24 Personality and the Self

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INTRODUCTION

In his influential text, William James (1890) devoted separate chapters to the self and to its habits. His chapter on the self focused on the malleability of self-views and the manner in which they are diverse, encompassing disparate aspects such as the material, social and spiritual selves. By contrast, his chapter on habits highlighted the ways in which an individual becomes more and more like a particular type of person, with a particular type of disposition, over time. Whether functional or dysfunctional, habits coalescence into personality traits, and these personality traits become relatively fixed by the age of thirty.

James's (1890) separate treatments of the self and its habits may have contributed to divergent research streams in empirical psychology. Self researchers (primarily social psychologists) often operate under the assumption that the self is multifaceted, malleable and low in cross-situational consistency (McGuire & McGuire, 1988). By contrast, trait researchers (primarily personality psychologists) have converged on the idea of basic personality dimensions that are fairly stable and consistent across situations (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998). This tension between malleable and stable views was brought to a sharp focus with Mischel's (1968) critique of the trait construct. Although much of the dust from the person–situation debate has settled (Kenrick & Funder, 1988), the self and personality traditions continue to remain largely separate.

This independence of the two traditions may be unfortunate. When people report on their traits, they access features of the self-concept, give that the self-concept organizes information about the self and self-reports of personality concern information about the self (McCrae & Costa, 1982). A researcher could therefore garner insights into personality by considering the sources of self-knowledge upon which people draw when characterizing their personality. People retrieve abstract self-knowledge when thinking about their personality, and the broader implications of this point have yet to be appreciated.

Additionally, whereas personality psychology can be praised for its well-established taxonomies (Funder, 2009), there are concerns that the resultant traits are largely descriptive rather than explanatory concerning the relevant individual differences (Pervin, 1994). Drawing from the self literature could provide clues about the manner in which traits operate. The self-enhancement motive is a key contributor to what people report about themselves (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008), and thus the personality scores that they receive, whereas research from other traditions (e.g., raison oblige theory; Gregg, 2009) can explain why people act in ways that are trait-consistent (McCrae & Costa, 1994).

At the same time, the personality traits literature can inform the self literature. Psychologists of the self sometimes emphasize how malleable the self can be from one situation to the next (Markus & Wurf, 1987). However, when researchers consider the self-concept in terms of dispositional knowledge, this degree of malleability is not evident. Rather, people have remarkably stable views of the self (Köber & Habermas, 2017), even across fifty years (Trzesniewski, Donnellan & Robins, 2003). Similarly, although self-theorists historically emphasized the role of socialization experiences (Cooley, 1902), researchers today recognize the substantial genetic contribution to the self-concept (Luo, Liu, Cai, Wildschut & Sedikides, 2016) just as to traits (Plomin & Caspi, 1999).

Thus, an integration of the personality trait and self literatures could benefit both. We forge integration while highlighting promising research paths. We start with foundational questions concerning links between traits and the self-concept.

ARE THERE LINKS BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS AND THE SELF-CONCEPT?

Personality traits capture the ways in which people differ from each other with respect to their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. For example, neuroticism captures tendencies toward negative emotional experiences (McCrae &

John, 1992). Although traits could be assessed using clinician or informant reports, or perhaps by repeatedly observing behavior (Allport, 1937), the self-report method is the dominant one (John & Srivastava, 1999). People are asked to characterize themselves with respect to adjectives (e.g., "nervous") or phrases (e.g., "worry a lot") pertinent to having a trait (here, neuroticism). Assessing personality this way is not only practical and expedient, but also theoretically justified: People have more knowledge about themselves than others do (Funder, 1995).

Nonetheless, when researchers assess traits this way, they are asking people about their *self-concepts*. That is, they are asking participants how they view themselves in general terms. As such, it should not be surprising that personality traits overlap substantially with measures focused on the self. This is true for self-certainty (Campbell et al., 1996), self-deception (Paulhus & John, 1998), self-discrepancies (Hafdahl, Panter, Gramzow, Sedikides & Insko, 2000), and self-control (Tangney, Baumeister & Boone, 2004). It is also true for self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1979). From one perspective, low self-esteem is introverted neuroticism (Watson, Suls & Haig, 2002). From another perspective, self-esteem is a glue that links all Big Five traits together (Anusic, Schimmack, Pinkus & Lockwood, 2009) given that self-esteem correlates with all of them (Erdle, Gosling & Potter, 2009).

Personality traits are not entirely isomorphic with the self-concept. A percentage of Big Five items reference behavior (Werner & Pervin, 1986), for example, and behavioral references may be less common for many self-concept measures. Nonetheless, there is a great deal of overlap between personality and self-concept measures, particularly when people rate their own traits (Anusic et al., 2009). Such forms of overlap encourage efforts to understand traits in terms of self-related processes. We describe next models of the self that distinguish generalized and context-specific forms of self-knowledge.

WHAT KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTES TO TRAIT VIEWS OF THE SELF?

When people respond to how they are feeling, they consider the current state of the body (e.g., hungry or tired), where they are, what they are doing and what the events of the day will be like. When they are asked what they feel *in general*, they are presented with a nearly impossible task. Feelings, like thoughts, are constantly changing (Klinger, 1999). It could be difficult to generalize from a life in constant flux. Furthermore, the phrase "in general" is vague. Should it be equated with the current year, some phase of life (e.g., since leaving home and going to college), or one's life as a whole? Lastly, if one could translate "in general" to some temporal frame (e.g., the last ten years), how could one tally up all the individual moments to make a judgment?

