# Self-Liking and Self-Competence as Dimensions of Global Self-Esteem: Initial Validation of a Measure

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Three studies were conducted to validate the conceptualization of global self-esteem as consisting of two dimensions: a sense of social worth, or *self-liking*, and a sense of personal efficacy, or *self-competence*. In Study 1, confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the a priori structure of the Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale, a self-report instrument designed to measure the two dimensions. In Study 2, a second structural analysis showed the dimensionality of Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale to parallel the proposed dichotomy. In Study 3, self-liking and self-competence were related to several theoretically linked constructs—depression, self-perceived abilities, and perceived parental approval—with the resulting pattern of correlations supporting their conceptualization as substantively distinct dimensions. The implications of these findings for understanding global self-esteem are discussed.

Global self-esteem has most often been conceived as an indivisible construct that is influenced by an underlying hierarchy of more specific self-judgments (see Marsh, 1986). Supporting this view, structural analyses of self-concept instruments have consistently distinguished a superordinate general or global self-esteem factor from lower order factors representing specific facets of self-evaluation (Fleming & Courtney, 1984; Fleming & Watts, 1980; Shavelson & Bolus, 1982; Van Tuinen & Ramanaiah, 1979).[1] This implies that global self-esteem should be measured as an overall positive-negative attitude toward the self. The assumption of unidimensionality that

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[1]But see also Marx and Winne (1980) and Winne, Marx, and Taylor (1977).

is implicit in this popular conceptualization, however, appears to be some-what problematic.

The problem is exemplified in the dimensionality of Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (SES), the measure of choice in a full quarter of self-esteem studies published since 1967 (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Designed as a 6-point Guttman scale measuring general self-evaluation, the SES has most often been used by researchers in a modified form using 4- or 5-point Likert scales. Contradicting the scale's assumed unidimensionality, factor analyses have revealed that the items reduce to two correlated but distinct factors. Generally, it has been found that items with high loadings on one factor are all positively worded, whereas items with high loadings on the other factor are all negatively worded. This pattern has led researchers to either dismiss the two-dimensionality of the scale as a "methodological artifact" (Carmines & Zeller, 1974) due to "response set" (Hensley & Roberts, 1976), or to interpret it as suggesting two substantively distinct attitudinal dimensions: positive and negative self-esteem (Barber, 1990; Goldsmith, 1986; Kaplan & Pokorny, 1969; Kohn & Schooler, 1969; Openshaw, Thomas, & Rollins, 1981; Owens, 1993; Shahani, Dipboye, & Phillips, 1990).

Research addressing the discriminant validity of the two factors has been scarce and, when conducted, it has most often been of an exploratory nature. The results have been less than consistent, with some researchers finding divergent relations of the two factors with theoretically associated variables and others finding parallel relations. Moreover, where differences have been found, they have generally been of modest magnitude. Perhaps most importantly, though, the parsing of self-esteem into positive and negative attitudinal poles does not appear especially meaningful at the intuitive or the theoretical levels.[2]

Even so, the apparent two-dimensionality of the SES is somewhat disquieting to those who uphold a unidimensional view of global self-esteem.[3] The SES is perhaps the most "direct" of popular self-esteem instruments; its

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[2]Although strong evidence has been offered for considering positive and negative affectivity (PA and NA) as the two major underlying dimensions of mood (Watson & Clark, 1984), there exists no compelling precedent at this time for considering self-evaluation in the same way. Traits PA and NA represent distinct forms of emotional arousal, with no obvious parallel to attitudinal dimensions. In fact, empirical investigations into the underlying structure of meaning, or the "semantic space," have confirmed the linearity of bipolar scales anchored by paired opposites such as "good–bad" or "strong–weak," suggesting that in such instances the opposites represent the same dimension (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957, chap. 4). Self-esteem appears to be experienced in a similar bipolar fashion, arguing against the speculative identification of positive and negative semantic factors within the SES. For a contrary view on this issue, see Owens (1993).

[3]Rosenberg (1979) himself recognized the demonstrated multidimensionality, but countered that factor analysis does not always reflect structural unidimensionality as judged through the use of Guttman scaling. Given that the latter method is not designed to judge (i.e., reveal) dimensionality, this response seems somewhat inappropriate.

items were designed to tap self-esteem at the most general level, and it has long been presumed to be uniform in content. Evidence for two underlying factors raises the possibility that there may be two distinct global dimensions of self-valuative feeling. That is, global self-esteem may be experienced in two distinct senses. Although such a dichotomy may appear somewhat puzzling at first glance, it does in fact align with a recurrent theme in the self-esteem literature.

