CHAPTER 2

HUMAN AUTONOMY

THE BASIS FOR TRUE SELF-ESTEEM

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INTRODUCTION

Over and over, investigators have found self-esteem to be central in a broad network of constructs associated with motivation, performance, and well-being. Esteeming oneself—thinking well of oneself—has often been found to relate to more effective behavior and better adjustment than has low self-regard.

The concept has had great appeal and has been widely studied, in part because it is easy to understand and measure and because its relation to other variables has seemed straightforward: Put quite simply, more is better. Recent research and theory have indicated, however, that the concept is more complex than this. As it turns out, more is not necessarily better. Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice (1993), for example, reported that high self-esteem individuals developed egoistic illusions that led them to perform less well than low self-esteem individuals. Furthermore, Kernis, Grannemann, and Barclay (1989) reported that people with unstable high self-esteem were more angry and aggressive than people with low self-esteem.

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With these and other such findings, it has become increasingly clear that a reconsideration of the concept of self-esteem, using a more refined analysis is essential. Our approach to such an analysis has been to distinguish between contingent self-esteem and true self-esteem basing this distinction on the differentiated analysis of self contained within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991).

Contingent self-esteem refers to feelings about oneself that result from—indeed, are dependent on—matching some standard of excellence or living up to some interpersonal or intrapsychic expectations. A man who feels like a good and worthy person (i.e., has high self-esteem) only when he has just accomplished a profitable business transaction would have contingent self-esteem. If he were very successful, frequently negotiating such deals, he would have a continuing high level of self-esteem; yet that high level would be tenuous, always requiring that he continue to pass the tests of life, always requiring that he match some controlling standard.

A high level of contingent self-esteem is thus a kind of aggrandizement of oneself associated with being *ego-involved* in some types of outcomes and dutifully achieving them (Ryan, 1982). Often, contingent self-esteem involves social comparison because, to the extent that one has to live up to externally imposed criteria to feel worthy, one is likely to esteem oneself in accord with how one measures up relative to others. If the basis of a woman's feeling good about herself is financial success, she may always feel wanting until she has matched Ross Perot. And if the basis of a man's feeling good about himself is looking like the media-popularized muscular hunk, he may always feel wanting until he has a body like Arnold Schwarzenegger's. Having such social-comparison demands operative, of course, ensures that contingent self-esteem will be a powerful motivator.

Contingent self-esteem tends to be associated with a kind of narcissism that has one anxiously focused on one's own agenda, whether that agenda is being feminine, famous, fashionable, fabulously wealthy, or far out. To the extent that attaining such a goal determines a person's self-esteem, one can well imagine that the person will use whatever means are available to match the standards, including rationalization, self-deception, and other such defensive processes that have been linked to less positive mental health.

In contrast, *true self-esteem* is more stable, more securely based in a solid sense of self. A woman who is true to herself would have a high level of true self-esteem simply by being who she is. Her self-worth would essentially be a given and would have developed as she acted autonomously within the context of authentic relationships (Ryan, 1993). Her worth would not need to be continually put to the test, so she would not

typically be engaged in a process of self-evaluation. The fact of being focused on one's worth—of continually evaluating oneself—implies that one's self-esteem is contingent rather than true.

With a more secure sense of self, and a high level of true self-esteem, the more vacuous or narcissistic goals such as money and fame would be less important and would not be the basis for one's feelings of self-worth. Similarly, the insidious and internalized requirements of fulfilling parents' expectations would not be the basis of one's feelings of self-worth. Instead, one's worth would be an integrated aspect of one's self and would be reflected in agency, proactivity, and vitality (Ryan & Frederick, 1994).

People with high true self-esteem, of course, would have goals and aspirations, and they would attempt to accomplish those outcomes by devoting their personal resources to them, often wholeheartedly. And their emotions would surely be affected by the outcomes of their efforts. They would probably feel pleased or excited when they succeed and disappointed when they fail. But their feelings of worth as people would not fluctuate as a function of those accomplishments, so they would not feel aggrandized and superior when they succeed or depressed and worthless then they fail.