Such considerations suggest that people ought to find assessing their feelings in general difficult. Yet, they seem to be doing fine. Robinson and Clore (2002a) instructed participants to rate their positive (e.g., joy, pride) and negative (e.g., anger, sadness) emotions over seven temporal frames that varied on width and proximity to the present: "at this moment," "last few hours," "last few days," "last few weeks," "last few months," "last few years," "in general." These authors also assessed the time it took participants to make the judgments. If people base their emotion reports on event-specific or *episodic* emotion knowledge, it should take them longer to make judgments as the temporal frame becomes increasingly wide, from right now to the last few weeks to in general. Longer time frames mean more specific experiences to recall and aggregate (Brown, 1995). If people give up retrieving specific emotional episodes, there will be a curvilinear effect of time frame on judgment latencies, with a flat slope for especially long temporal frames.

Figure 24.1 displays a prototypical results pattern (Robinson & Clore, 2002a). There is a linear increase in judgment latency from the momentary time frame to the last couple of hours through the last couple of weeks. This indicates an episodic retrieval strategy as longer temporal frames would necessitate retrieving more instances. By contrast, the figure suggests that people stop using this retrieve-and-aggregate strategy for time frames longer than the last couple of weeks. For these longer temporal frames, increased frame width does not result in slower judgment times; rather, the latencies flatten out and then decrease, consistent with a different, nonepisodic strategy for making these judgments.

What sources of information do people retrieve when judging their emotions over long time frames? Robinson and Clore (2002a) termed this emotion knowledge *semantic* and suggested that people have beliefs about their emotions, even stereotypes, that they use when it is difficult to recall specific emotional episodes. The authors obtained relevant evidence by priming gender stereotypes as most people believe that women are more emotional than men. Men reported less intense emotion, and women reported more intense emotion, but only for the long temporal frames ("last few months," "last few years," "in general"). However, participants discounted these activated stereotypes when judging their emotions over the short temporal frames ("at this moment," "last few hours," "last few days"). People draw on beliefs about emotion, rather than specific instances of felt emotion, when judging their emotions over long time frames or "in general."

Klein and Loftus (1993) came to similar conclusions about trait judgments. They asked whether people retrieve specific episodic information when deciding if they have a personality trait (e.g., "agreeable," "dominant"). For example, when rating the self's agreeableness, a person might have to recall specific instances in which they acted agreeably (e.g., helped Suzie move) or disagreeably (e.g., yelled at Todd). The researchers used three tasks. In the "describe" task, participants were asked whether the trait describes them, that is, to make a trait judgment. In the
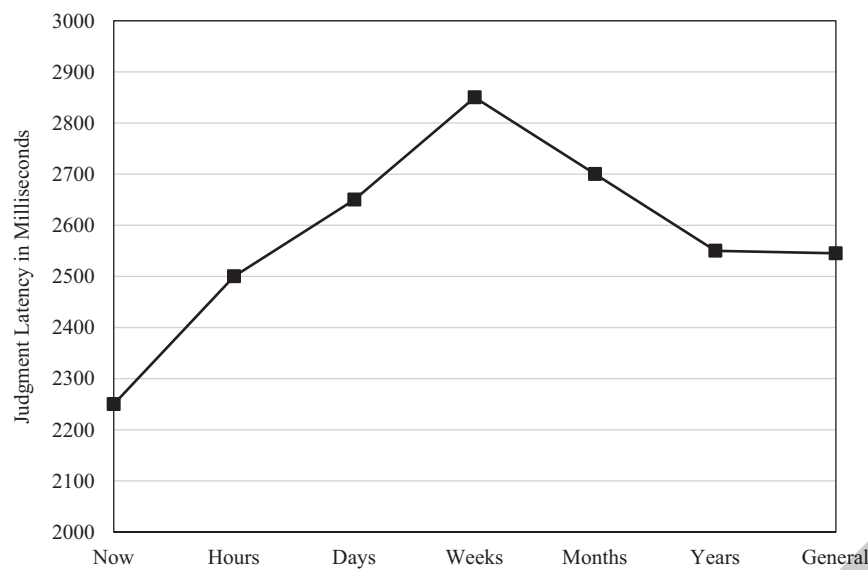
Figure 24.1 The effect of temporal frame on judgment latencies, based on Robinson and Clore (2002a).

"recall" task, participants were asked to recall a specific event or behavior relevant to their standing on the trait dimension. The final "define" task was a control condition. Participants were asked to define the trait (e.g., agreeable behavior is nice and caring) without thinking about the self.

By pairing the tasks together, Klein and colleagues could determine whether the person needed to retrieve specific instances to make a trait judgment. If the recall/describe order is faster than the define/describe order, then the recalled information was useful in making a trait judgment. Participants, however, do not show such priming, suggesting that they do not judge their traits "in general" by considering specific trait-relevant information (e.g., having engaged in a concrete behavior that was either extraverted or introverted; Klein & Loftus, 1993). Also, judging one's personality traits does not speed one's ability to recall trait-relevant exemplars (Klein, Sherman & Loftus, 1996a), converging on the idea that people do not need to consider specific behaviors when deciding which personality traits they possess. Instead, they have abstract ideas about the self's traits that are divorced from the particulars of their lives.

