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Self-Discrepancy in Adolescence: Own and Parental Standpoints on the Self

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Adolescence ushers in a period of growth in the capacity to represent multiple perspectives on the self. The capacity to represent multiple perspectives may increase the risk of detecting self-discrepancies. Results confirmed that self-discrepancy, independent of actual-self positivity, was predictive of internalizing and externalizing problems. For adolescent girls, discrepancy with parental standards predicted functioning, regardless of whether these standards were adopted as their own (identified parental standards) or not (introjected parental standards). Discrepancy with self-standards that were independent from parents also predicted externalizing problems in girls. For adolescent boys, discrepancy with independent standards, but not parental standards, predicted internalizing problems. Results suggest that the relevance of own versus parental standards for self-regulation is gender specific.

Adolescence brings new challenges and opportunities for the self. Developmental shifts in metacognitive and representational capacity that occur during adolescence (Case, 1985; Chalmers & Lawrence, 1993; Selman, 1980) promote a more highly differentiated and complex view of the self (Harter, 1990; Marsh, 1989; Moretti & Higgins, 1990a, 1999a). Adolescence also introduces a period of significant transition in family and social role expectations, coupled with an increase in the range and intimacy of social relationships (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Selman, 1980). Together the cognitive and social transitions of the adolescent period offer opportunities to explore new perspectives on the self. A key challenge of adolescence is the integration of this complex and sometimes conflicting information about the self. It is not surprising that this developmental period is characterized by intense self-preoccu-

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pation (Elkind, 1967, 1985) as adolescents attempt to understand, integrate, and solidify their identity.

At a fundamental level, adolescence involves a transition from a primary focus on parental standards and expectations for self-regulation to an appreciation of a wider range of self-regulatory standards (e.g., standards and expectations of peers, intimate partners, teachers, and employers). This transition need not require that adolescents detach themselves from parental values and expectations (Lamborn & Steinberg, 1993; Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995). Indeed, the transition to autonomy in self-regulation is facilitated by secure attachment and emotional connectedness with parents (Ryan & Lynch, 1989). The transition does require, however, that adolescents move through a process of increased awareness and differentiation of their own, parental, and other self-regulatory standards.

With greater awareness and differentiation of standards for the self, adolescents are better able to finely regulate their behavior to the demands of specific interpersonal contexts. Although this enhanced capacity to self-regulate carries benefits, it also introduces risks. Specifically, the capacity to represent multiple perspectives on the self increases the risk of highlighting discrepancies between one's view of oneself and various self-standards. This risk is particularly acute during early to mid adolescence when the capacity to represent multiple and possibly conflicting views of the self outweighs the capacity to integrate these divergent perspectives (Harter & Bresnick, 1996; Harter & Monsour, 1992). During this developmental phase adolescents may be more intensely aware of divergent rather than convergent perspectives on the self.

Self-Discrepancy Theory

Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987, 1989) provides one model for understanding the social-cognitive transitions in self-representation that occur during adolescence. This model differentiates between *domains* of self-representation (i.e., actual-self; ideal-self; ought-self) and inferred *perspectives* on the self (i.e., own perspective; parental perspective; partner perspective). Several self-state representations can be delineated by combining across domains and perspectives of self-representation (e.g., actual-self:own; ideal-self:own; ought-self:own; actual-self:parent; ideal-self:parent; ought-self:parent). One's own perspective on the actual-self is analogous to what is commonly referred to as the *self-concept*. Other self-state representations, such as one's own hopes and wishes for the self (ideal-self:own) or the duties or obligations that are

presumed to be held by one's parents for the self (ought-self:parent), provide important goals, standards, or *self-guides* for self-regulation.

A fundamental assumption of the theory is that the experience of discrepancy between the actual-self and important self-guides provokes emotional distress and the desire to reduce discrepancy. Specific types of discrepancy are linked to specific types of emotional distress: actual-self:ideal discrepancy is hypothesized to produce dejection-related emotions whereas actual-self:ought discrepancy is hypothesized to produce agitation-related emotions. Cumulatively, research supports the fundamental assumptions of self-discrepancy theory (see Moretti & Higgins, 1999, for a review). Early investigations provide consistent support for the specificity of hypothesized links between types of discrepancy and types of emotional problems (e.g., Higgins, Klein, Strauman, 1985; Scott & OHara, 1993; Strauman, 1989, 1992; Strauman & Higgins, 1987, 1988).

The view that self-worth is determined by the level of discrepancy between the actual-self and self-guides is not particularly new. Indeed this position was originally articulated by James (1890) and advanced by Rosenberg (1979). Despite the intuitive appeal of the discrepancy concept, research using discrepancy scores has not produced convincing results. In fact, reviewers have recommended that researchers avoid the use of discrepancy scores because they have poor stability, are restricted in range, and are subject to error variance in estimates of both the actual-self and self-guides (Byrne, 1996; Hoge & McCarthy, 1983; Wylie, 1974).

Reviewers' criticisms of discrepancy scores may be valid when leveled against scales that calculate difference scores between ratings of the actual-self and desired-self (typically the ideal-self) on preselected sets of personality dimensions (e.g., Hoge & McCarthy, 1983). We have argued in Moretti and Higgins (1990b) that such criticisms do not apply when the measurement of discrepancy maximizes the idiographic significance of attributes and the variance of discrepancy scores. In a study comparing two methods of measuring self-discrepancy, we found that only discrepancy scores derived from an idiographic self-discrepancy measure predicted self-esteem beyond the variance due to the positivity of actual-self attributes (Moretti & Higgins, 1990b). Only positive actual-self attributes that matched the ideal-self predicted high self-esteem and only negative actual-self attributes that were discrepant from the ideal-self predicted low self-esteem. These findings underscore the importance of understanding structural relationships between attributes of the actual-self and self-guides rather than simply focusing on the content of self-concept per se.

