improves (Swann et al., 2000, 2004).

Self-verification processes seem to be especially useful in small groups composed of people from diverse backgrounds. That is, out of a fear that they will be misunderstood, members of diverse groups may often refrain from expressing controversial ideas. Self-verification may reduce such fear by convincing them that they *are* understood. For this reason, they may open up to their coworkers. Such openness may, in turn, lead them to express off beat ideas that lead to creative solutions to problems. Performance may benefit (Polzer et al., 2002; Seyle et al., 2009).

Societal outcomes

Self-verification processes are also adaptive for groups and the larger society. Because self-verification processes make people predictable to one another, they may grease the wheels of social interaction. Self-verification processes seem to be especially useful in small groups composed of people from diverse backgrounds. In fact, when group members offer one another self-verification, relatively diverse groups actually outperform relatively nondiverse groups – an instance in which the "value in diversity hypothesis" seems to hold true (e.g., Polzer et al., 2002; Swann et al., 2004).

Self-verification can also help eradicate social stereotypes. In small groups, those who offer other group members self-verification are more apt to individuate them – that is, recognize them as unique individuals rather than as exemplars of social stereotypes (Swann et al., 2003a). Over time, such treatment could influence targets and perceivers alike. Targets who are treated as unique individuals will be encouraged to develop qualities that reflect their idiosyncratic competences and capacities. At the same time, perceivers who individuate other group members will relinquish their social stereotypes (Swann et al., 2003b).

There is also evidence that self-verification strivings may play a role in extreme behaviors. In a recent series of studies, investigators identified a group of people whose personal identities were "fused" with their social identities (Swann et al., 2009). Because the personal and social self are functionally equivalent among such individuals, activating one is tantamount to activating the other. Consistent with this, when we activated a personal self by challenging its validity, people displayed compensatory self-verification strivings. Among fused persons, such compensatory activity took the form of increased willingness to perform extraordinary behaviors, such as dying for the group (see also, Gómez et al., in press; Swann, et al., 2010a, 2010b).

NEW DIRECTIONS

Current research on self-verification is moving in several distinct directions. One approach focuses on tradeoffs between self-verification and other motives such as positivity, particularly in close relationships (e.g., Neff and Karney, 2005). One fascinating issue here is how people create and sustain idiosyncratic social worlds that are disjunctive with the worlds that they have created outside the relationship (Swann et al., 2002). Another emerging theme (e.g., Chen et al., 2004; Gómez et al., 2009) has been on the verification of social identities (i.e., identities associated with the groups people align themselves with, such as Democrat, American, etc.) as compared with personal identities (i.e., self-views referring to personal qualities, such as intelligent, athletic, etc.). A third set of questions have emerged regarding similarities and differences in the way that self-verification strivings unfold in other cultures (English et al., 2008). My take on this issue is that all people desire coherence and predictability but that this desire may express itself differently depending upon the extent to which the culture values selves that are cross-situationally consistent (e.g., Western culture) or relationship specific (e.g., some Asian cultures).

Much of my own recent work has focused on the interplay of self-verification strivings and identity negotiation, the processes whereby people in relationships reach agreements regarding "who is who." Identity negotiation theory (Swann and Bosson, 2008) integrates self-verification theory's emphasis on the activities of targets of social perception with behavioral confirmation theory's (Snyder and Swann, 1978b) emphasis on the activities of perceivers. My recent interest in identity negotiation theory has brought me full circle, as I am once again examining the impact of interpersonal expectancies, as I did as a graduate student. This time around, however, I can exploit the knowledge gained during three decades of research on self-verification processes. At the very least, I feel that I now have some insight into the nature and consequences of the negative identities that Tommy negotiated with his peers and the staff at Camp Sunshine.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Rebecca Caldwell and Tory Higgins for helpful comments on an earlier draft of the article.

REFERENCES

Allport, G.W. (1937) *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation.* New York: Holt.

Aronson, E. (1968) A theory of cognitive dissonance: A current perspective. In L. Berkowitz (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 4,* 1–34. New York: Academic Press.

Aronson, E. and Carlsmith, J.M. (1962) Performance expectancy as a determinant of actual performance. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 65,* 178–182.

Ayduk, O., Gyurak, A., Akinola, M. and Mendes, W.B. (2011) Self-verification processes revealed in implicit and behavioral responses to feedback. Manuscript under review, UC Berkeley.

Brooks, M.L., Mehta, P.H. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (2009) Reclaiming the self: Compensatory self-verification following a deprivation experience. Unpublished manuscript, University of Texas at Austin.

Brown, J.D. and McGill, K.J. (1989) The cost of good fortune: When positive life events produce negative health consequences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 55,* 1103–1110.

Byrne, D. (1971) *The Attraction Paradigm.* New York: Academic Press.

