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Introduction to New Directions in Theory and Research of the Developing Self

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After a lengthy period of exile from psychology, the concept of the self has re-emerged as a central focus of psychological research and theory. The renewed status of the self is evident across different areas of psychology (e.g., social, developmental, clinical), and across research examining different periods of development (i.e., childhood, adolescence, adulthood). Developmental psychologists have been eager to add to our understanding of the self (e.g., Harter, 1983, 1998; Kagan, 1989; Leahy, 1985; Suls & Greenwald, 1985). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, we witnessed the emergence of multidimensional models of the self (e.g., Damon & Hart, 1982; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976) and with them new domain-specific approaches to self-assessment (e.g., Harter, 1982, 1983, 1985; Marsh, 1988; Marsh, Barnes, Cairns, & Tidman, 1984; Marsh, Smith, & Barnes, 1983). Contemporary views of the self also led to a greater appreciation of the diversity of the self-system as concepts were advanced, such as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995), self-evaluation (Taylor, Neter, & Wayment, 1995; Tesser, 1988), self-monitoring (Snyder, 1979), self-continuity (Markus & Wurf, 1987), and self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Heckhausen & Dweck, 1998; Higgins, 1996). Coupled with these developments were research find-

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ings showing the impact of maltreatment and adversity on the development of self and the consequences of impairment for developmental psychopathology (Cicchetti, 1991; Schneider-Rosen & Cicchetti, 1991). As we come to the close of the 1990s, the time has come to take stock of and examine recent advances, both methodological and theoretical, in our current understanding of the development of the self. What is our current view of the self and of self-development? This is the focus of our special issue—to present recent, innovative advances in developmental approaches to understanding the self.

Perhaps the single most notable characteristic of research over the past quarter century is the move toward understanding self-development as complex and multifaceted. The field has moved increasingly toward models that capture the various and diverse ways in which the self becomes differentiated. For example, contemporary models of self-development describe the shift toward increasing differentiation between domains of self-representation and complexity in self-organization. Developmental shifts in cognitive representational capacity also give rise to the capacity to view the self from diverse standpoints or perspectives (e.g., the self in the perspective of one's parents vs. one's peers) and to contrast one's sense of self in one relationship versus another. Recognizing the complexity of self-development has prompted researchers to develop new methodologies and measurement instruments that are sensitive to the multifaceted nature of the self.

The papers contained in this special issue illustrate novel approaches to understanding and investigating the complexity of self-development. The papers fall naturally into two general camps. The first set of three empirical papers are concerned with issues in the assessment of self. Since the early 1960s, Ruth Wylie's (1961; 1974; 1979; 1989) critical reviews have repeatedly drawn our attention to the problems inherent in measuring the self and self-concept. The assessment of self in young children has been particularly difficult. It is not surprising that the most often used multidimensional measures of self-concept (Harter, 1985; Marsh, 1988) are appropriate for use with elementary school age children in the second or third grades or older. Despite efforts to develop assessment instruments for younger children (e.g., Eder, 1990; Harter & Pike, 1984), the measurement of self in preschool and early elementary school age children has been difficult and the resulting measures show only limited psychometric quality.

The assessment of self in infants and toddlers has been even more elusive, and until recently has been characterized as unidimensional, with different researchers addressing very distinct aspects of early self-de-

velopment without any unifying developmental perspective on the emergence of self. However, Stipek, Gralinski, and Kopp (1990) have proposed a developmental sequence in which they attempt to coordinate the emergence of multiple aspects of self with the development of various psychological processes across the early childhood period. In the present volume, DesRosiers, Vrsalovic, Knauf, Vargas, and Busch-Rossnagel have extended the work of Stipek and her colleagues in attempting to develop psychometrically sound procedures for assessing this proposed sequence of early self-development. Specifically, DesRosiers and colleagues have developed both observational and caregiver report procedures for assessing six different domains of self in young children: perceptual self-recognition, cognitive self-representation, linguistic self-description, motivational self-assertion, emotional self-evaluation, and social self-regulation. In a sample of children ranging in age from 6 to 66 months, they consider evidence for the reliability and validity of both a maternal report measure, the Caregiver Inventory of Self Concept (CISC), and an observational procedure, the Tasks for Observation of Self Concept (TOSC), designed to assess younger children's self-development. Their findings regarding the developmental progression of self-behavior, coupled with that of Stipek et al. (1990), clearly suggests that the 2.5 to 3.5 year period is an extremely important one for the emergence of self. Moreover, their efforts to fill a critical gap in research on the assessment of self are extremely promising and have the potential to facilitate future research on the development of self in very young children.

