Compartmentalization and Integration: The Evaluative Organization of Contextualized Selves

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ABSTRACT This article reviews research on the evaluative organization (compartmentalized or integrative) of contextualized selves. Evaluatively compartmentalized self-structures consist of multiple selves, each of which is either mostly positive or mostly negative. Evaluatively integrative self-structures represent each self with a mixture of positive and negative attributes. These different styles of organizing self-knowledge have been linked to current mood and self-esteem. More recently, studies of evaluative organization have examined self-esteem stability, coping styles (e.g., self-enhancement or resilience), change in self-organization, as well as psychopathology and psychological treatment. Findings suggest that compartmentalized self-structures, typically associated with the highest levels of self-esteem, may be vulnerable to instability. In contrast, the more moderate self-views of individuals with integrative self-structures may offer greater stability, increased resilience, and a means of coping with extreme stress.

A starting point of research on self-structure is the assumption that the self-concept is contextualized. That is, a person's self-concept in reality consists of multiple selves, distinct identities that are represented by organized bodies of both declarative and episodic knowledge (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987). Although these selves are generally treated as cognitive structures, their content is affect laden. Therefore, affective processes are likely to be important, and the implications for emotional experiences are strong (Cantor, Markus, Niedenthal, & Nurius, 1986). Cognitive-affective models of the self typically predict that these identities will be quite flexible (Markus &

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Wurf, 1987), although the notion of the core self continues to generate appeal.

There are several models of self-structure that highlight specific features of how self-knowledge is organized and examine their association with aspects of well-being, such as self-esteem, mood, or the ability to cope with stress. Examples of these structural features include self-complexity (Linville, 1985, 1987), differential importance (Pelham & Swann, 1989), self-discrepancies (Higgins, 1987), self-fragmentation (Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993), self-schemas (Markus, 1977), and compartmentalization (Showers, 2002). In addition, some areas of research focus on characteristics of the self that are likely linked to specific structural features, without specifying the underlying structure (cf. Segal, 1988). These areas of research include contingencies of self-worth (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), self-esteem stability (Kernis, 2003), and self-concept clarity (Campbell, 1990).

All models of specific structural features allow for contextualized multiple selves, and most imply that individuals define their own multiple contexts for their identities.[1] That is, the contextualized self is actively constructed by individuals who shape their own self-categories and contexts as part of their general motivation to make sense of the world and to function adaptively within it (Heider, 1946; Kelly, 1955; Mischel & Morf, 2003). Thus, contextualized identities may correspond to some combination of internal states (''me when I'm happy''), external environments (''me at work''), roles or relationships (''me as a friend''), or experiences (''success'').

Although the general motive underlying the contextualized self may be to make sense of the world, in a more concrete sense, the specific forms that contextualized selves take likely serve an individual's current goals and motives (Cantor et al., 1986). Examples of self-relevant goals include self-enhancement (feeling good about the self), self-consistency (maintaining a stable self-concept), accuracy, self-improvement, or resilience (being prepared for the worst). Thus, individuals may choose self-defining contexts or identities in such a way as to achieve their preferred or current goals and, therefore,

1. In some of the examples cited here, identities are defined nomothetically for the purposes of assessment (e.g., work, friend, daughter [Donahue et al., 1993]), presumably because they correspond to the identities that individuals construct for themselves.

function adaptively. If the current goals and motives change, self-structure may change as well (Showers & Zeigler-Hill, 2003).

COMPARTMENTALIZED AND INTEGRATIVE SELF-STRUCTURES

According to the compartmentalization model of self-structure, individuals construct contextualized selves that organize positive and negative beliefs about the self in a way that serves either implicit or explicit self-goals (Showers, 2000). In this model (Showers, 1992a, 1995), individuals' contextualized identities are termed self-aspects, and each is assumed to have a cognitive representation as a category of specific self-beliefs. Thus, the self-concept consists of a set of self-aspect categories corresponding to a person's most salient identities (cf. Linville, 1987). Each category consists of specific items of knowledge or specific self-beliefs. Looking across self-aspect categories, an individual's self-structure can be described on a continuum ranging from evaluative compartmentalization to evaluative integration, based on the distribution of positive and negative self-beliefs. If a person's positive and negative self-beliefs tend to be segregated into separate self-aspects, then the self-concept is relatively compartmentalized. For example, a student may organize his or her self-beliefs into two self-aspects, one that consists of primarily positive beliefs (e.g., "myself as a Renaissance scholar," which contains beliefs such as *motivated* and *creative*) and one that consists of primarily negative beliefs (e.g., "myself during the stress of final exams," which contains beliefs such as *distracted* and *insecure*). However, if each self-aspect category tends to contain a mixture of positive and negative beliefs, then the self-concept is relatively integrative. For instance, a student with an integrative self-concept structure may have a self-aspect corresponding to "myself in science classes" that contains both positive beliefs (*disciplined*, *curious*) and negative beliefs (*worrying*, *tense*).