The case is different for more contextual forms of the self-concept. Schell, Klein and Babey (1996) asked participants to judge their personality traits in general and also in the specific context of college. The authors reasoned that people have well-formed self-schemas for their personality traits in general, but they prefer to base contextual views of the self on more specific informational sources. Following this logic, recalling behaviors or events relevant to a trait should facilitate trait judgments for the self in college, but not in general. Schell et al. obtained this exact pattern: A priming effect (606ms) for the recall task when judging the self's traits in college, but not in general (58ms).

These results are consistent with a hierarchical view of self-knowledge. In their day-to-day lives, people encounter events, receive feedback and engage in specific behaviors. These features of day-to-day life influence momentary self-views as well as a corresponding contextual self-concept, such as the self in college. However, specific events and behaviors do not impact more generalized views of the self – the sort that are the focus of trait scales. Contextual self-views will thus be more tied to events of one's life than generalized views of the self. Figure 24.2 depicts such a hierarchical organization, with events and behaviors at the bottom of the hierarchy, contextual self-views in the middle and ideas about the self in general at the top.

In a neurocognitive case-study approach, Klein, Loftus and Kihlstrom (1996b) worked with a woman (W. J.) who had suffered temporary retrograde amnesia as a result of a concussive blow to the head. She could not recall specific events or experiences that occurred since high school, but could make reliable judgments about her personality. These ratings agreed with what her boyfriend thought about her, suggesting trait-related self-insight. Even more dramatic findings have been reported for patients who had lost their ability to retrieve episodic facts, whether due to severe head injury (K. C.), Alzheimer's disease (K. R.), or stroke (D. B.). These patients, too, were able to characterize their traits despite inability to remember the details of their lives. In all, people retrieve generalized and abstract (i.e., semantic) forms of self-knowledge when characterizing their traits. We explore implications next.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A CONTEXTUAL PERSONALITY?

Conner and Barrett (2012) contrast an experiencing self with a semantic or believed self. The experienced self lives in the moment rather than in the abstract and its
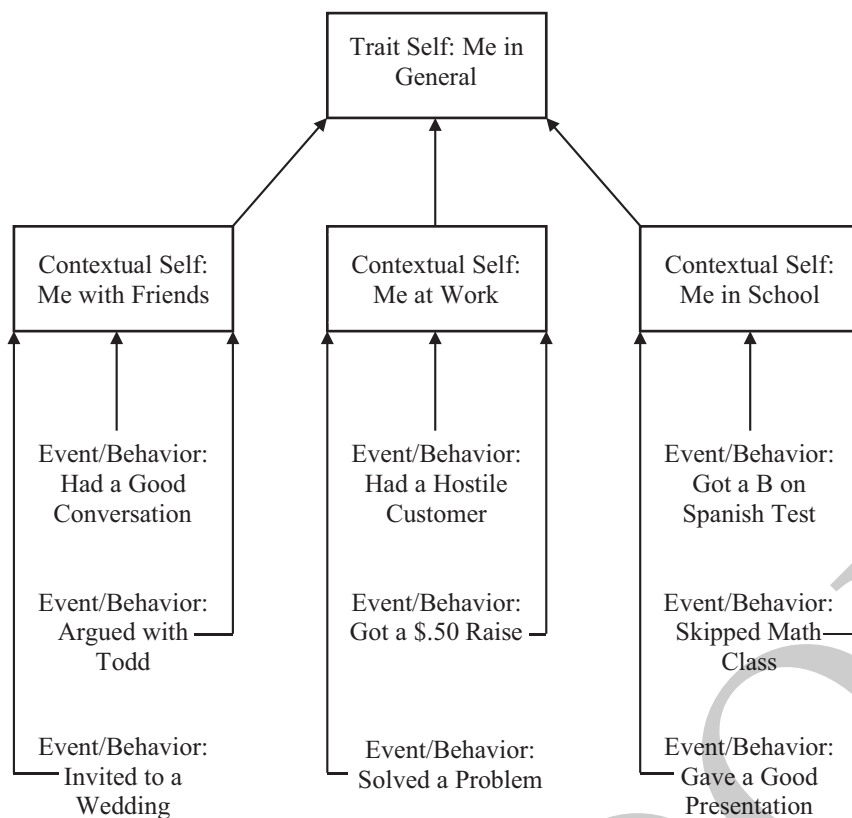
Figure 24.2 A hierarchical view of self-knowledge.

perceptions are determined by the motivational-embodied context at the time. This self is probed using experience-sampling procedures (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003), and its thoughts, feelings or behaviors are malleable (Klinger, 1999). Indeed, Fleeson (2001) argued that the typical person exhibits nearly every level of a particular trait – such as extraversion – across the situations of his/her daily life. Fleeson and Gallagher (2009) used experience-sampling procedures to determine that between 50 and 75 percent of the variance in Big Five levels was due to occasions or time points rather than individuals. Nonetheless, this variability organizes itself into larger entities such as the person-in-situation (Shoda & Mischel, 2000) or the social role one is currently inhabiting (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

McAdams (1995) made a distinction between decontextualized and contextualized personality aspects, the latter of which are more role-bound. People not only modify the self to fit the social role, but they also recognize that they do so (Roberts, 2007). In a typical study, participants are instructed to characterize their personality in different social roles such as with friends, at work or at school (Figure 24.2). People describe their personalities differently in different roles. They may be more agreeable with friends, more extraverted at work and more conscientious at school than is true of the self in general (Donahue & Harary, 1998). Moreover, specific experiences in a role

(e.g., succeeding at school) affect how people view themselves within that role more than they affect how people view themselves in general (Wood & Roberts, 2006), confirming predictions that would follow from the hierarchical scheme of Figure 24.2.