## SELF-COMPETENCE AND SELF-LIKING

Social worth and competence have long been considered the two axes of self-esteem. Diggory (1966), for example, argued for "distinguishing between two different criteria of self-valuation: that based on objective evaluation of abilities and that based on social approval and acceptance" (pp. ix–x). This distinction has been developed in the work of Gecas and his colleagues (Gecas, 1971, 1972; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983), Harter (1985, 1990), and Franks and Marolla (1976), all of whom stress the importance of both positive regard from others and successful action for the experience of self-esteem. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly accepted that self-esteem not only has two major sources, but that it actually consists of two distinct dimensions corresponding to these two sources—one being the sense of social worth and the other the sense of personal efficacy or power. In other words, it is becoming apparent that the global attitude toward the self has more than one semantic aspect to it, just as do attitudes in general (Osgood, 1962, 1964; Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). Rather than experiencing ourselves as simply positive or negative, we experience ourselves as globally *acceptable–unacceptable* (referred to here as *self-liking*) and globally *strong–weak* (referred to here as *self-competence*). Together these dimensions are held to constitute global self-esteem.[4]

Self-liking is the part of self-esteem that is clearly socially dependent. It is formed, to use Cooley's (1902/1964) metaphor, through a "looking-glass" process whereby one comes to "view oneself" as represented in the valuative reactions of others. These reactions become internalized as the capacity to view oneself as a social object develops (see Damon & Hart, 1982; Popper & Eccles, 1977). This capacity, as Mead (1934) has pointed out, is essentially the internalization of the perspective of the other, allowing one to become the audience or judge of oneself. Viewed developmentally, this

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[4]It is important to point out that although this position opposes the view that self-esteem is unidimensional, it does not violate the assumed globality or nonspecificity of self-esteem, which defines self-esteem as being generalized rather than content- or context-specific. The *specificity* transcended by self-esteem refers to the separate facets of ability on which (generalized) self-competence is based, or the separate social identities or aspects of social identities on which (generalized) self-liking is based. Thus, self-liking and self-competence are both conceived as *global* dimensions.

self-as-judge can be considered a "generalized other," the distillation of all significant others in one's life experience. Self-liking is our affective judgment of ourselves, our approval or disapproval of ourselves, in line with internalized social values. High self-liking is marked by positive affect, self-acceptance, and comfort in social settings (Rogers, 1961). Conversely, low self-liking is marked by negative affect, self-derogation, and social dysfunction (Blatt & Zuroff, 1992; Watson & Clark, 1984).

Self-competence is the overall sense of oneself as capable, effective, and in control. High self-competence has an intrinsically positive affective and valuative character. It has been discussed for its motivating role in purposive behavior (Smith, 1968; White, 1959, 1963) and for its adaptive role in coping with stress (Bandura, 1977, 1982; Seligman, 1975). Cognitively, it is characterized by the presence of a generalized expectancy for success (Fibel & Hale, 1978).

Self-competence results from the successful manipulation of one's environment, from the realization of goals, small and large. It is internally calibrated, or autonomously defined, in that we know what we want to happen through our actions (intentions), and we see what does happen (outcomes). If intentions and outcomes correspond, and we take this correspondence to be due to our actions, then self-competence is increased. Self-competence, then, is contingent upon the correspondence between our strivings and the fairly objective results of our efforts to fulfill them. In the course of healthy development, an individual's cumulative experience gives rise to an affectively charged sense of self as a locus of potential power. This sense of self militates against the fear induced by an often threatening environment (Adler, 1933/1979). Low self-competence, on the other hand, is associated with stunted motivation, anxiety, and depression (see Gecas, 1989; Mearns, 1989).

Empirically, self-liking and self-competence have emerged as two correlated dimensions that are substantively distinct. This distinction has been revealed through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses and studies of discriminant validity (Barber, 1990; Barber & Thomas, 1986; Franks & Marolla, 1976; Gecas, 1971, 1972; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Openshaw, Thomas, & Rollins, 1981, 1984).[5] However, examination of the instruments

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[5]Though self-liking and self-competence are distinct aspects of self-esteem, a fair degree of interdependence has been found. This relation is not surprising. An individual's sense of efficacy usually at least roughly corresponds to how others gauge that person's competence, given the common goals and priorities that define social existence. Competence is valorized by others both for aesthetic reasons and for the instrumental value it holds in social exchange and cooperative activity. As a result, demonstrated competence tends to elicit from others the positive appraisals that help foster a private sense of social worth. In turn, high self-liking promotes confident goal-seeking in social contexts (Coopersmith, 1967) and thereby contributes to the development of self-competence. Given this presumed reciprocal determination, Gecas (1972) has suggested that persons high on one dimension but low on the other should not easily be found.

used to measure the two dimensions in past studies reveals that they share a common flaw. Namely, all past instruments have combined global with domain-specific items in measuring what are described as two content- and context-free dimensions of self-esteem. For example, Franks and Marolla (1976), using a semantic differential format, had subjects judge themselves on both specific items such as *decisive–indecisive* and *honest–dishonest* and global items such as *competent–incompetent* and *good–bad*. Though one's judgment of being an honest or dishonest person may be one element that influences one's level of self-liking, it is a domain-specific attitude subordinate to self-liking and not a direct representation of the global dimension itself. In fact, self-perceived honesty may have little to do with self-liking for a good number of people. As such, it would be preferable to use only global items in an instrument explicitly designed to measure global attitudes toward the self.

