Copyright Notice

Sedikides, Constantine & Alicke, Mark D. "Self-enhancement and self-protection motives", from Ryan, R. (2012) *The Oxford Handbook of Human Motivation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.303-322.

Copy made from volume owned by School of Psychology, University of Southampton

- **Name of Designated Person authorising scanning: Nigel Long**
- **Course of Study for which scanned (course code): PSYC 6062**
- **ISBN (of book) or ISSN (of journal): 9780195399820**
- **Source (indicate one): A**

  A. original owned by University of Southampton
  C. copyright fee paid copy
  D. supplied by another licensed institution (state name)

Barcode: 00508800

CHAPTER

17 Self-Enhancement and Self-Protection Motives

Constantine Sedikides *and* Mark D. Alicke

Abstract

People desire to maximize the positivity, and minimize the negativity, of their self-views. The tendency to exalt one's virtues and soften one's weaknesses, relative to objective criteria, manifests itself in many domains of human striving. We focus illustratively on three strivings: the self-serving bias (crediting the self for successes but blaming others or situations for failures), the better-than-average effect (considering the self superior to the average peer), and selective self-memory (disproportionately poor recall for negative self-relevant information). Nonmotivational factors (e.g., expectations, egocentrism, focalism, individuated-entity versus aggregate comparisons) are not necessary for the emergence of these strivings. Instead, the strivings are (at least partially) driven by the self-enhancement and self-protection motives, as research on self-threat and self-affirmation has established. The two motives serve vital functions: They confer benefits to psychological health and psychological interests (e.g., goal pursuit).

Key Words: self-enhancement, self-protection, self-serving bias, better-than-average effect, self-memory, psychological health

Introduction

Individuals routinely appraise their qualities, performance, behavior, and feedback they receive from others. They also choose activities in which to engage, allocate credit or blame for dyadic and group task outcomes, recollect events from their lives, use self-knowledge to understand other people, and judge the value of their relationships or the groups to which they belong. We suggest, in the current chapter, that these and similar domains of human functioning can be motivated, and we proceed to discuss the role of two pivotal motives: self-enhancement and self-protection.

Self-enhancement and self-protection are instances of self-evaluation motives (Sedikides & Strube, 1995), which themselves are a class of the hedonic or pleasure/pain drive (Alicke & Sedikides, 2011a). Self-evaluation motives guide processing and appraisal of self-relevant information, broadly defined (Sedikides, 1993; Sedikides & Strube, 1997). Self-enhancement in particular refers to the desire and preference for maximizing the positivity of self-views, whereas self-protection refers to the desire and preference for minimizing the negativity of self-views. Self-enhancement and self-protection are reflected in individuals' tendency to exaggerate their strengths and to underrate their weaknesses more so than objective standards would warrant. The two motives are also reflected in individuals' tendency to construe or remember events in a manner that places their self-attributes in the most favorable light that is credible to themselves and to others (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003). Finally, the motives energize and guide attributions, task involvement, and behavior. In the long run, self-enhancement and self-protection foster psychological health (Sedikides, Gregg, & Hart, 2007) and assist in the advancement

and protection of psychological interests (e.g., goals; Alicke & Sedikides, 2009).

We begin our excursion into self-enhancement and self-protection with a brief historical overview. We then provide key examples of motive instantiation, what we call self-enhancement and self-protection strivings (Alicke & Sedikides, 2011b; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). These striving are the self-serving bias, the better-than-average effect, and selective self-memory. In discussing each of these strivings, we consider the perennial "cognition-motivation" debate. We acknowledge, of course, that cognition and motivation are closely intertwined (Kruglanski, 1989; Kunda, 1990; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987). Yet we aim to provide evidence that the strivings are motivated and, in particular, that they cannot be exclusively accounted for by the vagaries of information processing (Sedikides, 2012). Next, we discuss the functional benefits of the two motives: promotion of psychological health and psychological interest. We conclude with a consideration of issues worthy of further empirical attention.

A Historical Overview

The seeds for modern theorizing on self-enhancement and self-protection motivation were sown in classical times. The Cyrenaics (founder: Aristippus; Tatarkiewicz, 1976) and Epicureans (founder: Epicurus; De Witt, 1973) thought that hedonism drives human action. They observed that people want to feel good, or avoid feeling bad, about themselves, and they further proposed that humans want and pursue pleasurable experiences, while detesting and eschewing unpleasant ones. Notably, Demosthenes, the orator of antiquity, remarked insightfully on self-deception: "Nothing is so easy as to deceive oneself; for what we wish, we readily believe."

The role of hedonism as the master motive receded while rationalism was in ascendance. This philosophical school, building on Plato's ideas (Bloom, 1991), depicted an objective reality that all individuals with correct understanding ("orthodoxy") could readily discern (Kenny, 1986; Loeb, 1981). Continental rationalists (Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza), for example, opined that selfish, irresponsible, or malicious behavior was due to flawed knowledge. Erudition would cure personal and social ills such as immorality or the prioritization of personal over societal goals.

The pendulum swung back with Renaissance philosophers (Macfarlane, 1978) and the British empiricists. Mandeville (1705) argued that humans overvalue themselves and expect others to do the same. Hobbes (1651/1991) believed that behavior was driven by the unbridled pursuit of pleasure rather than by a failure to grasp a priori truths. "Men [are] vehemently in love with their own opinions" (p. 48), he proclaimed. The position that humans have an excessively positive view of themselves and of the objects (e.g., persons, possessions) associated with them was reflected in the utilitarianism of Bentham (1789/1982) and John Stuart Mill (1863/2004), the forewarning of Nietzsche (1886/1972) for the power of pride to rewrite memory (Maxim 68, p. 72), and the contemplations of La Rochefoucauld (1678/1827), Schopenhauer (1844/1996), and Freud (1905/1961a) on the curious human capacity for self-deception.

William James (1890) was the first psychologist to systematize various philosophical accounts and propose a unifying principle. He observed that thinking about one's self gives rise to the emotions of "*self-complacency* and *self-dissatisfaction*" (p. 305). He also remarked on "social self-seeking," people's persistent concern with the achievement of tangible successes and public acclaim. "Each of us," James stated, "is animated by a *direct feeling of regard for his [self]*" (p. 308). He proceeded to define the self (empirical "me") as a repository of ego-relevant matters. James' key animating principle, self-enhancement, found fertile ground in Gordon Allport's (1937) theorizing. He advocated that humans have a need for self-positivity, and he also regarded self-protection as "nature's eldest law." Heider (1958) similarly argued that subjective needs, desires, and preferences partially serve to maintain an individual's positive outlook. Rogers (1961) proposed the construct of positive self-regard, a form of self-appreciation achieved by satisfying one's own, rather than others', standards and expectations. In the meantime, Sigmund Freud (1915/1961b, 1923/1961c, 1926/1961d) and Anna Freud (1936/1946) were pioneering the analysis of defense mechanisms. The scientific study of self-enhancement and self-protection was born.

Instantiations of Self-Enhancement and Self-Protection

How have scientists approached self-enhancement and self-protection? They have done so through experimental and correlational investigations of over 60 instantiations (or implementations) of the motives. These marks of self-enhancement and self-protection have recently been summarized through factor-analytic techniques, with both Western (Hepper, Gramzow, & Sedikides, 2010) and East-Asian (Hepper, Sedikides, & Cai, in press) samples, into four factors: positivity embracement, defensiveness, favorable construals, and self-affirming reflections.

Positivity embracement reflects the acquisition of positive feedback (e.g., self-serving attributions for success), whereas defensiveness reflects the protection of self from threat (e.g., self-serving attributions for failure). A striving that exemplifies both factors is the *self-serving bias*, the tendency to credit the self for successes but to blame others (e.g., dyadic partners, ingroup, situations) for failures. Favorable construals reflects flattering portrayals of the self in the social world. An exemplary striving here is the *better-than-average effect*, the tendency to regard the self as superior to others in many domains of functioning. Finally, self-affirming reflections refers to securing favorable, or bypassing unfavorable, self-views and outcomes. A key mechanism through which this process is attained is *selective self-memory*, or disadvantageous recall for negative as opposed to positive feedback.

Next we review literature on the self-serving bias, the better-than-average effect, and selective self-memory. Although we fully endorse the close interweaving of cognition and motivation (Kruglanski, 1989; Kunda, 1990; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987), we venture to make the case for motivation. That is, we attempt to document that this class of purposive goal strivings cannot be accounted for purely and exclusively by nonmotivational antecedents. Instead, each striving is, at least in part, an outcome of the self-enhancement and self-protection motives in action.

The Self-Serving Bias

"If more than one person is responsible for a miscalculation, none will be at fault," Murphy's law advocates. Weiner's (1972) attributional analysis of achievement motivation documented this pattern. Actors attribute their successful outcomes to internal factors (e.g., ability, effort, discipline) and their unsuccessful outcomes to external factors (e.g., bad luck, task difficulty, harsh course instructor). More generally, assuming the lion's share of responsibility for desirable events and denying responsibility or displacing it to external causes for undesirable events has come to be known as the self-serving bias (SSB; Miller & Ross, 1975).

The SSB is a robust and pervasive phenomenon. It is evident among university students (Zuckerman, 1979), athletes (De Michele, Gansneder, & Solomon, 1998), and drivers (Stewart, 2005). It occurs in the arena of interpersonal influence (Arkin, Cooper, & Kolditz, 1980), naturalistic sports (Mullen & Riordan, 1988), and organizations (Corr & Gray, 1996). It is manifested by children, adolescents, and adults (Mezulis, Abramson, Hyde, & Hankin, 2004). And it is found both in Western and non-Western cultures (Brown & Kobayashi, 2002; Mezulis et al., 2004).

Next, we will consider reasons why the self-serving bias is motivated or why it cannot be accounted for solely by nonmotivational factors. Specifically, we will discuss the role of self-threat, self-affirmation, expectancies, and impression management. We will offer representative examples in each case.

SELF-THREAT

From a self-protection perspective, when people feel threatened, they become defensive (Roese & Olson, 2007). Given an outlet, such as the opportunity to deflect attributions regarding task outcomes, they will grab it to footprint their defensiveness. Assuming that the self-protection motive underlies the SSB, the more threatened people feel, the stronger the magnitude of the SSB will be. A meta-analysis by Campbell and Sedikides (1999) tested whether the SSB waxes and wanes as function of self-threat, operationalized as negative feedback. This meta-analysis examined several moderators of the SSB, such as role, self-focused attention, and interpersonal orientation.

In particular, each moderator was classified as high or low in self-threat potential. For example, the moderator *role* was classified in terms of actor or observer. Actors presumably experience more self-threat than observers, given that actors' self-views are directly challenged by negative feedback. The moderator *self-focused attention* was classified as self-focused or other-focused attention. Self-focused attention presumably involves more threat, given that participants in this experiential state are more likely to become aware of the discrepancy between their actual and ideal/ought self. Hence, their focus on performance standards would intensify the psychological impact of negative feedback. Finally, the moderator *interpersonal orientation* was classified as competitive or cooperative. Some participants competed (actually or ostensibly) with another person, whereas others cooperated (actually or ostensibly) with another person, on a task. Failed competitive participants would presumably experience the highest level of self-threat because they would have the most at stake on the task outcome.

