VI Self-discrepancies and Developmental Shifts in Vulnerability: Life Transitions in the Regulatory Significance of Others

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Perhaps the most fundamental assumption shared by theories of socioemotional development is that young children learn to regulate themselves in relation to the desires and demands of the significant others in their lives. The literature describes life transitions and developmental changes that produce shifts in both which significant others' standpoint, and whether significant others' standpoint, underlies self-regulation. The literature, for example, describes shifts in the relative importance of parents versus peers as significant others in self-regulation, and in the relative importance of significant "others" versus one's "own" personal viewpoint. What is the impact of such shifts on people's emotional, self-evaluative, and behavioral problems? As development progresses through the life span, might such shifts produce changes in vulnerability? Indeed, might even the same self-regulatory problem have different emotional and self-evaluative consequences because of such shifts? The purpose of this chapter is to consider these questions from the perspective of self-discrepancy theory, with special attention to the role of self-discrepancies as mediators of the consequences of such shifts (see Higgins, 1987, 1991). In doing so, the chapter will examine various interrelations among self-regulation, life transitions, and vulnerabilities. It will also reconsider some classic concepts in self-regulatory development, such as "identification," "internalization," and "own" versus "other" standpoints.

The chapter begins with a description of how developmental changes in children's capacity to represent the responses of others influences the kind of self-regulatory system they use and the role of significant others in self-regulation and self-evaluation (see also Higgins, 1989c, in press b; Moretti & Higgins, 1990). Next, the basic assumptions and postulates of self-discrepancy theory are briefly presented (see also Higgins, 1987, 1989a, in press a). Self-discrepancy theory is then used to make predictions about the emotional, self-evaluative, and behavioral problems that result from shifts in the regulatory significance of others, and recent studies testing these predictions are described.
Mental Capacity to Represent Others in Self-Regulation

The influence on socioemotional development of changes in children's mental representational capacity has received increasing attention in recent years (e.g., Case, Hayward, Lewis, & Hurst, 1987; Fischer & Watson, 1981; Harter, 1983, 1986; Pascual-Leone, 1983). A key aspect of this development involves changes in the self-system that impact on children's self-regulatory processes, including their representation of others' responses to them. The general changes in mental representational capacity described in this section draw on various Piagetian and Neo-Piagetian models of cognitive development (e.g., Damon & Hart, 1986; Fischer, 1980; Selman, 1980), but especially on Case's theory of intellectual change (1985; 1988). The use of distinct levels is an expositonal device. It is not meant to imply that development proceeds only in terms of strong qualitative shifts without any quantitative changes being involved (see Fisher, 1980; Higgins & Eccles-Parsons, 1983; Higgins & Wells, 1986). The developmental levels refer to levels in children's capacity, what children can do, which need not reflect how individual children actually regulate and evaluate themselves (see Higgins & Wells, 1987, for a discussion of this distinction).

Level 1: Early Sensorimotor Development

By the end of the first year of life children are capable of representing the relation between two events, such as the relation between two successive responses produced by their mother or the relation between a response produced by them and their mother's response to them (see Case, 1985; 1988). This ability permits children to produce and interpret communicative signals and to experience emotions that involve anticipating the occurrence of some event. Thus, even at this early stage children are capable of the preliminary form of role-taking described by Mead (1934) — the ability to anticipate the responses of a significant other with whom one is interacting.

During this period children are capable of experiencing all four major types of actual and anticipated psychological situations with their associated emotions:

1. The presence of positive outcomes, as when children feel their mother's nipple between their lips or anticipate their mother's face when playing peek-a-boo, which is associated with the child feeling satisfaction and joy (e.g., Case, 1988; Sroufe, 1984).

2. The absence of positive outcomes, as when a child's mother changes from affectionate face-to-face play to withholding communication from the child or when a child's sought after (but not visible) toy cannot be found, which is associated with the child feeling sadness, disappointment, and frustration/anger (e.g., Campos & Barrett, 1984; Kagan, 1984; Sroufe, 1984; Trevathan, 1984).

3. The presence of negative outcomes, as when a child suffers from noxious stimulation or is confronted by an unexpected and potentially harmful
person or situation, which is associated with the child feeling distress and fear (Emde, 1984; Kagan, 1984).