The basic model of compartmentalization predicts that evaluative organization of self-aspects has implications for a person's mood or self-esteem. For example, an individual with a compartmentalized self-structure should experience positive mood and high self-esteem if self-aspects that are purely positive are activated most frequently. In other words, the compartmentalized structure may facilitate activation of important positive self-beliefs and minimize the

activation of negative self-beliefs (by relegating them to less important or less frequently activated self-aspects, e.g., "myself during the stress of final exams"). However, individuals with compartmentalized self-structures may possess negative self-aspects that are salient and frequently activated, which would lead them to experience strong negative emotional states and low self-esteem. In contrast, in an integrative self-structure, both positive and negative self-beliefs are likely to be activated frequently, tempering mood and overall feelings about the self (i.e., making them less negative when there is strong negative content or less positive when there is strong positive content). To summarize, the basic theoretical model predicts that the association between compartmentalized or integrative self-organization and global self-esteem or mood depends on the salience or importance of positive and negative self-beliefs. When the self-concept is generally positive, compartmentalization is associated with more positive mood and higher self-esteem than integrative organization (because compartmentalization minimizes access to less important negative beliefs). However, when the self-concept contains important or salient negative content (i.e., negative beliefs that are difficult to avoid), then integrative organization will minimize the impact of negative beliefs in comparison to compartmentalized structures in which those negative beliefs may be activated without accompanying positive beliefs.

The term *positive compartmentalization* refers to a compartmentalized structure in which the positive self-aspects are most salient or important; the term *negative compartmentalization* refers to structures with salient or important negative self-aspects. In addition, integrative structures can be either positively or negatively integrative. That is, even for an integrative structure, an individual can make an overall evaluation of the positivity and negativity of each self-aspect category. If relatively positive self-aspects are perceived to be more important than relatively negative self-aspects, then the individual's self-structure is said to be positively integrative; if relatively negative self-aspects are more important, the structure is negatively integrative.

METHODOLOGY

The predictions of the basic model have been confirmed in multiple data sets that test the association of self-structure and current mood or self-

esteem (e.g., Showers, 1992a, 1992b; Showers & Kling, 1996). The most common measure of compartmentalization is a self-descriptive card-sorting task originally developed by Zajonc (1960) and adapted by Linville (1985, 1987) to assess self-complexity. In this task, participants sort potentially self-descriptive attributes to represent different aspects of the self-concept (i.e., multiple selves). Participants generate and label their own self-aspect groups and identify specific attributes that pertain to each self-aspect. The distribution of positive and negative attributes across self-aspects determines the degree of compartmentalization. If each self-aspect group is purely positive or purely negative, then the self-description is perfectly compartmentalized. If positive and negative attributes are equally distributed across all self-aspects, then the self-description is perfectly integrative (Showers, 1992a; Showers & Kevlyn, 1999). Table 1 presents sample card sorts from actual participants, including a perfectly compartmentalized card sort and a relatively integrative one. Some alternatives to this procedure include a paragraph task (McMahon, Showers, Rieder, Abramson, & Hogan, 2003), a thought-listing task (Showers, 1992b), and variations of the card-sorting task (e.g., Showers & Larson, 1999).[2]

Compartmentalization and Integration Over Time: Self-Stability and Outcomes

The basic model of compartmentalization presented above focuses on the concurrent association of self-structure with mood and self-esteem. However, a closer look at the process by which these structures may influence reactions to events leads to predictions for the stability of mood and self-esteem over time. In addition, these processes may affect long-term outcomes.

Stability of self-esteem. Consider an individual with a positively compartmentalized self-concept structure. Even though this structure should be associated with a relatively high level of concurrent self-esteem, a closer look at the compartmentalization model suggests that there may be a hidden vulnerability to positive compartmentalization. Depending on whether a positive or negative self-aspect category is activated, individuals with a compartmentalized self-concept may feel either extremely

2. Recently, Graham and Clark (2006) have used response latencies to positive and negative traits presented in alternating or nonalternating order as evidence of whether individuals have segregated or integrated representations of their relationship partners. They have also introduced the Integration of Thoughts About Partners Scale.