Cassidy, J., Ziv, Y., Mehta, T.G. and Feeney, B.C. (2003) Feedback seeking in children and adolescents: associations with self-perceptions, representations, and depression. *Child Development, 74,* 612–628.

Cast, A.D. and Burke, P.J. (2002) A theory of self-esteem. *Social Forces, 80,* 1041–1068.

Chang-Schneider, C. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (2009) Wearing self-esteem like a flag: Conveying our high- and low-self-esteem to others. Unpublished manuscript, University of Texas at Austin.

Chen, S., Chen, K.Y. and Shaw, L. (2004) Self-verification motives at the collective level of self-definition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 86,* 77–94.

Choi, I. and Choi, Y. (2002) Culture and self-concept flexibility. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28,* 1508–1517.

Cooley, C.S. (1902) *Human Nature and the Social Order.* New York: Scribner's.

De La Ronde, C. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (1998) Partner verification: Restoring shattered images of our intimates. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75,* 374–382.

Diener, E. and Diener, M. (1995) Cross-cultural correlates of life satisfaction and self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68,* 653–663.

Dipboye, R.L. (1977) A critical review of Korman's self-consistency theory of work motivation and occupational choice. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 18,* 108–126.

English, T., Chen, S. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (2008) A cross-cultural analysis of self-verification motives. In R. Sorrentino and S. Yamaguchi (eds), *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition Across Cultures,* pp. 119–142, San Diego: Elsevier.

Fernald, A. (1993) Approval and disapproval: Infant responsiveness to verbal affect in familiar and unfamiliar languages. *Child Development,* 64, 657–674.

Festinger, L. (1957) *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance,* Evanston: Row, Peterson.

Giesler, R.B., Josephs, R.A. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (1996) Self-verification in clinical depression: The desire for negative evaluation. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 105,* 358–368.

Gill, M.J. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (2004) On what it means to know someone: A matter of pragmatics. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 86,* 405–418.

Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday–Anchor.

Gómez, Á., Brooks, M.L., Buhrmester, M.D., Vázquez, A., Jetten, J. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (in press) On the nature of identity fusion: Insights into the construct and a new measure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.*

Gómez, Á., Seyle, C., Huici, C. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (2009) Can self-verification strivings fully transcend the self-other barrier? Seeking verification of ingroup identities. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 97,* 1021–1044.

Gosling, S. (2008) *Snoop: What Your Stuff Says About You.* New York: Basic.

Hardin, C.D. and Higgins, E.T. (1996) Shared reality: How social verification makes the subjective objective. In E.T. Higgins and R.M. Sorrentino (eds), *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition: The Interpersonal Context (Vol. 3).* New York: Guilford Press.

Higgins, E.T. and Bargh, J.A. (1987) Social cognition and social perception. In M.R. Rosenzweig and L.W. Porter (eds), *Annual Review of Psychology, 38,* 369–425. Palo Alto: Annual Reviews.

Hixon, J.G. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (1993) When does introspection bear fruit? Self-reflection, self-insight, and interpersonal choices. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64,* 35–43.

Hoek, H.W. (2006) Incidence, prevalence and mortality of anorexia nervosa and other eating disorders. *Current Opinion Psychiatry, 19,* 389–94.

Jones, S.C. (1973) Self and interpersonal evaluations: Esteem theories versus consistency theories. *Psychological Bulletin, 79,* 185–199.

Kanagawa, C., Cross, S. and Markus, H. (2001) 'Who am I?' The cultural psychology of the conceptual self. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27,* 90–103.

Kwang, T. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (2010) Do people embrace praise even when they feel unworthy? A review of critical tests of self-enhancement versus self-verification. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 14,* 263–280.

Leary, M.R. (2007) Motivational and emotional aspects of the self. *Annual Review of Psychology, 58,* 317–344.

Leary, M.R. and Baumeister, R.F. (2000) The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. In M.P. Zanna (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 32,* 2–51. San Diego: Academic Press

Lecky, P. (1945) *Self-consistency: A Theory of Personality.* New York: Island Press.

Lemay, E.P. and Ashmore, R.D. (2004) Reactions to perceived categorization by others during the transition to college: Internalizaton of self-verification processes. *Group Processes and Interpersonal Relations,* 173–187.

Lundgren D.C. and Schwab M.R. (1977) Perceived appraisals by others, self-esteem, and anxiety. *Journal of Psychology, 97,* 205–213.

McCall, G.J. and Simmons, J.L. (1966) *Identities and Interactions: An Examination of Human Associations in Everyday Life.* New York: Free Press.

Mead, G.H. (1934) *Mind, Self and Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mischel, W. and Shoda, Y. (1999) Integrating dispositions and processing dynamics within a unified theory of personality: The Cognitive Affective Personality System (CAPS). In L.A. Pervin and O. John (eds), *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research, 2,* 197–218. New York: Guilford Press.