(4) The absence of negative outcomes, as when a mother removes noxious stimulation from a child or removes a child from a situation that the child finds threatening, which is associated with the child feeling calm, secure, reassured (e.g., Case, 1988; Sroufe, 1984).

Anticipating any negative psychological situation, whether it be the absence of positive outcomes or the presence of negative outcomes, is likely to produce diffuse anxiety. Thus, in addition to the specific emotions described above, children at this stage are capable of experiencing diffuse anxiety. Indeed, it would be reasonable to characterize young children as being generally vulnerable to diffuse anxiety as has been suggested in the clinical literature (e.g., Freud, 1952; Horney, 1939; Sullivan, 1953). However, given that children are also capable of anticipating positive psychological situations, whether it be the presence of positive outcomes or the absence of negative outcomes, it would also be reasonable to characterize young children as being predisposed to cheerfulness as Rousseau suggested.

Level 2: Late Sensorimotor and Early Interrelational Development

By 18-24 months-of-age a dramatic shift in children's ability to represent events has occurred (e.g., Bruner, 1964; Case, 1985; Fischer, 1980; Piaget, 1951; Werner & Kaplan, 1963). This shift has traditionally been associated with the emergence of symbolic representation (see Huttenlocher & Higgins, 1978). As described by Case (see 1985; 1988), children become generally capable of recognizing the higher order relation that exists between two other relations, of using a scheme representing the relation between two objects as a means to obtaining a specified goal. For example, children become capable of representing the relation between “finishing all the food on my plate” and “mommy” as the means for getting dessert, which is the specified goal.

Children can now consider the bidirectional relationship between themselves and another person, such as their mother, as an interrelation between two distinct mental objects, self-as-object and other-as-object (see Bertenthal & Fischer, 1978; Harter, 1983; Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979). At this stage, children can represent the relation between two relations: (Relation 1) the relation between a particular kind of self-feature (action, response, physical appearance, mood, etc.) and a particular kind of response by another person, such as the relation between the child making a fuss or a mess at mealtime and mother frowning, yelling, or leaving; and (Relation 2) the relation between a particular kind of response by another person and a particular kind of psychological situation they will experience, such as the relation between mother's frowning, yelling, or leaving and the child experiencing a negative psychological situation. Figure 1 illustrates the shift between children's ability at Level 1 to represent one relation (R_1), where two elements are related, and their ability at Level 2 to represent a higher-order relation between two distinct relations (R_1 and R_2), where three elements are interrelated.
At Level 2, then, children are capable of a higher form of role-taking — the ability to anticipate the responses of others to their actions and the personal consequences of these social responses. The significant others in the child’s life respond to the child's features, which in turn places the child into particular psychological situations. Thus, the significant others link the child to the larger society by providing the social meanings of the child’s features. This occurs because children can now represent self-other contingencies, as follows:

My displaying Feature X is associated with Person A displaying Feature Y, and Person A displaying Feature Y is associated with my experiencing Psychological Situation Z.

In representing such self-other contingencies, children learn the interpersonal significance of their self-features. The meaning of a self-feature to a child derives from how others respond to the feature, and the importance of a self-feature derives from the psychological situations produced in the child by others’ responses to the feature. Although such self-other contingency representations are still only representations of relations between sensorimotor relations (i.e., relations between actions, responses, or physical appearance features), they can be used by children in a means-end fashion to control their features, to plan their actions, responses, or appearance, so as to approach positive psychological situations and avoid negative psychological situations.

The ability of Level 2 children to represent the relation between two relations also permits a new form of self-regulation to appear — social identification. As a general cognitive process, identification involves designating an entity or event as being a particular type of entity or event, assigning category membership. As a social-cognitive process, identification involves assigning someone to a social category or position. In the symbolic interaction literature, a “social identity” involves a person appropriating a social category placement for him or herself (see Stryker & Statham, 1985). In the psychodynamic literature, “identification” refers to a process of imitation, not necessarily conscious, whose aim is to be like another person (see Cameron, 1963). More generally, “identification” typically refers to imitation of a significant other serving as model (see Freud, 1936; Mowrer, 1960; Hoffman & Saltzstein, 1967). Thus, social identification could be conceptualized as someone assigning him or herself to the same social category as another person (or group) that he or she values. In this way, the person would “belong together” or “form a unit” with the other person (or group).