There is also support for the opposite direction of influence, as shown in the frame-of-reference literature. Organizational psychologists have sometimes thought that generalized traits are relatively inconsequential in predicting work outcomes, such as job satisfaction or job performance (Morgeson et al., 2007). Personality inventories can be contextualized, though, by adding the phrase "at work" to the end of the items (Hunthausen, Truxillo, Bauer & Hammer, 2003). People rate themselves as more conscientious when the pertinent self is at work than in other contexts (Schmit, Ryan, Stierwalt & Powell, 1995). More interestingly, contextualized personality inventories exhibit higher levels of predictive validity for experiences and behaviors in a particular domain, such as work (Hunthausen et al., 2003).

In a relevant study, extraversion "at work" (rather than in general) was a better predictor of job satisfaction and turnover intentions, agreeableness "at work" was a better predictor of work-related absenteeism, and neuroticism "at work" was a better predictor of one's tendency to be frustrated on the job (Bowling & Burns, 2010). Similar forms of contextualization are evident in occupational

and scholastic outcomes (Schmit et al., 1995). Thus, it would be informative to extend these findings by determining whether an inventory modified to include the phrase "with friends" predicts better interpersonal experiences and behaviors (Donahue & Harary, 1998). Regardless, people have forms of personality that are contextual. These forms are closely tied to relevant behaviors and experiences, and exhibit greater malleability across time (Wood & Roberts, 2006) and context (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

HOW CAN ONE ACCOUNT FOR THE STABILITY OF TRAIT JUDGMENTS?

Humanistic psychologists view the life course as one in which people might grow and self-actualize over time (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1961). However, people's responses to personality inventories exhibit remarkable stability over time, even among those who think their personalities have changed. McCrae and Costa (1994) noted that mean levels of the Big Five traits change to a small degree from age twenty to thirty (e.g., neuroticism decreases), but test-retest coefficients are more impressive. Over periods of five to ten years, McCrae and Costa reported test-retest coefficients of .60–.80. When such coefficients are compared to scale reliabilities (.70–.90), there appears to be almost no change in personality: What people say about their personality traits is the same over periods of five to ten years.

Yet, people's lives do change – they get married, advance in their jobs or encounter illness. Although many of these changes influence wellbeing and life satisfaction (Diener, Lucas & Scollon, 2006), they do not affect personality much. In a meta-analysis, Anusic and Schimmack (2016) found markedly higher stability coefficients for personality than for emotional wellbeing/life satisfaction. Part of this stability may be due to personality remaining stable over time. Evidence shows that peer-based judgments of personality, like self-based judgments, display test-retest coefficients in the .60–.80 range (Costa & McCrae, 1988). Part of this stability, however, is also due to people forming beliefs about themselves that become fixed and insulated from the everyday circumstances of their lives (Robinson & Clore, 2002b).

Consider Klein et al. (1996b), who found that one woman (W. J.) made the same personality judgments about herself when she suffered from retrograde amnesia and when she did not: She was accessing the same generalized self-knowledge in both cases. Moreover, such beliefs about the generalized self can be mistaken. Klein, Cosmides and Costabile (2003) worked with a woman (K. R.) with severe dementia. This woman could make reliable judgments about her personality. Yet, K. R.'s views of herself were outdated, better reflecting her personality in the past than in the present (Klein et al., 2003). Hence, we can account for the stability of personality self-judgments by positing that people form stable beliefs

about the self (e.g., "I am an introvert") that they repeatedly access when asked to make trait judgments. Whether such beliefs are accurate or not, they are divorced from the particulars of one's life, thus lending them a considerable degree of stability over time (Klein & Lax, 2010).

CAN PERSONALITY BELIEFS BIAS MORE MOMENTARY JUDGMENTS?

People have generalized beliefs about themselves and they have daily lives (Conner & Barrett, 2012). Although participants can often keep these sources of information separate, they may not always do so. For example, when people retrospect on their emotions, some of the particulars of their emotional experiences will fade over time. To fill in these gaps, people will consult more generalized beliefs about the self or their emotions. In retrospect, people overestimate the extent to which pleasant events cause pleasure (Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson & Cronk, 1997) and unpleasant events cause distress (Gilbert, Pinel, Wilson, Blumberg & Wheatley, 1998). They also overestimate their emotions (Robinson & Clore, 2002a), especially if they think of themselves as emotional (Robinson & Clore, 2002b).