Table 1
Examples of Actual Card Sorts Illustrating Compartmentalization and Integration

Panel A: Compartmentalized Organization

Me at Home	Me at Work	Me in Class	Me in Norman, OK	Me and My Sorority	Me with People I Don't Know	Me When I'm Stressed
Giving	Successful	Successful	Successful	Successful	– Weary	– Hopeless
Confident	Capable	Capable	Confident	Giving	– Inferior	– Not the "real me"
Comfortable	Confident	Independent	Comfortable	Confident	– Tense	– Uncomfortable
Lovable	Comfortable	Organized	Independent	Comfortable		– Sad & Blue
Outgoing	Needed	Interested	Fun &	Lovable		– Irritable
Happy	Communicative	Hardworking	Entertaining	Fun &		– Disorganized
Friendly	Organized		Interested	Entertaining		– Tense
Optimistic	Interested		Outgoing	Interested		
	Outgoing		Hardworking	Outgoing		
	Hardworking		Happy	Energetic		
	Happy		Friendly	Happy		
	Friendly		Optimistic	Friendly		

Panel B: Integrative Organization

Family	Religion	Student	African American	Intimate Relationship	Friendship	Dreams (As in Goals)	Perfectionist
Organized	Needed	Successful	– Hopeless	Comfortable	Giving	Independent	Successful
– Irritable	Organized	– Lazy	Organized	– Irritable	– Uncomfortable	Organized	– Disagreeing
– Disagreeing	Giving	Mature	Confident	– Immature	– Insecure	– Weary	– Irritable
– Self-centered	Happy	– Irritable	– Irritable	– Insecure	– Irritable		Capable
Communicative	– Irritable	Organized		– Inferior	– Isolated		Confident
Lovable	Optimistic	Intelligent		Organized	Organized		Organized
Fun &		Interested		– Tense	Friendly		Intelligent
Entertaining		Hardworking			– Not the "real me"		Outgoing
Energetic		– Tense					Hardworking
							– Tense

Note: Negative attributes are identified by a minus sign. Panel A: compartmentalization = 1.00; differential importance = .80; and proportion of negative attributes = .17. Panel B: compartmentalization = .32; differential importance = .65; and proportion of negative attributes = .40. From Zeigler-Hill and Showers (2007).

good or extremely bad about themselves. Thus, a person who generally has a positively compartmentalized self (i.e., has a compartmentalized self-structure with important positive self-aspects) and who usually feels extremely good may experience extremely negative self-feelings whenever a negative self-aspect is activated. Such shifts in self-feelings may be experienced on a daily basis, suggesting that positive compartmentalization may be associated with self-esteem that is generally high but is unstable over time. In contrast, integrative organization should be associated with relatively stable self-esteem because even if salient self-aspects change, there should be relatively little variation in the average positivity of activated self-knowledge.

This stability hypothesis was tested in two daily diary studies (Zeigler-Hill & Showers, 2007). Self-concept structure was assessed using the self-descriptive card-sorting task. Participants were then asked to record their state self-esteem at 10 pm each day for either 10–14 days or 5–7 days using a procedure adapted from Kernis, Grannemann, and Barclay (1989). They also recorded any positive or negative events that had occurred that day using either the Daily Hassles and Uplifts Scale (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988) or the Daily Events Survey (Butler, Hokanson, & Flynn, 1994). In both studies, the stability hypothesis was confirmed, but only for individuals with relatively high self-esteem. That is, among individuals who generally held positive views of the self, an integrative self-concept structure was associated with greater self-esteem stability than was compartmentalization. However, when self-esteem was generally low, integrative individuals were not especially stable. This result may suggest that the correlates of self-structure are motivationally controlled. It is certainly possible that individuals with low self-esteem would not wish to avoid transient good feelings, and so they may not invoke their integrative self-aspects to temper their feelings when good events do occasionally occur. For high self-esteem individuals, there are more advantages to stability, given that self-esteem levels are already generally high, and so integrative individuals may be more likely to forego a temporary elevation or avoid a transient dip.

Follow-up analyses confirmed that for individuals with relatively compartmentalized self-structures, daily self-esteem reports fluctuated with the number of positive and negative life events occurring on that day. Moreover, compartmentalized individuals' self-esteem was especially sensitive to a laboratory manipulation of social acceptance or rejection. In other words, compartmentalized individuals seemed vulnerable to dramatic shifts in self-evaluations in response to daily events. A similar result was obtained by Rhodewalt, Madrian, and Cheney (1998) for compartmentalization and self-esteem instability, but only for individuals who possessed relatively high levels of narcissism.

Interestingly, compartmentalized and integrative individuals did not differ in the number or type of daily positive or negative events reported. Thus, there is no evidence that integrative individuals' stability is a result of less extreme experiences. However, a related possibility that has not been tested is whether integrative individuals are more stable in the self-aspects that are activated by their everyday experience. For example, their self-concepts may consist of a few broadly defined selves that are activated more consistently in a wider range of contexts and may lend greater stability to self-evaluations.

