Reflections on the Self and Others: The Influence of Clarity on Interpersonal Judgments

THESIS

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Jean Guerrettaz

Graduate Program in Psychology

The Ohio State University

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Master's Examination Committee:

Professor Robert Arkin, Advisor

Professor Lisa Libby

Professor Jennifer Crocker
Abstract

Research on fluency in judgments (specifically, “ease of retrieval effects”) shows that subjective experiences of difficulty during recall can override or swamp the actual objective content of the information, yielding surprising and counterintuitive judgments. When examples come readily and easily to mind, they are perceived as more available; consequently, people judge the related event or construct as more likely, frequent, or compelling. By contrast, when examples do not come readily to mind – are difficult to retrieve – they are experienced as less available and the related event or construct is judged as less likely, frequent, or compelling. To date, little research has been centered on the potential moderating impact of individual differences. The present research addresses this gap, exploring how clarity about the self (or a relationship) affects the information one attends to during a retrieval task. The term Self-concept Clarity refers to the degree to which a person’s various self-images are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman, 1996). More bluntly, self-concept clarity is the degree to which a person believes he or she knows and understands the self. In the present work, clarity concerning another is operationalized as 1) the length of a romantic relationship and 2) the degree of psychological inclusion of the other in the self (i.e., self-other overlap; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). Three studies were designed to test how these moderating variables play a role in guiding a person in elaborating on the self or a
romantic partner. Specifically, the studies were designed to examine how self-concept clarity, relationship duration, and self-other overlap influence whether people attend to the subjective experience more or less than the objective content of information about one’s self or about another. Findings support the notion that ease of retrieval effects are determined not just by the circumstances of the task, but also by the unique characteristics of the person.
Dedicated to my parents, Ellen Guerrettaz and Tom Buelow
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Vita

2007..........................................................B.A. Mathematics, Indiana University

2007-2009 .................................................Math Teacher, Danville Community High

School, Danville, Indiana

2009-2010 ................................................Graduate Fellow, Department of

Psychology, The Ohio State University

2010 to present ..........................................Graduate Teaching Associate, Department

of Psychology, The Ohio State University

Publications


Fields of Study

Major Field: Psychology
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Imagine, for a moment, that you are sitting in a large lecture class. It is a psychology course focused on “the self,” and to learn more about the students on the first day the professor asks the class to take out a sheet of paper and write a bit about themselves. Your task is merely to answer the question “Who am I?”. The professor then asks the class to turn the paper over and think about someone else. Your task now is to identify someone very close to you, and then to write about that someone, answering the very same question: “Who is _____?“.

Does this experience writing about yourself, and then another, differ? Would it matter if the other person who came readily to mind was a very distant other versus someone close, even intimate? Too, would the sort of person you are or the relationship you have with that other person matter at all? And finally, how do individual differences, on some relevant dimension, affect the experience of thinking about a self – either your own or someone else’s self?

These and related questions inspired the present program of research. The research reported here aims to show that how a person experiences the above situation depends on the situation and the characteristics of the person. Social psychology has a long history of documenting how experiences and judgments depend on the transient circumstances of a situation. For instance, how funny a person believes himself to be
depends on how many examples of funny behaviors are accessible. If someone recalls
telling five jokes in the last week, he may conclude he is a very funny person (assuming
the frivolity was well received). The situation, recalling five recent joke-telling
behaviors, has guided the person’s judgment. However, if the individual already believed
himself to be funny and then struggled to recall his last two jokes or witticisms, he may
conclude he is not very funny after all. In this case, the person gleans information from
his own expectations that then influences how he interprets the experience and forms his
judgments. The present research is interested in how perceptions of and inferences drawn
from experiences in a given situation depend on more stable traits of the person as well as
the situational circumstances. That is, how do someone’s beliefs about how funny he is
influence how he interprets the experience of recalling the number of jokes he has told or
witty comments in the past week?

The Self-Concept

To answer the question “Who am I?”, the individual calls on information
contained within his or her self-concept. Contemporary theory and research treats the
self-concept as a cognitive schema used to organize and process information relevant to
the self (Markus, 1980). This framework of self-information can also be thought of as a
“set or collections of images, schemas, conceptions, prototypes, theories, goals, or tasks”
(Markus & Wurf, 1987, p. 302). Together, this suggests the self-concept not only
contains a person’s various self-representations, but also actively integrates new
information and experiences into existing images and knowledge of the self. In line with
this understanding, Markus and Wurf (1987) have proposed that the self-concept includes
both an active and a chronic component. The chronic self-concept is the complete sense of self and includes the central, core elements of the self. These chronic self-images are the stable aspects of the self-concept that consistently have the potential to be accessed in various situations. In contrast, the active self-concept is the working sense of the self that includes those representations currently accessed in a given situation, dubbed the “working self” because it provides a snapshot of the self, relevant to the immediate moment and set of circumstances. To extend the metaphor, self-concept as a whole might be considered a video, for which the working self-concept is but one “frame.” The active self-concept includes the more temporary representations that respond to environmental cues. Hence, the self-concept contains both stable and adaptive components.

This general structure of the self-concept, including both a chronic and an active component, is thought to reflect anyone and everyone’s sense of self. Yet, the underlying structures of the chronic and active self-concepts are thought to vary across individuals. For instance, self-concept clarity is the extent to which one’s self-concept is “clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable” (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman, 1996, p. 141). Although this definition suggests an objective, directly measurable level of self-concept clarity, most of the literature has relied on self-reports. Thus, it is reasonable to think of clarity as one’s beliefs that the self-concept is clear, confidently held, consistent, and stable. Self-concept clarity can be conceptualized as a metacognitive understanding of the self, a belief about one’s self-knowledge. Metacognition broadly defined is thinking about one’s own cognitions (Jost,
Kruglanski, & Nelson, 1998). In the case of the self, clarity depends on how one percepts the process of thinking about the self-concept. When reflecting on one’s self-images, a person with higher self-concept clarity has more confidence in his or her sense of self. Moreover, the clearness with which one understands the complexities and framework of the self and the metacognitive confidence a person with more clarity has while thinking about the self work together to form the strength and improve the articulation of that person’s self-concept. In contrast, a person with low self-concept clarity has less confidence in his or her sense of self. The combination of low confidence when reflecting on the self and the relative lack of clarity in one’s understanding of the complexities and organization of the self contribute to a weaker, less-articulated self-concept.

Self-concept clarity has been shown to correlate with several other constructs in psychology, including self-esteem, self-complexity, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness (Campbell et al., 1996). These correlates will be discussed in more detail later. For now, one related construct is worth mentioning further. Clarity is often strongly correlated with self-esteem, with those who maintain a clearer sense of the self also having a more positive self-regard. This does not, however, imply that self-esteem and self-concept clarity are one and the same. One key and simple difference is that self-esteem is an evaluation of the self as “good” or “bad” and does not necessarily relate to a sense of clarity, confidence, or understanding of those positive or negative self-images. There is no reason, based on the theoretical definitions of the two constructs, that an individual could not be unclear about a positive self or clear about a negative self. In
fact, depressed individuals likely do have very clear understandings of confidently held negative self-images that are both consistent and stable.

Nonetheless, the difficulty of distinguishing between self-esteem and self-concept clarity remains a concern in the literature and a task requiring more research. For the present purposes, we will be distinguishing between self-esteem and self-concept clarity based on a difference of evaluations of various self-images versus a feeling about certainty in one’s more general self-knowledge.

Availability and Ease of Retrieval

The availability heuristic refers to the tendency to judge events based on “the ease with which instances or associations come to mind” (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973, p. 208). When a person attempts to judge, for instance, the likelihood of an event occurring, he or she might try to remember other times when the event has occurred. When those events come to mind readily, that availability serves as a cue that there are many examples – and the event is seen as more likely to recur. If other events do not readily come to mind, the lack of availability is a cue that there are few examples and the event must be unlikely to happen. People’s reliance on such cues was illustrated in several studies on the availability heuristic. For instance, in one study Tversky and Kahneman showed that individuals overestimate the number of words beginning with the letter r, guessing there are more words with r as the first letter than words with r as the third letter. Presumably this is because words beginning with the letter r are more available in one’s awareness, and the availability signifies that many such words must exist. In contrast, words with r as the third letter come to mind much less readily, signifying that
those words are few in number. The results of these studies were limited, though, because the objective information was always congruent with the perceived availability. When thinking about words that began with the letter r, for example, people did think of more such words, making it difficult to know whether the judgments were driven by the content or the perceived availability.

Realizing this confound, a new paradigm was developed to separate content and availability. In the ease of retrieval paradigm, the number of examples to be retrieved is pre-determined to create a situation where the experience actually conflicts with the output (Schwarz, Bless, Strack, Klump, Rittenauer-Schatka, & Simons, 1991). Building upon the availability heuristic, the ease of retrieval effect occurs when the subjective feeling about the ease or difficulty of recalling something, rather than the content actually recalled, informs people’s judgments. For instance, when participants are asked to list either six or twelve personal examples of assertive or unassertive behavior, those who listed twelve examples of assertive (unassertive) behavior found the task more difficult. Moreover, they later rated themselves as actually less (more) assertive as a consequence (Schwarz, 1998). In other words, they used the subjective experience of retrieving the examples as information to guide their judgments rather than relying on the objective evidence they had generated in their own thinking.

Similar ease of retrieval effects have been found for self-esteem when individuals are asked to provide more (eight) or fewer (two) examples of self-confidence (Hermann, Leonardelli, & Arkin, 2002). Among high self-doubt individuals, those who listed more examples subsequently reported lower self-esteem than those who listed fewer examples.
Participants who listed eight examples experienced more difficulty retrieving so many instances of self-confidence, and that subjective experience of difficulty lead them to believe they were actually less self-confident and, consequently, led them to experience lower overall self-esteem.