Barrett, Robin, Pietromonaco and Eyssell (1998) instructed participants to report on their momentary emotional reactions to daily social interactions for one week. The same participants completed trait-related scales of positive affect, negative affect and affect intensity. The researchers found little evidence that women are more "emotional" in their momentary reactions. The trait emotion scales revealed robust differences, however, with women believing that they are more emotionally reactive than men. Thus, there is a dissociation between generalized beliefs about emotion, which are associated with pronounced sex differences, and online experiences of emotion, which are inconsistent with generalized beliefs. Robinson, Johnson and Shields (1998) asked women and men to report their emotional experiences immediately after playing a competitive game. These reports of emotion did not vary by sex. By contrast, sex differences were observed when participants reconstructed their emotional reactions a week later or when they merely imagined their reactions to the game. Apparently, people draw on generalized beliefs about their emotions, including sex stereotypes, when specific experiential information is missing, either due to the passage of time (retrospective condition) or the absence of relevant experience (hypothetical condition).

Similar dissociations have been reported for culture. Asians are more modest in their self-presentation and report lower levels of subjective wellbeing than Westerners (Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2003). However, these beliefs about happiness may be in error. In several experience-sampling and laboratory studies, Oishi (2002) found no differences in wellbeing between Asian and Caucasian

samples. Nonetheless, Asians retrospectively reported lower wellbeing than Caucasians. Diener et al. (2000) found a similar belief-infusion effect for the difference between one's satisfaction with specific life domains (e.g., textbooks, lectures) and the more global life domains that these would constitute (e.g., education). Cultural groups differed in the extent to which they reported greater satisfaction with global than specific domains, and such differences in "global positivity" systematically varied by culture (e.g., the difference was higher for "happy" cultures like Puerto Rico, but lower for "modest" cultures like Japan). Thus, cultural beliefs about happiness bias retrospective and global judgments about wellbeing relative to the actual experiences that cultural members have.

Personality-related beliefs, too, could bias retrospective estimates of online experience. Larsen (1992) collected online reports of somatic symptoms (e.g., aches and pains) for two months and then had the same participants retrospectively report on their somatic symptoms during this total time period. Neuroticism predicted online reports of symptoms, but there was a stronger relationship with retrospective reports of symptoms: Neurotic individuals thought that they had more somatic symptoms than they did. Similarly, Houtveen and Oei (2007) found that people prone to think of themselves as ill and symptomatic (in their trait reports) retrospectively overestimated their tendencies toward somatic distress during a one-week time period. Hence, personality traits can be viewed in terms of beliefs about the self that can bias retrospective estimates of experience relative to online reports of experience. Research focusing on other personality dimensions (e.g., conscientiousness) and other classes of outcomes (e.g., behavior) is needed. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that people would consult their personality-related beliefs when asked what the self would do, think, or feel in the absence of easily retrieved evidence.

Consider the results of Van Boven and Robinson (2012). These researchers induced emotions, using film clips or vignette-based inductions. Participants reported their emotional reactions a mere twenty minutes later. To disrupt episodic memory retrieval, some participants rehearsed complex letter strings while attempting to recall their earlier emotional reactions. Under such circumstances, people might have difficulties recalling specific details and should consult generalized beliefs concerning their emotions. Indeed, women reported more intense reactions to sadness inductions, and men to anger inductions, when under high than low cognitive load. Cognitive load led women and men to report emotional reactions that were consistent with gender stereotypes, even though the relevant emotional episodes occurred recently. People might use generalized beliefs about the self as "fill in" information under conditions in which event-specific meaning is difficult to come by.

Further support for these ideas derives from research on individual differences in reaction time. Robinson, Solberg, Vargas and Tamir (2003) examined the relationship between extraversion and subjective wellbeing. Extraversion predicts wellbeing (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998), but might do so in a "fill in" fashion. That is, under mundane circumstances, extraverts might be inclined to make more positive evaluations of their environment than introverts, which would facilitate higher levels of wellbeing (Lucas & Diener, 2001). Such top-down effects, though, should be lesser to the extent that the person is good at distinguishing neutral and positive events in more episodic, event-specific terms (e.g., at encoding).

To test this formulation, Robinson et al. (2003) designed a reaction time task that required participants to distinguish neutral and positive events (words) as quickly as possible. People who make these distinctions quickly are more skilled in online evaluation and may consult their dispositional beliefs less often in evaluating their circumstances. Extraversion interacted with evaluation speed to predict subjective wellbeing. Extraversion did not predict wellbeing among participants who were fast to distinguish neutral and positive events, but did predict wellbeing judgments among slow evaluators. Thus, extraversion, as a source of dispositional beliefs, is important among people who have difficulty making distinctions at encoding.

In the previously described research, Robinson et al. (2003) assumed that the distinction between neutral and positive events was relevant, because most of the events people encounter in life fall somewhere between neutrality and positivity (Cacioppo, Gardner & Berntson, 1997). Subsequent studies, though, supported a broader consideration of such phenomena. In Robinson and Oishi (2006), participants distinguished pleasant and unpleasant words, but also made nonevaluative distinctions such as between fruits and vegetables or animate and nonanimate objects. Participants who were faster at one categorization task were faster at others, indicating a general speed or episodic encoding factor.

Robinson and Oishi (2006) found results similar to Robinson et al. (2003), with a representative pattern reported in Figure 24.3. Extraversion predicted life satisfaction, a component of subjective wellbeing, particularly among participants slow to categorize events (words) as they occur. Among those proficient in assigning meaning to events, the dispositional beliefs captured by extraversion did not predict life satisfaction levels. In the latter case, these people may live their lives in a more episodic manner, rendering their dispositional beliefs less relevant. Personality-related beliefs may matter more when event-specific meaning is harder to come by, here due to poorer categorization skills.