The Challenge of Adolescence: Multiple Perspectives on the Self

Only recently has the importance of different standpoints embodied within self-state representations become a focus of investigation (Higgins, 1996; Higgins, Loeb, & Moretti, 1995; Moretti & Higgins, 1999a, 1999b; Moretti, Rein, & Wiebe, 1998). For example, discrepancies can stem from the perception that one's actual-self is divergent from one's *own* standards or self-guides or they can stem from the perception that one's actual-self is divergent from *others* (e.g., parents) standards for the self.

In contrast to previous work on self-discrepancy in which the specific emotional consequences of ideal versus ought discrepancy is examined, the current study is focused on understanding the importance of own versus parental perspectives on the self in determining adolescents' emotional and behavioral functioning. This focus has been selected because of the relevance of this issue during adolescence. As previously noted, adolescence ushers in a period of significant growth in the capacity to represent multiple perspectives on the self. Adolescents can represent, for example, the hopes and wishes that they hold for themselves (own self-guide) versus the hopes and wishes that they believe their parents hold for them (parental self-guide). The ability to differentiate one's own perspective on the self from that of significant others, and to simultaneously represent multiple perspectives, increases the risk of detecting self-discrepancies. Thus, adolescents can suffer because they are now able to perceive that who they are (i.e., actual-self) is incongruent with who they themselves wish to be (own standards) and who they believe their parents wish them to be (parental standards).

Although the distinction between own and parental perspectives on the self is important, it is necessary to understand that the standards adolescents hold for themselves need not be completely independent from their parental standards. In a recent study of young adults (Moretti & Higgins, 199b), we differentiated between standards that are shared between individuals and their parents (*identified* self-guides), parental standards that are not shared or adopted as one's own (*introjected* self-guides), and standards that are independent from parental standards (*independent* self-guides). We argued that self-guides representing an overlap between one's own standpoint and that of parents (identified self-guides) are psychologically significant because they represent a "shared reality" between oneself and one's parents regarding the self (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Higgins, 1996). Discrepancy between one's actual-self and identified self-guides strikes close to the heart of our "true self" (Ryan et al., 1995). In contrast, we reasoned that parental self-guides that are not adopted as one's own (introjected self-guides) are of less importance precisely be-

cause these guides are not accepted by the self and do not constitute a shared reality regarding the self in relation to others. We also proposed that independent standards, those self-guides which are neither identified or introjected parental guides, also are likely to be of significance in determining functioning. Independent self-guides may be shared with peers or partners, but are not shared with parents. Nonetheless, by definition independent self-guides represent one's own hopes and aspirations for the self and thus are likely to be central to the "true self."

Consistent with our predictions (Moretti & Higgins, 1999b), results showed that when individuals perceived their actual-self as incongruent with the self-standards that they share with their parents (identified self-guides), they suffered from emotional distress and interpersonal difficulty. Similarly, when they perceived their actual-self as incongruent with their own self-standards (independent self-guides), they experienced distress. Discrepancy between the actual-self and parental self-guides that were not adopted as one's own (introjected self-guides) were not predictive of functioning. Some gender differences emerged in the study. For men, only the relationship between the actual-self and independent self-guides predicted functioning. Psychological functioning in women was predicted by the relationship of the actual-self to identified and introjected maternal self-guides.

Gender Differences in the Relevance of Own Versus Parental Perspectives on the Self

Individual differences in self-regulatory orientation may result from socialization experiences that encourage regulation toward own versus others' standpoints on the self (Moretti & Higgins, 1999a). In a recent study (Moretti et al., 1998), we examined the relationship of own discrepancy and other discrepancy in young adult males and females with dysphoria. Other standpoint discrepancy was more predictive of dysphoria in females than in males suggesting that women are more likely to regulate the self from a relational standpoint (Surrey, 1991).

These findings, and the results of Moretti & Higgins (1999b), are consistent with research showing a gender difference in socialization practices (see Cross & Madson, 1997, for a review). Although research on gender differences in socialization practices has produced mixed results (Lytton & Romney, 1991), a common finding is that parents exercise different methods of controlling the behavior of their daughters and sons (Cross & Madson, 1997). For example, although mothers are equally likely to exercise control with their daughters and their sons,

they are more likely to limit autonomy when they use control with their daughters than with their sons (Pomerantz & Ruble, 1998).

Daughters more than sons are encouraged to attend to others' needs, to conform to their expectations, and to judge their success or failure in terms of acceptance by others. Research examining socialization of emotional attunement and empathy suggests that daughters more than sons are encouraged to adopt a relational self-regulatory style. Mothers are more likely to engage their young daughters than sons (age 18 months) in discussions of others' feelings (Parke, 1967), and by 2 years of age girls are more likely to talk about feelings than are boys (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987). Parents also encourage their daughters, more than their sons, to attend to others' feelings by using induction techniques that help them understand the impact of their behavior on others (Grusec, Dix, & Mills, 1982; Smetana, 1989). And, in turn, girls are more likely than boys to anticipate feeling badly if they act aggressively toward others and to express concern about the impact of their aggressive behavior on others (Perry, Perry, & Weiss, 1989).

Higgins (1991) argues that one consequence of these socialization differences is that females are likely to develop stronger self-other contingencies than are males. To the extent that socialization is sex-typed, girls may develop an orientation to regulate toward the guides of significant others whereas boys may develop an orientation to regulate toward their own self-regulatory guides (Cross & Madson, 1997; Hoffman, 1973, 1977). This pattern of socialization may have deleterious consequences for self-esteem and predispose girls to depression in adolescence (Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994).