When asked to complete a self-esteem scale, people with high true self-esteem would, of course, come out high, even though they do not typically engage in such self-evaluations. And herein lies a problem for self-esteem research, because people with contingent self-esteem, who have been succeeding, would also come out high, yet the nature of the self-regard held by these two types of individuals would be quite different.

The distinction between true self-esteem and contingent self-esteem is based on the distinction between an integrated or true self and an unintegrated or false self as outlined in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1993). It suggests, as will be elaborated later, that an integrated sense of self develops as one acts agentically within a context that allows satisfaction of the three fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (e.g., Ryan, 1993). True self develops as one acts volitionally (i.e., autonomously), experiences an inner sense of efficacy (i.e., competence), and is loved (i.e., feels related to) for who one is rather than for matching some external standard.

The problem is that all too often people in one's socializing environment make their love or esteem contingent on living up to some standards, so one may feel forced to give up autonomy and a true sense of self, while taking on a socially implanted self. As that happens, one's sense of self-worth becomes contingent on continuing to live up to those implanted standards.

The point, then, is that people develop more of a true self and have

truer self-esteem when they are supported and loved as they behave agentically from their own perspective, whereas they develop more of a false self and have more contingent self-esteem when they are pressured to meet others' standards and are loved only for matching those standards. In turn, true self-esteem is the basis for further agentic activity, whereas contingent self-esteem is the basis for being controlled by the demands placed on people by the social world (or by internalized versions of those demands).

Because being autonomous and having a more integrated sense of self have been associated with more positive mental health, whereas being controlled and having a less integrated sense of self have been associated with more negative mental health (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, in press; Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993), one can begin to understand why high self-esteem does not always have positive consequences. Self-esteem that is true would be expected to have positive consequences, whereas self-esteem that is contingent would be expected to have less positive, and at times negative, consequences.

A DIFFERENTIATED VIEW OF SELF

At the heart of self-determination theory is the concept of self, which is based in the active, integrative processes of the organism that underlie human development and have also been referred to as the "organization principle" (Piaget, 1971), the "actualizing tendency" (Rogers, 1951), and the "synthetic function of the ego" (Freud, 1923/1962). As development proceeds, through the organismic integration process, one's intrinsic or core self is elaborated and refined, and this ever-changing set of integrated processes and structures is referred to as "self" (i.e., as true self or integrated self). In other words, self develops through the ongoing, synthetic resolution of the interaction between the active, integrative organism and the challenges of the environment, and only those psychic elements that have been integrated are considered part of the self.

Development of self, through organismic integration, is theorized to be a motivated process. One integrates intrapsychic and interpersonal material out of the needs to be autonomous, competent, and related. Because integration operates in the service of these needs, social contexts that permit their satisfaction are theorized to facilitate the development of self and a feeling of true self-worth, whereas social contexts that do not are expected to impair the development of self and prompt the internalization of a contingent sense of one's worth.

Behavior that emanates from one's integrated sense of self is said to be

"autonomous" or "self-determined"; it has what deCharms (1968) referred to as an "internal perceived locus of causality." As one behaves autonomously, acting with an internal perceived locus of causality, the behavior promotes further development of self and a stronger sense of true self-worth. Thus, being autonomous is both an input to and a manifestation of the development of an integrated self and true self-esteem. In our theory, the term *human agency* refers to those motivated behaviors that emanate from one's integrated self. To be agentic is thus to be self-determined.