The meta-analysis proceeded to test the effectiveness of the SSB moderators. The proposition that self-threat magnifies the SSB was supported. For example, actors, self-focused, and competing participants displayed the SSB, but their respective counterparts (observers, other-focused, and cooperative

participants) did not do so. In all, this meta-analysis illustrated that, the more threatened individuals feel, the more likely they are to resort to the SSB.

This conclusion is bolstered in research by Kernis, Cornell, Sun, Berry, and Harlow (1993) and by Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, and Major (1991). Undergraduate students are quick to find flaws in a test when they fail it but quick to stress its validity when they pass it (Wyer & Frey, 1983). This pattern is especially pronounced among individuals with unstable self-esteem, suggesting that these individuals use the SSB when threatened to shore up a fragile sense of personal worth (Kernis et al., 1993). Black American students experience a drop in self-esteem when the negative feedback is administered by a White evaluator believed to be unaware of their race; however, their self-esteem is unaffected when the evaluator is believed to be aware of their race. In the latter case, participants attribute their failure to racial prejudice, thus denying the validity of the test (Crocker et al., 1991). Here, the SSB is not only a mode to respond to self-threat but also a means to alleviate the consequences of threat (i.e., drop in self-esteem).

SELF-AFFIRMATION

As discussed earlier, self-threat intensifies the SSB. It follows that the SSB will be attenuated or cancelled when the self-threat is assuaged. One way of reducing self-threat is via self-affirmation (Sherman & Hartson, 2011). Here, individuals affirm a domain (e.g., values) irrelevant to self-threat. For example, they explain in writing, before or after they receive negative feedback, why some values are important to them. This self-affirmation procedure reduces defensiveness (and even buffers neuroendoctrine and psychological responses to stress; Creswell et al., 2005) by making individuals feel more secure in their self-worth. Self-affirmation, then, would reduce, if not eliminate, the SSB.

Sherman and Kim (2005) tested these ideas in field experiments with volleyball and basketball athletes. The experiments were conducted at the conclusion of a game, with positive feedback operationalized as a win and negative feedback as a loss. Immediately after the game, athletes were escorted into a conference room and undertook a self-affirmation manipulation. They rated and ranked five values (aesthetics, religion, social, political, theoretical) in terms of personal importance. Then, participants in the control condition received a 10-item scale corresponding to their least important value, whereas participants in the self-affirmation condition received a 10-item scale corresponding to their most important value. Each item consisted of two statements, one describing a facet of the relevant value, the other being neutral (i.e., filler). Participants proceeded to rate their agreement with each statement. Participants in the control condition displayed the SSB. However, participants in the self-affirmation condition refrained from it. In all, self-affirmation eclipsed the proclivity to respond defensively to self-threat, a pattern tracked by the vanishing of the SSB.

NONMOTIVATIONAL EXPLANATIONS

We will now turn to the nonmotivational explanations of expectancies and impression management.

Expectancies

It has been argued that differential expectancies for success and failure account for the SSB (Miller & Ross, 1975). Based on prior experience (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Tetlock & Levin, 1982), individuals expect success more frequently than failure. As such, they make internal attributions for expected outcomes and external attributions for unexpected outcomes (i.e., SSB).

There is evidence that expectations can influence the SSB. For example, individuals with chronic expectations of superior task performance (e.g., high self-esteemers, normals) manifest strongly the SBB relative to individuals with chronic expectations of inferior task performance (low self-esteemers, depressed; Blaine & Crocker, 1993; Tennen & Herzberger, 1987). Similarly, participants who regard a task as important (and hence likely have chronic expectations of superior performance) demonstrate the SSB to a greater degree than participants who regard a task as unimportant (Miller, 1976).

Nevertheless, expectations are not a necessary component of the SSB (Weary, 1979; Weary Bradley, 1978; Zuckerman, 1979). Of the various moderators in the Campbell and Sedikides (1999) meta-analysis discussed earlier, expectations did not play a substantial role. Actors and observers approach the experimental situation with the same expectations, yet only actors display the SSB. Furthermore, it is not clear why a momentary state of self-focused versus other-focused attention, or a state of competitive versus cooperative interpersonal orientation, would influence task expectancies. Yet the SSB was manifested by some of these participants (i.e., actors, state-self-focused persons, competitive persons) but not others. Finally, the SSB is observed even when controlling for task importance (Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, & Elliot, 1998).

Impression Management

Participants may display the SBB in a strategic maneuver to present themselves favorably to others (Miller, 1978; Weary, 1979). Impression management, of course, aims at the enhancement or protection of one's public image (Forsyth & Schlenker, 1985), although such aims are not always felicitous (Miller & Schlenker, 1985; Sedikides, Gregg, et al., 2007). Nevertheless, strategic enhancement/protection of one's public image does not necessitate the concurrent enhancement/protection of one's private self. Impression management may be superficial and short lived (i.e., driven by the moment or situation) rather than authentic. It may merely reflect putting on a persona or playing a role rather than expressing a cherished self-belief.

Impression management concerns can influence the SSB (Arkin, Appelmen, & Burger, 1980; House, 1980). Such concerns, however, are not necessary for its occurrence. Sedikides et al. (1998) tested undergraduate students at a large university. The participants worked together, as members of a dyad, on an interdependent-outcomes task. They were unacquainted and thus unlikely to anticipate future interactions. In addition, care was taken to ensure that participants expected not to meet each other after the experiment and not to discuss this experiment even if they happened to encounter each other on campus. Finally, all procedures were private, anonymous, and confidential, with each participant being unaware of the other's contribution to the interdependent-outcomes task. These procedures were intended to minimize impression management concerns. The experimental task ostensibly assessed creativity. Following bogus success or failure feedback at the dyadic level, participants did manifest the SSB.

Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon (1982) put the impression management explanation of the SSB directly to test. Participants took an alleged intelligence test ("Culture Fair Test of g"). Half of them learned that the experimenter was interested in their performance on the test and therefore would collect their named answer sheets and record their scores (public performance condition: presence of impression management concerns). The other half of participants learned that the experimenter was disinterested in their performance and had no way of knowing how well they had done on the test (private performance condition: absence of impression management concerns). Participants displayed the SSB in both conditions. Remarkably, the SSB was stronger in the private than public performance condition. In all, impression management concerns cannot fully account for the SSB.

SUMMARY

Although nonmotivational factors play a role in the SSB, they cannot account singly for it. Expectations or strategic self-management is not necessary for the emergence of the SSB. In contrast, research on self-threat and self-affirmation makes a compelling case that the SSB is a valid signature of the self-enhancement and self-protection motives.

The Better-Than-Average Effect

Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon is a fictional location, where "all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all the children are above average." This characterization describes succinctly the human tendency for overestimation of one's merits and underestimation of one's liabilities, in comparison to other persons. Research has confirmed this tendency. Most people judge themselves as better than their average peer (Alicke & Govorun, 2005; Brown, 1998; Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004), and they truly believe they are so (Williams & Gilovich, 2008). The phenomenon of rating oneself above the average peer standing on positive characteristics, or rating oneself below the average peer standing on negative characteristics, has been labeled the better-than-average effect (BTAE).

The BTAE is robust and pervasive. It is found among undergraduate students rating their leadership skills, athletic prowess, ability to get along with others (Brown, 1986; College Board Exams, 1976), intentions (Kruger & Gilovich, 2004), resistance to socially undesirable media messages (Davison, 1983), complexity of personality (Sande, Goethals, & Radloff, 1988), possessions (Nesselroade, Beggan, & Allison, 1999), and, indeed, their very humanness (Haslam, Bain, Douge, Lee, & Bastian, 2005); drivers rating their driving skills, while in a hospital due to a car accident they had caused (Preston & Harris, 1965); college instructors rating their teaching ability (Cross, 1977); social psychologists rating the quality of their research (Van Lange, Taris, & Vonk, 1997); students assessing their dating popularity (Preuss & Alicke, 2009) or couples assessing the quality of their marriage (Rusbult, Van Lange, Wildschut, Yovetich, & Verette, 2000); and adults assessing their happiness (Freedman, 1978). In addition, individuals suffering from rheumatoid arthritis rate their symptoms as less severe than those of the average patient (DeVellis et al., 1990), and elderly persons judge that they are less at risk for age-related problems than their peers

(Schulz & Fritz, 1987). The BTAE has also been found among preschoolers (Weiner, 1964), elementary school children (Albery & Messer, 2005), high school students (Kurman, 2002), and representative community samples (Andrews & Whitey, 1976; Heady & Wearing, 1988). Ironically, people believe that they are less prone to the BTAE than the average person (Pronin, Lin, & Ross, 2002).

Next we will discuss five reasons why the BTAE is motivated. These pertain to attribute valence and controllability, attribute importance (in cross-cultural context), attribute verifiability, self-threat, and self-affirmation. We will also consider nonmotivational accounts of the effect.

ATTRIBUTE VALENCE AND CONTROLLABILITY

Self-enhancement and self-protection strivings are tactical (Sedikides & Strube, 1997; see also Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010). People do not self-enhance or self-protect across the board; instead, they are selective on the attributes that they will tout or undervalue. For example, they may be more likely to self-enhance on positive attributes over which they have high control (e.g., resourceful) than positive attributes of which they have low control (e.g., mature). Conversely, they may be more likely to self-protect on negative attributes over which they have high control (e.g., unappreciative) than negative attributes over which they have low control (e.g., humorless).

The results of a study by Alicke (1985) demonstrated that the BTAE effect indeed varies as a function of attribute valence and controllability. Undergraduates rated themselves more favorably on positive traits, and less favorably on negative traits, compared to their average peer. Thus, the BTAE increased as the valence of the self-attribute increased. In addition, participants rated themselves more favorably on positive controllable traits, and more unfavorably on negative controllable traits, compared to their average peer. Finally, they rated themselves more favorably on positive controllable than positive uncontrollable traits, and rated themselves less favorably on negative uncontrollable than negative controllable traits, compared to their average peer. This latter finding in essence illustrates that people self-aggrandize the most when they feel responsible for their positive traits, and self-aggrandize the least when they believe that fate is responsible for their negative traits.

ATTRIBUTE IMPORTANCE: ON THE PANCULTURALITY OF THE BTAE

Self-enhancement and self-protection strivings are also tactical in another way. People are more likely to assert their self-superiority on their important (e.g., trustworthy) than their unimportant (e.g., punctual) attributes (Sedikides & Strube, 1997). This principle is illustrated in recent work by Brown (2011, Studies 1–4), where participants indeed showed a stronger tendency to evaluate themselves more positively on important than unimportant traits (Study 1). This principle is also illustrated when placing the BTA effect in cultural context.

Important self-attributes are those that imply successful role fulfillment or enactment of culturally sanctioned roles. They imply that one is a valued member of a given culture, given that one excels on culturally (and personally) important characteristics, no matter if one falls behind on culturally (and personally) unimportant characteristics. Members of all cultures, then, will appraise themselves positively on important (but not necessarily on unimportant) attributes.

For Western culture important attributes are those conveying agency (e.g., personal effectiveness, competence), whereas for Eastern culture important attributes are those conveying communion (e.g., personal integration, other-orientation). Hence, Westerners will display the BTAE on agentic attributes, whereas Easterners will display the BTAE on communal attributes. Westerners, for example, will rate themselves as better than their average peer on originality or independence but not on loyalty or respectfulness, but Easterners will rate themselves as better than their average peer on loyalty or respectfulness but not on originality or independence. This hypothesis has been confirmed both by primary studies (Brown & Kobayashi, 2002; Gaertner, Sedikides, & Chang, 2008; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003) and meta-analytic investigations (Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005, 2007; for more general discussions, see Brown, 2003, 2010). The findings attest to the panculturality of the BTAE.