The studies that follow were aimed at validating a new measure of self-liking and self-competence that consists of items that are homogeneous in their globality. In Study 1, the a priori structure of this measure was tested. In Study 2, the dimensionality of Rosenberg's (1965) SES was tested for fit with the dimensionality of the new measure. Finally, in Study 3, the discriminant validity of the two dimensions as measured by the new instrument was examined.

## STUDY 1

## Method

### Subjects

Participants were 1396 students enrolled in an introductory course in psychology at the University of Texas at Austin. All received course credit for their involvement in the study. The modal age was 18.

### Materials and Procedure

Students were tested in several large groups of 200 to 400. Each student completed a packet of questionnaires, two of which are pertinent here.

1. The Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale (SLCS) is a self-report measure of global self-esteem that was created as follows. First, two sets of content-free and context-free statements representing the self-liking and self-competence dimensions, respectively, were generated. The set consisted of a roughly equal number of positively and negatively worded items. To

enhance face validity, the items were evaluated by several graduate students unrelated to the project. Any item not unanimously identified in line with its a priori subscale designation was eliminated. Second, the items were tested on a small pilot sample of students who indicated degree of agreement to the first-person statements using a 5-point Likert scale anchored at the bottom with *strongly disagree* and at the top with *strongly agree*. Any item correlating less than .5 with its designated subscale was eliminated. Of the remainder, 20 items were retained, 10 comprising the self-liking and 10 the self-competence subscale. Both subscales were balanced for wording, half negative and half positive. (See Appendix A for the final scale.)

2. The Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSD; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) is a measure of socially desirable response bias stemming mainly from impression management concerns (Paulhus, 1984). In his review of studies examining the MCSD, Paulhus (1991) reported alpha coefficients ranging from .73 to .88, a 1-month test–retest correlation of .88, and evidence that low scorers and high scorers respond differentially and as expected to social evaluation and influence (see also Crowne, 1979). The scale consists of 33 statements describing both desirable but very uncommon behaviors and undesirable but very common behaviors. Statements are responded to as true or false. A perfect scorer would (unbelievably) deny all undesirable behaviors and affirm all desirable behaviors.

## Results and Discussion

Partially incomplete or incorrectly completed questionnaires were eliminated from the analysis. Also, to attenuate the distorting impact of impression management on responses, it was decided that the top 15% of scorers on the MCSD would not be analyzed.[6] Given the frequencies, the closest practicable retaining cutoff, 81.7%, was used. This corresponded to scores of 18 or less on the 0 to 33 scale. This resulted in a cleansed sample of 1053 students (541 women, 495 men, 17 unspecified). The internal consistency of both SLCS subscales was high: Cronbach coefficient alphas were .92 for the self-liking items and .89 for the self-competence items. As expected, the subscale intercorrelation was high, $r = .69$. Each subscale has a 10 to 50 possible range. The means for self-liking were 37.19 ($SD = 8.35$) for women

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[6]This elimination was warranted by the modest but worrisome correlations in the full sample between MCSD score and SLCS subscale scores, $r = .16$ for self-competence and $r = .23$ for self-liking. We based our decision in part on Paulhus' (1991) review of the MCSD and his conclusion that it is more a measure of impression management than of self-deception. Nonetheless, all analyses to be reported in this article using samples reduced through MCSD-based elimination were also conducted using the full samples. The essential pattern of results was unchanged throughout.

and 38.36 (*SD* = 7.90) for men. The means for self-competence were 41.86 (*SD* = 6.58) for women and 42.54 (*SD* = 6.35) for men.[7]

The SLCS was designed to be two-dimensional. To validate this, the scale's a posteriori structure was examined using the sample data. To simplify structural analysis, the 20 items were reduced to 4 combined variables by summing together items of each subtype [self-liking–positively worded (SL–p), self-liking–negatively worded (SL–n), self-competence–positively worded (SC–p), self-competence–negatively worded (SC–n)]. Because all scale items measure at the same global level (i.e., all items are content- and context-independent), no further descriptive distinctions between items were apparent. Confirmatory factor analysis using the EQS program (Bentler, 1989) was utilized to test the predicted structure for fit with the data and to evaluate it against competing models representing alternative conceptualizations of global self-esteem. The models tested were as follows:

Model I (single factor). The four variables are all equally strong indicators of a single common factor. This would support Rosenberg's (1965, 1979) unidimensional view of self-esteem, and the unitary "general self-concept factor" of Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) and Marx and Winne (1980).