The Current Study

Previous research is extended in two ways. First, to date few researchers have examined the relation of self-discrepancy to psychological functioning in adolescents (Higgins & Loeb, 1995). Research has yet to establish, for example, that self-discrepancy is predictive of functioning, independent of how positively or negatively adolescents describe their actual-self. This is the first hypothesis tested in the current study. To test this, we simply examined whether overall level of self-discrepancy (collapsing across type of discrepancy) predicts internalizing and externalizing problems independently from level of actual-self positivity. In light of our previous findings of a gender difference in the psychological significance of self-discrepancy in young adults (Moretti & Higgins, 1999b; Moretti et al., 1998), and research on gender differences in socialization

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	<i>Boys^a</i>		<i>Girls^b</i>		<i>All participants^c</i>	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Grade 9	5	12	8	17	13	15
Grade 10	16	39	23	49	39	44
Grade 11	16	39	15	32	31	35
Grade 12	4	10	1	2	5	6

Note. Due to rounding percentages to the nearest whole number, columns may not sum to 100%. ^a $n = 41$. ^b $n = 47$. ^c $N = 88$.

practices, we also examined gender differences in the relation between self-discrepancy and psychological functioning.

Our second hypothesis is focused on the differential relevance of identified, introjected, and independent standards. We argue that, generally, discrepancy between the actual-self and self-guides adopted as one's own (identified parental guides and independent guides) are more psychologically relevant than are standards adolescents believe parents hold for them but which they do not adopt as their own (introjected self-guides). However, our previous findings, and research on gender differences in socialization practices, give rise to more precise predictions for girls and boys. Specifically, we hypothesized that girls and boys are equally influenced by perceived discrepancy between their actual-self and self-guides adopted as their own (identified parental guides and independent guides), but that girls are more likely than boys to be influenced by parental self-guides even when they are not adopted as their own (introjected parental guides).

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 93 youths enrolled in a local high school. One decided to discontinue participation and four failed to follow instructions, and were therefore excluded from analyses. The final sample consisted of 88 adolescents (41 boys and 47 girls), ranging in age from 14 to 18 years ($M = 16.10$, $SD = 0.91$). The number in each grade level, ranging from 9 to 12, are displayed in Table 1. Boys were slightly older ($M = 16.29$, $SD = 0.98$) than girls ($M = 15.94$, $SD = 0.82$), $t(86) = 1.86$, $p < .07$.

The majority (85%) resided with both of their natural parents. A greater proportion of girls than boys, however, resided only with their

natural mother (19% vs. 2%) and no girls compared to 5% of boys resided only with their natural father, $\chi^2(3, N = 88) = 9.05, p < .05$. Socioeconomic status (SES) was scored on Hollingshead's (1975) 9-step scale for parental occupation, using the higher status occupation in each household (scores 1–3.5 = lower; 4–6.5 = middle; 7–9 = upper). The majority of youths' households were identified as upper (47%) or middle class (43%), with only 10% identified as lower class.

Procedures

Participants were obtained from a number of mandatory mathematics classes at a local high school, and participated in the study with written consent from their legal guardians. Written consent also was obtained from each youth at the start of the testing session. The Selves Questionnaire was completed prior to the Youth Self-Report. The total participation time did not exceed 1 hour.

Measures

The Selves Questionnaire (Higgins et al., 1985). Standard instructions for the Selves were revised using developmentally appropriate language for an adolescent sample. The revised version of the measure instructs the youth to describe each of six self-state representations—actual-self, ideal-self, and ought-self—from their own perspective and that of their parents or caregivers. For example, in describing their ideal-self, they are asked to "Write down at least 5 things that describe how you wish you could be someday. These are hopes, dreams or other things you wish you could be like." Similarly for describing their ought-self, they are asked to "Write down at least 5 things that describe how you should be. These are duties, responsibilities or other things you feel you should do." Participants also rate the extent to which they feel they possess, wish they possessed, or think they should possess each of the attributes on a 5-point scale from 1 (*a little*) to 5 (*a lot*).

Previous research with this measure has established good test-retest reliability and validity. Strauman (1996) reports moderate reliability estimates across a 3-year span, with significant zero-order correlations of $r = .42, .44,$ and $.56,$ for ideal, ought, and overall self-discrepancy scores, respectively. The relation of self-discrepancy to emotional distress and other aspects of functioning has been demonstrated in numerous studies, supporting the criterion-related validity of this instrument (e.g., Higgins, 1996; Moretti & Higgins, 1990b, 1999; Strauman, 1992).

The content of the actual-self:own representations was assessed by determining the number of positive, negative, and neutral attributes listed.

The positivity/negativity ratings were based on Anderson's (1968) 7-point scale for rating the "likableness" of personality attributes, from 0 (*least favorable or desirable*) to 6 (*most favorable or desirable*). Actual-self attributes with likableness scores greater than 3 were classified as positive, whereas those with likableness scores less than 3 were classified as negative. Examples of commonly listed positive attributes include, nice, smart, funny, and honest. In contrast, examples of commonly listed negative attributes include, mean, rude, lazy, and selfish. Attributes, with a likableness rating of 3 (e.g., cautious, different, tall) were classified as neutral. Interrater reliability was established at 93% agreement and with a Cohen's kappa equal to .80 for classifying actual-self attributes as either positive, negative, or neutral.

The Selves Questionnaire also was scored to determine the structural relationships between the actual-self representation and the self-guides. The first stage of this scoring followed the standard procedure of comparing attributes listed in the actual-self to those listed in each self-guide (Moretti & Higgins, 1990b). Attributes listed in each of the guides were coded as synonymous matches (a synonymous attribute represented in both the actual-self and the self-guide with extent ratings that did not differ by more than 1); synonymous mismatches (a synonymous attribute listed with extent ratings differing by 2 or more); antonymous mismatches (an attribute in the self-guide opposite to an attribute in the actual-self); or nonmatches (an attribute in the self-guide that did not appear in the actual-self). Interrater reliability was established at 95% agreement and with a Cohen's kappa equal to .85 for classifying self-guide attributes as either matches, mismatches (either synonymous or antonymous), or nonmatches with the actual-self.