Long-term outcomes. Given that positively compartmentalized structures are associated with concurrent high self-esteem but are also vulnerable to self-esteem instability that accompanies shifts in the relative salience of positive versus negative self-aspects, we considered how individuals with integrative versus compartmentalized structures might fare over extended periods of time. An interesting context in which to examine the long-term correlates of these organizational styles is actually not the organization of self-knowledge but rather the organization of knowledge about someone else, namely a romantic partner. In the case of the self, any deficiencies or disadvantages of any feature of the self may be countered with any of a wide range of compensatory strategies (see Tesser, 2000 for a review), so that any long-term correlates of self-structure may be muted by the need to maintain or enhance the self. In contrast, outcomes for close relationships may be more dramatic and distinct. For example, a person may like a romantic partner relatively well, yet end the relationship (or, conversely, choose to continue a relationship despite negative views of the partner). Thus, examining structural effects in close relationships may allow for a somewhat more complex view of the long-term consequences associated with each type of organizational style.

In a longitudinal study of 99 college students in ongoing romantic relationships, participants completed a card-sorting task that assessed the structure of their positive and negative beliefs about their romantic partner (Showers & Kevlyn, 1999; Showers & Zeigler-Hill, 2004). One year later, participants repeated this measure of partner structure and reported on their current feelings about the partner and also the status of the relationship. Although at Time 1, liking and loving for the partner was reported by individuals whose partner structures were positively compartmentalized, at Time 2, these individuals' relationships were more likely to have ended than the relationships of individuals whose partner perceptions were positively integrated at Time 1. Thus, positive compartmentalization may have enhanced current feelings for the partner at Time 1, but these feelings may have been relatively unstable and prone to substantial shifts when any negative compartments were primed. In

contrast, the moderately positive feelings of individuals with positively integrated partner structures were more predictive of ongoing status 1 year later, perhaps as a result of their greater realism (cf. Murray & Holmes, 1993, 1999). Figure 1 illustrates these results, with the Time 2 outcomes superimposed on predicted values for liking and loving at Time 1.

For partners perceived as having important negative attributes, different results were obtained. Here, integrative structures were associated with relatively positive feelings for the partner at Time 1, but they also predicted relationship breakup by Time 2. This suggests that negative integration may help to bolster positive feelings for a partner despite important flaws but that this process does not sustain the relationship over time. We hypothesize that integration is an effortful process and that it is difficult to be continually constructing links between salient negative and positive beliefs. As a consequence, the process of integration may take a cognitive and emotional

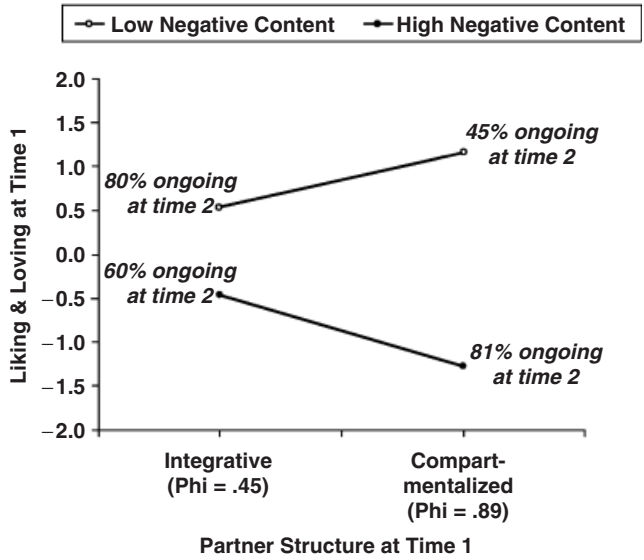

Figure 1

Relationship status (proportion ongoing) at Time 2 as a function of partner structure and partner negativity at Time 1. Numbers in italics show adjusted predicted values for the proportion of relationships that are ongoing, computed at values of partner structure (phi) and partner negativity that are 1 standard deviation above and below the means. These values are superimposed on the line graphs of the findings obtained by Showers and Kevlyn (1999, Figure 1) for a composite measure of liking and loving at time 1. From Showers and Zeigler-Hill (2004).

toll over time (cf. Showers & Kling, 1996). In contrast, negative compartmentalization seemed to be associated with relationships that are unhappy but stable. We speculate that this form of organization might be adopted by individuals who stay in a relationship for extrinsic reasons (e.g., financial security).