Such evidence is not limited to the extraversion/wellbeing relationship. Recall that neuroticism biases symptom reporting (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989), particularly in
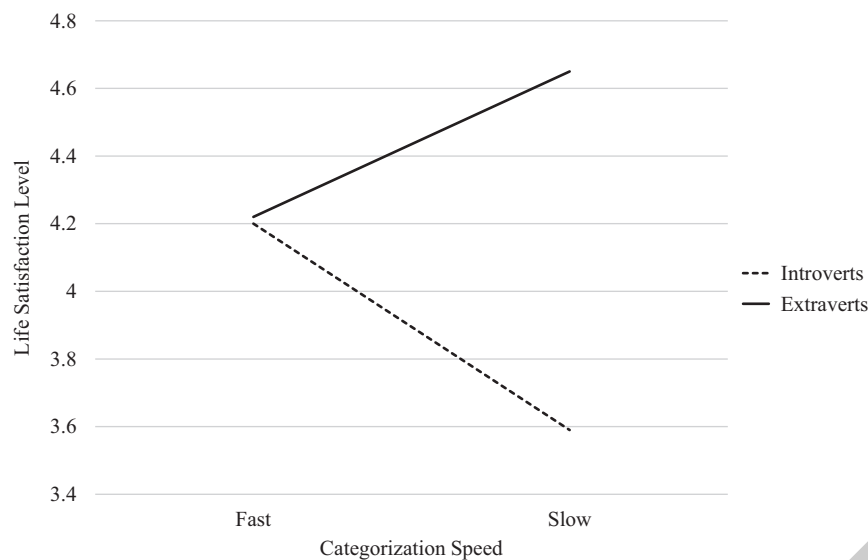
Figure 24.3 Extraversion as a predictor of life satisfaction among fast and slow categorizers, based on Robinson and Oishi (2006).

retrospective designs (Larsen, 1992). Following the logic of Robinson and Oishi (2006), the neuroticism/symptom relationship, too, might be stronger among people who have difficulties attaching meaning to events as they occur. Robinson and Clore (2007) tested this hypothesis by assessing neuroticism, individual differences in categorization speed and the extent to which the person felt they had been suffering from somatic symptoms (e.g., headaches, nausea) over the past weeks or months. Categorization speed and neuroticism interacted, such that neuroticism was a stronger predictor of somatic symptom reports among participants who exhibited difficulties assigning meaning to events in the choice reaction time tasks.

These results are informative. Personality traits, at least when assessed via noncontextual self-report scales, tap generalized beliefs about the self. Such beliefs alter construal and reporting in a top-down manner (Robinson & Clore, 2002b). To the extent that the person is attuned to the current environment, dispositional beliefs about the self matter less.

There are other lines of relevant research. One aligns people along a perseveration dimension, with some oriented toward the past (high perseveration) and others toward the present (low perseveration). Robinson, Wilkowski, Kirkeby and Meier (2006) theorized that participants high in perseveration, who are inclined toward cognitive-behavioral inertia, should exhibit greater "traitedness" as well – that is, their personality traits should matter more. The researchers supported this idea with respect to the neuroticism/distress relationship. We conclude that personality beliefs can exert a top-down influence on momentary judgments and behavior, particularly when episodic meaning is lacking (Robinson & Oishi, 2006) or the person leans toward habitual responding (Robinson, Goetz, Wilkowski & Hoffman, 2006).

PUTTING THE SELF INTO PERSONALITY

Personality psychology has been criticized for emphasizing structure over process (Pervin, 1994). Researchers know a lot about how traits relate to each other, and about taxonomic issues, but they know less about why personality traits predict certain outcomes. Viewing self-reported traits as features of the self-concept can provide process-based scaffolding, because the self literature emphasizes process over structure (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003). Thus, the taxonomic strengths of the personality literature can be joined with the process-related strengths of the self literature in a mutually beneficial manner.

The self literature is partially organized in terms of hyphenated concepts such as self-enhancement, self-protection, self-affirmation, self-regulation, self-certainty and self-deception (Baumeister, 1998). Many, if not most, of these concepts implicate motivation (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008), which has traditionally been thought of as distinct from traits (Winter, John, Stewart, Klohnen & Duncan, 1998). Motivational perspectives on personality traits, however, are in the ascendance (Denissen & Penke, 2008). We endorse such perspectives by highlighting mechanisms that can account for either the origin or operation of traits.

Self-Enhancement and Self-Certainty

Self-enhancement is a potent and cross-culturally prevalent motive that refers to the pursuit and endorsement of overly positive self-views (Sedikides, Gaertner & Cai, 2015). Self-enhancement is observed in judgments such as the better-than-average effect, whereby participants think they are better than their average peer on desirable qualities and attributes (Alicke & Govorun, 2005), or the

overclaiming effect, whereby people exaggerate their knowledge within important domains (Paulhus, Harms, Bruce & Lysy, 2003). More dynamically, self-enhancement leads people to seek positive information about the self (Hepper, Hart, Gregg & Sedikides, 2011) while rejecting negative feedback (Ditto & Boardman, 1995). Self-enhancement, which is related to social desirability (Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010), influences trait judgments. Edwards (1966) examined the correlation between trait desirability and trait self-endorsement. It was .892. What people report about their traits is strongly related to how desirable the trait is.