It has been suggested that the underlying motivation for social identification is to establish a relationship or association with a valued other person (e.g., Kelman, 1958). Since a necessary condition for category membership is similarity to other members of the category, a person would be motivated to imitate the valued others in order to more like them. In the typical case for young children, it would produce imitation of a parent to whom a child is attached. For example, the representation might be, “If I behave like Daddy, then Daddy and I belong together,” which involves a relation between two relations. Thus, the capability of Level 2 children
Figure 1. Illustration of Developmental changes in Children's Ability to Represent Self-Other Contingencies

to represent the relation between two relations means that social identification as a self-regulatory process becomes possible.

It is also possible for children at this level to compare themselves to a social standard or reference value, and evaluate the discrepancy between their actions and those of the social standard ("Is my action like or unlike what Daddy does?"). In addition, their self-other contingency knowledge makes them sensitive to the interpersonal significance of their actions. As suggested by Anna Freud (1936), children at this stage are capable of "interiorizing" a representative of the outside
world and anticipating suffering that may be inflicted by outside agents. Such self-evaluation and interpersonal sensitivity introduce new “interpersonal” emotions, such as a kind of “pride” or “shame” when others respond positively or negatively to their appearance or actions (see Campos & Barrett, 1984; Case, 1988; Kagan, 1984; Stouff, 1984). By being able to represent the significance of their actions and retrieve this significance prior to responding, children at Level 2 are better able to delay gratification, to control their momentary impulses — to free themselves from the demands and forces of the immediate situation (see Miller & Green, 1985; Mischel & Moore, 1980; Mischel & Patterson, 1978). On the other hand, children can now represent the interpersonal consequences of their failures, which introduces feelings of abandonment and rejection by others. Moreover, children can now think about the negative interpersonal consequences of behaving in certain ways, making them feel sad or afraid, even if they have not behaved that way recently. Thus, both new strengths and new vulnerabilities are introduced.

Level 3: Late Interrelational and Early Dimensional Development

Between 4 and 6 years-of-age another dramatic shift in children’s mental representational capacity occurs (see Case, 1985; Feffer, 1970; Fischer, 1980; Flavell, Botkin, Fry, Wright, & Jarvis, 1968; Piaget, 1965; Selman & Byrne, 1974; Werner, 1957) — the classic shift from “egocentric” to “non-egocentric” thought, from the absence to the presence of perspective-taking ability (see Higgins, 1981; Shantz, 1983). Children at this level possess an executive control structure that permits the coordination of two systems of interrelations that are qualitatively distinct (see Case, 1985, 1988).

During this period children become capable of inferring the thoughts, expectations, motives, and intentions of others (see Shantz, 1983). They are able to understand that the relation between a current situation and an alternative preferred situation can underlie (or mediate) how someone responds to that situation (e.g., “Bill is unhappy because he got less marbles than he wanted”). This new understanding can be applied to the case of self-other contingency knowledge. In order to regulate their features so as to maximize positive and minimize negative psychological situations, children are motivated to learn what kinds of self features are expected, valued, and preferred by the significant others in their life (e.g., their parents). Children at Level 3 are capable of understanding that other people have different attitudes about different types of responses. They prefer some types of responses over other types. They can understand that by performing the types of responses preferred by others, these others will respond positively to them. Children are, therefore, motivated to learn which types of responses are preferred by their significant others. Although children can learn about a significant other’s preferences from his or her reactions to them personally, they can also learn by observing how the significant other reacts to the responses of another person. For example, children can observe how their mother reacts to their brother’s or sister’s responses and thereby infer which types of responses their mother prefers (see Bandura & Walters, 1963).
Thus, children at Level 3 have both the ability and the motivation to acquire internalized standards or self-guides (see Gesell & Ilg, 1946; Fischer & Watson, 1981). Children at this level can monitor, plan, and evaluate their features in terms of their relation to the types of features that they infer are valued or preferred by another person; that is, children can now self-regulate in reference to a guide representing another person's standpoint on them. This major shift in self-other contingency knowledge is illustrated in Figure 1.