ATTRIBUTE VERIFIABILITY

There is another way in which self-enhancement and self-protection are tactically expressed. It involves attribute verifiability. Some attributes (e.g., those belonging to the moral or social domain) are more difficult to verify objectively than others (e.g., those belonging to the intellectual or physical domain; Reeder & Brewer, 1979; Rothbart & Park, 1986). Therefore, moral attributes leave more latitude for self-enhancement strivings than intellectual ones. The BTAE, then, will be stronger in the case of moral than intellectual attributes.

This pattern has been empirically supported. Participants firmly believe that they have enacted more moral behaviors than their average peer. However, they believe rather tentatively that they have enacted more intellectual behaviors than their peers (Allison, Messick, & Goethals, 1980; Van Lange & Sedikides, 1998). In addition, participants rate themselves as better than average on traits that are either preclassified as ambiguous or are manipulated to be ambiguous (Critcher, Helzer, & Dunning, 2011). These findings illustrate that self-enhancement and self-protection strivings, albeit "dying to come out," are susceptible to reality constraints (Gramzow, 2011; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008).

SELF-THREAT

A self-protection perspective would predict that, when individuals feel threatened, they will become defensive (Roese & Olson, 2007). We have discussed evidence that self-threat intensifies the SSB. Does self-threat also intensify the BTAE?

Research by Brown (2011, Study 4) showed that it does. All participants took the Remotes Associates Test (RAT; Mednick, 1962), ostensibly a test of the cognitive ability of integrative orientation (defined as creativity). The RAT consists of a series of three words; in each case, participants are asked to generate a fourth word that relates in some way to the other three. All RAT problems were difficult, and participants received either bogus negative feedback or no feedback. Subsequently, participants completed a BTAE task: They rated both themselves and most other people on important and unimportant traits. Participants who received negative feedback manifested a stronger BTAE effect (compared to those who did not receive feedback). In particular, they rated themselves as superior to others on important than unimportant traits, but they rated others as superior on unimportant than important traits. These results underscore the motivational relevance of the BTAE (see also: Brown, Collins, & Schmidt, 1988; Brown & Gallagher, 1992; Dunning, Leuenberger, & Sherman, 1995).

Self-Affirmation

Does self-affirmation reduce the BTAE? An experiment by Guenther (2011) addressed this question. Participants were assigned to either a self-affirmation or a control condition. The manipulation was a hybrid of two established procedures introduced by Blanton, Pelham, DeHart, and Carvallo (2001) and by Wiesenfeld, Brockner, Petzall, Wolf, and Bailey (2001). Specifically, self-affirmation participants described an accomplishment or achievement that made them feel good about themselves. Control participants, on the other hand, described the student union building on campus. Subsequently, all participants rated their standing, relative to that of their average academic peer, on a variety of traits (e.g., cooperative, truthful, athletic, attractive, imaginative, tolerant).

The results were revealing. The BTAE emerged, as expected, among participants in the control condition, but it was attenuated among participants in the self-affirmation condition. Self-affirmation reduced defensiveness or the need to assert one's superiority over others. These findings attest to the motivational underpinnings of the BTAE.

NONMOTIVATIONAL EXPLANATIONS

The three most prominent nonmotivational explanations for the BTAE effect are egocentrism, focalism, and individuated-entity versus aggregate comparisons. We consider them next along with a fourth possibility, that the BTAE reflects simple contrast of oneself from the average peer.

Egocentrism

According to egocentrism, when participants compare their attributes to those of the average peer, they think selectively about their own strengths or about their peer's weaknesses (Champers, Windschitl, & Suls, 2003; Moore, 2007; Moore & Kim, 2003; Weinstein, 1980). However, selective recruitment of one's assets or of peers' liabilities may themselves be expressions of self-enhancement and self-protection (Brunot & Sanitioso, 2004; Sanitioso & Niedenthal, 2006). In addition, egocentrism cannot explain why the BTAE is obtained not only with direct measures (where participants compare the self to the average peer on a single scale) but also with indirect measures (where participants rate the self and average peer on separate and scales that are counterbalanced) (Alicke & Govorun, 2005). Moreover, egocentrism has trouble accounting for why the BTAE is stronger on unverifiable than verifiable traits (Allison et al., 1989; Critcher et al., 2011) and for why self-affirmation reduces the BTAE (Guenther, 2011). Finally and importantly, the BTAE is observed even when behavioral evidence for attributes is equated for self and others. This pattern was demonstrated by Alicke, Vredenburg, Hiatt, and Govorun (2001). Participants first estimated the percentage of times they enacted various trait-relevant behaviors (e.g., percentage of times they were uncooperative or cooperative, when the opportunity arose). A month

and a half later, participants received the very same estimates but were led to believe that the estimates were provided by their average peer. Still, participants rated themselves more favorably than "their average peer" on almost all traits. Participants claimed that they were superior to themselves.

Focalism

According to focalism, people put greater weight on whatever entity is currently the focus of their attention. By asking participants to compare their attributes to those of their average peer, research on the BTAE places the self in the focal position and the average peer in the referent position. Self-representations consist of a higher number of unique attributes than other-representations (Karylowski, 1990; Karylowski & Skarzynska, 1992). Hence, focusing on the self highlights those unique attributes and leads to perceiving the self as less similar than the average peer (Moore & Kim, 2003; Otten & van der Pligt, 1996; Pahl & Eiser, 2006, 2007; Windschitl, Kruger, & Sims, 2003). However, focalism cannot provide an adequate account of why the BTAE varies as a function of attribute valence, controllability, importance, and verifiability. In addition, focalism cannot explain why the BTAE is obtained with indirect measures (Alicke & Govorun, 2005), when behavioral base rates for relevant traits are the same for self and other (Alicke et al., 2001), and even when the referent is highly concretized (Alicke, Klotz, Breitenbecher, Yurak, & Vredenburg, 1995). Finally, focalism cannot explain why participants manifest a stronger BTAE on important than unimportant traits, even when the self constitutes the referent and "most other people" constitute the target (Brown, 2011, Study 3).

Individuated-Entity Versus Aggregate Comparisons

This nonmotivational account refers to a single entity (e.g., a person, an object) being compared with an aggregate (e.g., the average peer, the average object). Klar and his colleagues (Giladi & Klar, 2002; Klar, 2002; Klar & Giladi, 1997) showed that any member of a liked group (e.g., a randomly selected student at one's university, police officer, soap fragrance) is rated more positively than the group average (e.g., average student at one's university, average police officer, average fragrance), and that any member of a disliked group is rated more negatively than the group average. These findings raise the possibility that the BTAE is due to the self being an individuated entity and the average peer being an aggregate. However, the BTAE is still present when the individuated entity is the self; that is, the effect emerges even when the self is compared to any other individuated entity (Alicke et al., 1995). In addition, this nonmotivational alternative cannot explain why the effect ebbs and flows as a function of the motivational significance of the judgment (e.g., attribute valence, controllability, verifiability, importance). Moreover, the alternative cannot easily explain why self-affirmation weakens the effect and, importantly, why the effect emerges even under cognitive load (Alicke et al., 1995, Study 7)—a pattern indicative of automatic self-enhancement (Paulhus, 1993). Finally, the alternative cannot explain why participants manifest a stronger BTAE on important than unimportant traits, even when they compare themselves with a single person (Brown, 2011, Study 2).

Assimilation and Contrast

Although some researchers have conjectured that self versus average peer judgments are made by anchoring on the self and contrasting the average peer from that point (e.g., Kruger, 1999), until recently, no studies had been designed specifically to examine this facet of the BTAE. To address this question, Guenther and Alicke (2010) constructed an experimental design that was equipped to test whether self versus average peer judgments represent assimilation or contrast, and in what direction assimilation or contrast might occur. In the first study, participants first made either self or average peer ratings in a pretesting session. Later in the semester, their original ratings were returned and they were now asked to rate the other target (i.e., those who rated the self in the first phase now rated the average peer in relation to their self-ratings, and those who rated the average peer in the first phase now rated the self in relation to their average peer ratings). Comparisons with the ratings provided by a group that simply made simultaneous ratings of self and the average peer showed that self-ratings were unaltered as a result of whether self and average peer were rated simultaneously, self was rated in relation to the average peer, or the average peer was rated in relation to the self. This shows clearly that the self anchors these judgments. The findings also demonstrated that ratings of the average peer were higher when made in relation to self-ratings than when self and average peer were rated simultaneously. Contrary to the common assumption that judgments of an average peer are contrasted *from* the self, average peer ratings were assimilated *toward* the self.

The fact that people move evaluations of the average peer closer to the self seems to contradict self-enhancement assumptions. However, most modern self-enhancement perspectives (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009; Sedikides & Gregg, 2003, 2008) acknowledge that such tendencies occur in concert with many nonmotivational forces, including relatively automatic anchoring and adjustment processes. Guenther and Alicke (2010) next designed a study to assess whether self-enhancement motives could be discerned in light of these assimilative comparative judgments.

In this study (Guenther & Alicke, 2010, Study 2), participants made self-judgments on various trait dimensions during pretesting. The returned later in the semester and were provided with the self-ratings they had completed during pretesting. This time, they were asked to evaluate the average college student with reference to these self-ratings. Most important, half of the participants were led to think that the ratings they now received were those provided by a randomly selected student instead of by themselves. The critical comparison was between ratings of the average peer made with reference to scale points that participants believed were their own ratings, and those made with reference to identical points that were believed to belong to another student. Participants assimilated their ratings of average toward the scale points provided to a lesser degree when those scale points were described as self-ratings compared to when the identical points were attributed to another individual. Thus, although anchoring comparative judgments on the self induces average-peer assimilation because of the fact that self-ratings constitute high scale points, participants' desire to maintain favorable self-concepts restricts this assimilative process and thereby maximizes the distance between the self and the average peer.

SUMMARY

As with the SSB, nonmotivational explanations for the BTAE are rather unsatisfactory. Egocentrism, focalism, individuated-entity versus aggregate comparisons, and assimilation/contrast cannot account for the fluctuation of the BTAE as a function of assessment technique (i.e., indirect measures, equation of behavioral evidence for self and other, cognitive load), motivational relevance (attribute valence, controllability, importance, verifiability), and referent individuation. On the other hand, research on self-threat, self-affirmation, and the motivational relevance of the BTAE makes a compelling case that this effect is a legitimate signature of self-enhancement and self-protection motivation.

Selective Self-Memory

"It's not only the most difficult thing to know one's self, but the most inconvenient," quipped Josh Billings. The empirical evidence has treated Billings kindly. People indeed remember poorly their weaknesses compared to their strengths, a memorial pattern that does not occur for other people's weaknesses and strengths (Sedikides & Green, 2009; Skowronski, 2011). We refer to this phenomenon as selective self-memory. Next we discuss it by reviewing research both from the autobiographical and experimental literatures.