Our view of self as being based in organismic integration has a very important set of corollaries that have been implicit in our discussion thus far. Specifically, it means that (1) not all intrapsychic processes are part of the self, (2) not all motivated behaviors are autonomous, and (3) not all positive self-evaluations are healthy. Because we restrict the term *self* (i.e., true or integrated self) to those processes and structures that have been integrated with one's intrinsic self or phenomenal core, there are many elements of a person's psychic makeup that do not constitute self but rather are separate from and may conflict with one's self. Because we restrict the term *self-determined* to behaviors that emanate from one's true self (and have an internal perceived locus of causality), there are many intentional behaviors regulated by processes within the person that are not truly agentic or autonomous but rather are pressured or controlled (and have an external perceived locus of causality). And because we restrict the term *true self-esteem* to feelings associated with the autonomous or integrated aspects of oneself, there are many reports of high self-esteem that are not well-grounded and stable but rather are tenuous and linked to performing up to some demands or controls.

The development of self entails both the maintenance and the elaboration of one's intrinsic self—of one's curiosity, proactivity, integrative tendency, and inherent interests—and the integration of other intrapsychic or interpersonal material with that which is intrinsic. Acting from one's self, which describes being autonomous, can thus be either intrinsically motivated or regulated by integrated processes.

To summarize, motivated behavior varies along a continuum describing the degree to which it is autonomous and emanates from the self rather than being controlled and pressured by some nonintegrated force. True self-esteem is associated with acting agentically from one's integrated self, whereas contingent self-esteem is associated with being controlled and needing to live up to some socially imposed standards.

In order to explore empirically the functioning of self and self-determination, we have anchored these concepts in motivational and regulatory processes. In other words, we have explicated the types of motivational or regulatory processes that are theorized to be associated with self and

self-determination, and those that are not, and we have explored the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of those different types of motivational or regulatory processes, as a way of providing empirical grounding for our theory of self. We therefore turn to a more thorough consideration of the regulatory bases of behavior, describing research that is pertinent to true vs. contingent self-esteem.

THE REGULATION OF BEHAVIOR

The concept of *intention* or purpose is key to understanding the regulation of behavior (e.g., Heider, 1958; Lewin, 1951). People are said to be motivated to the extent that they intend to accomplish something—that is, to the extent that they have a purpose. Motivated behaviors are mediated by intentions.

Some actions—actions such as defensively withdrawing from others—may *not* be experienced as intentional, and if they are not, they would not properly be termed motivated. In our theory, such an action is referred to as *amotivated,* and it is theoretically related to what Heider (1958) has called "impersonal causation," Rotter (1966) has designated an "external locus of control," Bandura (1977) has labeled "low self-efficacy," and Seligman (1975) has termed "learned helplessness." There is ample evidence that amotivation and impersonal causation are associated with low self-esteem, and self-determination theory, like each of the theories just mentioned, would predict just that.

Self-determination theory differs from these other theories, however, by distinguishing types of motivated behavior and thus being able to differentiate the concept of self-esteem. By conceptualizing motivated behavior as falling along the autonomous–controlled continuum, the theory can explain why the qualities of motivated actions vary and people have secure vs. tenuous self-esteem.

Both autonomous and controlled behaviors are intentional, but only autonomous actions emanate from one's true sense of self. An example of intentional activity that is self-determined would be a developer who acquires a building with a nonpressured sense of choice, believing he can save it from the wrecker's ball and preserve a small piece of history. In contrast, an example of intentional activity that is coerced or controlled would be a real estate developer who acquires yet another building because he feels internal pressure to one-up a primary rival. In the first example, the developer would be behaving with a sense of freedom and choice, in accord with an integrated value and based on a nonpressured consideration of consequences. His behavior would be autonomous; it would emanate from an integrated sense of self. In the second example,

however, the developer would be responding to the intense press for acclaim and aggrandizement; he would be ego-involved in acquiring the building, and his self-esteem would no doubt be contingent on his success.

As Ryan (1982) demonstrated, being motivated by ego involvements does not represent self-determination, for it undermines intrinsic motivation, which is the prototype of self-determination. Rather, ego involvement is an instance of being controlled by a nonintegrated internal force. Succeeding at an activity in which one is ego-involved bolsters self-esteem, but of course it would be contingent self-esteem.

