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The Implicit Self

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William James (1890/1983) famously described the experience of the self as a stream of consciousness. There is little doubt that understanding the conscious experience of the self is important, but in seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the self, researchers are beginning to explore streams of thought that are outside of our conscious experience, or implicit views of the self. This volume contains research that is on the cutting edge of this trend.

Investigating implicit views of the self have required reaching beyond explicit measures, which are plagued not only by impression management and self-deception biases (Paulhus, 1986), but also by respondents' limited access to self-related knowledge (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). If people cannot accurately introspect about themselves, then even under the best of circumstances, self-reports can only tell us what people believe to be true. Recent advances in indirect assessment techniques, including the response latency paradigm, obviate many problems that compromise explicit measures because they provide information that people may not be willing or able to report. As a result, there is a growing literature on the *implicit self*—aspects of the self that are represented in memory via routinized associations (e.g., between self and evaluation, attributes, or social identities) that may not be readily available to introspection. Among the many reasons to use implicit measures to investigate the self is the fact that they advance social psychological theory by revealing phenomena that would otherwise be obfuscated. This property of implicit self-assessment is what inspired the present special issue of *Self and Identity*.

The guiding themes of this special issue are represented by the principal questions being asked by contemporary researchers on both sides of the Atlantic. These include: How does the implicit self regulate emotion and defend against ego-threats? When and how does it adapt to changes in social identity and social comparison? What are the consequences of discrepancies between explicit and implicit self-evaluations? When and how do implicit self-identities develop? How do implicit self-concept, self-esteem, and identity relate? What are the consequences of the

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implicit self for intergroup relations? The ten articles selected for this double issue report on state-of-the-art research that advances both theory and methodology regarding these issues. They also extend the applications of the implicit self in important ways.

We have divided the special issue into three sections. The first section highlights exciting applications of the implicit self for understanding psychological dysfunction. Steinberg, Karpinski, and Alloy begin by reporting on their longitudinal study of risk factors for depressive symptoms. Their findings are among the first to demonstrate that low implicit self-esteem combined with a negative explanatory style puts people particularly at risk for depression following negative life events. They also show that implicit (but not explicit) self-esteem measures support vulnerability – stress models of depression. Next, Koole and Coenen present findings suggesting that the implicit self plays a significant role in automatic emotion regulation. For action-oriented people, subliminally priming the implicit self helps to down-regulate negative affect, whereas for state-oriented people, activating the implicit self incurs the persistence of negative affect. These results support a model of intuitive affect regulation, and further our understanding of what kinds of people are best able to defend against negative affect. Then, Zeigler-Hill and Terry report that people with low explicit but high implicit self-esteem are at risk for both maladaptive and adaptive perfectionism. Their results extend the "glimmer of hope" hypothesis (Spencer, Jordan, Logel, & Zanna, 2005), by which high implicit self-esteem is thought to protect people with low self-worth by providing a source of optimism, but they also suggest that the combination can lead to unrealistic expectations for the self. Finally, Sanchez, Zogmaister, and Arcuri's research on Southern Italians living in Northern Italy has implications for minority members' coping strategies. Their findings suggest that one way to cope with being a low status group member is to implicitly identify with the higher status group and that this strategy is particularly likely for those who do not have a shared superordinate identity with the higher status group. In this way, low status group members can gain some of the prestige of the higher status out-group without forfeiting identification with their in-group.

The second section emphasizes the effects of threat on the implicit self. The first two papers extend our understanding of the malleability of self-associations in the context of various ego-threats. McCall and Dasgupta report that men assigned to a subordinate role tend to compensate for this threat by increasing their implicit (but not explicit) associations between self and leadership. Consistent with self-determination theory, Hodgins, Brown, and Carver report that subtly priming control motives (i.e., the sense that one's actions are dictated by others) decreases implicit self-esteem, whereas priming autonomy motives (i.e., the sense that one's actions are self-determined) increases implicit self-esteem. Explicit self-esteem did not show comparable effects. They also find that men are more likely than women to possess fragile or defensive self-esteem, defined as the combination of high explicit/ low implicit self-esteem. The next two papers further explore reactions to threat for people with fragile or defensive self-esteem. Eaton, Struthers, Shomrony, and Santelli report that fragile self-esteem predicts low forgiveness and greater interest in retaliation in response to apologies for a transgression. A likely mechanism for this pattern is that apologies lend confidence to the inference that one has been harmed, and people with defensive self-esteem react negatively to this certainty. McGregor and Jordan extend their work on defensive zeal by showing that people with fragile self-esteem respond to an intellectual threat by endorsing extreme opinions toward capital punishment, the US invasion of Iraq, and suicide bombing. They also

endorse unrealistically high consensus estimates for their extreme opinions. Because McGregor and Jordan's results are the first to demonstrate that extremism is a spurious consequence of defensive zeal, they provide an important addition to the growing literature on this topic.

The third section consists of two papers that explore the interrelations among implicit self-related constructs. They are also similar in their investigation of Hispanic Americans—to date, an under-investigated group in the implicit social cognition literature. Dunham, Barrow, and Banaji assessed implicit self-esteem, self-concept, and group identity in Hispanic American children and adults. Past research suggests that implicit self-associations are balanced via cognitive consistency principles (Greenwald et al., 2002) in a pattern that can be characterized as "If I am X and I am good, then X is good" where X equals any social identity. Interestingly, Dunham and his colleagues report that only young children show this pattern, suggesting that implicit consistency in Hispanic Americans may decline with age. They also found greater automatic in-group bias when the contrasting target group was low in social status (African Americans) compared to when it was high (White Americans). These results are among the first to examine implicit associations in very young children, made possible by the authors' creative adaptation of the Implicit Association Test. In the final paper, Devos, Diaz, Viera, and Dunn measured self-identity in Latina and White American female students and found that implicitly, participants more strongly identified with motherhood than education, whereas explicitly, they more strongly identified with education. Moreover, participants showed balanced implicit cognitions (e.g., if they associated self with motherhood and they had high self-esteem, motherhood was evaluated favorably), in support of the unified theory (Greenwald et al., 2002).

Taken together, the papers presented in this special issue demonstrate the importance of using implicit self-assessment to advance social psychological theory. Among the conceptual frameworks tested are vulnerability–stress models of depression, personality systems interactions theory, the extended self model, self-determination theory, and the unified theory. In each case, the theory would not be supported if researchers were constrained to self-reports. In addition, the authors in this special issue have extended the applications of the implicit self to domains that have been under investigated. These include the clinical consequences of the implicit self, the developmental trajectory of implicit associations, and the impact of being a minority member on implicit self-constructs. Finally, the authors used empirical approaches that are methodologically sophisticated and richly variegated. Among the methods employed are the Implicit Association Test, the name letter effect, the Go/No Go Association Task, and subliminal priming. To paraphrase Thurstone (1928), the implicit self can be measured. As a consequence, we hope this special issue will inspire future investigations of this intriguing and important domain of inquiry.

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