Research has shown that experienced ease of retrieval can also affect likeability judgments. For instance, people who listed fewer favorable thoughts about a person liked him more than those who listed more favorable thoughts (Haddock, 2002). This suggests that if one lists many positive self-attributes, he or she may actually like the self less as a consequence if the experience feels difficult. Conversely, if the experience is one of ease when focused on the self, the individual might well evaluate the self more positively.

Despite the extensive literature showing ease of retrieval effects, though, it is important to note that experienced ease or difficulty does not always dictate judgment. When people are led to believe their experience of difficulty or ease when thinking about a construct is nondiagnostic, by providing another reason for the experienced difficulty or suggesting the task is difficult for everyone, they favor the declarative information and contents of their thoughts over the metacognitive experiential information (Schwarz et al., 1991).

Metacognitive Judgments and the Self

Research in the domain of ease of retrieval has pointed to the power of metacognition when making judgments about the self. As described above, work on the ease of retrieval effect has shown that people rely on the experience of listing behaviors to make judgments about their own traits. When thinking about aspects of the self, such
as aggression or self-confidence, people ignored content in favor of metacognition. Caruso (2008) replicated such findings for self-evaluation based on the experience of listing one’s own assertive behaviors, finding that when people listed more examples of their own assertive behaviors they rated themselves as less assertive. Rothman and Hardin (1997) also showed the typical ease of retrieval effects when individuals wrote about the self, evaluating themselves as less impolite after writing about more such behaviors. In all of these studies, a consistent effect has emerged in which people judge characteristics of the self based on the experience of thinking about their traits. The influence of metacognition and thinking about the experience of elaborating on one’s attributes and behaviors overrides the more objective content-based information recalled for the self. However, there is an important caveat. When participants retrieved examples of self-confident behaviors, they only reported lower self-esteem if they were high in self-doubt (Hermann, Leonardelli, & Arkin, 2002), suggesting individual differences in vulnerability to the ease of retrieval experience can be integral in determining the information one attends to when thinking about the self, and how that person interprets the information.

Of considerable interest for research on the self, self-concept clarity should have a strong influence on how someone experiences the ease of retrieval paradigm when the focus is on one’s general self-knowledge. Some research has considered how self-concept clarity may moderate the influence of self-relevant feedback on people’s self-judgments. Chang (1997) showed that self-concept clarity can serve as a buffer against self-evaluative information. Participants were asked to write about positive traits they
possessed and negative traits they did not possess, or positive traits they did not possess and negative traits they did possess. In short, participants wrote about either a positive or negative self-concept, leading either to a positive or negative self-evaluation. Participants then completed a computer task where they responded “me” or “not me” to several positive and negative traits. In the domains of intellectual ability and social competence, individuals low in self-concept clarity were more likely to endorse positive traits after writing about a positive self-concept and more likely to endorse negative traits after writing about a negative self-concept. Moreover, in all domains unclear individuals were faster to reject negative traits and accept positive traits when a positive rather than a negative self-concept was made salient. Reaction times when identifying a trait as self-descriptive did not differ among high clarity individuals who listed positive or negative self-attributes. This research suggests individuals with a clear self-concept should be less affected by transient self-relevant information in the environment than their counterparts who are self-concept unclear.

Guadagno and Burger (2007) also showed the importance of self-concept clarity when encountering self-relevant feedback. The researchers found that individuals with high self-concept clarity (related to being helpful or honest) were more influenced by false feedback telling them they were more helpful or honest than most others. When people with clear helpful self-concepts received false feedback that they were high in helpfulness, they behaved in a more helpful manner than those who did not receive any feedback. Parallel results were found for those with a clear honest self-concept. Those without high clarity for helpfulness or honesty were unaffected by the feedback. This
research suggests individuals with a clear self-concept may, in fact, be more affected by self-relevant feedback than those with an unclear self-concept, at least when the feedback relates to a domain in which the self-concept is clear.

These studies indicate the importance of a person’s clarity when encountering feedback about the self. However, one should notice that the feedback individuals receive in these studies does not contain any inherent conflicts. That is, in Chang’s (1997) work, the feedback was clearly positive or negative, depending on the self-concept about which they wrote. Similarly, Guadagno and Burger (2007) gave participants clear feedback in their studies with an obvious interpretation. In neither study were participants faced with ambiguous feedback that could imply different conclusions depending on the individuals’ interpretation. In contrast, ease of retrieval experiences do just that; they present individuals with conflicting feedback. When participants write more or less about who they are than is comfortable, they must choose between relying on the experience or the content, but it is a challenge to reconcile these conflicting pieces of information. This is likely not a conscious choice, but one that may be guided by other variables, such as one’s self-concept clarity.

People are more likely to experience ease of retrieval effects and rely on experiential information when the focus of the retrievals is self-relevant. Conversely, when the focus of the retrievals is not self-relevant, people base their judgments on content information (Tormala, Petty, & Briñol, 2002). A person’s naïve theories about the world can also influence whether declarative or experiential information guides his or her judgments (Schwarz, 2004). Such theories shape people’s expectations about an
event, which in turn shape the inferences they draw from elements surrounding that event (e.g., Winkielman, Schwarz, & Belli, 1998). One naïve theory may be that people have better memory and knowledge for things of personal importance and relevance, but less so for things that are unimportant or self-irrelevant. In the case of the self, people likely expect ease when thinking about their own traits. People live with their own traits and attributes, encountering them at some level on a daily basis. This may be especially true when a person has high self-concept clarity as opposed to low clarity about the self.

*Content Judgments and Others*

While the above prior research has shown ease of retrieval effects when people focus on the self, the story when people focus on others is much murkier. There is evidence of a clear difference in how people approached judgments about the self versus others. In one series of studies, people relied on metacognitive information when judging assertiveness of the self, but were guided by content information when rating the assertiveness of others (Caruso, 2008). Other research (Rothman and Hardin, 1997), however, complicates the self-other distinction. These studies showed similar ease of retrieval effects for close friends and outgroup members, but not for ingroup members or acquaintances. When people listed impolite behaviors of ingroup members (operationalized as same-sex others), they judged the politeness of ingroup members based on the number of behaviors they listed. People evaluated a classmate’s assertiveness in the same way. Hence, there is also evidence suggesting that for ingroup members and acquaintances, people rely on content information. In contrast, there is
evidence that when focused on the self, close friends, and outgroup members, people rely on metacognitive information to make judgments.

Considering individuals’ expectations may help explicate the effect of ease of retrieval on judgments. While people may expect ease when thinking about the self, naïve theories for others may lead a person to use quite different information when making judgments. There may be an expectation of difficulty when thinking about the traits of someone else. A naïve theory of self-understanding might imply that because people have constant access to their own traits, they should be easily accessible. Someone else’s traits, however, are separate from one’s own and perhaps only encountered occasionally and known only by inference, through theory of mind (Premack & Woodruff, 1978). A naïve theory of other-understanding might thus imply that because people do not have constant or complete access to others’ traits, they should be much less easily accessible. Hence, it is possible that when ease is expected, experienced difficulty becomes very informative. But when difficulty is expected, experienced difficulty provides little information about one’s knowledge or understanding.

*The Present Studies*

The present research has three key purposes. First, the present research extends the ease of retrieval literature by considering how an individual’s self-concept clarity may moderate reliance on metacognitive information. The studies are designed to show the consequences of perceptions of self-knowledge and feelings of self-concept clarity in situations that challenge one to consciously think about that self-knowledge at different levels of analysis. Second, the present line of research seeks to further the clarity of the
literature concerning self-concept clarity and its value. I suggest that our understanding of self-concept clarity remains somewhat incomplete, even opaque. The studies included in this paper are intended to add to the existing literature in pursuit of a more complete conceptualization of self-concept clarity. Finally, the present studies are intended to speak to the different experiences when thinking about the self versus someone else. Despite existing research that has considered how focusing on the self may differ from focusing on someone else when interpreting availability, the distinction remains unclear. The current studies aim to help clarify the different effects of ease of retrieval for the self and others, in part by considering the perceived overlap between the self and the other person.

A brief preliminary study showed a relationship between experienced difficulty when thinking about the self and self-esteem, self-doubt, and self-concept clarity. In the study, participants listed more (twenty) or fewer (ten) responses to the question “Who am I?”. No significant effects of condition (many versus few) emerged in the study, surprisingly. We had anticipated that ten would be less difficult than twenty entries, and that there would be a commensurate difference in felt difficulty. Yet, this difference did not emerge. However, internal analysis of the findings revealed that correlations did show that participants who rated the task of answering the question “Who am I?” as more difficult also experienced lower self-esteem ($r = -.212, p < .05$), higher self-doubt ($r = .228, p < .05$), and lower self-concept clarity ($r = -.281, p < .01$), across the two conditions. Naturally, being correlational evidence, these relationships were in the predicted direction, yet they were unable to speak to the direction of the effect. To
explore the precise direction of the effect, the present studies introduce a new paradigm including a manipulation of the experience of difficulty when thinking about the self.