The distinction between autonomous and controlled activity is important when considering the concept of human agency. To be truly agentic means to be autonomous; it means acting from one's integrated self. Yet theorists who have not made this critical distinction treat all intentional behavior as though it were agentic. For example, Bandura (1989), in his self-efficacy theory, asserted that the critical antecedents of intentional behavior are contingency beliefs and efficacy beliefs and that when one has such beliefs, one will be agentic. The problem with this view, of course, is that people can be highly self-efficacious, believing they can achieve whatever outcomes they desire, but at the same time be controlled by (i.e., ego-involved in) those outcomes. Using deCharms's terminology, such people would be self-efficacious "pawns," but they would not in a true sense be agentic. They would likely have high self-esteem, but it would be contingent. Human agency and true self-esteem require autonomy; they require that one be "an origin not a pawn" (deCharms, 1968). Being competent is simply not sufficient for human agency or true self-esteem (e.g., Koestner & McClelland, 1990).

INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

The prototype of autonomous behavior—of behavior emanating from one's self—is intrinsically motivated. It is performed out of interest and requires no "separable" consequence, no external or intrapsychic prods, promises, or threats (Deci, 1975). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) used the term "autotelic" to describe this behavior, for which the only necessary reward is the spontaneous experience of interest and enjoyment. Intrinsic motivation entails curiosity, exploration, spontaneity, and interest in one's surroundings. It is readily evident in mastery strivings (White, 1959) and assimilation (Piaget, 1971).

Intrinsically motivated behaviors are experienced as wholly volitional, as representative of and emanating from one's integrated sense of self. They are the behaviors that people perform interestedly when they are free from demands, constraints, or homeostatic urgencies.

In contrast, extrinsically motivated behaviors are performed instrumentally to attain some separable consequence. Initially, extrinsically motivated behaviors would not occur spontaneously and would therefore have to be prompted by a request or by some promised consequence. Such behaviors, because they are dependent on a separable consequence, are typically less autonomous.

In our conceptualization, however, extrinsically motivated behaviors can vary in the extent to which they are autonomous vs. controlled. We employ a developmental analysis—using the concept of organismic integration—to elaborate different types of extrinsic motivation that vary in their degree of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, Connell, & Deci, 1985). Because intrinsically motivated behaviors are by definition self-determined, their behavioral and experiential qualities serve as a gauge against which extrinsically motivated behaviors can be compared to index their degree of self-determination.

Extrinsically motivated behaviors can become self-determined through the natural developmental tendencies to *internalize* and *integrate* meaningful aspects of one's social context. Internalization entails transforming external regulatory processes into internal regulatory processes (Meissner, 1981; Schafer, 1968), and integration is the means through which these values and regulations become integrated with one's self (Deci & Ryan, 1991).

According to self-determination theory, people tend naturally to internalize the regulation of socially sanctioned activities to feel related to others and efficacious within their social world, and they tend to integrate those regulatory processes to maximize their experience of autonomy or self-determination. Put differently, individuals seek to feel competent, related to others, and autonomous in their actions by taking in and integrating the regulation of those behaviors that were initially externally prompted within a social milieu (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991). However, these processes may function more or less effectively, in part as a function of the social context, resulting in more vs. less integration of regulations and thus more vs. less self-determination of actions. When a value or regulatory process has been taken in but not accepted as one's own, we say it has been "introjected."

EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION: A DIFFERENTIATED VIEW

There are four types of extrinsic regulation, resulting from different degrees of internalization and integration.

External regulation describes behaviors that have not been internalized

but instead are prompted and sustained by contingencies overtly external to the individual. Examples would be engaging in a behavior explicitly to attain a reward or avoid a punishment. Externally regulated behaviors are intentional, but they are dependent on external contingencies and are thus described as being controlled by those contingencies rather than being autonomous or fully agentic.