As depicted in Figure 1, Level 3 children can represent another person's standpoint on their features, which are those features of the child that the other person values or prefers (as inferred by the child). Now the relation between self-feature X and other-response Y is understood to be mediated by the relation between self-feature X and the other's standpoint on self-feature X. Children, for example, are now capable of representing the fact that it is the discrepancy between their behavior and the behavior that their mother prefers that underlies the association between their behavior and their mother's response, and the negative psychological situation associated with this response. At Level 3, children not only represent how others are likely to respond to their features, they also represent others' expectations for them. Indeed, it is these representations of others' expectations and desires for them that can now provide the social meanings of their features. These expectations and desires can take the form of either wishes and hopes (Ideals) or demands and obligations (Oughts). At Level 3, then, children's self-features acquire a new kind of interpersonal significance, one tied to their representations of others' guides for them.

The ability of Level 3 children to coordinate two systems of interrelations that are qualitatively distinct permits a new form of self-regulation to appear — social internalization. "Internalization" has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. In the traditional psychodynamic literature, for example, "internalization" is a general category that includes incorporation, introjection, and identification as subcategories (see Cameron, 1963). When it is distinguished from identification, "internalization" refers to self-regulation in relation to a value system, typically a value system representing other people's attitudes, preferences, and expectations (e.g., Grusec, 1983; Hoffman, 1983; Kelman, 1958). The traditional psychodynamic literature, of course, also describes children's internalization of parental value systems, referred to as "secondary identification," which is considered to be a more advanced or "truer" form of identification than simple imitation of parental responses (see Cameron, 1963). As Anna Freud (1936) suggested, children's self-control no longer depends on the anticipation of suffering that may be inflicted by outside agents. A permanent institution has now been set up that embodies others' wishes and requirements. If one conceptualizes the nature of such social internalization as evaluating and controlling yourself like a significant other would evaluate and control you, then it is reasonable to characterize it as a secondary level of social identification.

Children at Level 3 can also use others' guides for them as a basis for self-evaluation (e.g., "How am I doing in relation to what mother wants or expects of me?"). Children can now assess the amount of discrepancy between their current self state and the end-state that others' desire or expect of them, and then respond to reduce
any discrepancy. Self-evaluation, then, occurs in the service of self-regulation. Assessing discrepancies between potential actions and others' guides for them increases children's control over others' responses to them. This in turn increases children's control over their own emotional experiences. On the other hand, children's new capacity to appraise themselves in terms of others' standpoints on them makes them vulnerable to believing others disapprove of them or are disappointed in them — producing true "shame."

**Level 4: Late Dimensional and Early Vectorial Development**

Between 9 and 11 years-of-age children become capable of co-ordinating values along two distinct dimensions (see Case, 1985; Fischer, 1980; Piaget, 1970). Children, for example, can now compare a person's relative standing on some attribute dimension at one point in time to the person's relative standing on the dimension at a different point in time, which makes dispositional or trait judgments possible (see Rholes & Ruble, 1984). This produces a qualitative change in their conceptions of self and others. There is a shift from conceptualizing self and others in terms of physical features and stable behaviors to conceptualizing self and others in terms of dispositional abilities and traits (see Harter, 1983; Rosenberg, 1979; Ruble & Rholes, 1981; Shantz, 1983).

As illustrated in Figure 1, children's capacity at this level to interrelate distinct dimensions means that they can form cognitive structures relating their representation of their actual self to their representation of significant others' guides for them, with dispositional attributes or traits being represented in each case. Children can not only evaluate a particular action that they have just performed by considering another person's likely response to or evaluation of that action, but they can also evaluate how the general dispositions or traits they believe they possess relate to the general dispositions or traits that significant others desire or expect them to possess (i.e., the "type of person" that others desire or expect them to be).