To test the first hypothesis, that self-discrepancy predicts functioning independently from level of actual-self positivity, an overall self-discrepancy score was calculated. For the purposes of the current study we collapsed across the domains of ideal versus ought, and own versus parental perspectives. This discrepancy score was calculated using a standard formula (Moretti & Higgins, 1990b): $\text{discrepancy} = (\text{synonymous mismatches} + (2 \times \text{antonymous mismatches})) - \text{synonymous matches}$. Nonmatches are excluded from this formula because they are not structurally connected with the actual-self.

The second stage of scoring differentiated the structural relationships between identified, introjected, and independent guides. These variables were used to test the second hypothesis regarding the differential relevance of these guides in predicting functioning. Self-regulatory guides that overlapped between the own perspective (ideal-own or ought-own) and parental perspective (ideal-parental or ought-parental) were classi-

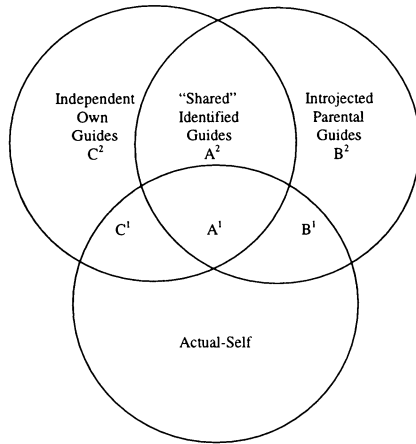


Figure 1. Identified, introjected parental guides, and independent self-guides in relation to the actual-self.

fied as identified guides. To be classified as identified, the attribute needed to appear in the same domain across perspectives (i.e., ideal in both own and parental guides or ought in both own and parental guides). Attributes that were unique to the youths' parental guides (ideal-parental or ought-parental) and did not overlap with the attributes of their own self-guides (ideal-own or ought-own) were classified as introjected guides (again maintaining consistency across ideal vs. ought comparisons). Attributes that were unique to youths' own guides (ideal-own or ought-own) and did not overlap with the corresponding ideal or ought-parental guides were classified as independent guides.

By combining information from the two scoring procedures, we were able to distinguish between: identified self-guides that matched or mismatched the actual-self (A1), or were not related to the actual-self (A2); introjected self-guides that matched or mismatched the actual-self (B1), or were not related to the actual-self (B2); and independent self-guides that matched or mismatched the actual-self (C1), or were not related to the actual-self (C2). Figure 1 displays these different aspects of the self-system. Nonrelated (nonmatching) guides were excluded from analyses because they are not structurally connected to the actual-self. For the purpose of testing the second hypothesis, six variables were retained for analyses: identified matches and mismatches; introjected matches and mismatches; and independent matches and mismatches.

The Youth Self-Report. The YSR (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987) is a self-report measure of social competence and behavioral difficulties appropriate for adolescents aged 11 to 18. It is

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Positive and Negative Actual-Self Attributes and Mean Scores for Self-Discrepancy, and YSR Scales for Boys, Girls, and All Participants

Variable	Boys ^a		Girls ^b		All ^c	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Positive attributes						
Frequency	5.28	1.60	5.00	1.85	5.13	1.74
Percentage	82	18	74	22	77	21
Negative attributes						
Frequency	1.08 _a	1.02	1.72 _a	1.53	1.43	1.35
Percentage	17 _a	16	26 _a	22	22	20
Actual-self positivity index	65 _a	33	48 _a	44	56	40
Self-discrepancy score	-1.38 _a	4.77	0.47 _b	4.60	-0.38	4.74
YSR scales						
Internalizing raw score	13.27 _a	8.87	19.57 _a	9.96	16.64	9.93
Externalizing raw score	16.41	10.21	17.85	9.96	17.18	10.04
Internalizing T score	53.66	11.14	57.55	10.25	55.74	10.79
Externalizing T score	56.07	11.26	59.94	11.61	58.14	11.55

Note. Means in the same row that share the same subscripts differ at $p < .05$. Means in the same row that do not share the same subscripts differ at $p < .10$.

^a $n = 40$. ^b $n = 47$. ^c $N = 87$.

virtually identical to the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) in format and content, but is completed by the adolescent. Each YSR problem item is scored 0 (*not true*), 1 (*somewhat or sometimes true*), or 2 (*very true or often true*), based on the preceding 6 months.

The current research utilized the two empirically derived, broad-band problem scales as dependent measures. The internalizing problems scale includes the anxious/depressed, withdrawn, and somatic complaints subscales; the externalizing problems scale includes the delinquent and aggressive behavior subscales. Raw scores rather than normalized T scores for the internalizing and externalizing scales were used as these scores are not based on separate raw score distributions for boys and girls. Reliability estimates at 1-week retest for raw scores on both scales are very good, ranging from .79 to .92, for normative samples of adolescents. Longer-term stability is moderate, ranging from .40 to .78, at 8-month retest. In addition, the YSR problem scales have been found to discriminate between clinic-referred and nonreferred adolescents (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987).