Introjected regulation refers to behaviors that are motivated by internal prods and pressures, resulting from regulatory processes having been introjected but not integrated. This type of regulation is operative when one behaves because one thinks one *should* or because one would feel guilty if one did not. When a regulation has been introjected, it is internal to the person in the sense that it no longer requires overtly external prompts, but it is still external to the person's sense of self. Introjected regulation describes a type of internal motivation in which actions are controlled or coerced by internal standards and contingent self-esteem. It is thus not autonomous and is said to have a relatively external perceived locus of causality (deCharms, 1968; Ryan & Connell, 1989).

The strength of introjected regulations derives from one's feelings of worth being dependent on performing as the introjects demand. When people behave because their "self-esteem" is contingent, they feel pressured or coerced to behave, and they are said to be ego-involved.

Identified regulation occurs when a behavior is accepted as personally important or valuable. By identifying with the underlying value of an activity and thus having begun to incorporate it into one's sense of self, the person is moving toward being self-determined for an extrinsic or instrumental activity.

Integrated regulation is the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation and results from the integration of identified values and regulations into one's coherent sense of self. When a person has fully integrated an extrinsic regulatory process, he or she will be self-determined with respect to that behavior. As an example, consider a professional football player who had initially identified with being both a rugged athlete and a composer of romantic music. He would no doubt have experienced tension between these identifications, but if he were to make the necessary changes—for example, giving up his "tough-guy" image and setting aside enough of his time to immerse himself in music—he could integrate the two values with each other and with other aspects of the self. A creative synthesis would occur, and the two identifications would no longer be cause for psychological stress. In such a case, the musical athlete would have elaborated his true sense of self, and his self-esteem would no longer be contingent on matching standards in either domain.

According to self-determination theory, integrated extrinsic regula-

tion, together with intrinsic motivation, represent the bases for self-determined functioning, which in its fullest sense is characterized by total involvement of the self. Thus, being intrinsically motivated and integrated would be accompanied by the experience of true self-esteem.

Various questionnaires have been developed to assess the strength of each of these types of regulation. For example, Ryan and Connell (1989) developed one for the academic domain that they used in a study of children of late-elementary-school age. They also collected other data from the children and their parents. Analyses revealed that the children's introjected (i.e., relatively controlled) regulatory style and their identified (i.e., relatively autonomous) regulatory style were correlated equally with parents' reports of how motivated their children were and with the children's self-reports of how hard they tried. However, introjected regulation was positively correlated with anxiety about school and self-blaming in response to failure, whereas identified regulation was positively correlated with enjoyment of school and with proactive responses to failure. This finding suggests, then, that although people can be highly internally motivated by either introjects or identifications, there are quite different affective accompaniments of each. Motivation based in introjects is not self-determined, for although it is powerful, it does not have a solid foundation in the self. Thus, as the data showed, to the extent that people were introjected, they tended to be anxious and to feel worthless when they failed. When they succeed, they would no doubt experience heightened self-esteem, but it would not be the type of self-esteem that is central to stable, healthy adjustment. It would not be true self-esteem.

In contrast, when people have identified with a value or regulation and thus have begun to integrate it, they are more autonomous, more self-assured, more able to feel a sense of enjoyment without having their feelings of self-worth contingent on outcomes. When they fail, they simply get on with figuring out how to do better next time. Their sense of themselves is more solid and true.

ASPIRATIONS, AUTONOMY, AND WELL-BEING

With a secure sense of self, people would be expected to have less narcissistic goals, to behave more autonomously, and to display more positive mental health. Several recent studies have confirmed this expectation. These studies have employed two strategies. Some have compared the correlates of intrinsic aspirations vs. extrinsic aspirations; others have compared the correlates of people's strivings that are more autonomous vs. more controlled.