Children's Level 4 regulation in terms of the dispositions that significant others desire or expect of them can be thought of as a higher level version of the Level 3 form of social internalization described earlier. The ability of children at Level 4 to interrelate distinct dimensions, however, could also introduce a new form of social internalization. Rather than trying to be the type of person that they believe a significant other desires or expects them to be, children could base their self-regulation on inferring what a significant other desires or expects of himself or herself, and then adopt the significant other's self-regulatory guides for themselves. In contrast to the secondary identification form of social internalization discussed earlier, where children evaluate and control themselves like a significant other would evaluate and control them (i.e., links to the same target or dimension of regulation), this form involves children evaluating and controlling themselves like a significant other evaluates and control himself or herself (i.e., links between distinct targets or dimensions of regulation). This latter form of social internalization could be characterized as "tertiary identification." It could account for those
"surprising" cases where parents demand little from their children but the children still demand a lot from themselves. This would happen if the children identify with parents who, although demanding little from their children, demand a lot from themselves.

Children's capacity at Level 4 to interrelate, i.e., interconnect, distinct dimensions means that they can evaluate themselves in more global, overall terms (see Higgins, 1991). If children are more likely to pay attention to and mull over problematic self-attributes, then these attributes would form the basis for interconnectedness (see Higgins, VanHook, & Dorfman, 1988). Thus, children's evaluation of a single discrepant self-attribute could activate their self-discrepancy system as a whole. Children would now be vulnerable to more global negative psychological situations, such as the "overgeneralizations" and "global negative self-attributions" described in the depression literature (e.g., Beck, 1967; Seligman, Abramson, Semmel, & von Baeyer, 1979).

On the benefits side, it is possible that children's new capacity to represent multiple distinct dimensions would increase their ability to differentiate among different regions of their life-space (Lewin, 1935). And this increased differentiation (e.g., between school life and home life) could function as a cognitive buffer by reducing the possibility that negativity associated with one region of a child's life would spread to other regions (see Linville, 1985; 1987). Simmons & Blyth (1987) also suggest that coping is increased if the multiple aspects of a person's self are sufficiently differentiated so that there are still "spheres of comfort" when other regions of the person's life are stressful. In addition, children could now produce or avoid producing novel self-features that are related to traits that match or mismatch guides for them. In fact, children generally do become better at regulating self-features during this period, such as reducing conduct disturbances (see Rutter & Garmezy, 1983).

**Level 5: Late Vectorial Development**

By 13 to 16 years-of-age children become capable of interrelating different, even conflicting, perspectives on the same object. This includes the self as an object (Fischer, 1980; Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Selman & Byrne, 1974). They become capable of constructing abstract mappings in which two abstractions are related to each other (Fischer & Lamborn, 1987), of interrelating different systems of distinct dimensions (see Case, 1985). Given this new ability, adolescents can integrate information about distinct traits into higher order abstractions, such as personality types, which can then be included in their self-concepts and self-guides (see Case, 1985; Fischer, 1980; Harter, 1983).

Adolescents' new ability to interrelate distinct dimensional systems has a further consequence of major significance. Previously, children's self-regulatory and self-evaluative conflicts were simply between alternative actions. But now their conflicts can be between alternative self-guide systems. Adolescents can now represent role conflict, the conflict a person experiences when the expectations of others associated with distinct role involvements are incompatible. For the first time two
distinct self-systems, such as one system involving a peer standpoint and another system involving a parental standpoint, can themselves be interrelated. As illustrated in Figure 1, now the relation between self-feature X and other-response Y can not only be part of a higher level system relating self-trait X and the standpoint of a significant other on self-trait X, but this higher level system can itself be related to another system relating self-trait X and the standpoint of a different significant other on self-trait X.

This new ability of adolescents to represent the relation between two self-systems introduces a new vulnerability — the potential for experiencing a guide1: guide2 discrepancy, such as a conflict between peer versus parental desires and expectations. A guide1: guide2 discrepancy reflects a double approach-avoidance conflict, which has been shown to produce confusion, uncertainty, and indecision regarding self-regulation and self-evaluation (see Van Hook & Higgins, 1988). Adolescents who have such difficulties might be expected to be rebellious. Indeed, adolescence can be a period of uncertainty, identity confusion, and rebelliousness for some children (see Blos, 1962; Erikson, 1963; Fischer & Lamborn, 1987). Harter (1986) reports that during adolescence there is a sharp rise in children's experience of intrapsychic conflict, in the extent to which attributes within the self are perceived as opposites that make them feel confused or mixed up.