In study 1, a new ease of retrieval paradigm was introduced to effectively manipulate experienced difficulty when thinking about the self. It was predicted that participants who were challenged to think more deeply about the self would find the task more difficult and experience lower self-esteem, higher self-doubt, and lower self-concept clarity. Study 1 also examined whether these predicted effects would be more pronounced for those high or low in chronic self-concept clarity. This latter question is the more important question of interest, as it sheds light on the role of clarity in guiding a person’s response to self-relevant feedback. As discussed earlier, the moderating effect of clarity when considering feedback about the self remains unclear in the literature. There is evidence that individuals with high clarity are at times more influenced by such feedback than those with low clarity (e.g., Guadagno & Burger, 2007), but at the same time there are other studies finding less influence (e.g., Chang, 1997). The present study helps identify those conditions under which clarity increases or decreases the influence of self-relevant feedback by presenting participants with two conflicting interpretations of ambiguous feedback about one’s self-knowledge.

Study 2 extends the results of Study 1 to examine the consequences of the ease of retrieval effect when the self-concept that is highlighted in the individual’s thinking is negative rather than positive. When examples of undesirable traits come to mind less readily, the availability heuristic suggests that people will infer that there are fewer examples to be recalled. This, then, tells the individual that there is less evidence for
those undesirable traits and they may not be as important to one’s self-concept as previously believed. In other words, the perceived unavailability of negative self-attributes serves as a cue that those negative traits actually do not apply to the self. It was thus hypothesized that participants who elaborated more on a negative self-concept would again find the task more difficult, but subsequently experience higher self-esteem and lower self-doubt (the mirror image of the effects anticipated in Study 1).

Furthermore, it was predicted that these participants would report lower self-concept clarity because, even though the self-attributes being questioned were negative, the clarity of the self-concept being described should still be shaken. This study also provided an additional test of the role of chronic clarity in guiding responses to self-relevant feedback.

Considering the results of studies 1 and 2, a natural question emerged regarding how ease of retrieval effects would differ for an intimate other. The first two studies had examined the role of an individual difference in guiding judgments about the self. Still, the question remained as to how particular characteristics of a relationship would affect judgments about the relationship, the relationship partner, and the self. Study 3 further extends the research to the domain of romantic relationships. This study explored the effects of the ease of retrieval paradigm on feelings about a relationship when someone elaborates more extensively on the attributes of his or her romantic partner. As discussed previously, the research on the effects of ease or difficulty of retrieval in the domain of understanding others remains unclear. In some cases (e.g., Caruso, 2008), individuals are more attuned to metacognition and experiential information when making judgments
about certain others (such as an outgroup member or close friend). Yet, for different others (such as ingroup members or an acquaintance) individuals make judgments based on the content information they produce (e.g., Caruso, 2008; Rothman & Hardin, 1997). An important contribution of Study 3 is the consideration of relationship length and self-other overlap as a predictor of when people experience ease of retrieval effects for a close other. Attention to these variables adds a new level of analysis to the existing research on ease of retrieval for others by bringing specific characteristics of the relationship into the equation. Just as individual differences are expected to be important in determining the information one relies on for self-judgments, relationship differences should guide one when making judgments relevant to the relationship.
Chapter 2: Study 1

The current research on the ease of retrieval effect has focused on a single self-attribute, asking participants to recall examples of a specific behavior such as assertiveness. In Study 1, we apply an ease of retrieval paradigm to the self-concept more generally, including a combination of multiple self-attributes. This allows us to explore the consequences of ease of retrieval when the subjective retrieval difficulty is related to the broader concept of self-knowledge and felt clarity about that self-knowledge.

Additionally, Study 1 provides a first investigation of the role of self-concept clarity in guiding a person’s response to feedback about the self. Ease of retrieval effects occur when people use the experience of ease or difficulty as information. In this study, the information participants receive tells them something about the extent to which they know who they are. The perceived difficulty informs the individuals about their self-concept clarity, providing self-relevant feedback. Because in this study the feedback is directly related to the person’s feeling of self-knowledge, it speaks to the question of how individuals with different levels of self-concept clarity approach and use such information.
Method

Participants

Participants were 40 undergraduates at the Ohio State University completing the study in exchange for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to condition and completed the study in sessions that included between one and six individuals.

Procedure

Measurement of chronic self-concept clarity. As part of prescreening prior to the study, participants completed a twelve-item self-concept clarity scale (see Appendix A) designed to assess trait clarity (Campbell, et al., 1996). Previous research has demonstrated that this scale has high internal consistency averaged across three studies ($\alpha = .86$) as well as adequate test-retest reliability ($r = .79$ and $r = .70$). Scores on the scale have also correlated with scale measures of self-esteem ($r = .61$), neuroticism ($r = -.64$), and conscientiousness ($r = .43$). Additionally, scores have moderately correlated with extraversion ($r = .40$ or .27 depending on scale) and agreeableness ($r = .26$). Scores on the scale have not correlated with openness to experience ($r = -.01$) (Campbell et al., 1996). Participants responded to each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Chronic self-concept clarity scores were created by summing responses across all twelve items.

Manipulation of difficulty. Subjective difficulty was manipulated using a modified ease of retrieval paradigm. During the study, each participant provided ten responses to the question “Who am I?”. The “Who am I?” task, or “Twenty Statements Test,” was first used by Kuhn and McPartland (1954) as a means of tapping into elements
of an individual’s self-concept. The questionnaire is an open-ended inventory in which individuals are free to write whatever self-images come to mind.

After completing the “Who am I?” task, each participant chose the two items from the list he or she considered most important. In one condition, participants provided two examples of instances when they had exhibited each of those traits. In the other condition, participants provided eight such examples. Participants reported their experienced difficulty providing the ten statements immediately after completing the “Who am I?” inventory by answering the question “Below please rate how difficult it felt to generate your responses to the question ‘Who am I?’ [by selecting the response that best matches how difficult this felt during the task]” on a 10-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all difficulty (it felt easy), 10 = extremely difficult (it felt hard)). After recalling examples of the important traits, participants then rated the subjective difficulty of this retrieval task by answering the question “Below please rate how difficult it felt to generate your examples of behaviors for your chosen traits. [by selecting the response that best matches how difficult this felt during the task]” on the same 10-point Likert-type scale just described.

Measurement of state self-concept clarity. After completing the “Who am I?” inventory, subsequent retrieval task, and difficulty ratings, participants completed another measure of self-concept clarity. Because the scale used during prescreening to measure self-concept clarity is a trait scale, a modified version of the scale tapping “state” self-concept clarity was used during the study. The state scale was developed in prior research by rating the degree to which each item on the full scale was trait-like or state-
The six items identified as having more state-like qualities were chosen to comprise a state measure of clarity. Participants were asked to respond to this six-item measure considering their current thoughts and feelings. The items on this state scale include the following: “I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am”, “Sometimes I feel that I am not the person that I appear to be”, “When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like”, “My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently”, “Even if I wanted to, I don't think I could tell someone what I'm really like”, and “In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am”. Additionally, participants responded to a one-item measure of clarity developed in the same prior research. Specifically, participants rated the extent to which they agreed with the statement “Today I felt like I had a clear sense of who I am and what I want in life” (Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerssen, 2009). Participants responded to both state measures on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). This yielded two scores for state clarity, one based on the sum of the scores on each item in the six-item version and one based on the single rating from the one-item measure.

Measurement of self-esteem. After completing the state measure of clarity, participants’ self-esteem was measured using the ten-item Rosenberg self-esteem scale (see Appendix B). The scale is widely used in psychological research, with prior studies yielding reliability coefficients ranging from $\alpha = .72$ to $\alpha = .88$ and test-retest coefficients ranging from $\alpha = .50$ (for a one year time lapse) to $\alpha = .82$ (for a one week period) (Gray-Little, Williams, & Hancock, 1997). Participants responded to each item on a 6-point
Likert-type scale (1 = disagree very much, 6 = agree very much), and self-esteem scores were created by summing across all ten items.

Measurement of self-doubt. As a final dependent measure, participants completed an eight item measure of chronic self-doubt (see Appendix C) taken from the subjective overachievement scale (Oleson, Poehlmann, Yost, Lynch, & Arkin, 2000). The scale has demonstrated both high internal consistency (α = .82) and test-retest reliability (r = .68) in previous research. Additionally, scores on this measure have correlated with scores on measures of self-esteem (r = -.68) and social anxiety (r = .48) (Oleson et al., 2000). Participants responded to each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = disagree very much, 6 = agree very much). Items on the scale included the following: “When engaged in an important task, most of my thoughts turn to bad things that might happen (e.g., failing) than to good”, “For me, avoiding failure has a greater emotional impact (e.g., sense of relief) than the emotional impact of achieving success (e.g., joy, pride)”, “More often than not I feel unsure of my abilities”, “I sometimes find myself wondering if I have the ability to succeed at important activities”, “I often wish that I felt more certain of my strengths and weaknesses”, “As I begin an important activity, I usually feel confident in my ability”, “Sometimes I feel that I don’t know why I have succeeded at something”, and “As I begin an important activity, I usually feel confident in the likely outcome” (Oleseon et al., 2000). Responses were summed to create each individual’s self-doubt score.
Results and Discussion

Main Effects

Analyses for Study 1 consisted of several one-way ANOVAs with condition as the predictor variable. A main effect of condition on perceived difficulty recalling examples (retrieval difficulty) emerged, $F(1, 38) = 6.45, p < .05$, such that participants who recalled eight examples found the task more difficult ($M = 6.95$) than those who recalled only two examples ($M = 4.76$). Contrary to prediction, neither measure of state self-concept clarity showed a significant effect, the six-item measure, $F(1, 38) = .458, p = .503$, and the one-item measure, $F(1, 38) = .254, p = .617$. There was also no significant main effect of number of retrievals on self-doubt, $F(1, 38) = 1.590, p = .215$. A marginal main effect of number of retrievals on self-esteem did emerge, $F(1, 38) = 3.059, p < .10$. The pattern suggests that participants who recalled eight examples experienced somewhat lower self-esteem ($M = 44.05$) than those who recalled two ($M = 49.29$). While the initial analyses revealed that the manipulation failed to impact levels of state self-concept clarity, they do show that those who recalled more examples found the task more difficult and tended to report lower self-esteem.