Model II (two factors: Self-Liking and Self-Competence). This would reflect the scale as designed: Two positively correlated factors adequately account for the covariation. SL–p and SL–n are equally strong indicators of one factor (Self-Liking), and SC–p and SC–n are equally strong indicators of the other (Self-Competence). Confirmation would support the dichotomous conceptualization of self-esteem as self-liking and self-competence.

Model III (two factors: Positive and Negative Self-Esteem). As in Model II, two positively correlated factors adequately account for the covariation. Here, however, SL–p and SC–p are equally strong indicators of one factor, and SL–n and SC–n are equally strong indicators of the other. The factors would represent *valence* dimensions of self-esteem, or positive and negative self-esteem, parallel to Kaplan and Pokorny's (1969) positive "verbal expression"[8] and negative "self-derogation," Kohn and Schooler's (1969) "self-confidence" and "self-deprecation" (see also Owens, 1993) and Shahani and colleagues' (1990) "self-enhancement" and "self-derogation."

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[7]As to stability, a random subset (*n* = 128) of this sample filled out the SLCS a second time, 3 weeks after the initial testing. The test–retest reliabilities for this time interval were .80 and .78 for the self-liking and self-competence scales, respectively.

[8]Kaplan and Pokorny (1969), interpreting a rotated factor pattern that they constrained to be orthogonal, suggested that the positive factor "represented a posture of conventional defense" because it "is apparently compatible with either high or low scores on the self-derogation factor" (p. 425). Had they allowed an oblique rotation, however, it is very likely that they would have found correlated factors, as has consistently been the result in other studies. This might have led them to cast the positive factor more simply as positive self-esteem.

TABLE 1
Goodness-of-Fit Indices for SLCS Measurement Models Tested in Study 1

| Model | $\chi^2$ | df | NFI | CFI |
|-------|----------|----|-----|-----|
| Null | 2695.27 | 6 | – | — |
| I | 457.70 | 5 | .83 | .83 |
| II | 35.41 | 3 | .99 | .99 |
| III | 456.03 | 3 | .83 | .83 |

Each model was fitted to the data, with the results as listed in Table 1. The chi-square value associated with a given model provides an absolute fit index, large values indicating poor fit. However, the test is highly power-sensitive and tends to lead to the rejection of most models when sample size is quite large, as in this case. As such, comparative indices of the model's incremental fit over the null or other baseline model are often used. Two widely used comparative indices are the normed fit index (NFI; Bentler & Bonett, 1980) and the comparative fit index (CFI; see Bentler, 1990). Both range from 0 to 1, with values greater than .9 indicating good fit. As can be seen in Table 1, the results according to these criteria indicate that only Model II, reflecting the intended dimensionality of the SLCS, adequately fit the obtained covariance matrix. This was the case for both sexes in the sample.[9] The factor intercorrelation for Model II was estimated at .82.

The results provide validation of the SLCS as a scale measuring two correlated but distinct dimensions of self-esteem—self-liking and self-competence—for both sexes. In contrast, the poor fit with the data of the uni-dimensional model (Model I) and the valence factors model (Model III) casts doubt upon both those conceptualizations.

It is arguable that the high correlation between self-liking and self-competence implicates a higher order factor. However, unless a global self-esteem experience can be identified that qualitatively transcends feelings of self-liking and self-competence, there is little justification for interpreting this "factor" as anything more than the degree of interdependence between two global (highest order) dimensions of self-valuative experience. Furthermore, if self-liking and self-competence have differential relations with other constructs, reifying their shared variance as a separate construct can potentially obscure these differences. Hence, utilizing a gross "global self-esteem" construct in theoretical models may be somewhat counterproductive.

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[9]To test for sex differences, Model II was respecified with cross-group (women vs. men) equality constraints for factor loadings and the factor intercorrelation. Lagrange multiplier tests using the chi-square statistic showed that removing these constraints would not significantly improve the model's overall fit, indicating that these parameter estimates were quite similar for women and men.

Having confirmed that the SLCS represents the presumed dichotomy of self-liking and self-competence, the dimensionality of Rosenberg's (1965) SES was examined to test the possibility of a parallel structure.

## STUDY 2

## Method

### Subjects

Participants were 1102 students enrolled in an introductory course in psychology at the University of Texas at Austin. All received course credit for their involvement in the study. The modal age was 18.

### Materials and Procedure

Students were tested as in Study 1, but completed six items from the SES in addition to the 20-item SLCS, using the same 5-point Likert-type scale. The SES items chosen were those that have most consistently loaded highly on the two factors obtained in past exploratory factor analyses of the SES (Barber, 1990; Carmines & Zeller, 1974; Hensley & Roberts, 1976; Kaplan & Pokorny, 1969; Kohn & Schooler, 1969; Openshaw et al., 1981; Tafarodi & Swann, 1992), three items on one factor and three items on the other. These are:

1. (F1) I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
2. (F1) I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. (F1) I am able to do things as well as most other people.
4. (F2) I wish I could have more respect for myself.
5. (F2) I certainly feel useless at times.
6. (F2) At times I think I am no good at all.