In two recent sets of studies, Kasser and Ryan (1993, in press) assessed the aspirations of over 500 subjects from three groups of college students, one group of low self-esteem 18-year-olds, and one group of mixed self-esteem adults. Taken together, the studies compared three types of intrinsic aspirations with three types of extrinsic ones. Personal growth, meaningful relationships, and community contributions were considered intrinsic because achieving these aspirations tends to be a reward in its own right and because these aspirations are theoretically congruent with intrinsic needs, growth tendencies, and a secure sense of self. In contrast, financial success, fame, and physical attractiveness were considered extrinsic aspirations, for they are primarily instrumental to other rewards rather than being rewards in their own right. Money brings all manner of goods and services, as well as power; fame brings adulation and privilege; attractiveness brings attention and approval. These goals not only are extrinsic, but also tend to be very controlling, and they relate to the desires of a looking-glass self (Cooley, 1902). They are typical bases of self-evaluation that people adopt from the social order; they are the external criteria for feeling worthy, and thus they are the assets people flaunt to feel better than others. Through attaining these goals, people can bolster their feelings of worth, piling affirmation on an insecure foundation.

Kasser and Ryan found that the relative importance people placed on each of the three *intrinsic* aspirations was positively correlated with a variety of indicators of mental health and well-being, including self-actualization (Jones & Crandall, 1986), vitality (Ryan & Frederick, 1994), global social functioning (Shaffer et al., 1983), and social productivity (Ikle, Lipp, Butters, & Ciarlo, 1983), and it was negatively correlated with indicators of ill-being, including anxiety (Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970), depression (Radloff, 1977), physical symptoms (Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974), and conduct disorders (Herjanic & Reich, 1982). In contrast to these results, the relative importance people placed on each of the three *extrinsic* aspirations—money, fame, and attractiveness—was negatively correlated with the indicators of well-being and positively correlated with the indicators of ill-being. It therefore seems that having one's sense of self associated with long-term goals that are more intrinsic has clear mental health advantages, relative to goals that are extrinsic to the person and mediated by their visibility to others.

It is worth noting that Kasser and Ryan (1993, in press) also assessed subjects' beliefs about the likelihood of being able to attain the goals, and they found that feeling more able to attain the extrinsic goals was also associated with indicators of poor mental health, whereas feeling more able to attain the intrinsic goals was associated with indicators of good mental health. This underscores the point that we made earlier, namely,

that just having high efficacy expectations with regard to goals is not enough to ensure positive well-being and true self-esteem; those efficacy expectations must be associated with greater autonomy (in this case, intrinsic aspirations) for the expectations to have clear benefits.

In another set of studies, Sheldon and Kasser (in press) had subjects report their strivings using a method developed by Emmons (1986). They also asked the subjects to rate the reasons they strive for those goals, using the type of measure developed by Ryan and Connell (1989) to assess the degree of autonomy. In the Sheldon and Kasser studies, subjects' autonomous vs. controlled reasons for pursuing their goals were related to the well-being variables of self-actualization, vitality, empathy (Davis, 1980), and openness to experience (Costa & McCrae, 1985). Each measure of well-being was significantly correlated with the relative autonomy of one's strivings, and being more autonomous in one's strivings was also correlated with life satisfaction and self-theory coherence (Harter & Monsour, 1992).

These various studies suggest that aspirations and strivings that are theoretically linked to contingent self-esteem are associated with poorer mental health than those that are theoretically linked to true self-esteem. Recognizing the difference between the type of self-esteem that is tenuously contingent on outcomes and the type that is securely based in being true to oneself can therefore provide the basis for an account of why high self-esteem does not always have positive consequences.

SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Considerable research has focused on social-contextual conditions that enhance vs. diminish self-determination and the development of self. Because true self-esteem is theorized to be associated with behaving autonomously, as an expression of one's self, we briefly review research exploring the contextual conditions that enhance vs. undermine the two types of autonomous behavior, namely, intrinsic and integrated.