Interaction Effects

Additional analyses were conducted to clarify the influence of chronic self-concept clarity on both self-esteem and experienced difficulty. First, self-esteem was regressed onto the number of retrievals and chronic self-concept clarity measured during prescreening. For the present analysis, retrieval condition was effects coded with the two retrieval condition as “-1” and the eight retrieval condition as “1”. The interaction was
significant, $B = -0.336$, $t(36) = -2.163$, $p < .05$. The pattern was such that there was no difference in self-esteem among participants low in chronic clarity who recalled two or eight examples. However, among those high in chronic clarity, participants who recalled two examples experienced higher self-esteem than those who recalled eight examples. Simple slopes analyses confirmed that the difference among chronically clear individuals was significant, $B = -5.3$, $t(36) = -2.80$, $p < .01$. The difference between retrieval conditions among chronically unclear participants did not approach significance, $B = .533$, $t(36) = .281$, $p = .78$. The slope of the two retrievals condition was significant, $B = .785$, $t(36) = 3.461$, $p < .01$, while the slope of the eight retrievals condition was not, $B = .113$, $t(36) = .530$, $p = .599$. Thus, individuals high in chronic self-concept clarity reported higher self-esteem after recalling eight examples rather than two examples, but individuals low in chronic clarity did not differ in self-esteem as a consequence of the number of examples they recalled. Additionally, among those who retrieved two examples, those with high clarity reported higher self-esteem than those with low clarity. In this analysis, high and low clarity represents chronic self-concept clarity at one standard deviation above and below the mean, respectively.
Figure 1. Self-esteem. Self-esteem as a function of condition and chronic self-concept clarity as measured during prescreening. Individuals low in clarity (defined as one standard deviation below the mean) showed no differences in self-esteem between conditions. However, those high in clarity (defined as one standard deviation above the mean) experienced greater self-esteem when they recalled fewer examples for important self-attributes than when they recalled many examples.

The effect of the number of retrievals and chronic self-concept clarity on self-esteem reveals an interesting interaction. There are at least two ways to interpret the nature of this interaction. One interpretation is simply that the effect is driven by the positive correlation between self-concept clarity and self-esteem. This interpretation would argue that, because clarity and self-esteem are positively correlated, it is not surprising that those high in clarity are reporting higher self-esteem. However, this explanation cannot account for the differences between clear individuals who give two versus eight examples. Additionally, this interaction provides evidence that clarity and self-esteem are separable constructs. Clear individuals who provide more examples of
important self-attributes are actually reporting self-esteem on par with unclear individuals. An interpretation based on the correlation between self-concept clarity and self-esteem does not appear to fully explain this interaction.

A second interpretation of these results focuses on the experience of difficulty. When individuals who are unclear about their self-concept are asked to think about who they are, they may immediately find the experience difficult. If this is the case, these individuals would find the process of providing ten responses to the question “Who am I?” difficult, even before they are asked to elaborate on two of those traits. Consequently, individuals low in clarity may not feel the effect of recalling two or eight examples for those traits because the experience is already difficult, and there is little or no room for increased perceptions of difficulty for retrieving additional thoughts. In essence, there is no “easy” condition for those with low self-concept clarity. Because this experience of simply describing and elaborating on the self is so difficult, these individuals may feel worse about the self.

In contrast, it is possible that individuals who are clear about their self-concept do not feel any difficulty when simply answering the question “Who am I?”. Additionally, these individuals likely expect the process of thinking about the self to be easy because they have a sense of confidence and certainty about the self. The difficulty for this group, then, is not experienced until that sense of self is challenged and they are asked to elaborate on those self-images. As a result, clear individuals do feel the effects of retrieving more examples and elaborating more on important self-images, leading to the

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1 The data lend some support for this interpretation, with individuals low in self-concept clarity reporting more difficulty retrieving the examples than those high in self-concept clarity, $F(1, 37) = 2.278, p = .117$. 

observed differences in self-esteem for this group. Additionally, when clear participants retrieve more examples, the difficulty they experience is unexpected, leading to lower self-regard. When retrieving fewer examples, the ease self-concept clear participants experience is congruent with their expectations and further contributes to greater self-regard. This interpretation is preferred to the first for at least two reasons. First, it can account for the low self-esteem reported by clear participants who retrieved eight examples. The alternate explanation cannot account for all of the patterns in the interaction. Second, an explanation based on difficulty rather than the correlation between self-esteem and clarity speaks to the underlying process driving the interaction effects. A correlation-based interpretation does not reveal anything new about self-concept clarity. However, if the results are interpreted as a cause of experienced difficulty, more is learned about the role of clarity in determining how people interpret contextual information and use that interpretation to form judgments about the self. Thus, we find the second, difficulty-based interpretation far more compelling.

Too, there is a most intriguing implication of the effect shown in this interaction, namely the possibility that clear individuals have a somewhat superficial clarity about the self. Self-concept clarity is a subjective feeling about how well one knows the self. It is possible that people with high clarity may simply believe they are clear and confident in their self-concept without actually having thought extensively about the organization of those self-images. Consequently, the experience of difficulty after more elaboration and deeper consideration of important images, and whether they are warranted, may shake such people’s sense of self and self-esteem unexpectedly.
To further investigate this intriguing possible explanation, a second regression analysis was conducted with retrieval difficulty regressed onto the number of retrievals and chronic self-concept clarity. This interaction approached significance, $B = .089, t(36) = 1.938, p = .061$. The pattern suggests that participants low in chronic clarity found the task equally difficult for both two and eight retrievals. However, participants high in chronic clarity who recalled eight examples found the task more difficult than those who recalled only two. In fact, the interaction reveals that the only group who did not experience difficulty during the task (in an absolute and relative sense) were those with high clarity who only retrieved two examples and were able to maintain a rather superficial level of elaboration about the self. Simple slopes analyses confirmed that the difference among high clarity individuals was significant, $B = 1.801, t(36) = 3.226, p < .01$, while there was no significant difference among low clarity individuals, $B = .260, t(36) = .466, p = .644$. Moreover, the slope in the two retrievals condition was significant, $B = -.208, t(36) = -3.109, p < .01$, while the slope in the eight retrievals condition was not, $B = -.030, t(36) = -.485, p = .631$. Thus, chronically clear individuals found recalling eight examples of behaviors reflective of important traits more difficult than recalling only two examples, but chronically unclear individuals rated recalling eight or two examples as equally difficult. Furthermore, among those who recalled two examples, those high in clarity reported more difficulty than those low in self-concept clarity. If one maintains a sense of clarity about the self but is pushed to think more deeply and extensively about his or her self-images, the experience is just as difficult as if that person was unclear about the self at the outset.
Figure 2. Retrieval difficulty. Retrieval difficulty as a function of number of retrievals and chronic self-concept clarity as measured during prescreening. Individuals low in clarity (defined as one standard deviation below the mean) reported no differences in difficulty between conditions. However, those high in clarity (defined as one standard deviation above the mean) reported greater difficulty when they recalled more examples for important self-attributes than when they recalled fewer examples.

The results of this regression analysis support the explanation proposed for the interaction effect of the number of retrievals and chronic clarity on self-esteem. Not only do individuals low in chronic self-concept clarity report no difference in perceived retrieval difficulty when giving either two or eight examples, but they also report rather high difficulty. On the other hand, there is a significant difference in experienced difficulty for individuals high in chronic self-concept clarity, with those who recall more examples finding the task more difficult. In fact, when clear individuals are asked to provide more examples for important self-attributes, their reported difficulty is the same.
(nonsignificantly different) as the difficulty experienced among unclear individuals. Clear individuals who only briefly elaborate on the important traits, in contrast, report rather low levels of difficulty for the retrieval task. In sum, it appears that self-concept clear individuals experience lower self-esteem after elaborating more on important self-images because they find the task as difficult as an individual who is unclear.

The results and discussion thus far suggest that retrieval difficulty may mediate the relationship between the interaction of chronic clarity and number of retrievals and self-esteem seen in the first interaction. That is, chronic clarity and number of retrievals likely affects self-esteem because of the subjective difficulty during the retrieval process. A final analysis was conducted to test this mediation hypothesis. First, a regression was conducted with self-esteem as the outcome variable and the interaction term (chronic self-concept clarity x retrieval condition effects coded) as the predictor, $B = .336, t(36) = 2.163, p = .037$. Retrieval difficulty was then regressed onto the interaction of chronic self-concept clarity and retrieval condition, $B = -.089, t(36) = -1.938, p = .061$. Finally, a third regression was conducted with self-esteem as the outcome variable and the interaction term (chronic clarity x retrieval condition effects coded) and retrieval difficulty as the predictor variables. The results showed a significant relationship between retrieval difficulty and self-esteem, $B = -1.817, t(35) = -3.755, p < .01$. Additionally, the relationship between the interaction term (chronic self-concept clarity x retrieval condition effects coded) and self-esteem dropped from significant to non-significant when retrieval difficulty was controlled for in the model, $B = .175, t(35) = 1.250, p = .220$. This meditational analysis suggests that retrieval difficulty mediates the
relationship between the interaction of chronic self-concept clarity with number of retrievals and self-esteem. In sum, there is evidence that the interaction of chronic clarity and number of retrievals influences self-esteem through its effect on perceived retrieval difficulty.