Recent findings by Graham and Clark (2006) suggest that individuals with high self-esteem may tend to integrate partner perceptions because their positive views of the self make them less defensive and allow them to dedicate more cognitive resources to other tasks such as long-term relationship issues. The present results suggest that this integrative effort will likely enhance relationship stability. In contrast, any hint of rejection or other relationship threat may tend to be exaggerated by individuals with compartmentalized partner structures (cf. Murray, Bellavia, Rose, & Griffin, 2003; Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998).

To summarize, positive compartmentalization is associated with the most positive feelings about the self or a romantic partner, but we caution that these feelings may be unrealistically positive and, as a consequence, may be unstable and vulnerable to change. In contrast, positive integration is associated with moderately positive feelings that may be both more realistic and more stable over time. Interestingly, the potential benefits of a positively integrative self-concept structure are probably not well captured by conventional assessments of coping or psychological adjustment. Although access to negative beliefs may help inoculate individuals who use positive integration against sudden stressors—which contributes to resilience—conventional measures of adjustment (e.g., current mood or self-esteem) would likely favor individuals who display positively compartmentalized self-structures.

Negative integration should show similar benefits in terms of resilience and should enhance feelings for the self or one's partner when important negative attributes are salient, at least in the short term. However, the effort of maintaining a negatively integrative structure may wear itself out or may eventually be overwhelmed by the extent of negative content. Thus, negative integration may be most effective when used for a relatively short period of time. Negative compartmentalization is unlikely to lead to positive evaluations of self or partner, but it may allow an individual to manage strong negative beliefs by creating narrowly defined positive aspects that provide islands of hope, even though they may be experienced only infrequently.

Change in Self-Structure

According to the basic model, greater compartmentalization is associated with positive mood and high self-esteem when positive self-beliefs are important or salient; in contrast, greater integration is associated with less

negative mood and higher self-esteem when negative self-beliefs are important or salient. This suggests that if the relative importance of positive and negative self-beliefs shifts over time, flexibility in self-structure may allow individuals to take advantage of any possible benefits of each type of organization in the appropriate context. As described by Showers (2000), a dynamic model of self-organization predicts that well-adjusted individuals with basically positive self-concepts may adopt positively compartmentalized structures when negative attributes are not especially salient (e.g., when stress is low) yet shift to a more integrative style when negative attributes are salient (e.g., when stress is high). This would allow individuals to take advantage of the ease and efficiency of compartmentalization—which does seem to be the more prevalent style of organization—and utilize integration to help individuals work through those concerns raised by their negative attributes that may surface during times of stress.

Given the apparent ease and efficiency of compartmentalization, the dynamic model predicts that many individuals will return to a compartmentalized structure once transient stresses are resolved or subside. However, individuals facing chronic stress may maintain a relatively integrative style. Moreover, some individuals who adopt an integrative self-concept structure during a time of stress may even become highly efficient at maintaining this structure such that the greater effort required to maintain an integrative structure, as compared to a compartmentalized structure, is greatly reduced. That is, some individuals may become expert integrators and adopt this strategy on a more permanent basis.

Most negative attribute. Consistent with the predictions of the dynamic model, McMahon et al. (2003) found that female college students who were selected for low levels of body-image concerns and no disordered eating tended to be positively compartmentalized in their overall self-descriptions but used integrative statements when asked to describe their most negative characteristic. Thus, women who were well-adjusted appeared to shift from a basically positively compartmentalized self-structure to an integrative style of thinking when they had to focus on a negative attribute.

Relationship stress. The study concerning the organization of partner knowledge described above also examined change in partner structure over the course of 1 year. In this study, a shift toward greater integration in partner structure was observed for individuals who might be characterized as reporting moderate levels of relationship stress (Showers & Zeigler-Hill, 2004). More specifically, increased integration was observed

for individuals who perceived their partner as having many negative attributes or who reported relatively high relationship conflict (but not both). This finding supports the notion that integration often corresponds to an active struggle with negative beliefs. Once the situation seems hopeless (e.g., negative perceptions of one's partner accompanied by high relationship conflict), people may avoid the effort of integration because it is not likely to pay off. Unfortunately, the shift toward greater integration, even if it reflects an individual's ongoing struggle with negative beliefs, is not necessarily successful over the long term. Individuals who shifted toward a more integrative style while experiencing high levels of relationship conflict experienced relatively high rates of breakup over the year's time.

Psychological treatment. Recent studies of clinical and psychologically vulnerable populations provide support for both the central tenet of the dynamic model (i.e., people adopt a more integrative style in times of stress) and the view that the correlates of integrative styles are complex and not easily captured by conventional measures of psychological adjustment. Preliminary results from a longitudinal study of 38 individuals who completed intake forms at a university counseling center were more integrative in their self-structures 3 months after intake than they had been at Time 1 (Showers, Zeigler-Hill, Boyce, Mattachione, & Turner, 2005). This suggests that increases in integrative thinking may be associated with psychological treatment (cf. Showers, Limke, & Zeigler-Hill, 2004). However, the duration of this increase in integration has yet to be determined. That is, it is unclear whether this increased use of integration is temporary (and the individual will soon recompartmentalize) or whether this change is relatively permanent.