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Mean scores on the YSR were 16.64 ($SD = 9.93$) and 17.18 ($SD = 10.04$) for internalizing and externalizing problems, respectively. Mean T scores for the sample fell within the normal range of internalizing and externalizing symptoms ($M = 55.74$, $SD = 10.79$ and $M = 58.14$, $SD = 11.55$, respectively). These results are reported separately for boys and girls in Table 2 and are comparable to other published normative samples of adolescents (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987).¹

Three age groups were formed based on frequency distributions: youth aged 14–15 years ($n = 25$); 16 years ($n = 33$); and 17–18 years ($n = 29$). A 2×3 ANOVA with gender and age as between-subject factors revealed that, compared to boys, girls reported significantly higher levels of internalizing problems (raw score), $F(1, 82) = 8.11$, $p < .01$. No significant main effects for age or Gender \times Age interactions were found. In addition, no age or gender differences were found when T scores were compared rather than raw scores. Subsequent analyses are reported for broad-band raw scores rather than T scores.²

Actual-Self Positivity and Self-Discrepancy

As summarized in Table 2, results indicated that the frequency of positive attributes listed for the actual-self ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.74$) far outweighed the frequency of negative attributes ($M = 1.43$, $SD = 1.35$). On average 77% of actual-self attributes were positive compared to 22% negative. To simplify subsequent analyses, a summary index of actual-self positivity was computed as the proportion of positive minus the proportion of negative attributes. Examination of gender and age effects using a 2×3 ANOVA revealed that actual-self positivity was significantly lower for girls (48%) than for boys (65%), $F(1, 81) = 4.13$, $p < .05$. In addition, a marginal Gender \times Age interaction was found, $F(2, 81) = 2.94$, $p < .10$. Among adolescents aged 14 to 15 years, girls' actual-self positivity was significantly lower than that for boys, $t(23) = 2.77$, $p < .01$. However, actual-self positivity was not significantly differ-

¹ For example, Achenbach and Edelbrock (1987) report mean raw scores of 15.2 ($SD = 9.2$) for boys and 20.1 ($SD = 11.4$) for girls on the internalizing scale and 14.6 ($SD = 8.4$) for boys and 14.0 ($SD = 0.4$) for girls on the externalizing scale. Mean T scores for the same sample were 50.1 ($SD = 9.3$) for boys and 50.9 ($SD = 9.8$) for girls on the internalizing scale and 50.7 ($SD = 9.3$) for boys and 51.4 ($SD = 10.0$) for girls on the externalizing scale.

² All analyses were also conducted using t scores. Overall, these results were comparable to those conducted with raw scores.

Table 3. Zero-Order Correlations Between Index of Actual-Self Positivity, Self-Discrepancy, and YSR Scales for Boys, Girls, and All Participants

		Boys ^a	Girls ^b	All ^c
Actual-self positivity index	Internalizing	-.38*	-.39**	-.42***
	Externalizing	-.10	-.48**	-.33**
Self-discrepancy score	Internalizing	.21	.46***	.38***
	Externalizing	.001	.73***	.38***

^a $n = 40$. ^b $n = 47$. ^c $N = 87$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

ent for boys and girls age 16 years, $t(31) = 1.09$, *NS*, or age 17 to 18 years, $t(27) = -.55$, *NS*. This finding is consistent with research showing lower self-esteem in adolescent girls than in boys (Simons & Blyth, 1987; Simmons & Rosenberg, 1975), but suggests that this gender difference may be more pronounced in younger rather than older adolescents.

For self-discrepancy, the only marginally significant main effect was for gender, with girls reporting greater overall discrepancy ($M = 0.47$, $SD = 4.60$) than boys ($M = -1.38$, $SD = 4.77$), $F(1, 81) = 3.36$, $p < .10$. There was neither a main effect for age nor an interaction effect.³

The Contribution of Self-Discrepancy Independent of Actual-Self Positivity

Zero-order correlations for the entire sample revealed significant relationships for actual-self positivity, and self-discrepancy with the dependent variables (see Table 3). Consistent with previous research (Moretti & Higgins, 1990b), actual-self positivity was correlated with lower levels of distress, as reflected in both internalizing and externalizing problems. Separate analyses for boys and girls showed comparable relationships between actual-self positivity and internalizing symptoms, however, the relationship between actual-self positivity and externalizing symptoms was significantly stronger for girls, $z = 1.90$, $p < .05$.

Consistent with the first general hypothesis, self-discrepancy was correlated with higher scores on both the internalizing and externalizing scales. Separate analyses for boys and girls indicated that discrepancy was significantly correlated with both dependent variables for girls, but that these relationships were not significant for boys. Furthermore, the relationship between discrepancy and externalizing symptoms was significantly stronger for girls than for boys, $z = 4.16$, $p < .0005$, and

³ Age was not correlated with any other independent or dependent variables and was therefore excluded from subsequent analyses.

Table 4. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Actual-Self Positivity, Self-Discrepancy, and Gender in Predicting Internalizing Symptoms ($N = 86$)

		r	pr	B	SE B	β
Step 1	Actual-self positivity	-.42	-.25	-6.74	2.86	-.27*
	Discrepancy	.38	.18	0.40	0.24	.19†
	Gender	.31	.24	4.26	1.93	.22*
Step 2	Actual-self positivity	-.42	-.14	-12.35	10.07	-.50
	Discrepancy	.38	-.15	-1.21	0.88	-.58
	Gender	.31	.08	2.74	4.02	.14
	Gender \times Discrepancy	.40	.19	0.90	0.51	.68†
	Gender \times Positivity	-.27	.07	3.66	6.10	.26
	Positivity \times Discrepancy	.25	.15	0.63	0.45	.20

Note. $R^2 = .25$, $p < .001$, for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .03$, *NS*, for Step 2; $\Delta R^2 = .009$, *NS*, for Step 3.
 * $p < .05$. † $p < .10$.

between discrepancy and internalizing symptoms was marginally stronger for girls, $z = 1.27$, $p = .10$.

Two hierarchical regression analyses were completed to examine the first hypothesis, that self-discrepancy predicts internalizing and externalizing symptoms independent of actual-self positivity. In each analysis actual-self positivity, discrepancy, and gender were entered as a block in the first step of the analysis. All two-way interactions were entered in the second step and the three-way interaction was entered in the third step.