Figure 3. Mediation Model. Unstandardized regression coefficients for the relationship between the interaction of self-concept clarity and retrieval condition and self-esteem as mediated by retrieval difficulty. The unstandardized regression coefficient between self-concept clarity and self-esteem controlling for retrieval difficulty is in parentheses. †p<.10, *p < .05, **p < .01.
Chapter 3: Study 2

Study 2 extends the finding of Study 1, examining the consequences of elaborating on negative and undesirable self-attributes. A closer examination of the traits people considered most important in Study 1 revealed an unwillingness among participants to consider negative self-attributes, which should be of no surprise given the literature on the self and self-evaluation (e.g., Taylor & Brown, 1988). Two research assistants who coded the important traits independently as positive, negative, or neutral agreed on 74 of the 80 cases. The first coder determined 72 of the important traits were positive, and the second coder determined 68 were positive. Clearly, the traits listed by participants in Study 1 were overwhelmingly desirable. This can further explain why self-esteem scores suffered as perceived retrieval difficulty increased; participants were experiencing difficulty thinking about examples of times they exhibited important positive and desirable traits.

The focal question in Study 2 is whether experienced difficulty and a higher demand during the retrieval process can actually increase self-esteem if the individual’s focus is on negative, undesirable traits. If one perceives difficulty retrieving more instances of negative traits, the experience would indicate that few such instances are available to be recalled at all. The conclusion, then, would be that one cannot really be
characterized (as easily) by that negative trait. Thus, this process coats the undesirable self in doubt, and this is expected, ironically, to lead to a more positive overall evaluation of the self.

Building on the results of Study 1, a main effect was predicted such that participants who provided eight examples of behaviors reflecting important self-attributes would report more difficulty during the process, higher self-esteem, and lower self-doubt than those who provided only two examples. Because Study 1 yielded no significant main effects on state self-concept clarity following the manipulation, no predictions were made for these measures. The measures were still included, though, to allow for the possibility that recalling more examples would lead to greater retrieval difficulty and lower state self-concept clarity. This is because, even though in this case the experienced difficulty may be good for feelings of self-regard, by calling into question negative traits, it might still challenge the participant’s sense of clarity and confidence about his or her self-concept. More specifically, if the ease of retrieval effect is relevant to consideration of negative characteristics the hypothesis is that, while self-esteem would improve, one’s self-concept clarity might decline at the same time, showing an intriguing and conceptually important distinction between these two constructs.

Finally, two interactions were predicted. First, it was predicted that no differences in self-esteem would be observed among participants low in chronic self-concept clarity. However, participants high in chronic clarity who recall eight examples should report higher self-esteem than those who recall either two or zero examples. Such a pattern would be comparable to that found in Study 1, with the important difference that
the predicted means for clear participants retrieving two and eight examples will be reversed in comparison to Study 1. Second, there should also be no differences in retrieval difficulty among chronically unclear participants across conditions. Among chronically clear participants, though, those who recall eight examples should report more difficulty than those who recall two or zero examples. This pattern would match that found in Study 1.

Method

Participants

Participants were 70 undergraduates at the Ohio State University completing the study in exchange for course credit. All participants were randomly assigned to condition and completed the study in groups of one to six.

Procedure

Measurement of chronic self-concept clarity. Chronic self-concept clarity was measured using the same scale as in Study 1. Chronic clarity was also measured during prescreening, maintaining additional consistency with Study 1.

Manipulation of difficulty. The purpose of this study was to investigate the consequences of thinking and elaborating about negative self-attributes. One concern with a study asking participants to list negative traits was that people may be unwilling to write about important, central self-images, if negative in nature. An initial study provided some credence to this concern. Participants were asked to list ten negative attributes in response to the question “Who am I?”, mirroring the methods of Study 1. A review of the traits listed revealed that participants were somewhat unwilling to list very
meaningful negative traits. Two research assistants coded the responses as high or low in meaningfulness. While agreement was low (agreeing on only 82 of the 140 traits), the first coder determined 83 of the traits were low meaningful attributes and the second coder considered 106 traits to be low in meaningfulness. This provides some support for our concern that participants would not consider particularly central, meaningful self-attributes on their own, unprompted.

To deal with this concern, we provided participants with a list of fourteen negative attributes to choose from (rather than requiring them to self-generate their own list). The traits were taken from Anderson’s (1968) list of 555 personality trait adjectives, and the selection of items was based on three criteria. First, items were selected from those in the bottom 20% on likableness ratings. There was one exception. The item unintelligent was added to this set because of its high relevance to college students. Academics are of primary concern to college students who have presumably worked throughout high school towards a goal of attending college. Because of the importance students place on attending college, the ability to perform well should also be of primary importance, making intelligence a highly relevant concern for this sample, perhaps above all others. Second, traits were chosen to be highly meaningful as indicated by ratings of how well-known and understood the words were. Words from Anderson’s list were rated for meaningfulness ranging from “I have almost no idea of the meaning of this word” to “I have a very clear and definite understanding of the meaning of this word” (p. 277). Those words with high ratings (above 3.5) were considered high in meaningfulness. Finally, traits were chosen to reflect important attributes to college
students’ concern with social interactions and academic performance. The final list of adjectives was also chosen to cover a range of relevant categories, with two adjectives for each of seven categories. The list presented to participants was (with the related category in parentheses): untrustworthy and dishonest (honesty/trust), unintelligent and incompetent (competence), unsympathetic and cruel (compassion/empathy), selfish and greedy (egoism), narrow-minded and prejudiced (open-mindedness), slacker and lazy (ambition), and fraud and phony (imposter). As in Study 1, participants chose the two most important traits from the list provided and were then asked to write about zero, two, or eight instances when they acted in a way reflecting each of those two traits. Note here the addition of a control condition in which participants were instructed to choose the two most important traits as in the other two conditions, but do not list any subsequent examples of related behaviors.

_Ancillary measures._ All other measurements were the same as those used in Study 1 and included the six-item and single-item measure of state self-concept clarity, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and the self-doubt scale. Participants who listed two or eight examples for the chosen important traits also rated the difficulty of retrieving those examples with the same difficulty rating used in Study 1.

Results and Discussion

Analyses for Study 2 are analogous to those conducted for Study 1. A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted with retrieval condition (two or eight) as the predictor variable. There was again a significant main effect of condition on retrieval difficulty, $F(1, 45) = 9.368, p < .01$. Participants who wrote about eight times they had
behaved in a way reflective of each important trait reported experiencing more difficulty during the task (M = 7.22) than those who only wrote about two such instances (M = 5.17). There was still no significant effect of condition on the six-item measure of state self-concept clarity, \( F(1, 67) = 1.316, p = .275 \), or the one-item measure, \( F(1, 67) = 1.547, p = .220 \). Contrary to expectations, there was also no significant effect of the number of retrievals on self-doubt, \( F(1, 67) = .028, p = .972 \), or self-esteem, \( F(1, 67) = .083, p = .921 \).

The most disappointing null result was the nonsignificant effect of the number of retrievals on self-esteem. There was a very clear prediction for this effect based on Study 1, and it is surprising that elaborating more or less on negative self-images had no effect on participants’ self-evaluations. Still, there was the possibility that differences in self-esteem were experienced for those high in self-concept clarity but were masked by an absence of different levels of self-esteem for those low in self-concept clarity. Following this logic, additional hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine the behavior of individuals high or low in chronic clarity. As in Study 1, self-esteem was regressed onto chronic self-concept clarity measured during prescreening and retrieval condition. Condition was again effects coded, with the control condition (zero retrievals) as the comparison condition.\(^2\) The regression analysis was not significant when the interaction terms were added to the model, \( \Delta R^2 = .010, p = .641 \). Because retrieval difficulty showed some indication of mediating the relationship between retrieval

\(^2\) The first effects coded variable was created such that the two, eight, and zero retrieval conditions were coded as 1, 0, and -1, respectively. The second effects coded variable was created such that the two, eight, and zero retrieval conditions were coded as 0, 1, and -1, respectively.
condition and chronic clarity and self-esteem in Study 1, a second regression was conducted with retrieval difficulty regressed onto chronic clarity and condition. This interaction was also not significant, $B = .023$, $t(43) = .669$, $p = .507$.

While these results are difficult to interpret, the fact that there was no significant interaction in this study provides some insight into why the predicted effects on self-esteem were not observed. First, the task in this study did not produce enough experienced retrieval difficulty among chronically unclear participants, especially for those who recalled only two examples for the important traits. Second, the task provided more retrieval difficulty among chronically clear participants who recalled two examples than was anticipated. We expected subjective difficulty when retrieving two examples to decrease as clarity increased, but to remain constant (and higher than for two examples) across levels of clarity when participants retrieved eight examples. We found that difficulty did not change as a function of chronic clarity for either the two or eight retrievals task. This issue is problematic because it shows that subjective difficulty during retrieval did not differ in the ways necessary to cause differences in self-esteem based on the interaction of chronic clarity and the number of retrievals. Stated differently, study 1 illustrated the mediating role of perceived difficulty during the retrieval task on self-esteem effects. In the present study, the nonsignificant effects on the mediating variable create a situation in which effects on self-esteem are unlikely.

The absence of the desired interaction effects on difficulty and self-esteem indicate that individuals react differently when elaborating on negative self-attributes than they do when thinking about positive self-attributes. When forced to directly face
negative self-images, people may immediately respond by trying to protect their threatened self-regard. One consequence of such a desire to protect one’s self-esteem might be discounting, or ignoring, the information and feedback from the task altogether. Such a response could be a form of self-serving bias. For example, it is possible participants attribute the list of negative traits to the experimental task, believing that anyone in the same situation (i.e., asked to write about undesirable traits in a research study) would be able to think of examples of behaviors that reflect negative attributes. By making such an attribution, participants avoid attributing the list of examples they have recalled to themselves. Through this process, participants are able to protect their self-esteem by maintaining that the negative retrievals are a consequence of the study rather than believing they are truly representative of the self (Weary-Bradley, 1978). Essentially, this self-serving bias renders the manipulation unable to impact participants’ self-esteem or other psychological reactions in any measurable way because they have already discounted the experience as unreflective of who they are.