In the past, post hoc interpretation of the differences between these two sets of items has most often focused on their valence: The first set is positively worded, the second negatively worded. Given the poor fit of the valence factor model with the SLCS in Study 2, however, further inspection is warranted. Item 3 is clearly a comparative self-competence item. This invites the suggestion that perhaps "a number of good qualities" in Item 2 tends to prompt respondents to assess their competencies, and that for Item 1, "worth," when comparatively judged, leads to the consideration of competence as a common index. Though this "relative" self-competence would be socially rather than internally calibrated, it may be more closely associ-

ated to our conceptualization of self-competence than to self-liking. Items 4, 5, and 6 are neither explicitly nor implicitly comparative, and may be more representative of self-liking. "Useless," then, might be understood by respondents more as "bad" in the eyes of others than as ineffective in meeting personal goals. These three items appear less objectively valuative than the first three, matching the self-liking/self-competence distinction. This speculative interpretation, then, assumes the first SES set to be indicators of self-competence (SES–self-competence) and the second to be indicators of self-liking (SES–self-liking).

## Results and Discussion

Partially incomplete or incorrectly completed questionnaires were eliminated from the analysis. Again, to attenuate the distorting impact of impression management on responses, approximately the top 15% (17.2% in this case) of scorers on the MCSD were not analyzed. This resulted in a cleansed sample of 835 students (387 women, 342 men, 106 unspecified[10]). Each group of three associated SES items was summed into a single variable and was multiplied by 5/3 to scale it in line with the four SLCS aggregate variables. Cronbach coefficient alphas for the new variables were .80 for SES–self-liking and .85 for SES–self-competence. Two nested models were tested for fit with the obtained covariance matrix of the six variables.

   Model I (Two factors: Self-Liking and Self-Competence). Two positively correlated factors adequately account for the covariation. SL–p, SL–n, and SES–self-liking are equally strong indicators of one factor (Self-Liking) and SC–p, SC–n, and SES–self-competence are equally strong indicators of the other (Self-Competence). This would reflect the proposed interpretation of the factors, indicate parallel dimensionality for the SLCS and the SES, and provide further support for the dichotomous conceptualization of self-esteem as self-liking and self-competence.
   Model II (Two factors: Self-Liking and Self-Competence, with the SES variables being weaker indicators). Same as Model I, but relaxing the constraint of factor loadings of SES and SLCS indicators being equal. Significantly better fit for this model over Model I would minimally support the contention of Openshaw and colleagues (1981, 1984) that the SES factors are distinct from self-liking and self-competence (their terms are "worth" and "power," as used by Gecas, 1971) in that they represent valence factors of self-esteem. The superiority of this relaxed model would suggest that the SES variables are indicators of (an) additional factor(s), and would imply a more complex dimensionality for self-esteem.

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   [10]The high percentage of unspecified cases here, relative to Study 1, is attributable to certain differences in verbal instructions for completing the sex item, differences that are not important for the results being analyzed.

TABLE 2
Goodness-of-Fit Indices for SLCS/SES Measurement Models Tested in Study 2

| Model | $\chi^2$ | df | NFI | CFI |
|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| Null | 3200.59 | 15 | — | — |
| I | 188.79 | 12 | .94 | .94 |
| II | 179.57 | 10 | .94 | .94 |

The models were fitted to the data, with the results as listed in Table 2. Goodness of fit was compared for the two nested models using two separate Lagrange multiplier tests. The two tests corresponded to the incremental fit provided by releasing the factor loading equality constraints for SES–self-liking with other self-liking indicators and for SES–self-competence with other self-competence indicators, respectively. The incremental fit was significant for releasing the constraint on SES–self-liking, $\chi^2(1, N = 835) = 6.67, p = .01$, but not significant for releasing the constraint on SES–self-competence, $\chi^2(1, N = 835) = 2.02, p = .16$. Though the former test suggests a slightly better absolute fit for Model II, a better comparative fit did not result, as reflected in the identical high NFI and CFI values for the two models. In other words, the gain was quite small. The parity in comparative fit, coupled with Occam's law of parsimony, suggests that the conceptualization underlying Model I provides the "better" structural explanation for the covariation among the variables.[11]

Mirroring the results of Study 1, the estimated factor intercorrelation was quite high, at .85.