Selective self-memory is robust and pervasive. It has been observed in the domain of feedback (Crary, 1966; Sedikides & Green, 2000), social act frequencies (Gosling, John, Craik, & Robins, 1998), possessions and places (Zauberman, Ratner, & Kim, 2009), relationship-relevant behaviors (Van Lange, Rusbult, Semin-Goossens, Goerts, & Stalpers, 1999), personality traits (Messick, Bloom, Boldizar, & Samuelson, 1985; Mischel, Ebbesen, & Zeiss, 1976), life events (Ross & Wilson, 2002; Skowronski, Betz, Thompson, & Shannon, 1991), and emotionally charged (i.e., pride-inducing and shame-inducing) events (D'Argembeau & Van der Linden, 2008). It has also been observed not only in Western but also in non-Western or East-Asian cultures (Kwon, Scheibe, Samanez-Larkin, Tsai, & Carstensen, 2009; Schrauf & Hoffman, 2007). Selective self-memory emerges early in life. Children, for example, ascribe more serious transgressions to their siblings than to themselves in their recollections of sibling conflict (Wilson, Smith, Ross, & Ross, 2004). Finally, selective self-memory is found both among younger and older adults (Field, 1981, 1997; Wagenaar & Groeneweg, 1990; Yarrow, Campbell, & Burton, 1970).

Selective self-memory may be due to an encoding bias. People avoid attending to unfavorable feedback (Baumeister & Cairns, 1992; Sedikides & Green, 2000, Experiment 3), thus impeding its registration. However, selective self-memory may also be due to a retrieval bias. Evidence for this processing mechanism is found in memory for behaviors that exemplify desirable traits (Sanitioso, Kunda, & Fong, 1990), satisfying interpersonal relationships (Murray & Holmes, 1993), and health-boosting habits (Ross, McFarland, & Fletcher, 1981). Finally, selective self-memory may be due to retention. The negative affect associated with autobiographical memories fades faster across time than the positive

affect associated with such memories (Landau & Gunter, 2009; Ritchie, Skowronski, Hartnett, Wells, & Walker, 2009; Walker, Skowronski, & Thompson, 2003).

We will examine next why selective self-memory is motivated. In particular, we will zero in on the role of self-threat and self-affirmation in selective self-memory. We will also consider the nonmotivational accounts of differential expectancies and inconsistency between information valence and self-view valence.

Self-Threat

Sedikides and colleagues (Sedikides & Green, 2009; Sedikides, Green, & Pinter, 2004) tested experimentally the role of self-threat in selective self-memory. In the standard paradigm, participants first receive behavioral feedback. Some are then asked to imagine, or are led to believe, that they are likely to perform the behaviors contained in the feedback. Other participants are asked to imagine, or are led to believe, that another person (Chris) is likely to perform the very same behaviors. These behaviors are either negative or positive, and they exemplify either central (e.g., unkind vs. kind, untrustworthy vs. trustworthy) or peripheral (e.g., complaining vs. uncomplaining, unpredictable vs. predictable) traits. Next, participants engage in a surprise recall task. The typical finding is that participants recall poorly behaviors that are negative, exemplify central traits, and refer to the self (e.g., unkind or untrustworthy behaviors) compared to all other categories of behavior (e.g., those that are positive, exemplify central traits, and refer to the self; those that are negative exemplify central traits but refer to Chris). For example, participants recall poorly the behaviors "you would borrow other people's belongings without their knowledge" (untrustworthy) and "you would refuse to lend classnotes to a friend who was ill" (unkind). However, participants recall relatively well the behaviors "Chris would borrow other people's belongings without their knowledge" and "Chris would refuse to lend classnotes to a friend who was ill" (unkind). Additionally, they recall relatively well the behaviors "you would keep secrets when asked to" (trustworthy) and "you would offer to care for a neighbor's child when the babysitter couldn't come" (kind). This recall discrepancy has been labeled *mnemic neglect* and has been attributed to the self-threat potential of the feedback.

Research has consistently supported the idea that self-threat underlies mnemic neglect. In general, the more threatening the feedback is perceived, the more defensive participants become (i.e., more likely to exhibit mnemic neglect). For example, the effect is obtained when the behaviors are high on diagnosticity (e.g., "you would be unfaithful when in an intimate relationship"), but it is cancelled when the behaviors are low on diagnosticity (e.g., "would forget for a week to return a borrowed book to a friend") (Green & Sedikides, 2004). This is because high-diagnosticity behaviors can really reveal whether one is untrustworthy or unkind, and are thus threatening. In addition, the effect is obtained when participants are led to believe that their traits are unmodifiable, but it is cancelled when they are led to believe their traits are modifiable (Green, Pinter, & Sedikides, 2005). This is because learning that one was born untrustworthy or unkind and will be so for life makes untrustworthiness or unkindness feedback threatening. Relatedly, the effect is obtained when participants are deprived of the opportunity to improve on feedback-relevant dimensions (e.g., to become less untrustworthy or less unkind) and are thus threatened, but it is cancelled when participants are offered the opportunity to improve (Green, Sedikides, Pinter, & Van Tongeren, 2009). In all, this research shows that selective self-memory is motivated.

Self-Affirmation

Does self-affirmation reduce or negate selective self-memory? Green, Sedikides, and Gregg (2008, Experiment 2) addressed this question. All participants took a test ostensibly assessing their cognitive ability (i.e., creativity). In the self-threat condition, participants learned that they had performed poorly on the test. In the self-affirmation condition, however, participants learned that they had performed well on the test. Subsequently, all participants proceeded to an "impression" task, which was actually the standard mnemic neglect paradigm (i.e., behavioral feedback).

The results were, once again, telling. Self-threatened participants evinced mnemic neglect, whereas self-affirmed participants did not. Self-affirmation relaxed defensiveness, as tracked by the abolishment of mnemic neglect. These results are consistent with the idea that mnemic neglect is a motivated phenomenon.

Nonmotivational Explanations

We next turn to two nonmotivational explanations of selective self-memory: differential expectancies and inconsistency between information valence and self-view valence.

DIFFERENTIAL EXPECTANCIES

In a review of the literature, Walker et al. (2003) concluded that the base rate of negative versus positive life events is unequal. That is, negative events are half as frequent as positive events (25% vs. 50%). Differential base rates may also be involved in mnemic neglect. People may process shallowly and recall negative feedback poorly because they do not expect to receive it; based on prior experience, such feedback is implausible.

Can differential expectancies account for selective self-memory? We (Sedikides et al., 2004; Sedikides & Green, 2009) addressed this issue in the context of the mnemic neglect paradigm. As described earlier, this research was concerned with the on-line processing of a concrete and experimentally provided array of feedback as opposed to the reconstruction of pleasant or unpleasant life events, thus exerting tight control over the to-be-remembered material. The ratio of negative to positive information was equal. In addition, the relevance of self versus other memories was taken into consideration: The same information was self-referent in one condition and other-referent in another condition. More important, the research addressed the issue of whether mnemic neglect is due to expectancies (Sedikides & Green, 2004, Experiment 1).

All participants received hypothetical behavioral feedback. However, the referent of the feedback varied. A quarter of the participants received feedback about themselves, and another quarter about Chris. The third quarter of participants received feedback about a person described in glowing terms, such as extraordinarily trustworthy and kind (glowing Chris condition). The fourth quarter of participants received feedback about a close friend. Pretest had established that participants held the most positive expectancies for glowing Chris, considering him or her as most likely to enact positive behaviors and least likely to enact negative behaviors. Expectancies for close friend and self were virtually identical, and they were both more positive than expectancies for (mere) Chris. If expectancies constituted a sufficient explanation for mnemic neglect, then the effect would be more strongly evident in the glowing Chris than the self condition, and it would be equally strong in the close friend and self conditions. This was not the case. Participants evidenced the most neglect in the self condition, followed by the friend condition, and then by the glowing Chris and Chris conditions (which did not differ significantly).

These findings were conceptually replicated by Newman, Nibert, and Winer (2009). In a separate session after the usual exposure to and recall of behavioral feedback, participants provided expectancies for each behavior for either the self or Chris. That is, they estimated the extent to which they could imagine either themselves or Chris performing the behavior. Expectancies and recall were uncorrelated for most but a subset of participants. This subset was defensive pessimists, who as hypothesized, did not show the typical mnemic neglect pattern. In conclusion, differential expectancies, albeit relevant to recall of autobiographical information (Walker et al., 2003), cannot account solely for mnemic neglect and more generally selective self-memory.

INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN INFORMATION VALENCE AND SELF-VIEW VALENCE

Another alternative, though, is worth considering, specifically, inconsistency between the valence of one's self-views and the valence of feedback (Abelson et al., 1968). Mnemic neglect, in particular, may reflect processing of information whose valence is inconsistent with the valence of self-conceptions. Most participants have a positive self-concept (Ogilvie, 1987; Schwartz, 1986). Hence, they recall negative feedback poorly because it is inconsistent with their self-views. This alternative explanation leads to an interesting prediction. Inconsistency will also drive mnemic neglect among participants with a negative self-concept. These participants will recall positive feedback poorly, because it is inconsistent with their self-views.

An experiment (Sedikides & Green, 2004, Experiment 2) tested whether feedback inconsistency (behaviors that are inconsistent with the self-view) or feedback negativity (behaviors that are negative regardless of whether they are consistent or inconsistent with the self-view) drives mnemic neglect. A pretest identified two groups of participants: those with positive self-views (i.e., trustworthy, kind) and those with negative self-views (i.e., untrustworthy, unkind). These participants were then brought in the laboratory and exposed to the usual mnemic neglect paradigm. The inconsistency alternative would predict that participants with positive self-views would recall poorly untrustworthy and unkind behaviors, whereas participants with negative self-views would recall poorly trustworthy and kind behaviors. The results ran contrary to this alternative. All participants, regardless of the valence of their self-conception, manifested mnemic neglect. That is, even individuals who regarded themselves as untrustworthy or unkind recalled poorly untrustworthy or unkind behaviors. This is additional

evidence that feedback negativity (i.e., self-threat) underlies mnemic neglect. In conclusion, inconsistency between the valence of one's self-views and the valence of feedback, albeit relevant to autobiographical recall (Gramzow & Willard, 2006), cannot account singly for mnemic neglect and more generally selective self-memory.

SUMMARY

As with the SSB and the BTAE, nonmotivational explanations for selective self-memory are not particularly persuasive. Differential expectancies and inconsistency between information valence and self-view valence cannot provide a satisfactory account for poor recall of negative, central, self-referent feedback. Instead, the threat potential of such feedback, including research on self-affirmation, can. The extant evidence points to mnemic neglect as a valid signature of the self-protection motive.

But is self-threatening feedback always recalled poorly? Research on trauma would seem to indicate that it is not: Traumatic events are well remembered (Berntsen, 2001; McNally, 2003). Such events, though, are extreme, and event extremity is associated with superior recall (Thompson, Skowronski, Larsen, & Betz, 1996). And yet event valence predicts recall independently of event extremity (Thompson et al., 1996, Chapter 4). Finally, in the mnemic neglect paradigm, behavioral feedback was moderate rather than extreme (Sedikides & Green, 2000, pilot studies). Selective self-memory, then, is applicable to the domain of mild, as opposed to extreme, feedback or events.

What Are Self-Enhancement and Self-Protection Good For?

Self-enhancement and self-protection strivings have functional advantages for the individual. Next we will consider two critical domains of functionality: psychological health and psychological interests.