With respect to internalizing problems, when only main effects were entered, actual-self positivity and gender emerged as significant predictors, $\beta = -.27$, $p < .05$, and $\beta = .22$, $p < .05$, respectively. Self-discrepancy also was a marginally significant predictor of internalizing problems, $\beta = .19$, $p = .10$. Once the two-way interactions were entered into the second step of the regression, however, the only marginally significant effect remaining was the Gender \times Discrepancy interaction, $\beta = .68$, $p < .10$. Entering the three-way interaction in the third step was not significant. The results from the first and second steps of this regression analysis are displayed in Table 4.

The interaction effect between gender and discrepancy was further examined by conducting regression analyses separately for boys and girls. Results showed that for girls, self-discrepancy was a significant predictor of internalizing problems, $\beta = .35$, $p < .05$, but that actual-self positivity was not, $\beta = -.17$, *NS*. Alternatively, for boys, results indicated that actual-self positivity was a significant predictor, $\beta = -.35$, $p < .05$, rather than self-discrepancy, $\beta = .06$, *NS*.

Table 5. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Actual-Self Positivity, Self-Discrepancy, and Gender in Predicting Externalizing Symptoms ($N = 86$)

		r	pr	B	SE B	β
<i>Step 1</i>	Actual-self positivity	-.33	-.15	-4.22	3.06	-0.17
	Discrepancy	.38	.26	0.63	0.26	0.30*
	Gender	.06	-.03	-0.64	2.07	-0.33
<i>Step 2</i>	Actual-self positivity	-.33	-.08	-7.12	10.22	-0.28
	Discrepancy	.38	-.19	-1.50	0.89	-0.72†
	Gender	.06	-.05	-1.70	4.08	-0.09
	Gender \times Discrepancy	.48	.32	1.56	0.52	1.17**
	Gender \times Positivity	-.33	.06	3.43	6.20	0.24
	Positivity \times Discrepancy	.07	-.04	-0.18	0.46	-0.06

Note. $R^2 = .17$, $p < .005$, for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .12$, $p < .01$, for Step 2; $\Delta R^2 = .007$, NS, for Step 3. † $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .005$.

Table 6. Percentage and Range of Identified, Introjected, and Independent Self-Guides for Boys, Girls, and All Participants

	<i>Boys^a</i>		<i>Girls^b</i>		<i>All^c</i>	
	%	Range	%	Range	%	Range
Identified (shared) own guides						
Matches	8	4	6	4	7	4
Mismatches	3	2	2	2	2	2
Nonmatches	18	5	14	5	16	5
Total %	29	7	22	8	25	8
Independent own guides						
Matches	14 ^a	7	10 ^b	5	12	7
Mismatches	6	4	10	4	8	4
Nonmatches	51	11	58	11	55	11
Total %	71	11	78	13	75	13
Introjected parental guides						
Matches	9	4	6	3	8	4
Mismatches	6	2	8	4	7	4
Nonmatches	53	10	60	12	57	12
Total %	68	10	74	14	72	14

Note. Means in the same row that do not share the same subscripts differ at $p < .10$.
^a $n = 39$. ^b $n = 47$. ^c $N = 86$.

In predicting externalizing symptoms, when only main effects were entered, self-discrepancy emerged as a significant predictor, $\beta = .30$, $p < .05$. Once two-way interactions were entered in the second step of the regression, however, both a Gender \times Discrepancy interaction, $\beta = 1.17$, $p < .005$, and a marginally significant discrepancy main effect, $\beta = -.72$, $p < .10$ were found (see Table 5). Separate analyses for boys and girls indicated once again that for girls, self-discrepancy was a significant predictor of externalizing problems, $\beta = .71$, $p < .001$, but that actual-self positivity was not, $\beta = -.03$, *NS*. For boys, neither self-discrepancy, $\beta = -.05$, *NS*, nor actual-self positivity, $\beta = -.11$, *NS*, were significant predictors of externalizing problems. Entering the three-way interaction in the third step of the regression analysis was not significant.

In summary, results support the first hypothesis for girls only; overall level of self-discrepancy was a significant predictor of internalizing and externalizing problems independent of actual-self positivity. For boys, however, only one significant result emerged: actual-self positivity predicts internalizing symptoms.

Identified, Introjected, and Independent Self-Guides

Representation in the self-system. Only 25% of youths' own guides were shared with parental guides and these were more likely to match than mismatch the actual-self (7% versus 2%, respectively). The remaining 75% of youths' own guides were independent of parental guides, including 12% congruent with the actual-self and 8% discrepant from the actual-self. The majority of parental guides were introjected (72%) and were equally likely to match as to mismatch the actual-self (8% versus 7%, respectively). There were no significant gender differences in the proportion of identified, independent, and introjected guides. Table 6 displays these results separately for boys and girls.

The contribution of identified, introjected, and independent guides to functioning. Our second hypothesis was that discrepancy with identified parental guides and independent guides is more predictive of functioning than is discrepancy with introjected guides. In the final analyses in this study, congruency (actual-self:guide matches) and discrepancy (actual-self:guide mismatches) were examined separately to determine whether they were equally predictive of functioning. In light of our gender difference predictions, that girls are more likely than boys to be influenced by introjected parental guides, and the gender differences that were found in the significance of discrepancy independent of actual-self positivity, separate analyses were completed for boys and girls. As displayed in Tables 7 and 8, simultaneous regression analyses were

Table 7. Summary of Simultaneous Regression Analyses for Identified, Independent, and Introjected Self-Guides Predicting YSR Scores for Boys ($n = 39$)

		r	pr	B	SE B	β
Internalizing	Identified matches	-.12	-.28	-24.47	14.85	-.30
	Identified mismatches	.23	.16	21.45	24.05	.14
	Independent matches	.29	.38	29.78	12.78	.43*
	Independent mismatches	.37	.25	21.90	14.92	.23
	Introjected matches	.06	.01	0.80	15.33	.01
	Introjected mismatches	.09	.19	20.76	19.13	.18
Externalizing	Identified matches	.12	-.002	-0.24	18.71	-.003
	Identified mismatches	.11	.08	12.85	30.32	.07
	Independent matches	.31	.27	25.43	16.11	.32
	Independent mismatches	.22	.19	20.05	18.81	.18
	Introjected matches	-.11	-.16	-17.33	19.33	-.15
	Introjected mismatches	.07	.12	16.46	24.12	.12

Note. $R^2 = .29$, $AdjR^2 = .16$, $p < .10$, for internalizing ; $R^2 = .17$, $AdjR^2 = .02$, NS, for externalizing. * $p < .05$.