Similarly, in a study of college students who reported having experienced either sexual or emotional maltreatment (or both) before age 15, the most severely maltreated individuals (i.e., those who had experienced both forms of maltreatment) displayed integrative self-structures (see Figure 2; Showers, Zeigler-Hill, & Limke, 2006). Those who experienced either sexual or emotional maltreatment (but not both) tended to be relatively compartmentalized. Moreover, those individuals in the moderately maltreated groups (i.e., those who reported only one form of maltreatment) scored better on measures of psychological adjustment when they were compartmentalized, whereas individuals with integrative structures showed greater distress. We suggest that individuals with integrative self-structures may still be working through concerns about their maltreatment or negative self-concepts. Because integration maintains access to negative attributes, it is not surprising that their scores on measures such as mood and self-esteem are less positive. However, it seems

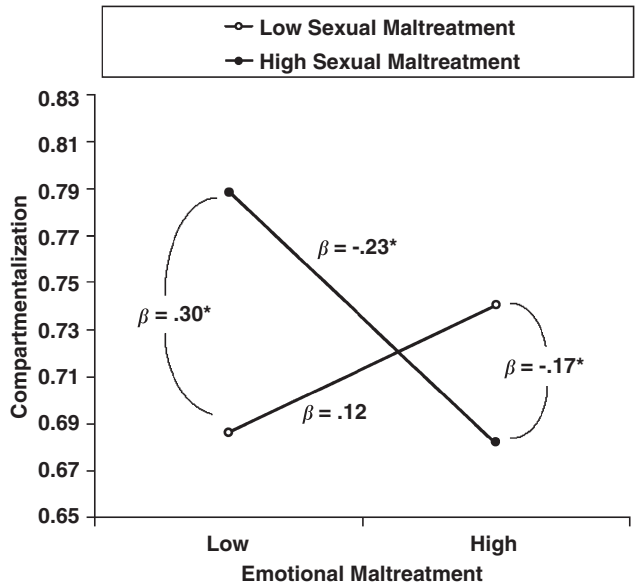

Figure 2
Adjusted predicted values for compartmentalization, illustrating the interaction of emotional and sexual maltreatment, computed at values of emotional maltreatment that are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean and at values of sexual maltreatment that are 0 (-0.4 *SD*) and 2.09 ($+1$ *SD*). Betas shown are simple slopes. From Showers, Zeigler-Hill, and Limke (2006).

plausible that their efforts associated with integration and their sacrifice of current mood may result in a form of resilience or inoculation against future negative events, which raises the question of whether conventional measures capture the potential benefits of an integrative self-concept structure. Moreover, some integrative individuals who are still in the process of coping may eventually recompartmentalize their currently salient negative attributes.

Stress in the first year of college. Ironically, an initial attempt to test the dynamic model of structural change obtained evidence that the structure of self-knowledge can change, but the nature of change was opposite to the predictions based on the dynamic model. College students who were coping well (i.e., were not prone to depression and were showing relatively little mood change in response to stress) tended to be more compartmentalized during their stressful 1st-year exams than they were at a low stress time almost 2 years later (Showers, Abramson, & Hogan, 1998). Thus, it seems that compartmentalization may actually be an

effective coping strategy as long as it successfully limits access to negative attributes. Moreover, the range of situations in which successful compartmentalization is possible (i.e., those situations in which negative self-aspects can be isolated and minimized) may be broader than originally thought. It is also possible that the college environment may facilitate effective compartmentalization because students are encouraged to construct multiple and nonoverlapping selves (e.g., "myself in biology class," "me with my roommate").

SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Recent research extends findings consistent with the basic model, which shows a concurrent association between greater compartmentalization and more positive mood and higher self-esteem for individuals with important positive self-aspects and the converse association between greater integration and less negative mood and higher self-esteem for individuals with important or salient negative self-aspects. The extensions show that for individuals with high self-esteem, greater compartmentalization is associated with self-esteem instability. Our study of close relationships also shows a hidden vulnerability of positive compartmentalization, namely higher rates of breakup despite more positive feelings for the partner at the outset, suggesting that there may be hidden advantages to positive integration (such as more realistic assessments of the self and one's relationships). Unfortunately, individuals with negatively integrative perceptions of their partner may be worn out by the struggle of integration, resulting in high rates of breakup, with negative compartmentalization characterizing relationships that seem unhappy but stable.