Murray, S.L., Holmes, J.G., Dolderman, D. and Griffin, D.W. (2000) What the motivated mind sees: Comparing friends' perspectives to married partners' views of each other. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 36,* 600–620.

Neff, L.A. and Karney, B.R. (2005) To know you is to love you: The implications of global adoration and specific accuracy for marital relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88,* 480–497.

Paulhus, D.L. and Levitt, K. (1987) Desirable responding triggered by affect: Automatic egotism? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52,* 245–259.

Pelham, B.W. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (1989) From self-conceptions to self-worth: The sources and structure of self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57,* 672–680.

Pelham, B.W. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (1994) The juncture of intrapersonal and interpersonal knowledge: Self-certainty and interpersonal congruence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 20,* 349–357.

Polzer, J.T., Milton, L.P. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (2002) Capitalizing on diversity: interpersonal congruence in small work groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 47,* 296–324.

Pratt, M.G. and Rafaeli, A. (1997) Organizational dress as a symbol of multilayered social identities. *Academy of Management Journal, 40,* 862–898.

Ritts, V. and Stein, J.R. (1995) Verification and commitment in marital relationships: An exploration of self-verification theory in community college students. *Psychological Reports, 76,* 383–386.

Robinson, D.T. and Smith-Lovin, L. (1992) Selective interaction as a strategy for identity maintenance: An affect control model. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 55,* 12–28.

Sacks, O. (1985) *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales.* New York: Simon & Shuster.

Schafer, R.B., Wickrama, K.A.S. and Keith, P.M. (1996) Self-concept disconfirmation, psychological distress, and marital happiness. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 58,* 167–177.

Schlenker, B.R. (1985) Identity and self-identification. In B.R. Schlenker (ed.), *The Self and Social Life,* pp. 65–99. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Secord, P.F. and Backman, C.W. (1965) An interpersonal approach to personality. In B. Maher (ed.), *Progress in Experimental Personality Research, 2,* 91–125. New York: Academic Press.

Sedikides, C. and Gregg, A.P. (2008) Self-enhancement: Food for thought. *Perspectives on Social Psychology, 3,* 102–116.

Seyle, D.C., Athle, D. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (2009) Value in diversity and the self: Verifying self-views promotes group connectedness and performance in diverse groups. Unpublished manuscript, University of Texas at Austin.

Shapiro, B., Eppler, M., Haith, M. and Reis, H. (1987) An event analysis of facial attractiveness and expressiveness. Paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development, Baltimore, MD.

Shimizu, M. and Pelham, B.W. (2004) The unconscious cost of good fortune: Implicit and positive life events, and health. *Health Psychology, 23,* 101–105

Shrauger, J.S. (1975) Responses to evaluation as a function of initial self-perceptions. *Psychological Bulletin, 82,* 581–596.

Snyder, M. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (1978a) Hypothesis testing processes in social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36,* 1202–1212.

Snyder, M. and Swann, W.B., Jr. (1978b) Behavioral confirmation in social interaction: From social perception to social reality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 14,* 148–162.

Steele, C.M. (1988). The psychology of self-affirmation: Sustaining the integrity of the self. In L. Berkowitz (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, Vol. 21,* pp. 261–302. New York: Academic Press.

Swann, W.B., Jr. (1983) Self-verification: Bringing social reality into harmony with the self. In J. Suls and A.G. Greenwald (eds), *Psychological Perspectives on the Self, 2,* 33–66, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Swann, W.B., Jr. (1984) The quest for accuracy in person perception: A matter of pragmatics. *Psychological Review, 91,* 457–477.

Swann, W.B., Jr. (1996) *Self-traps: The Elusive Quest for Higher Self-esteem.* Freeman: New York.

Swann, W.B., Jr. and Bosson, J. (2008) Identity negotiation: A theory of self and social interaction. In O. John, R. Robins, and L. Pervin (eds), *Handbook of Personality Psychology: Theory and Research I,* pp. 448–471. New York: Guilford Press.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Bosson, J.K. and Pelham, B.W. (2002) Different partners, different selves: The verification of circumscribed identities. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28,* 1215–1228.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Chang-Schneider, C.S. and McClarty, K.L. (2006) Do people's self-views matter? Self-concept and self-esteem in everyday life. *American Psychologist, 62,* 84–94.

Swann, W.B., Jr., De La Ronde, C. and Hixon, J.G. (1994) Authenticity and positivity strivings in marriage and courtship. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66,* 857–869.