An incomplete measurement of self-concept clarity?

One exciting possibility is that this study actually reveals a limitation of the self-concept clarity scale. The literature on self-concept clarity has struggled to clearly and concisely separate the constructs self-concept clarity and self-esteem. While the two constructs are strongly correlated (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996), there is no conceptual reason they cannot be distinct (though there may be practical reasons, stemming from the experience of daily life, that make it nearly impossible for them to be empirically distinct). In fact, the first study reported here provides some evidence that
they are in fact separable, conceptually. Theoretically, a person should be able to maintain clarity in either a positive or negative self-concept, with the latter actually bringing about low self-esteem. A close reading of the items on the self-concept clarity scale, however, suggests the measurement of clarity funnels a person to thoughts of the positive self. For instance, a person is unlikely to agree that a negative self-image does not change frequently or conflict with other beliefs about the self (Campbell et al., 1996). This study and the lack of research successfully separating clarity and self-esteem point to the possibility that the clarity scale pertains mostly to positive self-images. Thus, even if a person is thinking about a negative self-concept, the measure of clarity may not reveal any effects.
Chapter 4: Study 3

Studies 1 and 2 investigated the role of self-reflection and exploration on later evaluations of the self and self-concept. Study 3 extends the concepts of these first studies to reflection about a romantic partner. The underlying question driving Study 3 was how thinking carefully about the attributes of a significant other impacts feelings towards the partner and one’s relationship with that partner. It was predicted that individuals who elaborated more about traits they deemed important in their partners would experience more difficulty during the process and lower relationship satisfaction than those who elaborated less. It was also predicted that those who elaborated more by recalling more examples of important traits in their partners would experience lower self-esteem, lower self-concept clarity, and higher self-doubt. This is because the difficulty they should experience during the process might lead them to question the quality of the relationship and the partner.

Cognitive interdependence suggests that people in committed relationships tend to think of themselves in terms of their partner and the relationship, merging their two identities (Agnew, VanLange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998). Hence, positive evaluations of the relationship and the partner can promote more positive evaluations of the self as well. If I have a great relationship with a wonderful partner, I must be great, too.
However, this interdependence could also work in the other direction. If I have a bad relationship or an awful partner, I may not be very great, either. Because people can feel as though relationships and significant others are extensions and reflections of themselves, doubt about the relationship could lead to similar feelings about the self. Specifically, when one begins to question his or her relationship or relationship partner in a given domain (such as how well one knows one’s partner), those feelings about the relationship or partner may spread to the self, creating similar doubt about the self, less certainty in how well one knows the self, and a more negative self-regard.

Method

Participants

Participants were 65 undergraduates at the Ohio State University completing the study in exchange for course credit. The study description stated as a requirement that all participants currently be in a romantic relationship, and participants were again asked upon arrival to the lab if they were in a romantic relationship. Any participant who arrived for the study but did not meet this requirement was informed that they were not eligible to participate in the study. Only one person from the relationship participated in the study. All participants were randomly assigned to condition and completed the study in groups of one to six.

Procedure

Manipulation of difficulty. Participants first identified their significant other by listing the name of their partner. They then completed the ease of retrieval paradigm used in Study 1, with an important difference. In the current study, participants listed ten
traits in response to the question “Who is your partner?”, with the name provided in place of “your partner”. Participants then chose the two most important traits from those listed and provided zero, two, or eight examples of times their partner had behaved in a way reflective of each of those two traits. As in the earlier studies, all participants rated the difficulty of providing the ten partner-attributes. Participants who elaborated on the traits also rated the difficulty of recalling the requested number of examples for the two important traits using the same difficulty scale used in studies 1 and 2.

Measurement of closeness. Closeness between the participant and his or her romantic partner was measured using the pictorial inclusion of other in the self (IOS) scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992) (see Appendix D). This single-item scale asks participants to choose one of seven pictures with two circles overlapping to increasing degrees, as in a Venn Diagram. Greater overlap between the two circles, which represent the “Self” and an “Other”, reflects more closeness between the self and the other. Scores on the scale showed high test-retest reliability ($r = .83$) over a two-week period. Scores on the IOS scale also correlated with measures of the subjective closeness index ($r = .34$), intimacy ($r = .45$), positive emotions about the “other” ($r = .45$), and the strength of the other’s influence over the self ($r = .36$) (Aron et al., 1992). After completing the ease of retrieval paradigm and difficulty ratings, all participants responded to the single-item IOS scale by choosing the image that best described their relationship with their partner.

Measurement of perceived relationship quality. Participants completed a shortened version of the eighteen-item perceived relationship quality component (PRQC) inventory (see Appendix E). The full scale assesses perceived relationship quality based
on six components: satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. A confirmatory factor analysis showed that these six components, each measured with three related questions, are correlated and tap into the higher-order factor of perceived relationship quality ($RMSEA = .08$, $CFI = .91$) (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). For the present study, participants only responded to the questions related to satisfaction, commitment, and intimacy. The items related to trust, passion, and love were excluded in order to focus on those questions most relevant and of greatest interest to the current study as well as to minimize redundancy and reduce the total number of questions participants were asked to respond to during the study. Participants responded to each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale ($1 = \text{not at all}, 7 = \text{extremely}$), with the PRQC score created by summing across all nine responses.

_Ancillary measures._ Each participant responded to the single question “How satisfied are you with your current relationship partner, partner’s name?” on a 7-point Likert-type scale ($1 = \text{not at all}, 7 = \text{extremely}$). Participants then made a prediction for the length of the relationship, answering the question “How many more months do you think your current relationship with partner’s name will last?” Participants also completed both measures of state self-concept clarity, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and the self-doubt scale discussed above. Lastly, participants reported how many months they had been in the current relationship and their gender.

Results and Discussion

Study 3 was analyzed using analysis of variance and regression. Several ANOVAs were conducted with the number of retrievals as the predicting variable. The
first ANOVA produced a main effect of number of retrievals on perceived difficulty, $F(1, 41) = 10.191, p < .01$. Participants who recalled eight examples of times their partners had behaved in a way reflecting important traits found the process more difficult ($M = 4.55$) than those who recalled only two examples ($M = 2.62$). A main effect of number of retrievals on perceived relationship quality (PRQC) also emerged, $F(1, 62) = 3.615, p < .05$, indicating that participants who recalled eight examples perceived much higher relationship quality in the domain of satisfaction, commitment, and intimacy ($M = 57.68$) than those who recalled zero ($M = 51.23$) or two ($M = 52.00$) examples. The effect of number of retrievals on the one-item partner satisfaction question approached significance, $F(1, 62) = 2.645, p = .079$. The pattern suggested that participants who recalled eight examples felt the greatest satisfaction with their current romantic partner ($M = 6.50$), those who recalled two examples felt somewhat less satisfaction ($M = 5.81$), and those who did not recall any examples felt the least satisfaction ($M = 5.68$). Finally, the main effect of number of retrievals on the one-item measure of state self-concept clarity also approached significant, $F(1, 62) = 2.916, p = .062$. The pattern of these results suggests that those who recalled eight examples experienced more state clarity ($M = 4.45$) than those who recalled zero ($M = 3.86$) or two ($M = 3.86$) examples. All other main effects were non-significant ($IOS, F(1, 62) = .875, p = .422$; predicted relationship length, $F(1, 62) = .963, p = .387$; six-item state self-concept clarity, $F(1, 62) = .931, p = .400$; self-esteem, $F(1, 62) = .950, p = .392$; self-doubt, $F(1, 62) = 1.336, p = .270$).

It is clear that most of the above results were contrary to those predicted for Study 3. We recognize that the effects were nonsignificant, and we are unwilling to place too
much undue emphasis on trends in the data. Still, a theme emerged during analysis of the present study in which participants who recalled eight examples generally experienced greater relationship satisfaction and more positive expectations for the relationship, despite finding the task more difficult. In fact, the trends for the dependent variables (closeness measured with the IOS scale, predicted relationship length, the six-item state clarity measure, self-esteem and self-doubt) were all supportive of the conclusion that more reflection on a partner’s important traits are good for feelings about the relationship, the partner, and the self.

An additional regression analysis was conducted to examine whether the length of the current relationship interacted with the number of retrievals to impact perceived relationship quality. To test this, perceived relationship quality as measured with the PRQC inventory was regressed onto current relationship length and number of retrievals in a hierarchical regression. Number of retrievals was effects coded using the same coding scheme used in Study 2, with the control condition in which participants did not recall any examples as the comparison condition. Relationship length was split at one standard deviation above and below the mean, labeled “long” and “short”, respectively. The regression model did not reach significance with the addition of the interaction terms, $\Delta R^2 = .043, p = .218$. However, the pattern of this interaction showed a trend where perceived relationship quality decreased for longer relationships when participants recalled zero or two examples. However, perceived relationship quality tended to slightly increase for long relationships when participants provided eight examples of their partners’ important traits. These results are consistent with the main effects and the
interpretation that when thinking about a relationship partner, more elaboration is beneficial. Moreover, the interaction suggests this may be particularly (or only) true for those who have been in the relationship for a longer period of time.

Figure 4. Perceived relationship quality (PRQC). PRQC as a function of condition and current relationship length. Individuals in short relationships (defined as one standard deviation below the mean) reported no differences in PRQC between conditions. Those in long relationships (defined as one standard deviation above the mean), however, reported marginally greater PRQC when they recalled more examples for important partner-attributes than when they recalled fewer examples.