There are individual differences in the strength of the self-enhancement motive (Hepper, Gramzow & Sedikides, 2010) that are predictive of personality scores (Asendorpf & Ostendorf, 1998). People who self-enhance have higher self-esteem levels (Hepper et al., 2010), and self-esteem correlates with the Big Five (Robins, Tracy, Trzesniewski, Potter & Gosling, 2001). Thus, one would expect high self-enhancers to report greater extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, stability and openness to experience in a manner that exaggerates these traits. Indeed, the evaluative nature of all Big Five traits gives rise to inter-correlations. Digman (1997) first noticed two clusters of higher-order traits, termed alpha (A+C+N-) and beta (E+O+). Paulhus and John (1998) pointed out that these two clusters are highly related to two self-enhancement biases – a moralistic bias that leads people to exaggerate their communal qualities (A+C+) and an egoistic bias that leads them to exaggerate their agentic qualities (E+O+).

These distinct forms of self-enhancement, moralistic and egoistic (Paulhus & John, 1998), are also interrelated. Musek (2007) reported evidence for a "Big 1" of personality that combines the desirable poles of all Big Five traits. This General Factor of Personality is apparent when people self-report their personalities (Anusic et al., 2009) and is strongly associated with self-esteem (Erdle et al., 2009). Moreover, it correlates with improbable forms of self-enhancement such as claiming to be attractive, intelligent and athletic despite the orthogonality of these desirable qualities (Anusic et al., 2009). Hence, what people report about their traits reflects, in part, operations of the self-enhancement motive (Paulhus & John, 1998).

The implications of this analysis have been debated. Some regard it unfortunate that self-reports of personality confound descriptive content – whether one is more talkative or quiet – with tendencies to make positive evaluations about the self (Saucier, 1994). Others think that whether a person views themselves favorably or not is a meaningful personality component (Musek, 2007). Regardless, traits that are more evaluative, and therefore more likely to trigger the self-enhancement motive, result in lower levels of self-peer and peer-peer agreement (John & Robins, 1993. Also, traits that are more evaluative often result in lower levels of test-rest stability (Wood & Wortman, 2012), because the self-enhancement motive also waxes and wanes with time (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009). Hence, it can be useful to control for evaluation and/or focus on neutral or less evaluative traits.

Although some people do not habitually self-enhance, this does not mean that they dislike themselves. Rather, they may present themselves in a modest, self-protective manner as one is less likely to look foolish by claiming skills or potentials that are lacking (Sedikides, Hoorens & Dufner, 2015). People low in self-esteem are motivated by such concerns (Baumeister, Tice & Hutton, 1989) and hesitate when opportunities for self-promotion arise (Heimpel, Wood, Marshall & Brown, 2002). Given links between self-esteem and the Big Five (Robins et al., 2001), some of the modesty characteristic of low self-esteem individuals may also be found among those lower in extraversion or higher in neuroticism (Watson et al., 2002), especially because introversion and neuroticism are linked to self-protective concerns (Cheek & Buss, 1981).

The relation between self-esteem and self-certainty is relevant. People with lower self-esteem are less certain and more conflicted in their self-views (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003). They report less clarity concerning the self, give less extreme self-ratings, make these ratings with lesser confidence and exhibit longer latencies when judging the self (Campbell, 1990). This degree of uncertainty matters with respect to personality because individual differences in self-certainty are systematically related to multiple Big Five traits, including neuroticism (Campbell et al., 1996). Moreover, a self-certainty perspective can explain individual differences in reactivity: When people are uncertain about the self, negative events or feedback will have more impact on momentary self-views, affecting emotional wellbeing (Kernis, 2003). Given that neurotic individuals are less certain about the self (Campbell et al., 1996), they are more prone to emotional reactivity (Bolger & Schilling, 1991).

There are further reasons to explore self-certainty as a personality component. Certainty is a classic measure of attitude strength, such that attitudes held with greater certainty are more predictive of behavior (Petty & Krosnick, 1995). In a meta-analysis, the average attitude–behavior correlation was $r = .45$ at high levels of certainty, but $r = .08$ at low levels of certainty (Kraus, 1995). Similarly, higher certainty about one's traits predicts behavior better (Dalal et al., 2015): Extraversion is more predictive of observer judgments among people who are more certain of their extraversion (Swann & Ely, 1984).

The self-enhancement motive is potent, prevalent and dynamic (Sedikides et al., 2015). A great deal is known about how this motive influences processes such as attention, feedback-seeking and memory (Sedikides, Green, Saunders, Skowronski & Zengel, 2016). Given that the motive has been linked to major personality traits (Paulhus & John, 1998), researchers will learn more about how these traits operate by adopting experimental paradigms pioneered by social psychologists for the study of

self-enhancement (Alicke & Sedikides, 2011). For example, extraverted people may recall memories of successful social interactions as a way of bolstering their social confidence when it is threatened (Denissen & Penke, 2008).

Raison Oblige as a Basis for Personality Congruence

Once people have formed ideas about what they are like, they seem to act in ways that will confirm those beliefs. For example, people with negative self-views may dwell on negative feedback and even seek it out (Swann, Rentfrow & Guinn, 2003). In one such paradigm, people with positive and negative self-views are offered the choice to interact with someone who has given them either positive or negative feedback. Although people with positive self-views choose to interact with favorable others, those with negative self-views choose to interact with unfavorable others (Swann, 1992). Negative feedback seems to "fit" better for people with negative self-views and anticipated interactions appear smoother.