Psychological Health

The SSB is linked to a variety of psychological health benefits. For example, the SSB is related to positive mood (McFarland & Ross, 1982) and high subjective well-being (Rizley, 1978), improved problem solving (Isen & Means, 1983), reduced depression (Abramson & Alloy, 1981), better immune functioning (Taylor et al., 2000), and lower mortality and morbidity longitudinally (Peterson & Seligman, 1987). On the other hand, a weak or absent SSB is related to depression (Sweeney, Anderson, & Bailey, 1986), deteriorating physical health (Peterson, Seligman, & Vaillant, 1998), and poorer athletic, academic, and work performance (Peterson & Barrett, 1987; Seligman, Nolen-Hoeksema, Thornton, & Thornton, 1990). The positive association between the SSB and psychological health has been found not only in Western culture but also in East-Asian culture (China; Anderson, 1999).

The BTAE is also strongly linked to psychological health. For example, the BTAE is positively related to indices of thriving (e.g., subjective well-being, purpose in life, positive relations, self-acceptance), positively related to resources (optimism, extraversion, self-esteem, family support), and negatively related to indices of distress (e.g., loneliness, depression, anxiety) (Brown, 1991, 1998; Marshall & Brown, 2007; Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, & McDowell, 2003a). Similar patterns have been obtained in several East-Asian cultures such as China (Brown & Cai, 2009; Cai, Wu, & Brown, 2009; O'Mara, Gaertner, Sedikides, Zhou, & Liu, 2010), Japan (Kobayashi & Brown, 2003), Korea (Chang, Sanna, & Yang, 2003), Taiwan (Gaertner et al., 2008), and Singapore (Kurman & Sriram, 1997). In addition, longitudinal studies, in Western and non-Western culture, indicate that the BTAE promotes subsequent psychological health under adverse conditions (Bonanno, Field, Kovacevic, & Kaltman, 2002; Bonanno, Rennicke, & Dekel, 2005; Gupta & Bonanno, 2010; Zuckerman & O'Loughlin, 2006). Moreover, the BTAE serves a stress-buffering function: As a response to stress, the BTAE is related to lower cardiovascular response, more rapid cardiovascular recovery, and lower baseline cortisol level (Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, & McDowell, 2003b).

Finally, selective self-memory in autobiographical recall is also associated with psychological health. For example, selective self-memory is related to lack of dysphoria (Walker, Skowronski, Gibbons, Vogl, & Thompson, 2003), reduced depression (Williams et al., 2007), a future orientation (Brunson, Wheeler, & Walker, 2010), social connectedness or better interpersonal relations (Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006), felt continuity between one's past and one's present (Sedikides, Wildschut, Gaertner, Routledge, & Arndt, 2008), perceptions of life as meaningful (Routledge et al., 2011), and reduced existential anxiety (Juhl, Routledge, Arndt, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2010). Relatedly, selective self-memory is linked to fewer symptoms of psychopathology and better psychological health over time (Bonanno, Keltner, Holen, & Horowitz, 1995; Bonanno, Znoj, Siddique, & Horowitz, 1999; Newton & Contrada, 1992). In conclusion, self-enhancement

and self-protection strivings are associated with, or promote, psychological health.

Psychological Interests

Psychological interests include love/security, social status, and popularity, as well as skills and abilities (e.g., musicality, athleticism, intelligence). Interests are hierarchically organized from the general (e.g., being a good student, being a good friend) to the specific (e.g., performing well on a task, providing support to a friend in need) ones. Furthermore, interests can entail private matters (e.g., meeting one's personal standards) or public matters (e.g., meeting organizational standards) and can extend to close relations or important groups. Finally, interests can be negative or positive. Negative interests include matters that individuals wish to circumvent or shun (e.g., relationship breakup, achievement failure), whereas positive interest include matters that individuals wish to possess or attain (e.g., two-story house, managerial position) (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009).

A vital function of self-enhancement and self-protection is the pursuit of psychological interests (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009). This pursuit is carried out through either primary or secondary means. (These constructs correspond to notions of primary and secondary control; Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982.) Primary means refer to changing an objective state of affairs by assuming instrumental action. In that capacity, self-enhancement entails effective action that promotes oneself and one's prospects. Secondary means refers to psychological mechanisms that regulate events by altering how one perceives or interprets them. In that capacity, self-protection entails effective intervention that obviates failing below one's standards. Self-enhancement and self-protection, then, contribute effectively to the successful pursuit of psychological interests of the effective avoidance of harm to those interests.

The three self-enhancement and self-protection strivings serve psychological interests. Let us first consider the SSB. Seligman et al. (1990) examined the role of the SSB in predicting athletic performance. They found that varsity swimmers prone to the SSB (assessed at the start of the season) performed better at sporting competitions than swimmers not prone to the SSB. Additionally, Peterson and Barrett (1987) reported that undergraduate students prone to the SSB (assessed at the beginning of their first year at university) received higher grades during their freshman year compared to students not prone to the SSB. This pattern held after controlling for initial ability (measured by the Scholastic Aptitude Test) and initial depression. Students prone to SSB were more likely to have specific academic goals and to make use of academic advising.

The BTAE is similarly implicated in the facilitation of psychological interests. Taylor et al. (2003a) showed that the BTAE is positively related to active coping, positive reframing, planning, achievement, mastery, and personal growth. In addition, Wright (2000) demonstrated that undergraduate students who are more likely to manifest the BTAE (assessed in the beginning of the semester) achieved higher grades during the semester compared to students less likely to manifest the BTAE. Moreover, students who exaggerate reporting of their grade point average perform better than those who do not (Gramzow, 2011). In general, the BTAE is associated with working harder and longer on tasks (Taylor & Brown, 1988) and with performing better on tasks (Armor & Taylor, 2003).

Finally, selective self-memory in autobiographical recall is also involved in the promotion of psychological interests. Such memory has approach rather than avoidance consequences (Stephan et al., 2011; Walker & Skowronski, 2009) and, as such, it can motivate individuals to engage and persist in goal pursuit (Sedikides & Hepper, 2009; Walker & Skowronski, 2009). Indeed, forms of selective self-memory have been found to be associated with resilience (Coifman, Bonanno, Ray, & Gross, 2007), improved coping following traumatic life events (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), and, in general, the implementation of active coping strategies in times of stress (Langens & Moerth, 2003) and in attempting to master life challenges (Walker & Skowronski, 2009).

SUMMARY

A psychological health and psychological interests analysis addresses squarely the issue of why people self-enhance and self-protect. They do not do so for a whim, or just to feel good, or for short-lived impression management purposes. Rather, they do so, and they do so persistently, because self-enhancement and self-protection strivings confer both momentary and long-term benefits (i.e., ways in which psychological health and psychological interests are advanced) and deter both momentary and long-term harms (i.e., ways in which psychological health interests are regressed or thwarted).

Conclusions

In his *An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish* (1943), Bertrand Russell was duly impressed by the influence

of motives on human judgment. "Man is a rational animal—so at least I have been told. [...] I have looked diligently for evidence in favor of this statement, but so far I have not had the good fortune to come across it [...]," he exclaimed in wonder (p. 73). We have focused in this chapter on two self-evaluation motives that might have confounded Russell, self-enhancement and self-protection.

We defined self-enhancement as the desire and preference for maximizing the positivity of one's self-views, and we defined self-protection as the desire and preference for minimizing the negativity of one's self-view. We argued that the tendency to exalt one's virtues and make light of one's weaknesses, relative to impartial criteria, manifests itself in a variety of strivings. Due to space limitations, we restricted our discussion to three key strivings: the SSB (crediting the self for successes but blaming others for failures), the BTAE (considering the self superior to others), and selective self-memory (disadvantageous recall for negative feedback).

Although we acknowledged that cognition and motivation are closely intertwined, we proceeded to make a case for the motivational underpinnings of these strivings. We aimed to provide evidence that self-enhancement and self-protection strivings cannot be exclusively accounted for by nonmotivational (i.e., information processing) factors. The nonmotivational explanations of expectations and impression management were not deemed necessary for the occurrence of the SSB. Likewise, egocentrism, focalism, and individuated-entity versus aggregate comparisons were not deemed necessary for the occurrence of the BTAE. And similarly, differential expectancies and inconsistency between self-view valence and feedback were not deemed necessary for the occurrence of selective self-memory. In contrast, evidence from research on self-threat and self-affirmation testifies to the motivational underpinnings of the strivings. The SSB, BTAE, and selective self-memory are driven, in part, by the self-enhancement and self-protection motives.

We drew to a conclusion by asking why individuals self-enhance and self-protect. A partial answer lies in the functionality of self-enhancement and self-protection strivings: They accrue benefits pertaining to psychological health and psychological interests. Self-enhancement and self-protection strivings are associated with, or confer, a host of psychological health advantages, and they advance a host of psychological interests. Mild self-enhancement and self-protection continue to be markers of psychological health.

Future Directions

There are several issues in need of further empirical attention. We will briefly touch upon four of them. First, what is the interplay between the two motives? Although self-enhancement and self-protection are occasionally treated as polar ends of a single dimension, the empirical evidence suggests that a lot will be gained if they are treated separately (Elliot & Mapes, 2005). Yet the relation between the two motives is complex. They can operate independently, one motive may facilitate the other, or one motive may impede the other. Second, and relatedly, what is the interplay between implicit and explicit self-enhancement and self-protection? In particular, what is the relation between implicit and explicit self-enhancement and self-protection strategies (Arndt & Goldenberg, 2011) or between implicit and explicit self-esteem (Gregg & Sedikides, 2010)? Third, what is the interplay between the self-enhancement and self-protection motives on the one hand and other self-evaluation motives on the other? These other motives are self-assessment (i.e., pursuit of accurate self-knowledge; Gregg, Sedikides, & Gebauer, 2011), self-improvement (i.e., pursuit of one's betterment; Sedikides & Hepper, 2009), and self-verification (i.e., pursuit of self-confirmation; Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2003). Finally, what are the boundary conditions—both situational demands and individual differences—that constrain self-enhancement or self-protection (Gramzow, 2011)? And what are the intrapersonal and interpersonal consequences of such constraints upon motive emergence or manifestation? These and other issues are worth exploring. As La Rouchefoucauld (1678/1827) prophetically noted, "Whatever discoveries have been made in the land of self-love, many territories remain to be discovered."

References

Abelson, R, Aronson, E., McGuire, W., Newcomb, T., Rosenberg, M., & Tannenbaum, P. (Eds.). (1968). *The cognitive consistency theories: A source book.* Chicago, IL. Rand McNally.

Abramson, L. Y., & Alloy, L. B. (1981). Depression, nondepression, and cognitive illusions: Reply to Schwartz. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, 110,* 436–447.

Albery, I. P., & Messer, D. (2005). Comparative optimism about health and nonhealth events in 8- and 9-year old children *Health Psychology, 24,* 316–320.

Alicke, M. (1985). Global self-evaluation as determined by the desirability and controllability of trait adjectives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49,* 1621–1630.

Alicke, M., & Govorun, O. (2005). The better-than-average effect. In M. D. Alicke, D. A. Dunning, & J. I. Krueger (Eds.), *The self in social judgment* (pp. 85–106). New York Psychology Press.