Table 8. Summary of Simultaneous Regression Analyses for Identified, Independent, and Introjected Self-Guides Predicting YSR Scores for Girls ($n = 47$)

		r	pr	B	SE B	β
Internalizing	Identified matches	-.12	-.003	-.24	14.83	-.002
	Identified mismatches	.27	.29	45.01	23.41	.27†
	Independent matches	-.15	-.05	-4.29	13.00	-.05
	Independent mismatches	.26	.23	18.67	12.69	.21
	Introjected matches	-.19	-.03	-2.81	17.59	-.02
	Introjected mismatches	.41	.40	44.35	16.06	.38**
Externalizing	Identified matches	-.28	-.20	-15.56	11.79	-.15
	Identified mismatches	.08	.005	0.55	18.61	.003
	Independent matches	-.26	-.27	-18.37	10.33	-.20†
	Independent mismatches	.49	.43	30.01	10.09	.34**
	Introjected matches	-.40	-.30	-27.90	13.98	-.22*
	Introjected mismatches	.52	.50	47.14	12.77	.40**

Note. $R^2 = .29$, $AdjR^2 = .19$, $p < .05$, for internalizing and $R^2 = .55$, $AdjR^2 = .49$, $p < .001$, for externalizing. † $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

performed regressing each dependent variable on to all six predictors (identified matches and mismatches; independent matches and mismatches; introjected matches and mismatches).

For boys, only one significant predictor emerged: independent matches predicted increased levels of internalizing problems, $\beta = .43$, $p < .05$. No significant predictors of externalizing problems were found for boys (although independent matches also had a positive relationship with externalizing problems, this relationship was not significant).

For girls, higher levels of internalizing problems were significantly predicted by introjected mismatches, $\beta = .38$, $p < .01$, and marginally predicted by identified mismatches, $\beta = .27$, $p = .08$. Higher levels of externalizing problems in girls were significantly predicted by introjected mismatches, $\beta = .40$, $p < .01$, and independent mismatches, $\beta = .34$, $p < .01$. Lower levels of externalizing problems in girls were significantly predicted by introjected matches, $\beta = -.22$, $p < .05$, and marginally predicted by independent matches, $\beta = -.20$, $p = .08$. Overall, these results provide partial support for our second hypothesis, that boys and girls are equally influenced by their independent own self-guides, but that girls are more likely to be influenced by shared and nonshared parental standards than are boys.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to examine two hypotheses. The first hypothesis, that self-discrepancy is a significant determinant of functioning independent of how positively or negatively adolescents view their actual-self, was partially supported. Although actual-self positivity and discrepancy were each significantly correlated with internalizing and externalizing symptoms, regression analyses assessing the unique relationship of each predictor showed that only discrepancy predicted internalizing and externalizing symptoms in girls. For boys, results were limited; actual-self positivity predicted internalizing but not externalizing symptoms and discrepancy was not a significant predictor. Our finding that girls were more strongly influenced by self-discrepancy than were boys is consistent with Higgins's (1991) view that girls develop stronger self-regulatory guides than do boys as a result of greater parental monitoring.

We hypothesized that both girls and boys are influenced by perceived discrepancy between their actual-self and self-guides they share with their parents (i.e., identified parental guides). Contrary to our prediction, we did not find that discrepancy with identified parental guides strongly predicted functioning. Adolescent girls who perceived their actual-self as discrepant from identified parental guides reported margin-

ally higher levels of internalizing problems, however, no significant effects emerged for adolescent boys. It may be that shared or identified guides are not well established by mid adolescence. This possibility is confirmed by comparing results from the current study to those based on a sample of young adults (Moretti & Higgins, 1999b). This comparison reveals that a higher percentage of parental guides are not adopted by adolescents (72% of parental guides are introjects) compared to young adults (56% of parental guides are introjects). Similarly, the percentage of overlap between the own guide and parental guide (i.e., percentage of identified guides) is lower in adolescents (25%) than in young adults (44%). These results are consistent with research showing that it is not until late adolescence or early adulthood that individuals are able to integrate their own views with those their parents hold for them (Harter & Bresnick, 1996; Harter & Monsour, 1992). Our comparison across studies suggests that there are shifts from adolescence to adulthood in the representation and regulatory significance of parental guides and this warrants further investigation using a longitudinal design.

We also predicted that both girls and boys are influenced by perceived discrepancy between their actual-self and independent self-guides. Consistent with this prediction, we found that girls who perceived their actual-self as discrepant from their independent guides reported higher levels of externalizing problems. Conversely, girls who perceived congruency between the actual-self and independent guides reported lower levels of externalizing problems. Contrary to our prediction, however, regression analyses suggested that boys reported significantly more internalizing problems when they perceived their actual-self as congruent with independent guides. Zero-order correlations proved helpful in interpreting this result. These correlations show, for males, a positive relationship between internalizing problems and both discrepancy and congruency with independent guides, $r = .37, p < .05$, and $r = .29, p < .08$, respectively. Similarly, positive correlations were noted between both discrepancy and congruency with independent guides and externalizing problems, $r = .22, NS$, and $r = .31, p < .06$.