There is also a positive side to this scenario. Given that adolescents are capable of experiencing such conflicts between different significant others' guides for them, they are motivated to resolve the conflicts. Although younger adolescents may not have the representational capacity to accomplish this (see Fischer & Lamborn, 1987), older adolescents are capable of finding solutions to such conflicts. By searching for solutions to such conflicts, adolescents are more likely to construct regulatory principles beyond being a "good boy" or a "good girl" (see Kohlberg, 1976; Loevinger, 1976). Adolescents are capable of constructing their "own" standpoint that can function as the integrated, coordinated solution to the complex array of alternative self-guides. The implications of constructing one's "own" standpoint for self-regulation will be discussed more fully later.

In sum, self-discrepancy theory identifies five major levels in the development of the self-system (see also Higgins, 1989a; Moretti & Higgins, 1989). As illustrated in Figure 1, the developmental model assumes that each level of mental representational capacity builds on and subsumes the earlier levels. A key assumption of the model is that self-guides develop from a history of social interactions between a child and significant others involving interpersonal contingencies. The model also distinguishes among different forms and different levels of social identification and internalization processes, and between regulating in terms of "other" versus "own" standpoints on the self.
Self-discrepancies and Emotional Vulnerabilities

According to self-discrepancy theory, it is the psychological situations involved in caretaker-child interactions that underlie both the motivational significance of the self and the construction of distinct systems for regulating emotional experience (see Higgins, 1987, 1989a, 1991). Self-discrepancy theory proposes that the same general variables of caretaker-child interaction underlie children’s acquisition of strong self-guides, regardless of the type of self-guide. In children’s interactions with their significant others, the more frequently and consistently that a child is provided with clear information about others’ responses to his or her behavior, and the more significant the others’ responses are to the child, the greater the likelihood that the child will acquire the strong self-other contingency knowledge that develops into strong self-guides (i.e., self-guides high in accessibility, coherence, and commitment). The stronger the self-guide, the stronger the motivation to direct and evaluate one’s behavior in terms of it.

A major aspect of self-discrepancy theory is its distinction between different types of self-guides. The distinction that has received the most empirical attention concerns domains of self, in particular the distinction between the Ideal self and the Ought self. The Ideal self is a representation of someone’s hopes, wishes, and aspirations for a person. The Ought self is a representation of someone’s beliefs about a person’s duty, obligations, and responsibilities. People can regulate themselves (either chronically or momentarily) in relation to the Ideal self or the Ought self. Self-discrepancy theory postulates that differences between the Ideal and Ought regulatory systems arise from differences in the psychological orientation experienced by children in their interactions with significant others.

It is hypothesized that children whose significant others respond to them such that the children experience the absence of positive outcomes (e.g., a “love withdrawing” mode) and/or the presence of positive outcomes (e.g., a “bolstering” mode) will acquire hopes and wishes for themselves as directive values, will be oriented toward positive outcomes (i.e., maximizing the presence of positive outcomes and minimizing the absence of positive outcomes), and will be concerned with approach as a direction for regulation — the Ideal regulatory system. It is also hypothesized that children whose significant others respond to them such that the children experience the presence of negative outcomes (e.g., a “punitive/critical” mode) and/or the absence of negative outcomes (e.g., a “prudent” mode) will acquire duties and responsibilities as directive values, will be oriented toward negative outcomes (i.e., maximizing the absence of negative outcomes and minimizing the presence of negative outcomes), and will be concerned with avoidance as a direction for regulation — the Ought regulatory system. Because children’s significant others (mother, father, teachers, siblings, friends) might respond to them in different ways, children can acquire both the Ideal and the Ought regulatory systems.

Both the Ideal and Ought regulatory systems are acquired by children in order to regulate the valence of their interpersonal experiences, to maximize the pleasure and minimize the pain of evaluative motivation. But it is hypothesized that the
systems vary in how they orient children toward the pleasure and pain of evaluative motivation, in how they regulate valence. The Ideal regulatory system orients children toward maximizing the presence of positive outcomes and minimizing the absence of positive outcomes, whereas the Ought regulatory system orients children toward maximizing the absence of negative outcomes and minimizing the presence of negative outcomes.