The results of Study 2 support a new interpretation of the SES. The two-factor structure that has been interpreted in past research as either methodological artifact or polar dimensionality appears to be the dichotomy of self-liking and self-competence. This conclusion contrasts with that of Openshaw and colleagues (1981, 1984) that there are in fact four distinct aspects to global self-esteem, two polar or valence dimensions in addition to self-liking and self-competence.[12] Our results reveal a parallel dimensional-

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[11]The model fit similarly for women and men. Neither the factor loadings nor the covariance of the two factors differed significantly across sex. This was confirmed as in Study 1, by conducting a simultaneous multigroup analysis on those participants who had indicated their sex and then submitting each of the imposed equality constraints to Lagrange multiplier tests.

[12]It should be noted that interpretation of the exploratory results on which Openshaw and colleagues' (1981, 1984) argument is based is problematic for two reasons. First, the authors used a combination of global and specific items in representing self-liking and self-competence (their "self-esteem worth" and "self-esteem power"), a shortcoming discussed previously. Second, they used semantic differential scales as indicators of self-liking (e.g., "good–bad") and self-competence (e.g., "powerful–powerless") while using standard Likert-type scales (strongly disagree—strongly agree) for SES items. Thus, their self-liking and self-competence items were *bivalenced* and therefore qualitatively different from the *univalenced* SES items. That the items split on this

ity across two direct measures of self-esteem, one designed to capture the dichotomous conceptualization, and the other capturing the dichotomy in spite of its design. The latter especially suggests that self-liking and self-competence are truly constitutive dimensions and not artifacts of an ad hoc measure. But how significant is the distinction between self-liking and self-competence? Evidence that the two dimensions differentially relate to theoretically linked constructs would highlight the importance of representing self-esteem dichotomously in theoretical models. To this end, we sought, in the final study to be reported, to confirm several theoretically based predictions concerning the relation of self-liking and self-competence to other constructs.

## STUDY 3

### Method

#### Subjects

Participants were 844 (391 women and 453 men) students enrolled in an introductory course in psychology at the University of Texas at Austin. All received course credit for their involvement in the study. The modal age was 18.

#### Materials and Procedure

Each participant completed the SLCS at the beginning of the semester and one of the following a few weeks later:[13] the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, 1967), a short form of the Self-Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ;

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difference is not surprising. Given the results of this study, it is plausible that had Openshaw and colleagues' self-liking semantic differential items each been split into two separate indicators (e.g., *I am good* and *I am bad*), they would have all loaded together with the SES–self-liking items on one factor. Similarly, had their self-competence semantic differential items each been split (e.g., *I am powerful* and *I am powerless*), they could have been expected to load together with the SES–self-competence items. In this scenario, only two significant factors would result. Of course, a multitrait–multimethod design, using several item types to indicate each of Openshaw and colleagues' four putative "independent dimensions" would best address the issue of heterogeneous measurement (see Marsh, 1989). It is difficult to imagine, however, a univalenced indicator of one of the two polar dimensions that is not at the same time an indicator of either self-liking or self-competence. It appears, then, that the results of Openshaw and colleagues' (1981, 1984) analyses are problematic in their own right and should be interpreted with caution.

[13]The BDI, SAQ, and PTQ were added to a standard set of questionnaires that was administered to participants in groups of 5 to 15. Because of time constraints, however, each group was limited to receiving only one of the three questionnaires in addition to the standard set, which addressed topics unrelated to this study (e.g., radio listening habits).

Pelham & Swann, 1989), and the Parental Treatment Questionnaire (PTQ; Swann & Tafarodi, 1992). The three questionnaires were chosen to represent theoretically related constructs, affording associative criteria for the purpose of construct validation. Specifically, the joint relation of self-liking and self-competence with these measured constructs was expected to be distinct in each of the three cases, as follows.

*BDI.*    Painfully negative thoughts and feelings about the self have long been identified as one of the central markers of depression. At least two broad prototypes of depression have been outlined in the literature, the distinction resting upon the dominant form of ego-deficit (Arieti & Bemporad, 1980; Beck, 1983; Blatt, 1974; Blatt & Zuroff, 1992). One form stems mainly from the frustration of attachment needs, the other from the frustration of achievement or control needs. Beck (1983), for example, distinguished "sociotropically" depressed from "autonomously" depressed individuals. The depressive experience of the former is marked by feelings of rejection or worthlessness in the eyes of others, a sense of loss or insecurity in significant attachments, and alienation. In such cases, the dysfunction centers on the unfulfilled desire for gratifying and stable social relationships. Autonomous depression, on the other hand, is marked more by feelings of defeat, failure, or loss of control in the pursuit of significant life goals and self-ideals.

This typological distinction between a depression marked by social dysfunction and a depression marked by agency-related dysfunction clearly parallels our conceptualization of self-liking and self-competence, implying that a deficit in either dimension of global self-esteem would predict depression in one of its two prototypical forms. As such, both dimensions, as measured by the SLCS, were expected to hold significant independent negative correlations with the disorder. To index depression, the BDI was used, a set of 21 items representing various depressive "symptom–attitude categories" (Beck, 1967)—behaviors, thoughts, and feelings associated with general depression. Each item appears as four statements of graduated severity; subjects indicate which of the four levels corresponds to the way they currently feel.