Moving beyond the early years, two other papers in this special issue address the assessment of self-concept in school-age children, a period that has perhaps received the greatest attention in research on the development and measurement of self. Although the psychometric quality of recently developed multidimensional measures of self-concept for school-age children has been well documented (see Byrne, 1996, and Wylie, 1989, for reviews), assessment issues remain. Since the 1980s, one of the leading researchers in this area, Herbert Marsh, has developed an extensive program of research on the development of self-concept during the school years, with particular interest in demonstrating the domain-specific nature of children's academic self-concept. In his Self Description Questionnaire (SDQ), currently one of the most widely used measures of self-concept in children, Marsh has demonstrated the utility and importance of distinguishing between children's reading and math self-concepts within the academic domain. In the present volume, Marsh addresses the distinctiveness of two other components of elementary school children's academic self-concept: feelings of competence

versus affect. The distinction between competency items (addressing perceptions of being "good at," "working easily in," or "getting good marks in" a particular domain) and affect or task value items (addressing feelings of interest, enjoyment, engagement in a particular domain) is emphasized in various theories of academic motivation, with intrinsic motivation (defined in terms of affective constructs such as interest, curiosity, liking) both leading to and following from perceptions of competence in a given area. In this special issue, Marsh provides in-depth analyses of both cross-sectional and longitudinal data on large samples of students and examines the degree to which competency and affect are related, but nevertheless distinguishable. As Marsh notes, these findings have important educational implications in that they suggest that teachers who want to enhance students' academic self-concept need to consider and target both competence and affective aspects of the self.

Hymel, LeMare, Ditner and Woody (this issue) also consider the more recent, domain-specific measures of self-concept, but address the question of whether different approaches to the measurement of self-concept yield the same picture of children's self-perceptions in various domains. In an initial study of preadolescent children, they compared two of the most widely-used multidimensional self-concept measures, the Self Description Questionnaire (SDQ-1, Marsh et al., 1983; Marsh, 1988) and the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC, Harter, 1982,1985) across five common domains (academics, athletics, appearance, social/peer relations, and general self-worth). Results verified the comparability and strong psychometric characteristics of these two scales, but also reveal some interesting differences in the correspondence between self and other evaluations across content domains. In a second study, Hymel et al. compared a wider variety of assessment approaches, including the SDQ as well as open-ended interviews and two different types of self-ratings. The results indicated a rather striking pattern of differences as a function of the domain being tapped. Specifically, the correspondence between different assessments of self *and* between self and other perceptions varied considerably across domains. This pattern of differential correspondence across domains was not attributable to the consistency of others' perceptions but may well be due to the nature of the cues children utilize in assessing their own competencies. The findings suggest that children do not process information about the self in the same way across domains, and that future researchers need to consider domain-specific variations not only in the assessment of self, but in the unique ways in which children determine their own self-evaluations.

Taken together, these three papers support Marsh's contention (Marsh, 1990; 1993; 1999) that "theory building, instrument construction, and research are inexorably intertwined" (this issue, p. 569). The move to multidimensional conceptions of the self has led to a greater appreciation of the complexities of self-development and to new challenges in the assessment of self. These challenges appeared to be readily addressed in the 1980s with regard to the assessment of self-concept in school-age children, but the evaluation of self in younger children has been more perplexing. Recent theoretical advances (e.g., Stipek et al., 1990) and innovative approaches to measurement by DesRosiers et al. in this issue have paved the way for multidimensional evaluations of self in young children, which in turn will make continued research on the development of self in the preschool years possible. At the same time, as we begin to unravel the complexities of self-assessment, our theories of the structure and development of the self have been refined by Marsh and new questions about the processes involved in self-assessment have been raised by Hymel et al. in this volume.

The second group of papers are focused on the construing of self-development within a social and interpersonal sphere. Increasingly, researchers have recognized the need to conceptualize and study self-development within an interpersonal context, and to understand the dynamic relationship between internal representations of self and interpersonal interactions in the real world. Three papers within this special issue are addressed to the consequences of self-development within an interpersonal context for how the self becomes differentiated and the liabilities that may occur as a consequence.