Swann, W.B., Jr. and Ely, R.J. (1984) A battle of wills: Self-verification versus behavioral confirmation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46,* 1287–1302.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Gómez, Á., Seyle, C. and Morales, F. (2009) Identity fusion: The interplay of personal and social identities in extreme group behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96,* 995–1011.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Gómez, Á., Dovidio, J., Hart, S. and Jetten, J. (2010a) Dying and killing for one's group: Identity fusion moderates responses to intergroup versions of the trolley problem. *Psychological Science,* 21, 1176–1183

Swann, W.B., Jr., Gómez, Á., Huici, C., Morales, F. and Hixon, J.G. (2010b) Identity fusion and self-sacrifice: Arousal as catalyst of pro-group fighting, dying and helping behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 99,* 824–841.

Swann, W.B., Jr. and Hill, C.A. (1982) When our identities are mistaken: Reaffirming self-conceptions through social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 43, 59–66.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Hixon, J.G. and De La Ronde, C. (1992a) Embracing the bitter 'truth': Negative self-concepts and marital commitment. *Psychological Science, 3,* 118–121.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Hixon, J.G., Stein-Seroussi, A. and Gilbert, D.T. (1990) The fleeting gleam of praise: Behavioral reactions to self-relevant feedback. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59,* 17–26.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Kwan, V.S.Y., Polzer, J.T. and Milton, L.P. (2003a) Vanquishing stereotypic perceptions via individuation and self-verification: Waning of gender expectations in small groups. *Social Cognition, 21,* 194–212.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Kwan, V.S.Y., Polzer, J.T. and Milton, L.P. (2003b) Fostering group identification and creativity in diverse groups: The role of individuation and self-verification. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29,* 1396–1406.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Milton, L.P. and Polzer, J.T. (2000) Should we create a niche or fall in line? Identity negotiation and small group effectiveness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79,* 238–250.

Swann, W.B., Jr. and Pelham, B.W. (2002) Who wants out when the going gets good? Psychological investment and preference for self-verifying college roommates. *Journal of Self and Identity, 1,* 219–233.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Pelham, B.W. and Chidester, T. (1988) Change through paradox: Using self-verification to alter beliefs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54,* 268–273.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Pelham, B.W. and Krull, D.S. (1989) Agreeable fancy or disaagreeable truth? Reconciling self-enhancement and self-verification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57,* 782–791.

Swann, W.B. Jr., Polzer, J.T., Seyle, C. and Ko, S. (2004) Finding value in diversity: Verification of personal and social self-views in diverse groups. *Academy of Management Review, 29,* 9–27.

Swann, W.B., Jr. and Predmore, S.C. (1985) Intimates as agents of social support: Sources of consolation or despair? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49,* 1609–1617.

Swann, W.B., Jr. and Read, S.J. (1981a) Self-verification processes: How we sustain our self-conceptions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 17,* 351–372.

Swann, W.B., Jr. and Read, S.J. (1981b) Acquiring self-knowledge: The search for feedback that fits. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 41,* 1119–1128.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Rentfrow, P.J. and Guinn, J. (2003c) Self-verification: The search for coherence. In M. Leary and J. Tagney, *Handbook of Self and Identity,* pp. 367–383. New York: Guilford Press.

Swann, W.B., Jr. and Snyder, M. (1980) On translating beliefs into action: Theories of ability and their application in an instructional setting. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 38,* 879–888.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Stein-Seroussi, A. and Giesler, B. (1992b) Why people self-verify. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62,* 392–401.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Wenzlaff, R.M. and Tafarodi, R.W. (1992c) Depression and the search for negative evaluations: More evidence of the role of self-verification strivings. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 101,* 314–371.

Swann, W.B., Jr., Wenzlaff, R.M., Krull, D.S. and Pelham, B.W. (1992d) The allure of negative feedback: Self-verification strivings among depressed persons. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 101,* 293–306.

Taylor, S.E. and Brown, J.D. (1988) Illusion and well-being: A social psychological perspective on mental health. *Psychological Bulletin, 103,* 193–210.

Tesser, A. (1988) Toward a self-evaluation maintenance model of social behavior. In L. Berkowitz (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Psychology, Vol. 21: Social Psychological Studies of the Self: Perspectives and Programs,* pp. 181–227. San Diego: Academic Press.

Wiesenfeld, B.M., Swann, W.B., Jr, Brockner, J. and Bartel, C. (2007) Is more fairness always preferred? Self-esteem moderates reactions to procedural justice. *Academy of Management Journal, 50,* 1235–1253.

Winkielman, P., Schwarz, N. and Nowak, A. (2002) Affect and processing dynamics: Perceptual fluency enhances evaluations. In S. Moore and M. Oaksford (eds), *Emotional Cognition: From Brain to Behaviour,* pp. 111–136. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Wood, J.V., Heimpel, S.A., Newby-Clark, I. and Ross, M. (2005) Snatching defeat from the jaws of victory: Self-esteem differences in the experience and anticipation of success. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89,* 764–780.