*SAQ.*    This questionnaire measures domain-specific self-evaluations and the centrality or importance of each for the individual. Respondents rate themselves on several ability dimensions using a 1 (bottom 5% of the ability range for their age and sex, and college status) to 10 scale (top 5%) scale, and then rate how much they care about each dimension on a 1 to 9 (*not at all important* to *very important*) scale. The form we used included four dimensions: academic, social, athletic, and creative ability. In our conceptualization of self-esteem, these facet-specific self-valuations of competence should be antecedent to feelings of self-competence but not self-liking. We

therefore predict a significant independent positive correlation between self-competence and these self-valuations taken together, but no independent association with self-liking. To create an aggregate SAQ score, separate self-ratings on the four dimensions were transformed to $z$-scores and multiplied by their corresponding importance rating. These cross-products scores, representing self-ratings weighted by importance, were then summed to produce the criterion variable. The benefit of this method of relating specific antecedent facets to self-esteem is that each self-rating is adjusted by the degree to which the person is invested in that particular domain (i.e., deems it personally important). For example, a person may rate herself as quite unathletic relative to others (e.g., a $z$-score of $-1$). If this person considers athletic ability to be high in personal importance, (say 8 on the 9-point scale), then the self-rating would be expected to have a considerable negative influence on global self-esteem. If the importance rating was 2, however, the negative relation would be expected to be weak at best, though the self-rating is the same. The use of cross-products produces a scale that is sensitive to such variation (see Marsh, 1986).

*PTQ.* Self-liking has been described as being founded upon the reflections communicated by others in the individual's social environment. Clearly, parents are the most significant mirrors in this process, at least for the period spanning infancy through early adolescence. Parental support and acceptance through this period is highly significant for the development of healthy self-regard. More specifically, given our scheme, this direct antecedent relation should hold for self-liking but not for self-competence, the latter resting more on the relatively autonomous triad of goals, actions, and outcomes than on social affirmation.[14] The PTQ (see Appendix B) is designed to retrospectively assess degree of parental support and acceptance by having respondents recall how their mother and father treated them during their childhood. Responses are degree of agreement on a 5-point Likert-type scale to six statements representing, on the one hand, critical or indifferent treatment, and on the other, nurturance and approval from parents. Each statement appears twice, once with reference to the mother and once to the father. The sum of ratings (negative items reversed) is taken to indicate overall perceptions of parental support and acceptance. A positive independent correlation of this variable with self-liking is predicted. In contrast, a lack of association with self-competence is predicted.

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[14]Of course, domineering or unpredictable parental treatment can be expected to hinder the emergence of self-competence through undermining the child's sense of being able to control events. However, we did not seek to measure these dimensions of parenting style here. Rather, the focus was on acceptance and approval, which are not expected to hold independent causal relations with self-competence.

## Results and Discussion

The Pearson partial correlations of each criterion variable with self-liking and self-competence were computed. That is, in each case, the variance on the criterion that was not distinctively accounted for by one dimension of self-esteem (independent of that accounted for by the other) was partialled out. The results are displayed in Table 3. Sex differences for all six partial correlations were tested using the Fisher r–z transformation. None of these post hoc tests results in a z-score that met the Bonferroni-corrected critical value of 2.64. The relations appeared to be uniform across sex.

As can be seen in Table 3, all three pairs of predictions were borne out. Both self-liking and self-competence held significant independent negative correlations with score on the BDI, as expected. Furthermore, they did not significantly differ in their actual degrees of association with the BDI, using Williams's (1959) method for testing dependent correlations against one another. Second, self-competence but not self-liking held a significant independent positive correlation with the sum of self-rating × importance cross-products from the SAQ, and the two were significantly different in their degree of association with this sum. Third, self-liking but not self-competence held a significant independent positive correlation with score on the PTQ. Again, the two dimensions were significantly different in their degree of association with the criterion.

TABLE 3

Pearson Partial Correlations of SLCS Subscales With Criterion Variables in Study 3

| Criterion | Sex | Self-Liking | Self-Competence |
|---|---|---|---|
| BDI | Men (n = 157) | − .30 | − .20 |
| | | p = .0001 | p = .01 |
| | Women (n = 203) | − .34 | − .14 |
| | | p = .0001 | p = .04 |
| SAQ | Men (n = 178) | .06 | .30* |
| | | p = .43 | p = .0001 |
| | Women (n = 112) | .05 | .48* |
| | | p = .58 | p = .0001 |
| PTQ | Men (n = 118) | .24 | − .11* |
| | | p = .01 | p = .24 |
| | Women (n = 76) | .32 | .01** |
| | | p = .005 | p = .92 |

*p < .05 and **p < .005 significance, respectively, for magnitude of difference between the standard (unpartialled) Pearson correlation of the criterion variable with self-competence and the standard Pearson correlation of same criterion variable with self-liking, taking into account the correlation of self-liking and self-competence. This corresponds to the Williams (1959) test for dependent rs. For discussions supporting the logic and appropriateness of this test, see Dunn and Clark (1971) and Steiger (1980).