In making predictions about and interpreting the results of the research, we considered the theoretical relation of the contextual conditions to the three fundamental psychological needs—the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, 1993). Social conditions that afford opportunities to satisfy these three needs are predicted to facilitate intrinsic motivation, the integration of extrinsic motivation, and thus a true sense of self-esteem. In contrast, social conditions that obstruct satisfaction of these needs—for example, conditions in which love is given contingently, so one must give up autonomy to obtain

love—are expected to impair intrinsic motivation and interrupt integration of extrinsic motivation, thus resulting in either contingent or low self-esteem.

The earliest studies were laboratory experiments that manipulated specific events (e.g., Deci, 1971). With a few limiting conditions, the experiments showed that material rewards (Deci, 1971, 1972), threats of punishment (Deci & Cascio, 1972), evaluations (Smith, 1974), deadlines (Amabile, DeJong, & Lepper, 1976), imposed goals (Mossholder, 1980), and good-player awards (Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973) all tended to be controlling (i.e., to be experienced as pressure to perform in specific ways), and thus they undermined intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, providing choice (Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, Smith, & Deci, 1978) and acknowledging feelings (Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt, 1984) tended to be experienced as autonomy-supportive (i.e., as encouragement for self-initiation and choice), and thus they maintained or enhanced intrinsic motivation.

Subsequent experimental work (i.e., Harackiewicz, 1979; Ryan, 1982) refined these early results, indicating that although, on average, certain events are controlling and others autonomy-supportive, the style and language with which the events are administered significantly influence their effects. For example, Ryan, Mims, and Koestner (1983) found that although performance-contingent rewards tend to be experienced as controlling, they can have positive effects if administered in a noncontrolling, autonomy-supportive way.

Laboratory studies exploring the conditions that promote competence found that optimal challenge (Danner & Lonky, 1981) and positive feedback (Deci, 1971) enhanced intrinsic motivation, although these effects require that the interpersonal context (i.e., the style and locution of administration) be autonomy-supportive rather than controlling (Fisher, 1978; Ryan, 1982). To be self-determined and to develop true self-esteem, people need to feel that their successes are truly their own—they must feel autonomous rather than controlled. Thus, positive feedback that is controlling (e.g., praising people for "doing as they should") can rob them of the opportunity to feel good about their accomplishments because it places the causes of their successful actions in sources external to the self.

This and related research thus provides further evidence that although personal control over outcomes (i.e., self-efficacy) is important, it is not sufficient for intrinsic motivation; the feelings of competence must be accompanied by perceived autonomy for people to be intrinsically motivated (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1993). A person can develop a strong sense of contingent self-esteem by consistently being efficacious in the accomplishment of introjected goals, but if the behavior is not self-

determined, it will not enhance intrinsic motivation or promote true self-esteem.

Several field studies have also explored autonomy-supportive vs. controlling interpersonal climates. Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, and Ryan (1981) developed a measure of autonomy support within the classroom that assesses the degree to which teachers attempt to motivate learning in a controlling vs. an autonomy-supportive manner. These researchers, as well as Ryan and Grolnick (1986), found that in autonomy-supportive classrooms, where teachers tended to consider the students' frame of reference, students displayed greater curiosity and more independent mastery attempts than students in more controlling classrooms. Importantly, they also developed higher self-esteem in the autonomy-supportive classrooms.

The finding that autonomy support plays an important role in facilitating self-determination and personal satisfaction is not limited to the classroom, however. Grolnick and Ryan (1989), using an interview procedure, found that parental autonomy support (vs. control) affected their children's degree of intrinsic motivation for learning, and Kasser, Ryan, Zax, and Sameroff (in press) found that involved, autonomy-supportive parents tended to have children who developed intrinsic aspirations, whereas cold and controlling parents had children who placed more value on extrinsic aspirations.

As mentioned, not only are individuals naturally intrinsically motivated, but also they have an innate tendency to internalize the regulation of extrinsically motivated behaviors that are useful for effective functioning in the social world. Internalization allows people to feel related to others and to feel competent in dealing within the social matrix. Internalization can, however, take the form of mere introjection or, alternatively, of greater integration. Although people may feel both related and competent when their behavior is regulated by introjects, they will feel autonomous only when the regulation is self-determined—that is, only when internalized regulatory processes have been fully integrated.