The view that the self, and self-development, is interpersonal in nature has a long and rich history in psychology. The classic works of James (1890/1950), Baldwin (1911), Cooley (1902/1964) and Mead (1934) paint a picture of self-development within the context of diverse interpersonal relationships. Over time our reflections of ourselves within interpersonal relationships become internalized and integrated into a sense of self. Symbolic interactionists argue that we come to see ourselves as others see us, grooming and tailoring who we are to better fit within our interpersonal niche. The interpersonal world in which the self develops contains both intimate, close relationships and the broader social context, as reflected by interpersonal theories of self-development such as those proposed by Harry Stack Sullivan (1953) and Karen Horney (1946). Sullivan (1953) focused on the impact of significant relationships on self-development in children, and argued that the self emerged from the "reflected appraisals" of parenting figures. If parental appraisals are associated with

high levels of anxiety and lack of acceptance, self-integration is poor. Similarly, Horney proposed that children exposed to low levels of parental acceptance develop interpersonal and intrapersonal strategies to camouflage their "real self" in order to maintain connectedness with others. These strategies range from attempting to adopt a self that is believed desirable by others ("moving toward others"), to aggressively rejecting the inferred demands of others ("moving against others"), or simply giving up the struggle for acceptance of the real self ("moving away from others"). Although each of these strategies was associated with distinct interpersonal patterns of behavior, they shared a common lack of acceptance of the "real self."

These classic theories of self-development are revisited in Harter's contribution to this special issue. Her work illustrates how contemporary psychologists can draw on these concepts to better understand self-development, and how classic theories can be recast in light of contemporary knowledge of child development and subjected to rigorous empirical examination. In doing so, Harter provides a bridge from social psychology—symbolic interactionism—and psychodynamic theories of personality development to contemporary models of self-development. Specifically, Harter addresses the question of whether the emergence of the self within the "crucible" of interaction experiences carries potential liabilities that can undermine healthy self-development. She shows how different sources of self-reflections—reflections within very close, significant relationships, and reflections within the larger social context—each play a role in determining how children see themselves and how they value who they are. And, like Karen Horney (1946), Harter argues that children who believe that their real self is not acceptable engage in "false self" behavior, which over time can lead to confusion about who one really is. Harter's work also reminds us that the impact of close, intimate relationships versus the larger social context depends on the developmental level of the child. The significance of these sources of information about the self depends not only on the relative capacity of children to represent and contrast diverse sources of self-relevant information, but also on social role changes and the consequences that this has for the significance of different sources of information.

The integration of classic concepts of self-development also is apparent in the present paper by Moretti and Wiebe. This work is focused on the challenge of adolescence in terms of differentiating and integrating which values and goals will be adopted as one's own and which will remain the "felt presence of others" within the self. Adolescence ushers in new abilities in the capacity to represent multiple perspectives on the self

and contributes to a more highly differentiated view of the self. As adolescents enter new social roles and take on new social responsibilities, they come to view the self from increasingly diverse and potentially conflicting perspectives. Drawing on psychodynamic theories of self-development and contemporary models from social psychology, Moretti and Wiebe recast the concept of internalization and examine the consequences of adolescents' differentiating between the standards, values, and goals that they hold for themselves from the standards that others hold for them. The authors show that psychological importance of the "internal audience" depends on the extent to which it is accepted as one's own. Moreover, their work suggests that gender may be an important variable in determining the psychological relevance of others' standards for the self, and that this link may be due to gender-typed socialization.

The papers by Harter and Moretti and Wiebe highlight the need to consider the impact of close relationships on the development of self as well as the impact of the larger social context. These factors will continue to be important considerations in future research. In addition, these authors discuss the various shifts in self-representation and self-regulatory orientation that occur during adolescence. Longitudinal studies of changes in the self within the context of significant changes in interpersonal and social relationships also are important in better understanding the dynamic relationship between social context and self-development.

In contrast to Harter and Moretti and Wiebe, who focus on internal representations of self and other, Cillessen and Bellmore examine how self-concept is linked to peer interactions in the real world. The question of whether self-concept is a function of others' reflections of the self has been of long-standing interest to psychologists. Cillessen and Bellmore argue that if social context is critical to self-development, then one should expect to see some degree of correspondence between how children view themselves and how they are perceived by others. Children who are excluded from social interactions, however, may hold views of themselves that are less congruent with the views that others hold of them, as compared to socially successful children. The work of Cillessen and Bellmore extends the field by offering greater methodological sophistication in measuring congruency between self-perceptions and peer ratings, and by showing the negative consequences of inaccurate self-perceptions. Their work is important because it makes the point that the inner world of the child—the internal sense of self—is intimately tied to very real social experiences.

Taken together, the papers by Harter, Moretti and Wiebe, and Cillessen and Bellmore present a balance between recognizing the importance

of internal representations and experiences in the real world. What is suggested by these authors, but not directly assessed, is the need to examine the dynamic relationship between experiences in social relationships and the development of internal representations of self. What is the mutual and bidirectional influence of social experiences and self-representations on development over time? The nature of this relationship may well change as development proceeds and self-representations become more firmly and elaborately established. Critical points in self-development—for example, losing a significant relationship or establishing the first romantic relationships—may offer windows of change in self-development. These issues provide exciting avenues for future research.

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