Alicke, M D , Klotz, M L , Breitenbecher, D L , Yurak, T J , & Vredenburg, D S (1995) Personal contact, individuation, and the better-than-average effect *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68*, 804–825

Alicke, M , & Sedikides, C (2009) Self-enhancement and self-protection What they are and what they do *European Review of Social Psychology, 20*, 1–48

Alicke, M D , & Sedikides, C (2011a) Self-enhancement and self-protection Historical overview and conceptual framework In M D Alicke & C Sedikides (Eds), *The handbook of self-enhancement and self-protection* (pp 1–19) New York Guilford Press

Alicke, M D , & Sedikides, C (2011b) (Eds) *The handbook of self-enhancement and self-protection* New York Guilford Press

Alicke, M D , Vredenburg, D S , Hiatt, M , & Govorun, O (2001) The "better than myself effect " *Motivation and Emotion, 25*, 7–22

Allison, S T , Messick, D M , & Goethals, G R (1989) On being better but not smarter than others The Muhammad Ali effect *Social Cognition, 7*, 275–296

Allport, G W (1937) *Personality A psychological interpretation* New York Holt

Anderson, C A (1999) Attributional style, depression, and loneliness A cross-cultural comparison of American and Chinese students *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25*, 482–499

Andrews, F M , & Whitey, S B (1976) *Social indicators of well-being* New York Plenum Press

Arkin, R M Appelmen, A J , & Burger, J M (1980) Social anxiety, self-presentation, and the self-serving bias in causal attribution *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 38*, 23–25

Arkin, R M , Cooper, H M , & Kolditz, T A (1980) A statistical review of the literature concerning the self-serving attribution bias in interpersonal influence situations *Journal of Personality, 48*, 435–448

Armor, D A , & Taylor, S E (2003) The effects of mindset on behavior Self-regulation in deliberative and implemental frames of mind *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*, 86–95

Arndt, A , & Goldenberg, J L (2011) When self-enhancement drives health decisions Insights from a terror management health model In M D Alicke & C Sedikides (Eds), *The handbook of self-enhancement and self-protection* (pp 380–398) New York Guilford Press

Baumeister, R F, & Cairns, K J (1992) Repression and self-presentation When audiences interfere with self-deceptive strategies *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62*, 851–862

Bentham, J (1982) *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation* (J H Burns & H L A Harts, Eds) London, England Methuem (Original work published 1789)

Berntsen, D (2001) Involuntary memories of emotional events Do memories of traumas and extremely happy events differ? *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 15*, 135–158

Blaine, B , & Crocker, J (1993) Self-esteem and self-serving bias in reactions to positive and negative events An integrative review In R F Baumeister (Ed), *Self-esteem The puzzle of low self-regard* (pp 55–85) New York Plenum

Blanton, H , Pelham, B W, DeHart, T , & Carvallo, M (2001) Overconfidence as dissonance reduction *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 37*, 373–385

Bloom, A (Trans) (1991) *The republic of Plato* (2nd ed) New York Basic Books

Bonanno, G A , Field, N P, Kovacevic, A , & Kaltman, S (2002) Self-enhancement as a buffer against extreme adversity Civil War in Bosnia and traumatic loss in the United States *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28*, 184–196

Bonanno, G A , Keltner, D , Holen, A , & Horowitz, M J (1995) When avoiding unpleasant emotions might not be such a bad thing Verbal-autonomic response dissociation and midlife conjugal bereavement *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*, 975–989

Bonanno, G A , Rennicke, C , & Dekel, S (2005) Self-enhancement among high-exposure survivors of the September 11th terrorist attacks Resilience or social maladjustment? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*, 984–998

Bonanno, G A , Znoj, H , Siddique, H I , & Horowitz, M J (1999) Verbal autonomic dissociation and adaptation to midlife conjugal loss A follow-up at 25 months *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 23*, 605–624

Brown, J D (1986) Evaluations of self and others Self-enhancement biases in social judgments *Social Cognition, 4*, 353–376

Brown, J D (1991) Accuracy and bias in self-knowledge In C R Snyder & D F Forsyth (Eds), *Handbook of social and clinical psychology The health perspective* (pp 158–178) New York Pergamon Press

Brown, J D (1998) *The self* New York McGraw-Hill

Brown, J D (2003) The self-enhancement motive in collectivistic cultures The rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 34*, 603–605

Brown, J D (2010) Across the (not so) great divide Cultural similarities in self-evaluative processes *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 4*, 318–330

Brown, J D (2011) *Understanding the better than average effect Motives matter* Unpublished manuscript, University of Washington

Brown, J D , & Cai, H (2009) Self-esteem and trait importance moderate cultural differences in self-evaluations *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 41*, 116–122

Brown, J D , Collins, R L , & Schmidt, G W (1988) Self-esteem and direct versus indirect forms of self-enhancement *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 55*, 445–453

Brown, J D , & Gallagher, F M (1992) Coming to terms with failure Private self-enhancement and public self-effacement *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 28*, 3–22

Brown, J D , & Kobayashi, C (2002) Self-enhancement in Japan and America *Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 5*, 145–168

Brunot, S , & Sanitioso, R B (2004) Motivational influences on the quality of memories Recall of general autobiographical memories related to desired attributes *European Journal of Social Psychology, 34*, 627–635

Brunson, C A , Wheeler, D , & Walker, W R (2011) *Testing two alternative explanations for a fading affect bias in autobiographical memory* Manuscript under review

Cai, H , Wu, Q , & Brown, J D (2009) Is self-esteem a universal need? Evidence from the People's Republic of China *Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 12*, 104–120

Campbell, K W, & Sedikides, C (1999) Self-threat magnifies the self-serving bias A meta-analytic integration *Review of General Psychology, 3*, 23–43

Champers, J R , Windschitl, P D , & Suls, J (2003) Egocentrism, event frequency, and comparative optimism When what

happens frequently is "more likely to happen to me" *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*, 1343–1356

Chang, E C, Sanna, L J, & Yang, K (2003) Optimism, pessimism, affectivity, and psychological adjustment in US and Korea A test of mediation model *Personality and Individual Differences, 34*, 1195–1208

Coifman, K G, Bonanno, G A, Ray, R D, & Gross, J J (2007) Does repressive coping promote resilience? Affective-autonomic response discrepancy during bereavement *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92*, 745–758

College Board (1976–1977) *Student descriptive questionnaire* Princeton, NJ Educational Testing Service

Corr, P, & Gray, J (1996) Attributional style as a personality factor in insurance sales performance in the UK *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 69*, 83–87

Crary, W G (1966) Reactions to incongruent self experiences *Journal of Consulting Psychology, 30*, 246–252

Creswell, J D, Welch, W T, Taylor, S E, Sherman, D K, Gruenewald, T L, & Mann, T (2005) Affirmation of personal values buffers neuroendocrine and psychological stress responses *Psychological Science, 16*, 846–851

Critcher, C R, Helzer, E G, & Dunning, D (2011) Self-enhancement via redefinition Defining social concepts to ensure positive views of self In M D Alicke & C Sedikides (Eds), *The handbook of self-enhancement and self-protection* (pp 69–91) New York Guilford Press

Crocker, J, Voelkl, K, Testa, M, & Major, B (1991) Social stigma The affective consequences of attributional ambiguity *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*, 218–228

Cross, P (1977) Not can but will college teachers be improved? *New Directions for Higher Education, 17*, 1–15

Davison, W P (1983) The third-person effect in communication *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 47, 1–15

D'Argembeau, A, & Van der Linden, M (2008) Remembering pride and shame Self-enhancement and the phenomenology of autobiographical memory *Memory, 16*, 538–547

De Michele, P E, Gansneder, B, & Solomon, G B (1998) Success and failure attributions of wrestlers Further evidence of the self-serving bias *Journal of Sport Behavior, 21*, 242–255

DeVellis, R F, Holt, K, Renner, B R, Blalock, S J, Blanchard, L W, Cook, H L, Harring, K (1990) The relationship of social comparison to rheumatoid arthritis symptoms and affect *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 11*, 1–18

De Witt, N W (1973) *Epicurus and his philosophy* Westport, CT Greenwood Publishing Group

Dunning, D, Heath, C, & Suls, J M (2004) Flawed self-assessment Implications for health, education, and the workplace *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 5*, 69–106

Dunning, D, Leuenberger, A, & Sherman, D A (1995) A new look at motivated inference Are self-serving theories of success a product of motivational forces? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*, 58–68

Elliot, A J, & Mapes, R R (2005) Approach-avoidance motivation and self-concept evaluation In A Tesser, J V Wood, & D A Stapel (Eds), *On building, defending and regulating the self A psychological perspective* (pp 171–196) New York Psychology Press

Field, D (1981) Retrospective reports by healthy intelligent elderly people of personal events of their adult lives *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 4*, 77–97

Field, D (1997) "Looking back, what period of your life brought you the most satisfaction?" *International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 45*, 169–194

Forsyth, D R, & Schlenker, B R (1985) Attributing the causes of group performance Effects of performance quality, task importance, and future testing *Journal of Personality, 45* 220–236

Freedman, J (1978) *Happy people What happiness is, who has it and why* New York Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

Freud, A (1946) *The ego and the mechanisms of defense* New York International Universities Press (Originally work published in 1936)

Freud, S (1961a) Three essays on the theory of sexuality In J Strachey (Ed & Trans), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol 19 pp 3–66) London, England Hogarth Press (Original work published 1905)

Freud, S (1961b) Instincts and their vicissitudes In J Strachey (Ed & Trans), *The standard edition of the complete works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol 14, pp 111–142) London England Hogarth Press (Original work published in 1915)

Freud, S (1961c) The ego and the id In J Strachey (Ed & Trans), *The standard edition of the complete works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol 19, pp 12–66) London, England Hogarth Press (Original work published in 1923)

Freud, S (1961d) Inhibitions, symptoms, and anxiety In J Strachey (Ed & Trans), *The standard edition of the complete works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol 20, pp 77–178) London England Hogarth Press (Original work published in 1926)

Gaertner, L, Sedikides, C, & Chang, K (2008) On pancultural self-enhancement Well-adjusted Taiwanese self enhance on personally-valued traits *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 39*, 463–477

Giladi, E E, & Klar, Y (2002) When standards are wide of the mark Nonselective superiority and bias in comparative judgments of objects and concepts *Journal of Experimental Psychology General, 131*, 538–551

Gosling, S D, John, O P, Craik, K H, & Robins, R W (1998) Do people know how they behave? Self-reported act frequencies compared with on-line codings by observers *Journal Personality and Social Psychology, 74*, 1337–1349

Gramzow, R H (2011) Academic exaggeration Pushing self enhancement boundaries In M D Alicke & C Sedikides (Eds), *The handbook of self-enhancement and self-protection* (pp 455–471) New York Guilford Press

Gramzow, R H, & Willard, G (2006) Exaggerating current and past performance Motivated self-enhancement versus reconstructive memory *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 32*, 1114–1125

Green, J D, Pinter, B, & Sedikides, C (2005) Mnemic neglect and self-threat Trait modifiability moderates self-protection *European Journal of Social Psychology, 35*, 225–235

Green, J D, & Sedikides, C (2004) Retrieval selectivity in the processing of self-referent information Testing the boundaries of self-protection *Self and Identity, 3*, 69–80

Green, J D, Sedikides, C, & Gregg, A P (2008) Forgotten but not gone The recall and recognition of self-threatening memories *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 44* 547–561

Green, J D, Sedikides, C, Pinter, B, & Van Tongeren, D R (2009) Two sides to self-protection Self improvement

strivings and feedback from close relationships eliminate mnemic neglect. *Self and Identity, 8*, 233–250.

Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Solomon, S. (1982). The self-serving attributional bias: Beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 18*, 56–67.

Gregg, A. P., & Sedikides, C. (2010). Narcissistic fragility: Rethinking its links to explicit and implicit self-esteem. *Self and Identity, 9*, 142–161.

Gregg, A. P., Sedikides, C., & Gebauer, J. E. (2011). Dynamics of identity: Between self-enhancement and self-assessment. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (Vol. 1, pp. 305–327). New York: Springer.

Guenther, C. (2011). *Self-affirmation and the better-than-average effect*. Manuscript submitted for publication, Creighton University.

Guenther, C. L., & Alicke, M. D. (2010). Deconstructing the better-than-average effect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 99*, 755–770.

Gupta, S., & Bonanno, G. A. (2010). Trait self-enhancement as a buffer against potentially traumatic events: A prospective study. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 2*, 83–92.

Haslam, N., Bain, P., Douge, L., Lee, M., & Bastian, B. (2005). More human than you: Attributing humanness to self and others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98*, 937–950.

Heady, B., & Wearing, A. (1988). The sense of relative superiority—central to well-being. *Social Indicators Research, 20*, 497–516.

Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. New York: Wiley.

Hepper, E. G., Gramzow, R., & Sedikides, C. (2010). Individual differences in self-enhancement and self-protection strategies: An integrative analysis. *Journal of Personality, 78*, 781–814.

Hepper, E. G., Sedikides, C., & Cai, H. (in press). Self-enhancement and self-protection strategies in China: Cultural expressions of a fundamental human motive. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*.

Hobbes, T. (1991). *Leviathan*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1651).

House, W. C. (1980). Effects of knowledge that attributions will be observed by others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 14*, 528–545.

Isen, A. M., & Means, B. (1983). The influence of positive affect on decision-making strategies. *Social Cognition, 2*, 18–31.

James, W. (1890). Principles of psychology (Vols. 1–2). New York: Holt.

Janoff-Bulman, R. (1992). *Shattered assumptions: Towards a new psychology of trauma*. New York: Free Press.

Juhl, J., Routledge, C., Arndt, J., Sedikides, C., & Wildschut, T. (2010). Fighting the future with the past: On the death-anxiety buffering function of nostalgia. *Journal of Research in Personality, 44*, 309–314.

Karylowski, J. (1990). Social reference points and accessibility of trait-related information in self-other comparisons. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*, 975–983.

Karylowski, J., & Skarzynska, K. (1992). Asymmetric self-other similarity judgments depend on priming self-knowledge. *Social Cognition, 10*, 235–254.

Kelley, H. H., & Michela, J. L. (1980). Attribution theory and research. *Annual Review of Psychology, 31*, 457–501.

Kenny, A. (1986). *Rationalism, empiricism and idealism*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Kernis, H. H., Cornell, D. P., Sun, C-R., Berry, A., & Harlow, T. (1993). There's more to self-esteem than whether it's high or low: The importance of stability of self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*, 1190–1204.

Klar, Y. (2002). Way beyond compare: Nonselective superiority and inferiority biases in judging randomly assigned group members relative to their peers. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 38*, 331–351.

Klar, Y., & Giladi, E. E. (1997). No one in my group can be below the group's average: A robust positivity bias in favor of anonymous peers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*, 885–901.

Kobayashi, C., & Brown, J. D. (2003). Self-esteem and self-enhancement in Japan and America. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 34*, 567–580.

Kruger, J. (1999). Lake Wobegon be gone! The "below-average effect" and the egocentric nature of comparative ability judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*, 221–232.

Kruger, J., & Gilovich, T. (2004). Actions, intentions, and self-assessment: The road to self-enhancement is paved with good intentions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 30*, 328–339.

Kruglanski, A. W. (1989). *Lay epistemics and human knowledge: Cognitive and motivational biases*. New York: Plenum Press.

Kunda, Z. (1990). The case for motivated reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin, 108*, 480–498.

Kurman, J. (2002). Measured cross-cultural differences in self-enhancement and the sensitivity of the self-enhancement measure to the modesty response. *Cross-Cultural Research, 36*, 73–95.

Kurman, J., & Sriram, N. (1997). Self-enhancement, generality of self-evaluation, and affectivity in Israel and Singapore. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 28*, 421–441.

Kwon, Y., Scheibe, S., Samanez-Larkin, G. R., Tsai, J. L. & Carstensen, L. L. (2009). Replicating the positivity effect in picture memory in Koreans: Evidence for cross-cultural generalizability. *Psychology and Aging, 24*, 748–754.

La Rochefoucauld, F. (1827). *Reflections: Or sentences and moral maxims* (J. W. W. Bund & J. H. Friswell, Trans.). London, England: Simpson, Low, Son, & Marston. (Original work published 1678).

Landau, J. D, & Gunter, B. C. (2009). "Don't worry; you really will get over it": Methodological investigations of the fading affect bias. *American Journal of Psychology, 122*, 209–217.

Langens, T. A., & Moerth, S. (2003). Repressive coping and the use of passive and active coping strategies. *Personality and Individual Differences, 35*, 461–473.

Loeb, L. (1981). *From Descartes to Hume: Continental metaphysics and the development of modern philosophy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Macfarlane, A. (1978). *The origins of English individualism: The family, property, and social transition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mandeville, B. (1705). *The fable of the bees: or private vices, public benefits* (Vol. 1). Oxford, England: Clarendon Press.

Marshall, M. A., & Brown, J. D. (2007). On the psychological benefits of self-enhancement. In E. Chang (Ed.), *Self-enhancement and self-criticism: Theory, research, and clinical implications* (pp. 19–35). New York: American Psychological Association.

McFarland, C , & Ross, M (1982) Impact of causal attributions on affective reactions to success and failure *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45*, 937–946

McNally, R J (2003) *Remembering trauma* Cambridge, MA Belknap Press/Harvard University Press

Mednick, S A (1962) The associative basis of the creative process *Psychological Review, 69*, 220–232

Messick, D M , Bloom, S , Boldizar, J P, & Samuelson, C D (1985) Why are we fairer than others? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 21*, 480–500

Mezulis, A H , Abramson, L Y, Hyde, J S , & Hankin, B L (2004) Is there a universal positive bias in attributions? A meta-analytic review of individual, developmental, and cultural differences in the self-serving attributional bias *Psychological Bulletin, 130*, 711–747

Mill, J S (2004) *Utilitarianism* Adelaide, Australia ebooks@ Adelaide Retrieved July 2011, from, http //etext library adelaide edu au/m/mill/john_stuart/m645u/ (Original work published 1863)

Miller, D T (1976) Ego involvement and attributions for success and failure *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 34*, 901–906

Miller, D T (1978) What constitutes a self-serving attributional bias? A reply to Bradley *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36*, 1221–1223

Miller, D T , & Ross, M (1975) Self-serving bias in the attribution of causality Fact or fiction? *Psychological Bulletin, 82*, 213–225

Miller, R S , & Schlenker, B R (1985) Egotism in group members Public and private attributions of responsibility for group performance *Social Psychology Quarterly, 48*, 85–89

Mischel, W , Ebbesen, E B , & Zeiss, A R (1976) Determinants of selective memory about the self *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 44*, 92–103

Moore, D A (2007) Not so above average after all When people believe they are worse than average and its implications for theories of bias in social comparison *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 102*, 42–58

Moore, D A , & Kim, T G (2003) Myopic social prediction and the solo comparison effect *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*, 1121–1135

Murray, S L , & Holmes, J G (1993) Seeing virtues in faults Negativity and the transformation of interpersonal narratives in close relationships *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*, 707–722

Mullen, B , & Riordan, C A (1988) Self-serving attributions for performance in naturalistic settings A meta-analytic review *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 18*, 3–22

Nesselroade, K P, Beggan, J K , & Allison, S T (1999) Possession enhancement in an interpersonal context An extension of the mere ownership effect *Psychology and Marketing, 16*, 21–34

Newman, L S , Nibert, J A , & Winer, E S (2009) Mnemic neglect is not an artifact of expectancy The moderating role of defensive pessimism *European Journal of Social Psychology, 39*, 477–486

Newton, T L , & Contrada, R L (1992) Repressive coping and verbal-autonomic dissociation The influence of social context *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62*, 159–167

Nietzsche, F (1972) *Beyond good and evil* (R J Hollongdale, Trans) London, England Penguin Books (Original work published 1886)

Ogilvie, D M (1987) The undesired self A neglected variable in personality research *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*, 379–385

O'Mara, E M , Gaertner, L , Sedikides, C , Zhou, X., & Liu, Y (2010) An experimental test of the panculturality of self enhancement Self-enhancement promotes psychological well-being both in the West and the East Manuscript submitted for publication, University of Dayton

Otten, W, & van der Pligt, J (1996) Context effects in the measurement of comparative optimism in probability judgments *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 15*, 80–101

Pahl, S , & Eiser, J R (2006) The focus effect and self-positivity in ratings of self-other similarity and difference *British Journal of Social Psychology, 45*, 107–116

Pahl, S , & Eiser, J R (2007) How malleable is comparative self-positivity? The effects of manipulating judgemental focus and accessibility *European Journal of Social Psychology 37*, 617–627

Paulhus, D L (1993) Bypassing the will The automatization of affirmations In D M Wegner & J M Pennebaker (Eds) *Handbook of mental control* (pp 573–587) Englewood Cliffs NJ Prentice Hall

Peterson, C , & Barrett, L C (1987) Explanatory style and academic performance among university freshmen *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*, 603–607

Peterson, C , & Seligman, M E (1987) Explanatory style and illness *Journal of Personality, 55*, 237–265

Peterson, C , Seligman, M E , & Vaillant, G E (1998) Pessimistic explanatory style is a risk factor for physical illness A thirty-five-year longitudinal study *Journal of Personality* 55, 23–27

Preston, C E , & Harris, S (1965) Psychology of drivers in traffic accidents *Journal of Applied Psychology, 49* 284–288

Preuss, G S , & Alicke, M D (2009) Everybody loves me Self evaluations and metaperceptions of dating popularity *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*, 937–950

Pronin, E , Lin, D Y, & Ross, L (2002) The bias blind spot Perceptions of bias in self versus others *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 3*, 369–381

Pyszczynski, T , & Greenberg, J (1987) Toward an integration of cognitive and motivational perspectives on social inference A biased hypothesis-testing model *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 20*, 297–340

Reeder, G D , & Brewer, M B (1979) A schematic model of dispositional attribution in interpersonal perception *Psychological Review, 86*, 61–79

Ritchie, T , Skowronski, J J , Hartnett, J Wells B , & Walker, W R (2009) The fading affect bias in the context of emotion activation level, mood, and personal theories of emotion change *Memory, 17*, 428–444

Rizley, R (1978) Depression and distortion in the attribution of causality *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 87*, 32–48

Roese, N J , & Olson, J M (2007) Better, stronger, faster Self-serving judgment, affect regulation, and the optimal vigilance hypothesis *Perspectives on Psychological Science 2*, 124–141

Rogers, C R (1961) *On becoming a person* Boston, MA Houghton Mifflin

Ross, M , & Wilson, A E (2002) It feels like yesterday Self-esteem, valence of personal past experiences, and judgments of subjective distance *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*, 792–803

Ross, M , McFarland, C , & Fletcher, G J (1981) The effect of attitude on the recall of personal histories *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 40*, 627–634