In this study, we were also interested in the role of self-other overlap in ease of retrieval effects. Prior research has shown there is a difference in how people interpret a retrieval experience for the self compared to someone else. Still, it seems that the self-other distinction is not as simple as metacognition effects for the self, but content-based effects for others. One possibility is that the degree to which the person perceives
overlap between his or her self and the other person may predict when other-focused judgments will be determined by experiential or declarative information. Based on this intuition, analyses were conducted with both perceived relationship quality (PRQC) and state self-concept clarity regressed onto self-other overlap measured with the IOS scale and number of retrievals.

The interaction on perceived relationship quality was not significant, $\Delta R^2 = .033$, $p = .231$. For the second regression analysis, a total state clarity score was created by summing the six-item state and one-item state clarity scores for each individual. This yielded a seven-item state self-concept clarity score with $\alpha = .831$. The overall interaction did not reach significance, $\Delta R^2 = .057$, $p = .129$, although the pattern showed that participants in a relationship with more overlap reported the highest clarity after retrieving eight examples of their partners’ traits. Thus, the pattern was consistent with that found for the interaction of relationship length and number of retrievals on PRQC, suggesting that the number of retrievals has the greatest impact for those who perceive the greatest overlap with their relationship partners. When perceived overlap was low, there was no difference in the individuals’ clarity scores based on the number of behaviors they recalled for their partners. However, when perceived overlap was high, one standard deviation above the mean, those who recalled eight examples of their partner’s traits appear to report greater state clarity about their own self-concepts. This suggests that the self-other distinction may depend on the perceived overlap between the self and the other.
Figure 5. State self-concept clarity. State self-concept clarity as a function of condition and perceived self-other overlap (IOS). Individuals perceiving less overlap (defined as one standard deviation below the mean) reported no differences in state clarity between conditions. Those perceiving more overlap (defined as one standard deviation above the mean), however, reported marginally greater state clarity when they recalled more examples for important partner-attributes.

Although we are appropriately cautious in making strong conclusions based on a marginally significant effect, the results of study 3 indicate ease of retrieval effects for someone else may depend on the perceived closeness between the self and that other rather than simply the nominal relationship between the two. Interestingly, the results indicate this may be true not only for judgments about the relationship, which pertain to the other person, but also for judgments about the self. When an individual perceives greater overlap between a relationship partner and him or herself, greater elaboration about that partner seems to benefit both the relationship and the self.
The results of Study 3 further suggest the possibility of an interesting exception to the ease of retrieval effect. When the difficulty experienced does not directly pertain to the self, an experience of difficulty may actually reinforce the evidence recalled rather than undermine it (as in the case of typical ease of retrieval studies). Moreover, the benefit of increased elaboration felt by participants in longer and closer relationships may reflect more practice with such a process in the context of a more seasoned relationship. If this is the case, this group of individuals may be more likely to expect difficulty when thinking and writing about significant others. We propose two possible consequences of entering the task expecting it to be difficult. First, any difficulty experienced may simply be irrelevant, allowing these individuals to focus on the content of the examples produced rather than the feelings they had when producing them. When difficulty is anticipated, individuals may attend less to experienced difficulty as a cue because, in a way, the question of how difficult the task will be has already been answered. Moreover, when difficulty is experienced, it does not surprise the individual who anticipates it, so the experience does not refocus the person on the experience of difficulty. Second, the difficulty may actually contribute to positive feelings towards the relationship because the expectations were confirmed and contribute to a feeling of perceptual fluency (Reber, Winkielman, & Schwarz, 1998). Perceptual fluency has been shown to generate positive evaluations (e.g., Reber, Schwarz, & Winkielman, 2004), and in the present case the congruency between expectations about and experienced difficulty might create such fluency. However, the data cannot really speak to these hypotheses and they should be considered with caution, and as hypotheses to be examined more precisely in future.
research. For instance, future research could ask participants about their expectations, to
determine whether those in a closer or longer relationship do, in fact, anticipate more
difficulty when thinking about a romantic partner. If this were the case, additional
research should focus on manipulating experiences of fluency to empirically test the
impact of perceptual fluency on judgments about the relationship, the partner, and the
self.
Chapter 5: General Discussion

The studies reported here were designed to explore the importance of individual and relational differences in ease of retrieval effects. In order to study this question, it is necessary to present participants with conflicting information that necessitates a preference for one set of feedback over the other. The ease of retrieval paradigm nicely achieves this by providing individuals with conflicting experiential and declarative information. The present research capitalizes on this aspect of the paradigm to illustrate the importance of both the situation and the person in determining when the subjective experience or the objective content prevails while making judgments about the self and close others.

Studies 1 and 2 were designed to investigate the influence of self-concept clarity when a person encounters self-relevant feedback. In study 1, we tested the hypothesis that greater elaboration on important self-attributes would feel more difficult and thus lead to poorer evaluations of the self. The results were consistent with our predictions, but interestingly only among those with high self-concept clarity. The ease of retrieval effect, whereby an individual relies on subjective, experiential information rather than objective, declarative information, emerged only for high clarity individuals. For unclear individual – those with a less articulated understanding of the self – the degree of
elaboration had no effect on either their subjective experience of difficulty or their self-regard.

Study 2 was designed to extend the results of study 1, testing the hypothesis that when one elaborates on undesirable, negative self-attributes the resulting experience of difficulty would lead to a more positive self-evaluation. Moreover, we predicted this would be the case for those high in clarity, mirroring the results of the first study. We did not, however, uncover support for these predictions. Study 2 yielded a series of null results, indicating no differences in self-esteem based on the degree of elaboration, despite greater elaboration being rated as more difficult. While null results are difficult to interpret, we propose the possibility that the results of study 2 indicate an incompleteness of how self-concept clarity has been conceptualized and measured, to date. The present results suggest that clarity as it is currently measured may only apply to those with high self-esteem. While in theory it should be possible to have confidence, certainty, consistency, and stability about a negative self-concept, people may be unlikely to report that their negative self-images have such characteristics. A different approach to measuring self-concept clarity that circumvents this issue may prove beneficial for future research in this area, and one suggestion will be discussed later.

Study 3 extended the research to further explore the consequences of elaborating on a romantic partner’s attributes on later evaluations of the partner, the relationship, and the self. The existing literature on ease of retrieval effects for others has shown mixed results, creating an unclear picture as to when judgments about someone else will be based on the subjective or objective information provided by the situation. This study
provided a new contribution in an effort to help explicate when to expect ease of retrieval effects for a close other. Specifically, study 3 included measurements of relationship length and inclusion of the other in the self, or self-other overlap, that can provide some insight into how differences in these variables can determine when ease of retrieval effects will emerge. This study showed that individuals relied on objective information when making judgments related to a romantic partner, evaluating the relationship, partner satisfaction, and one’s own self-concept clarity and self-esteem more positively after elaborating more extensively about the partner’s attributes. Of particular interest, these effects were generally more pronounced when the person had been in the relationship longer or there was more self-other overlap. This suggests that, even when thinking about someone else, it is the interaction of the people and the situation that determines judgments. The experience provided by the ease of retrieval paradigm is interpreted differently depending on the unique aspects of the relationship between the two people, and that interpretation determines the consequential judgments. When a person is in a close or established relationship, the process of elaborating more extensively on the important attributes of his or her partner has an overall positive effect. Despite being difficult, the process of thinking more extensively about a romantic partner feels good and has beneficial consequences. Folk wisdom tells us that relationships “take work” and that getting to know someone else takes time. Perhaps when people have been in a relationship for a longer period of time or are closer to their partners, they interpret the difficult process of elaborating about the partner as indicative of their commitment to making a relationship work and learning about the other person.
The Pilot Study

One important question to ask about the present research is how the results of the pilot study fit into the emerging framework. In these studies, participants were asked to give ten or twenty responses to the question “Who am I?”, but no additional examples were generated. No significant effects emerged based on the number of responses participants gave. However, those who did find the experience more difficult also reported lower self-esteem, lower self-concept clarity, and higher self-doubt. We can only speculate as to why difficulty was not dependent on the condition in this study, but one possibility is that difficulty was never really achieved. The difficulty ratings provide some support for this interpretation, with all conditions producing a mean difficulty rating near the midpoint of the 10-point scale (M = 4.52 and 5.28 for ten and twenty statements, respectively). Ease of retrieval effects are reliant on experiencing either ease or difficulty, and it is possible that in the pilot study only the easy condition was created. Yet, some individuals experienced difficulty, and they likely would show individual differences in experienced difficulty no matter how many items they were asked to generate.

A second reason the pilot study may not have produced the expected ease of retrieval effects is due to the importance of chronic self-concept clarity in the studies reported here. In the pilot study, self-concept clarity was not measured prior to the study, so there was no measure of individuals’ chronic levels of clarity. Considering the importance of chronic clarity in determining the reported effects in study 1, similar effects may not have been found in the pilot study because it was not possible to separate
participants into high and low clarity groups. The effects may have, in essence, been lost without being able to make this distinction.

Metacognition as a Default

As defined earlier, metacognition occurs when one is aware of and thinks about his or her cognitions. In the case of ease of retrieval, metacognition can be thought of as an awareness of one’s thoughts about the difficulty of the experience. Hence, when individuals are influenced by metacognition, they should be more likely to rely on the experiential information in a situation to guide their judgments rather than on more objective information. In fact, the robustness of ease of retrieval effects points to the possibility that relying on such metacognitive, experiential information might be a default, with people naturally turning to such experiential information as a guide. The initial work on ease of retrieval is consistent with such an inference. In those studies participants only relied on the content of their retrievals and ignored the experience when they were led to believe that a difficult experience was nondiagnostic (Schwarz, et al., 1991). Hence, reliance on metacognition and experiential information may be a natural tendency that is only altered when that inclination is disrupted. It may be under circumstances that disrupt this natural tendency that individuals turn to objective, content-based information to guide their judgments.