Studies of structural self-change are consistent with the view that greater integration may often reflect an ongoing struggle to resolve negative self- or partner beliefs. This struggle may or may not be successful in the long run. Our findings suggest that it is most likely to be successful when the structure is positively integrated or when stress or conflict is low. Studies of clinically relevant samples suggest that integration is associated with the process of psychological treatment and also with severe childhood maltreatment. In these populations, an interesting question is whether integration is transient (i.e., reflects an ongoing struggle) or whether it becomes a stable characteristic once it is adopted.

Future Directions

Basis for Contextualized Selves

To date, research on compartmentalization has not focused on content (other than positive or negative valence) of self-knowledge at either the self-aspect category level or the level of individual attributes. Focusing on the category level, there may be certain kinds of identities (i.e., domains of the self, roles, contexts) that are consistent with self-motives (such as self-enhancement or self-accuracy). For example, if the self-concept consists of a set of broadly defined, largely positive identities corresponding to important social roles or contexts (e.g., "me at school," "me with my friends," "me with family") and few narrowly defined negative identities (e.g., "me during exams," "me when I'm in a bad mood"), the structure may tend to be positively compartmentalized and may also serve the motive of self-enhancement. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether the preferred self-motive (in this case, self-enhancement) drives the choice of specific identities or vice versa.

The experience or desire for authenticity (cf. Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997) might also contribute to the preference for compartmentalized versus integrative self-structures. If the experience of authenticity in a domain allows one to acknowledge negative attributes, then individuals with integrative self-structures may experience greater authenticity consistent with their apparent realism.

How Does Contextualization Change?

Another as-yet-unexplored question has to do with the relative stability of underlying structure (i.e., compartmentalized or integrative) versus specific self-categories. In the 2-year longitudinal study (Showers et al., 1998), underlying structure was fairly stable (r [$N = 79$] = .56), yet it seems unlikely that the specific categories of self-knowledge would remain the same. Although it seems quite plausible that general features of these categories (such as breadth or internality) could influence evaluative organization, it seems less likely that the specific content of categories ("me with roommate" vs. "me with family") would have a significant impact on evaluative organization. In other words, we speculate that the particular domains of a person's life that seem important or the current focus on a

particular activity or event is less likely to have a significant association with a compartmentalized or integrative style than are the features of an individual's cognitive perspective. It seems that the specific content of the self-aspect categories is likely to be influenced by transient everyday events (and therefore change relatively rapidly), in contrast to underlying goals, motives, and coping styles (cf. Wood & Roberts, 2006). However, this is clearly an empirical question.

Individual Differences in Stability and Flexibility

As indicated above, the dynamic model of compartmentalization (Showers, 2000) suggests that for many individuals, the effort and residual negative feelings that accompany integrative organization mean that integration will serve primarily as a temporary strategy for coping with salient negative events and self-beliefs. However, this does not preclude the possibility that some individuals can be characterized as chronic integrators. Such individuals may have accepted the likely tradeoff between feeling extremely good and experiencing greater self-stability. They may be committed to the struggle of working through negative events and negative attributes and value greater resilience to future negative events. Some of these individuals may also have honed their integrative abilities such that the greater effort that is necessary to form and maintain an integrative self-concept structure—as compared to a compartmentalized structure—is substantially reduced. They may also have emotional skills that allow them to function effectively despite the greater accessibility of their negative attributes. To take a slightly different perspective, chronic integrators may also sometimes be individuals whose external circumstances or internal characteristics do not allow successful compartmentalization (e.g., if their negative characteristics or experiences are too extreme to be effectively isolated).

Directions of Causality and Developmental Issues

The important question of whether evaluative organization has a causal impact on self-esteem and mood cries out for further exploration. Most of the research described here is cross-sectional. To date, research in our labs has shown only that self-structure assessed at one point in time is associated with feelings and behavior assessed 1 week later (Showers & Kling, 1996; Zeigler-Hill & Showers, 2007)

or 1 year later (Showers & Zeigler-Hill, 2004). Unfortunately, no reliable method for manipulating compartmentalization or integration has been developed (cf. Showers, Niedenthal, & Nugier, 2002). Although some studies have manipulated self-complexity (Margolin & Niedenthal, 2000; Setterlund, 1993), additional work along these lines is warranted.

The present discussion raises even more complex issues about causal processes. Are self-structures created to serve an individual's goals or does evaluative organization (and the specific thought processes that ensue) determine the goals? Similarly, do the contextualized identities that a person experiences influence their organization and goals or vice versa or (as suggested above) is the specific content of these identities irrelevant?