Such findings can be accounted for by self-verification theory (Swann et al., 2003), but they can also be accounted for by a simpler alternative, raison oblige theory (Gregg, 2009). According to it, individuals with negative self-views do not want their self-views to be true. Rather, they consider favorable feedback as implausible and, constrained by reality, accept unfavorable feedback because they view it as more plausible than favorable feedback. So, individuals with negative self-views find themselves rationally obliged to pursue feedback that they would prefer not to be part of their identity. These individuals do not differ from those with positive self-views in their desire for favorable or unfavorable feedback or in their wish for favorable or unfavorable feedback to be true; they only differ in the plausibility that they ascribe to favorable feedback. In a typical experiment of this type, participants with negative self-views who choose to read an unfavorable (over favorable) personality profile report that they prefer the rejected (favorable) profile, but consider the chosen (unfavorable) profile as more plausible.

People with low self-esteem seem to inhabit worlds that are less joyful and eschew positive affective outcomes (Wood, Heimpel, Manwell & Whittington, 2009). By contrast, the untroubled extravert is someone who regularly seeks pleasure, including in their social interactions (Lucas & Diener, 2001). People also expect (but not necessarily want) mood states that match their dispositional tendencies. Tamir, Robinson and Clore (2002) found that extraverts were faster to identify desired and undesired outcomes when they were in positive rather than neutral mood states, but happy introverts exhibited difficulties with the same tasks. Hence, people's ideas about dispositional affect can influence the emotional experiences that make sense for them, affecting performance.

The downstream consequences of raison oblige theory processes can be significant. People who are depressed often act in ways that magnify their depression (Joiner & Metalsky, 1995) and people who are anxious often act in ways that reinforce this state (Suls & Martin, 2005). There are physiological consequences to such dynamics. Brown and McGill (1989) reported that positive events undermined health for people with low self-esteem, but promoted health among people with high self-esteem. Similarly, Ayduk, Gyurak, Akinola and Mendes (2013) found that blood pressure levels increased when people with negative self-views received positive feedback, but decreased when they received negative feedback. In all, people create and inhabit psychological worlds that match their dispositional self-beliefs.

We underline two implications. First, raison oblige theory can explain why personality traits predict certain outcomes. Disagreeable people, for example, may act in a less moral manner because doing so is consistent with features of the self-concept (Mulder & Aquino, 2013). Second, raison oblige theory can explain why personality traits are stable over time. When people continue to act in ways consistent with the self-concept, that self-concept will become more entrenched (McCrae & Costa, 1994).

CONCLUSION

Personality psychologists study traits and social psychologists study the self-concept. An integration of these traditions is possible because both ask people to characterize themselves and there are systematic relationships between measures of traits and the self-concept (Robins et al., 2001). The two literatures can inform one another.

When people self-report on their traits, they access semantic self-knowledge, which is independent of time and place (Klein & Lax, 2010). Its decontextualized nature may contribute to the temporal stability of traits (Klein et al., 1996b), but it may also result in self-views that no longer map onto the particulars of one's life (Klein et al., 2003). People also have contextualized self-views that are updated more frequently, though they may capture a limited scope of operation (Schell et al., 1996). Such considerations give rise to a hierarchical view of self-knowledge, one in which decontextualized ideas about the self organize multiple contextual self-views, which in turn respond (though conservatively) to particular experiences and behavior (Wood & Roberts, 2006; see Figure 24.2).

Viewing personality in terms of generalized beliefs about the self invites questions. Generalized beliefs are usually accurate, but they can sometimes be inaccurate (Clore & Robinson, 2012). In the context of personality, similarly, some people may have beliefs about the self (and/or their traits) that are systematically inaccurate in characterizing their everyday lives (Conner & Barrett, 2012). Even so, beliefs about the self provide a sense of continuity (McAdams, 2013) and can serve as a default when information relevant to the judgment is not readily accessible (Robinson & Clore, 2002b). In the chapter, we

used these ideas to address the nature of retrospective biases and then extended these ideas to a consideration of trait–outcome relationships. Personality traits could be particularly consequential under cases of ambiguity or when people encounter difficulties assigning meaning to events as they occur (Robinson & Clore, 2007; Robinson & Sedikides, 2009). This framework is not sufficient for understanding all trait–outcome relationships, but it does offer insights concerning some of them.

In the final portion of the chapter, we attempted to integrate the personality and self literatures by considering whether motives such as self-enhancement can contribute to an understanding of personality functioning. People differ in the strength of the self-enhancement motive (Hepper et al., 2010), and such differences can explain why some are more likely than others to endorse personality items on the basis of their favorability (Leising, Scherbaum, Locke & Zimmermann, 2015). People who do not gravitate toward self-enhancement may be less certain about the self and more modest. Additional work on certainty merits attention. For example, because people who are less certain about the self should exhibit greater reactivity in daily life (Kernis, 2003) and weaker personality–outcome relationships (Dalal et al., 2015). Finally, we outlined ways in which raison oblige theory (Gregg, 2009) can explain some cases of personality trait congruence. Altogether, the chapter illustrates multiple benefits that can follow from an integration of the personality and self literatures.

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