An important consideration in such a proposition is the role of naïve theories and expectations in determining when one would experience fluency or disfluency, a form of disruption. Fluency is a metacognitive cue based on the subjective ease of processing information (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). In the case of general ease of retrieval
findings, fluency occurs when people experience ease retrieving only a few examples and
disfluency occurs when people experience difficulty retrieving several examples. The
presence or absence of fluency during the task then guides one’s judgments, inferring
greater evidence of the construct of interest after a fluent experience.

**Fluency and Expectations**

Fluency should play a strong role in the current research just as it does in other
ease of retrieval research. Prior research has shown, for instance, that fluency can lead to
more positive aesthetic evaluations of an object (Reber, Schwarz, & Winkielman, 2004).
Hence, one could expect a fluent experience when thinking about the self or a
relationship partner to lead to more positive evaluations of the self, the partner, and the
relationship. However, in the present studies what is fluent may depend on differential
expectations based on one’s self-concept clarity or the length and overlap of a
relationship.

Particularly, people with high self-concept clarity may expect thinking about the
self to be easy. Thus, an easy experience when retrieving examples of important self-
attributes may be most fluent for this group, while a difficult experience would disrupt
this fluency. This would lead such individuals to have more positive evaluations of the
self after a subjectively easy experience, and less positive evaluations of the self
following a difficult experience. For low self-concept clarity individuals, though, the
expectations would be much different. Unclear individuals are unlikely to expect ease
when thinking about the self, and there may be no fluent experience for this group.
Thinking about the self may be disfluent for those with low self-concept clarity,
regardless of the extent of elaboration, because – by definition – they lack a sense of self-knowledge. As a result, one would expect a lower overall evaluation of the self, with no differences in the evaluation based on how many examples of self-attributes the person provided.

Fluency may also help explain the null results found in study 2 when individuals were focused on a negative self. Similar to those with low self-concept clarity in study 1, there may be no fluent experience when thinking about one’s undesirable traits. Moreover, both clear and unclear individuals may expect thinking about negative traits to be difficult. Without a fluent experience or expectation of ease, the metacognitive experience could be disrupted when thinking about the negative self, turning attention to the objective information. However, in this case that objective information includes evidence for undesirable attributes. It is reasonable that people would be unwilling to attend to such negative feedback, essentially leaving them with no real information upon which to base their judgments. This would explain why no significant effects were found in study 2 – people were left with no information they could use to form their judgments during the task.

People should have different expectations when thinking about the traits of a romantic partner compared to expectations when thinking about the self. When one has been in a relationship for a longer period of time, they might be more aware of the difficulty of knowing the other person and expect less ease when thinking more about the partner. This would lead to greater fluency when retrieving more examples of the partner’s traits because that experienced difficulty is consistent with the person’s
expectations. Retrieving fewer examples, in contrast, would be more disfluent because the experience of ease would contradict expectations. Those who have been in the relationship for a shorter period of time, though, should have less clear expectations for the task of thinking about their partner. Hence, metacognition could still be the guiding information for judgments in study 3, but the metacognition is different from that in study 1. In study 1, and typical ease of retrieval studies focused on the self, the awareness of experienced difficulty while thinking indicates a problem, leading to less positive judgments. In study 3, the awareness of experienced difficulty while thinking about a romantic partner does not indicate a problem; rather it is consistent with expectations and thus leads to more positive judgments. However, because the information from metacognition leads to the same judgments one would expect from judgments based on the content (more examples and more difficulty, as expected, both lead to more positive judgments), it is unclear at this point whether the judgments in study 3 are due to metacognition or content-based information.

Conclusion

In sum, the present research demonstrates the importance of both the person and the situation in determining the information one attends to when thinking about the self or an important other. More broadly, the research illustrates that the interaction of the person and the situation is key for determining when people will be guided by metacognitive and experiential information in their judgments. It appears self-concept clarity for the individual and relationship length and self-other overlap for a relationship partner guide people’s reliance on experiential information in part by setting one’s
expectations for the ease or difficulty of thinking about the self or one’s partner. When the experience is consistent with the expectations, people are most likely to experience fluency and judge the target more favorably. Under experiences of fluency, people showed more positive evaluations for the self, the relationship, and the romantic partner. Alternatively, under experiences of disfluency, participants evaluated the self, the relationship, and the romantic partners less positively (studies 1 and 3). For those with high self-concept clarity and longer relationships or more self-other overlap, fluency serves as information and leads people to rely on metacognitive, experiential information. For those with low self-concept clarity and shorter relationships or less self-other overlap, there is no experience of fluency and ease of retrieval effects do not occur.

However, the effect of expectations and fluency remains unclear when one thinks about the negative aspects of the self. Future research should be proactive in considering the role of individual differences in forming judgments during retrieval tasks. Additionally, the literature on self-concept clarity specifically would be greatly benefited by investigating the current conceptualization of clarity and how it may be unintentionally limiting the field to an understanding of clarity about the positive self while overlooking clarity about the negative self. People are motivated to see the self in a positive light (e.g., Sedikides & Strube, 1997), and confidently believing that one’s desirable self-images are clear, stable, and consistent helps maintain such a positive view of the self. In contrast, confidently believing one’s undesirable self-images are clear, stable, and consistent is in direct opposition to the goal of maintaining a positive self-view. Because of this asymmetry, people may only report clarity about desirable self-
images even if they do have clarity about negative self-images. If given the opportunity, on the other hand, to confidently believe one has a negative self-image that is clear, but less stable and consistent, a person might be more apt to report self-concept clarity about a negative self.

One approach might involve a reaction time task during which individuals respond “me” or “not me” to various self-descriptions. A portion of the descriptions would come from the participants themselves, while the others would be provided by the experimenter. Relative to unclear individuals, those with high self-concept clarity should be faster to respond “me” to descriptions they generated themselves and “not me” to descriptions they did not provide. This would suggest that self-concept clarity is not only about a person’s beliefs about their self-knowledge; rather, we could extend our conceptualization of self-concept clarity to consider the strength of the associations between a person’s self-images. Such a view of clarity would provide an important catalyst for future research pertaining to what self-concept clarity really is. For instance, it might prove of value to consider the strength of the associations between one’s chronic and active self-concepts as another measure of self-concept clarity. Because the framework of the self-concept is better organized for those with high self-concept clarity, they should be more efficient both when identifying traits that apply to the self and when moving between the chronic and the active self-concept. A measure of clarity based on associative strength would be extremely useful because it would not rely on self-report measures and would be less likely to be confounded with self-esteem. Thus, future
research focused on these associative paths could be very useful in moving the literature on self-concept clarity forward.

People can exist day to day with a firm belief they know who they are, but that others remain a mystery. Perhaps both the self and others are a mystery, at least for most of us. When one is faced with his or her own unexplored, incomplete, and superficial sense of self, the prior confidence about one’s self-knowledge can be shaken. When one realizes a greater understanding of someone else than expected, the prior lack of confidence is dispelled. With different expectations for knowledge about the self—we expect to know ourselves completely—and others—we expect some level of ignorance about others—come unique consequences of elaboration. Exploring our self-knowledge highlights our lack of self-understanding, while exploring knowledge about a close other highlights the quality of our relationship. Thinking about who someone close to us is leaves us feeling satisfied, connected, and clear; thinking about who we are leaves us feeling uncertain.

_No one remains quite what he was when he recognizes himself._ ~Thomas Mann
References


Appendix A: Chronic Self-Concept Clarity Scale

1. My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another. (R)
2. On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion. (R)
3. I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am. (R)
4. Sometimes I feel that I am not the person that I appear to be. (R)
5. When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I’m not sure what I was really like. (R)
6. I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality.
7. Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself. (R)
8. My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently. (R)
9. If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another day. (R)
10. Even if I wanted to, I don’t think I could tell someone what I’m really like. (R)
11. In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.
12. It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I really don’t know what I want. (R)
Appendix B: Self-Esteem Scale

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. (R)
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of. (R)
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. (R)
9. I certainly feel useless at times. (R)
10. At times I think that I am no good at all. (R)
Appendix C: Self-Doubt Scale

1. When engaged in an important task, most of my thoughts turn to bad things that might happen (e.g., failing) than to good.
2. For me, avoiding failure has a greater emotional impact (e.g., sense of relief) than the emotional impact of achieving success (e.g., joy, pride).
3. More often than not I feel unsure of my abilities.
4. I sometimes find myself wondering if I have the ability to succeed at important activities.
5. I often wish that I felt more certain of my strengths and weaknesses.
6. As I begin an important activity, I usually feel confident in my ability. (R)
7. Sometimes I feel that I don’t know why I have succeeded at something.
8. As I begin an important activity, I usually feel confident in the likely outcome. (R)
Appendix D: Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale

1. Self Other
2. Self Other
3. Self Other
4. Self Other
5. Self Other
6. Self Other
7. Self Other
Appendix E: Perceived Relationship Quality Component Inventory (PRQC)

1. How satisfied are you with your relationship?
2. How content are you with your relationship?
3. How happy are you with your relationship?
4. How committed are you to your relationship?
5. How dedicated are you to your relationship?
6. How devoted are you to your relationship?
7. How intimate is your relationship?
8. How close is your relationship?
9. How connected are you to your partner?