Although not all correlations are significant, the direction of the relationships suggests that internalizing and externalizing problems increase as adolescent boys regulate toward standards that are independent of their parental guides. This was confirmed by a final analysis in which we simply correlated actual-self:independent guide *relatedness* (combining matches and mismatches) with internalizing and externalizing problems in boys. Actual-self:independent guide relatedness in boys was significantly correlated with higher levels of internalizing and externalizing problems, $r = .42, p < .01$, and $r = .36, p < .05$, respec-

tively. Thus, own guides that are independent from parental guides are indeed important predictors of functioning in male adolescents. The typical formula for assessing discrepancy scores (discrepancy minus congruency), however, obscures the detection of these relationships.

The standards that boys report as independent of their parental guides may be shared with their peers, and regulation toward these standards may have both positive and negative consequences. When adolescent boys meet the standards that they share with their peers, they may enjoy some measure of social acceptance and success. At the same time engagement in activities that are congruent with the standards of their peer group may be associated with increased externalizing or problematic behavior. The gender differences we observed in the relevance of own and parental standards are consistent with previous findings (Higgins & Loeb, 1995; Higgins et al., 1995). Specifically, this research showed that boys more than girls moved away from parental guides and toward own and peer guides during early adolescence. But this transition was emotionally difficult for young boys and conflict between peer and parental self-guides was associated with feelings of general confusion.

Our results, in conjunction with findings from previous research, suggest that the movement of boys through adolescence may involve differentiation of parental standards from their own independent standards. In contrast to girls, who regulate the self in terms of both parental and independent self-guides, boys may prematurely reject parental standards and adopt alternative standards that are shared with peers. It is interesting to ponder whether this is, at least in part, promoted by societal and parental expectations that emphasize the achievement of independence in male adolescents. Boys who are overly socialized toward this goal, and who prematurely reject the values and guides of their parents, may suffer from emotional and behavioral problems (Ryan & Lynch, 1989).

Our final prediction was that girls are more strongly influenced than boys by parental self-guides even when girls do not adopt these guides as their own (introjected parental guides). Consistent with this prediction, we found that girls who perceived their actual-self as discrepant from introjected parental standards reported higher levels of internalizing and externalizing problems. Conversely, girls who perceived their actual-self as congruent with introjected parental guides reported lower levels of externalizing problems.

Our findings are consistent with research demonstrating that parental standards have a significant influence over functioning in adolescent girls (Higgins & Loeb, 1995; Higgins et al., 1995), and young adult women (Moretti et al., 1998). Girls may be socialized to attend to and

regulate toward the standards that others hold for them, regardless of whether they adopt these standards as their own (Cross & Madson, 1997). This self-regulatory orientation may be a result of gender differences in socialization practices that encourage girls to develop a sense of self in relation to others (Gilligan, Lyons, & Hammer, 1990; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Surrey, 1991). Alternatively, a self-regulatory perspective that emphasizes others' perspectives on the self may be a function of social roles typically occupied by girls and women. Lower social status and power may motivate individuals to be sensitive to the perspectives held by others, especially others who exert control and power (Martin & Ruble, 1997).

The overall pattern of results for girls shows that they regulate to a wide range of standards—parental standards that they share as their own (identified parental standards), parental standards that they do not share (introjected parental standards), and standards that are independent of their parents. Because a wide scope of self-regulatory guides are psychologically salient for adolescent girls, they may be more sensitive to experiencing discrepancy between various perspectives on the self. This is supported by our finding of higher discrepancy in girls than in boys, and previous research showing that girls report higher levels of opposing self-attributes than do boys (Harter, Bresnick, Bouchey, & Whitesell, 1997). Thus for girls, adolescence may present a formidable challenge of integrating potentially diverse perspectives on the self. This challenge need not result in loss of self-esteem or increased depression if the views that young women believe others hold for them are generally positive and cohesive, and if they are not overly dependent on the perspectives that others hold of them (Harter, this issue). If young women believe, however, that the qualities they possess are not consistently valued by close others or society, they are likely to suffer considerably. Reviews of the literature suggest that this is unfortunately the case, particularly for young girls in low socioeconomic families (Gilligan et al., 1990; McGrath, Keita, Strickland, & Russo, 1990; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994).

This study provides an interesting methodology for investigating self-regulatory transitions during adolescence. Results should be viewed as preliminary, however, given limitations inherent in the study. Foremost among these limitations is the fact that we defined independent self-guides as those which are independent from perceived parental standards. Clearly, these guides are likely to be influenced by peer relationships in adolescence. Thus, it is important that the guides we have defined as independent not be confused with *autonomous* self-guides (Ryan et al., 1995). In future research it would be advantageous to measure the extent to which self-regulatory guides are shared with peers and

the consequences of this for emotional and behavioral regulation. Second, in the current research we did not differentiate maternal and paternal guides. Research suggests that maternal relationships may be a particularly important source of support and conflict during adolescence, especially for girls. In our study of young adults (Moretti & Higgins, 1999b) we found that young women were particularly influenced by the guides that their mothers held for them but were not as influenced by paternal self-guides. Further research is necessary to precisely determine in what ways self-development in adolescents (both boys and girls) is influenced by their relationships with same-sex and opposite-sex parents.

A related limitation of this study is our reliance on self-reports of adolescents for determining parental standards. Although adolescents' beliefs about the standards their parents hold for them likely has a powerful impact on how they feel and behave, the real aspects of interpersonal relationships also play an important role. Thus, it would be important to measure self-guides as reported by adolescents and by their parents in future studies. Finally, although this study was focused on self-regulation in middle adolescence, it is important to understand that the foundations of the self and of self-regulation are clearly laid prior to this period of development. What is observed during this period of development may have more to do with what preceded it than with adolescence per se. In addition, it is critical to focus on how child-parent relationships prepare children for adolescence and how they support them through the process of integrating diverse perspectives and new information about the self. As Ryan and Lynch (1989) point out, "individuation is not something that happens from parents but rather with them" (p. 341).

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