To some extent, answers to questions of causality imply distinct developmental processes. Several mechanisms may contribute to the development of compartmentalized versus integrative knowledge structures. First, a motivational perspective suggests that compartmentalization, especially positive compartmentalization, may stem from a motive to self-enhance, whereas integration may reflect either realism or a motive for self-protection. Second, compartmentalized versus integrative styles of thinking may be learned from significant others in the environment. Learning mechanisms may also contribute if, for instance, integrative thinking is learned in the process of coping with a traumatic experience. Third, underlying cognitive or affective skills may contribute to compartmentalization or integration. For example, integration may require greater cognitive capacity, such as working memory capacity (e.g., Engle, Cantor, & Carullo, 1992), whereas compartmentalization may be associated with affective extremity (Larsen & Diener, 1987) or impaired abilities to regulate emotion (Mayer, 2000).

Contributions to Personality Research

For almost 40 years, personality psychologists have been straining to develop approaches that account for both stability and flexibility in behavior. The present model of individual differences in self-structure fits the "if . . . then" formulation used by Mischel and Shoda (1995). This model makes no assumptions of cross-situational consistency in behavior by explicitly allowing individuals to make distinct self-representations in each context (cf. Fraley, this issue;

Stryker, this issue). Moreover, like the groundbreaking approaches that attempted to characterize personality in terms of goals and motives, rather than specific behaviors, this approach allows multiple selves or domains to be idiographic (i.e., defined by the individual) while at the same time yielding nomothetic parameters that permit quantitative comparisons across individuals (cf. Emmons, 1986). Although the present model does aggregate the extent of compartmentalization across multiple selves or multiple domains, in theory one could index the degree of compartmentalization or integration within a domain.

Another strength of the compartmentalization model is that it identifies a clear and testable process model for the impact of self-knowledge on behavior. Moreover, it allows for the possibility that knowledge structures may change.

The self-descriptive card-sorting task that is currently the most commonly used measure of compartmentalization also makes several important methodological contributions. It readily captures contextualized identities, allowing people to represent the full complexity of their multiple selves without undue generalizations about their attributes or behaviors. One pragmatic implication of this may be that social desirability concerns are minimized. Within the context of a set of multiple identities, people can report negative attributes and self-aspects in a relatively nonthreatening way. Presumably, this more complete and more balanced view of the self reflects how an individual represents the self in everyday life (cf. Diehl & Hay, this issue; Heller, Watson, Komar, Min, & Perunovic, this issue). Moreover, although the overall self-description and the multiple identities reported in this task are explicitly defined, the measure of compartmentalization per se is implicit. That is, participants cannot guess what feature of the card sort is of interest to the researchers.

The term *integration* has previously been applied to the self within a fairly wide-ranging set of theoretical perspectives. First, psychodynamic theorists outlined the need for self-integration. More recently, literature on cognitive complexity has emphasized the importance of the cognitive sequence of differentiation followed by integration. For instance, in Tetlock's work, integration reflects the resolution of disparate, seemingly inconsistent attitudes or beliefs in any domain (i.e., not restricted to the self; Tetlock, 1983). Previous research by Harter (e.g., Harter, Bresnick, Bouchey, & Whitesell, 1997; Harter & Monsour, 1992) and Loevinger (Hy & Loevinger,

1996; Loevinger, 1976) focuses specifically on the integrative resolution of positive and negative beliefs about the self, with Harter emphasizing a natural developmental process from childhood through adolescence, whereas Loevinger focuses on the ability to form a fully integrated self in adulthood. In each of these perspectives, integration implies the successful resolution of potentially conflicting beliefs. In the present work, this is not necessarily the case. Although integrative category structures often do imply resolution, they may also sometimes simply represent an ongoing struggle to resolve negative beliefs which may or may not be successful.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

Recent research on evaluative organization suggests that compartmentalization is associated with enhanced levels of mood and self-esteem that may be unstable over time. In contrast, integrative self-structures appear to be more stable and may be associated with greater realism, more moderate self-views, and possibly increased resilience. Although compartmentalization may offer a reasonable coping mechanism for many everyday stressors, severe traumatic events (e.g., childhood maltreatment) have been found to be associated with integrative self-organization.

The relationship between compartmentalized and integrative self-structures and the contextualized identities they comprise is an open area for research. Do the specific identities and individual constructs and experiences determine the type of organization? Or does a stable organizational style emerge, regardless of the specific contexts that come to the fore? What dimensions of identities (broad vs. narrow, internal vs. external, etc.) are associated with specific self-structures? Finally, does a compartmentalized or integrative self-structure have a causal impact on overall psychological adjustment, or is it simply concomitant with influential and determining goals, experiences, or beliefs?

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