Rothbart, M , & Park, B (1986) On the confirmability and disconfirmability of trait concepts *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*, 131–142

Rothbaum, F , Weisz, J R , & Snyder, S S (1982) Changing the world and changing the self A two-process model of perceived control *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 42*, 5–37

Routledge, C , Arndt, J , Wildschut, T , Sedikides, C , Hart, C M , Juhl, J , & Vingerhoets, A , & Schlotz, W (2011) The past makes the present meaningful Nostalgia as an existential resource *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101*, 638–652

Rusbult, C E , Van Lange, P A M , Wildschut, T , Yovetich, N A , & Verette, J (2000) Perceived superiority in close relationships Why it exists and persists *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 521–545

Russell, B (1943) *An outline of intellectual rubbish* Girard, KS Haldeman Julius

Sande, G , Goethals, G , & Radloff, C (1988) Perceiving one's own traits and others' The multifaceted self *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*, 13–20

Sanitioso, R , Kunda, Z , & Fong, G T (1990) Motivated recruitment of autobiographical memories *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*, 229–241

Sanitioso, B R , & Niedenthal, P M (2006) Motivated self-perception and perceived ease in recall of autobiographical memories *Self and Identity, 5*, 73–84

Schopenhauer, A (1996) *The world as will and representation* (Vol 2, E F J Payne, Trans) New York Dover Publications (Original work published 1844)

Schrauf, R W, & Hoffman, L (2007) The effects of revisionism on remembered emotion The valence of older, voluntary immigrants' pre-migration autobiographical memories *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 21*, 895–913

Schulz, R , & Fritz, S (1987) Origins of stereotypes of the elderly An experimental study of the self-other discrepancy *Experimental Aging Research, 13*, 189–195

Schwartz, R M (1986) The internal dialogue On the asymmetry between positive and negative coping thoughts *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 10*, 591–605

Sedikides, C (1993) Assessment, enhancement, and verification determinants of the self-evaluation process *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*, 317–338

Sedikides C (2012) Self-protection In M R Leary & J P Tangney (Eds), *Handbook of self and identity* (2nd ed) (pp 327–353) New York Guilford Press

Sedikides, C , Campbell, W K , Reeder, G , & Elliot, A J (1998) The self serving bias in relational context *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*, 378–386

Sedikides, C , Gaertner, L , & Toguchi, Y (2003) Pancultural self enhancement *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 60–70

Sedikides, C , Gaertner, L , & Vevea, J L (2005) Pancultural self-enhancement reloaded A meta-analytic reply to Heine (2005) *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89*, 539–551

Sedikides, C , Gaertner, L , & Vevea, J L (2007) Inclusion of theory relevant moderators yield the same conclusions as Sedikides, Gaertner, and Vevea (2005) A meta-analytic reply to Heine, Kitayama, and Hamamura (2007) *Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 10*, 59–67

Sedikides, C , & Gebauer, J E (2010) Religiosity as self enhancement A meta-analysis of the relation between socially desirable responding and religiosity *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 14*, 17–36

Sedikides, C , & Green, J D (2000) On the self-protective nature of inconsistency/negativity management Using the person memory paradigm to examine self-referent memory *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 906–922

Sedikides, C , & Green, J D (2004) What I don't recall can't hurt me Information negativity versus information inconsistency as determinants of memorial self-defense *Social Cognition, 22*, 4–29

Sedikides, C , & Green, J D (2009) Memory as a self-protective mechanism *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 3*, 1055–1068

Sedikides, C , Green, J D , & Pinter, B (2004) Self-protective memory In D R Beike, J M Lampinen, & D A Behrend (Eds), *The self and memory* (pp 161–179) Philadelphia, PA Psychology Press

Sedikides, C , & Gregg, A P (2003) Portraits of the self In M A Hogg & J Cooper (Eds), *Sage handbook of social psychology* (pp 110–138) London, England Sage Publications

Sedikides, C , & Gregg, A P (2008) Self-enhancement Food for thought *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3*, 102–116

Sedikides, C , Gregg, A P, & Hart, C M (2007) The importance of being modest In C Sedikides & S Spencer (Eds), *The self Frontiers in social psychology* (pp 163–184) New York Psychology Press

Sedikides, C , & Hepper, E G D (2009) Self-improvement *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 3*, 899–917

Sedikides, C , & Strube, M (1995) The multiply motivated self *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 21*, 1330–1335

Sedikides, C , & Strube, M J (1997) Self-evaluation To thine own self be good, to thine own self be sure, to thine own self be true, and to thine own self be better In M P Zanna (Ed), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 29*, 209–269 New York Academic Press

Sedikides, C , Wildschut, T , Gaertner, L , Routledge, C , & Arndt, J (2008) Nostalgia as enabler of self-continuity In F Sani (Ed), *Self-continuity Individual and collective perspectives* (pp 227–239) New York Psychology Press

Seligman, M E , Nolen-Hoeksema, S , Thornton, N , & Thornton, K M (1990) Explanatory style as a mechanism of disappointing athletic performance *Psychological Science, 1*, 143–146

Sherman, D K , & Hartson, K A (2011) Reconciling self-protection with self-criticism Self-affirmation theory In M D Alicke & C Sedikides (Eds), *The handbook of self-enhancement and self-protection* (pp 128–151) New York Guilford Press

Sherman, D K , & Kim, H S (2005) Is there an "I" in "Team"? The role of the self in group-serving judgments *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*, 108–120

Skowronski, J J (2011) The positivity bias and the fading affect bias in autobiographical memory A self-motives perspective In M D Alicke & C Sedikides (Eds), *The handbook of self-enhancement and self-protection* (pp 211–231) New York Guilford Press

Skowronski, J J , Betz, A L , Thompson, C P, & Shannon, L (1991) Social memory in everyday life Recall of self-events and other-events *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*, 831–843

Stephan, E , Sedikides, C , Wildschut, T , & Routledge, C , Zhou, X , Kuang, L , & Vingerhoets, J J M (2011) *Nostalgia regulates avoidance and approach motivation* Unpublished manuscript, University of Southampton

Stewart, A. E (2005) Attributions of responsibility for motor vehicle crashes *Accident Analysis and Prevention, 37*, 681–688

Swann, W B , Jr , Rentfrow, P J , & Guinn, J (2003) S elf-verification The search for coherence In M Leary & J Tangney (Eds), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp 367–383) New York Guilford

Sweeney, P D , Anderson, K , & Bailey, S (1986) Attributional style m depression A meta-analytic review *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*, 974–991

Tatarkiewicz, W (1976) *Analysis of happiness* Warsaw, Poland Polish Scientific Publishers

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

Taylor, S E , Klein, L C , Lewis, B P, Gruenewald, T L , Gurung, R A R , & Updegraff, J A (2000) Biobehavioral responses to stress in females Tend-and-befriend, not fight-or-flight *Psychological Review, 107*, 411–429

Taylor, S E , Lerner, J S , Sherman, D K , Sage, R M , & McDowell, N K (2003a) Portrait of the self-enhancer Well-adjusted and well-liked or maladjusted and friendless? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 165–176

Taylor, S E , Lerner, J S , Sherman, D K , Sage, R M , & McDowell, N K (2003b) Are self-enhancing cognitions associated with healthy or unhealthy biological profiles? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*, 605–615

Tennen, H , & Herzberger, S (1987) Depression, self-esteem, and the absence of self-protective attributional biases *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*, 72–80

Tetlock, P E , & Levin, A (1982) Attribution bias On the inconclusiveness of the cognition-motivation debate *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 18*, 68–88

Thompson, C P, Skowronski, J J , Larsen, S F, & Betz, A (1996) *Autobiographical memory Remembering what and remembering when* New York Erlbaum

Van Lange, P A M , Rusbult, C E , Semin-Goossens, A , Goerts, C A, & Stalpers, M (1999) Being better than others but otherwise perfectly normal Perceptions of uniqueness and similarity in close relationships *Personal Relationships, 6*, 269–289

Van Lange, P A M , & Sedikides, C (1998) Being more honest but not necessarily more intelligent than others Generality and explanations for the Muhammad Ali effect *European Journal of Social Psychology, 28*, 675–680

Van Lange, P A M , Taris, T W, & Vonk, R (1997) The social psychology of social psychologists Self-enhancing beliefs about own research *European Journal of Social Psychology, 27*, 675–685

Wagenaar, W A , & Groeneweg, J (1990) The memory of concentration camp survivors *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 4*, 77–87

Walker, W R , & Skowronski, J J (2009) The Fading Affect Bias But what the hell is it for? *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 23*, 1122–1136

Walker, W R , Skowronski, J J , Gibbons, J A , Vogl, R J , & Thompson, C P (2003) On the emotions accompanying autobiographical memory Dysphoria disrupts the fading affect bias *Cognition and Emotion, 17*, 703–724

Walker, W R , Skowronski, J J , & Thompson, C P (2003) Life is pleasant—and memory helps to keep it that way *Review of General Psychology, 7*, 203–210

Weary, G (1979) Self-serving biases in attribution process A re-examination of the fact or fiction question *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36*, 56–71

Weary Bradley, G (1978) Self-serving attributional biases Perceptual or response distortions? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37*, 1418–1420

Weiner, B (1972) *Theories of motivation From mechanism to cognition* Chicago, IL Rand McNally

Weiner, P S (1964) Personality correlates of self-appraisal in four-year-old children *Genetic Psychologic Monographs, 70* 329–365

Weinstein, N D (1980) Optimistic biases about personal risks *Science, 246*, 1232–1233

Wiesenfeld, B , Brockner, J , Petzall, B , Wolf, R , & Bailey, J (2001) Stress and coping among layoff survivors A self affirmation analysis *Anxiety, Stress and Coping, 1* 15–34

Wildschut, T , Sedikides, C , Arndt, J , & Routledge, C D (2006) Nostalgia Content, triggers, functions *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91*, 975–993

Williams, E F, & Gilovich, T (2008) Do people really believe they are above average? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 44*, 1121–1128

Williams, J M G , Barnhofer, T , Crane, C , Hermans D Raes, F, Watkins, E , & Dalgeish, T (2007) Autobiographical memory specificity and emotional disorder *Psychological Bulletin, 133*, 122–148

Wilson, A E , Smith, M D , Ross, H S , & Ross M (2004) Young children's personal accounts of their sibling disputes *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 50*, 39–60

Windschitl, P D , Kruger, J , & Sims, E N (2003) The influence of egocentrism and focalism on people's optimism and competition When what affects us equally affects me more *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*, 389–408

Wright, S S (2000) Looking at the self in a rose colored mirror Unrealistically positive self-views and academic performance *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 19*, 451–462

Wyer, R S , & Frey, D (1983) The effects of feedback about self and others on the recall and judgments of feedback relevant information *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 19* 540–559

Yarrow, M R , Campbell, J D , & Burton, R V (1970) Recollections of childhood A study of the retrospective method *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 35*, 1–83

Zauberman, G , Ratner, R K , & Kim, K (2009) Memories as assets Strategic memory protection in choice over time *Journal of Consumer Research, 35*, 715–728

Zuckerman, M (1979) Attribution of success and failure revisited, or The motivational bias is alive and well in attributional theory *Journal of Personality, 47*, 245–287

Zuckerman, M , & O'Loughlin, R E (2006) Self-enhancement by social comparison A prospective analysis *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 32*, 751–760