The results of Study 3 reveal an asymmetric pattern of independent correlations of self-liking and self-competence with criterion variables, in line with theoretically based predictions. This pattern neatly conforms with the conceptualization of these constructs as distinct dimensions of self-esteem, and underscores the importance of distinguishing them in theoretical modelling and in measurement.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

The three studies reported provide initial validation for a new instrument designed to measure the two dimensions described as constituting global self-esteem–self-liking and self-competence. In Study 1, the intended two-dimensional structure of the SLCS was confirmed. In Study 2, the dimensionality of Rosenberg's (1965) SES was found to conform to the proposed dichotomy. The parallel structure of the SLCS and SES is notable, given that the latter was clearly designed to be unidimensional (Rosenberg, 1965). This failure draws into question the phenomenal reality of the "general" self-esteem construct. If such a construct is "ulterior" and cannot be represented directly, does it really exist as a self-valuation? That is, if it can only be inferred from the interdependence of two experientially grounded global constructs, can it justifiably be considered an experienced attitude? Rather, it is offered here that the term *self-esteem* may simply be an expedient of discourse, in the same way one speaks of the *size* of a person's build rather than the person's (constitutive) height and girth.

Study 3 demonstrated the differential independent relations of self-liking and self-competence with two theoretically antecedent constructs (parental approval and domain-specific self-valuation), as well as their symmetric independent relations to depression, in accord with the dichotomous typology of that disorder. This correlational evidence converges with the work of others (e.g., Barber, 1990; Franks & Marolla, 1976; Gecas, 1971; Openshaw et al., 1984), in recommending against a gross conceptualization of self-esteem insofar as it blurs the distinct nomological relations of its constitutive dimensions. It suggests that the past reification of "general self-esteem" as an implicitly unidimensional construct in theoretical models may reveal itself to be self-limiting. Future work should be directed at clarifying the separate and joint roles of the two dimensions of global self-esteem in psychological processes.

As a caveat, it should be recognized that the conclusions drawn from our findings apply most directly to the self-views of students at the end of their adolescence. Developmental research has shown that the nature of self-understanding changes dramatically from infancy through adolescence (Damon & Hart, 1982). As such, the proposed conceptualization may be less applicable to those of younger ages. Further research should aim at delineating the distinct ontogenies of self-liking and self-competence as they relate to so-

cialization and separation–attachment dynamics. Second, the processes of reciprocal determination that underlie the high intercorrelation of self-liking and self-competence need to be investigated.

Admittedly, there are many useful ways to conceptualize self-esteem. The heuristic value of the dichotomy presented here of self-liking and self-competence is largely promissory at this point. What is clearer is that the traditional monolithic view of self-esteem does not adequately represent self-feeling at the global level. Whatever their form, future models will surely need to provide some form of semantic dimensionality in accounting for this central attitude.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# APPENDIX A: SLCS ITEMS

1. (SC–p) Owing to my capabilities, I have much potential.
2. (SL–p) I feel comfortable about myself.
3. (SC–n) I don't succeed at much.
4. (SC–p) I have done well in life so far.
5. (SC–p) I perform very well at a number of things.
6. (SL–n) It is often unpleasant for me to think about myself.
7. (SL–n) I tend to devalue myself.
8. (SL–p) I focus on my strengths.
9. (SL–n) I feel worthless at times.
10. (SC–p) I am a capable person.
11. (SC–n) I do not have much to be proud of.
12. (SL–p) I'm secure in my sense of self-worth.
13. (SL–p) I like myself.
14. (SL–n) I do not have enough respect for myself.
15. (SC–p) I am talented.

16. (SL–p) I feel good about who I am.
17. (SC–n) I am not very competent.
18. (SL–n) I have a negative attitude toward myself.
19. (SC–n) I deal poorly with challenges.
20. (SC–n) I perform inadequately in many important situations.


## APPENDIX B: PTQ ITEMS

1. As a child, I received a great deal of approval from my mother.
2. As a child, I received a great deal of approval from my father.
3. My mother made me feel worthy as a child.
4. My father made me feel worthy as a child.
5. My mother never seemed to care much how I was doing in my endeavors.
6. My father never seemed to care much how I was doing in my endeavors.
7. I can remember my mother yelling at me a lot.
8. I can remember my father yelling at me a lot.
9. My mother was very critical of me as a child.
10. My father was very critical of me as a child.
11. When I experienced difficulties as a child, my mother was very supportive.
12. When I experienced difficulties as a child, my father was very supportive.