Our research has shown that internalization and integration are facilitated by the autonomy support and interpersonal involvement of significant adults. For example, Grolnick and Ryan (1989) found that parental autonomy support and involvement influenced children's being autonomously self-regulating in doing their schoolwork. When parents were more autonomy-supportive and involved, the students displayed greater internalized motivation and were rated by teachers as being more competent and better adjusted.

Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, and Leone (1994) reported that supporting self-determination—by providing a meaningful rationale, acknowledgment of the person's feelings, and an interpersonal style that emphasized choice rather than control—led to greater internalization than being nonsupportive of self-determination. This study, which was a laboratory experiment, thus complements the Grolnick and Ryan (1989) field study. However, the experiment of Deci et al. (1994) also showed that internalization that had occurred in the conditions that supported self-determination was integrated, as reflected by positive correlations between the amount of time subjects subsequently spent with the target activity and self-reports of perceived choice, personal importance of the activity, and enjoyment, whereas internalization that had occurred in the more controlling conditions was introjected, as reflected by negative correlations between the amount of time subjects subsequently spent with the target activity and the same three affective self-report variables. In other words, people who internalized regulations in autonomy-supportive contexts engaged in the stipulated activity while feeling free and enjoying the activity. However, people who internalized regulations in controlling contexts engaged in the activity subsequently despite not feeling free and not enjoying it. They engaged in the activity because they felt they had to, presumably because their feelings of self-worth were contingent on doing so.

To summarize, the data indicate that socializing agents who are controlling (i.e., who pressure people to perform up to standards) promote introjection, whereas those who are autonomy-supportive (i.e., who take the individuals' perspectives, support self-initiation, and offer choice) promote integration. When the context is pressuring, individuals take in those pressures and controls and use them on themselves. The introjected demands become standards that the people use to evaluate themselves—much like others in the social context had initially done to them. Simply stated, introjects provide the rules for achieving contingent, rather than true, self-esteem.

CONCLUSIONS

Self-esteem, which has been widely studied, has generally been interpreted as comprising any positive evaluations individuals have about themselves. As well, it has generally been expected to have positive correlates. Recent work, however, has indicated that its correlates are not always positive, thus highlighting the importance of differentiating the concepts of true self-esteem vs. contingent self-esteem. We have done that, doing so on the basis of the differentiated conception of self (viz., integrated or true self vs. introjected or false self) contained within self-determination theory.

True self, herein defined, refers only to those regulatory processes and other psychic elements that are either intrinsic or have been integrated with one's intrinsic or core self. When one feels esteem for those aspects of oneself, one experiences true self-esteem, and this type of self-esteem will be enhanced only when one's actions are self-determined—that is, only when one acts with an internal perceived locus of causality.

In contrast, regulatory processes that have merely been introjected, that have been taken in but not integrated with one's intrinsic or core self, underlie controlled rather than self-determined actions, and they gain their potency from one's unstable sense of self. With the aim of shoring up one's ego, one may persist at an activity in a pressured way, acting with an external perceived locus of causality. Although successful completion of such activities will lead to positive feelings about oneself, those feelings represent contingent rather than true self-esteem.

Social contexts in which socializing agents are genuinely related to and autonomy-supportive of the target individual facilitate the development of true self-esteem. Being related to and autonomy-supportive of another—of one's child or student, for example—means valuing the other for who he or she is and taking that other's frame of reference. It means accepting the other's point of view by acknowledging feelings and providing choice. In essence, it means beginning by accepting and relating to the self of the other. It is precisely the acceptance of *self*—first by others and then by oneself—that supports the development and maintenance of true self-esteem. By acting from one's true self, by acting from one's innate potentials and phenomenal core, one will feel a sense of personal integrity and agency. One will experience true self-esteem.

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