A basic premise of self-discrepancy theory is that it is not the self-concept alone that is the major source of emotional experiences. Instead, self-discrepancy theory asserts:

*It is the distinct psychological situations represented by specific self-belief interrelations that underlie people's emotional and motivational predispositions.*

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the Ideal and the Ought systems regulate valence, and thus predispose people to experience both positive and negative psychological situations. These different psychological situations also underlie different emotional responses (see Mowrer, 1960; Roseman, 1984). For example, the presence of a positive outcome underlies feeling happy and satisfied, the absence of a positive outcome underlies feeling sad and dissatisfied, the absence of a negative outcome underlies feeling calm and relieved, and the presence of a negative outcome underlies feeling afraid and tense. In the Ideal system, then, self-guides matches represent the presence of a positive outcome and should produce emotions such as feeling happy or satisfied, and self-guide mismatches represent the absence of a positive outcome and should produce emotions such as feeling sad or dissatisfied. In the Ought system, self-guide matches represent the absence of a negative outcome and should produce emotions such as feeling calm and relieved, and self-guide mismatches represent the presence of a negative outcome and should produce emotions such as feeling afraid and tense.

When individuals possess a discrepancy between their actual self (or self-concept) and either their Ideal or Ought self-guide, it is hypothesized that they will experience the psychological situation represented by that discrepancy. This in turn will produce the emotional and motivational state associated with that psychological situation. A discrepancy between the actual self and the Ideal self represents the absence of positive outcomes and is predicted to produce dejection-related emotions (e.g., sad, disappointed, dissatisfied). A discrepancy between the actual self and the Ought self represents the presence of negative outcomes and is predicted to produce agitation-related emotions (e.g., nervous, afraid, tense). A discrepancy between two self-guides, such as the Ideal self and the Ought self, represents a double approach-avoidance conflict (see Van Hook & Higgins, 1988) and is predicted to produce confusion-related emotions (e.g., indecisive, unsure of oneself).

There is considerable evidence from a number of studies that supports the hypothesized relations between people possessing specific types of self-belief patterns and their being sensitive or vulnerable to distinct kinds of emotional/motivational problems (for fuller reviews, see Higgins, 1987; Higgins, Tykocinski, & Vookles, 1990). In most of our studies, introductory psychology undergraduates
filled out a "Selves Questionnaire" that was included in a general battery of measures handed out at the beginning of the semester, and the dependent measures were collected six to eight weeks later. The Selves Questionnaire simply asks respondents to list up to 8 or 10 attributes for each of a number of different self-states. It is administered in two sections, the first involving the respondent's own standpoint and the second involving the standpoints of the respondent's significant others (e.g., mother, father, best friend). On the first page of the questionnaire the actual, can, future, Ideal, and Ought self-states are defined (as described earlier). On each subsequent page there is a question about a different self-state, such as "Please list the attributes of the type of person you think you actually are" or "Please list the attributes of the type of person your Mother thinks you should or ought to be." The respondents are also asked to rate for each listed attribute the extent to which the standpoint person (self or other) believed they actually possessed that attribute, could possess that attribute, ought to possess that attribute, and so on.

The basic coding procedure for calculating the magnitude of a self-discrepancy involves a two-step procedure:

1. For each self-discrepancy, the attributes in one self-state (e.g., actual self) were compared to the attributes in the other self-state (e.g., Ideal self/own standpoint) to determine which attributes were synonyms and which were antonyms according to Roger's thesaurus. Attributes across the two self-states that were neither synonyms nor antonyms were considered to be nonmatches. Antonyms were considered to be antonymous mismatches. Synonyms where the attributes had the same basic extent ratings were considered to be matches. Synonyms where the attributes had very different extent ratings (e.g., actual self: "slightly attractive" versus Ideal/own: "extremely attractive") were considered to be synonymous mismatches.

2. The magnitude of self-discrepancy for the two self-states was calculated by summing the total number of mismatches and subtracting the total number of matches, with antonymous mismatches being weighted twice that of matches or synonymous mismatches.

One of our first studies used a latent variable analysis to test the hypothesis that an actual self discrepancy in relation to the Ideal self predicts different emotional problems than an actual self discrepancy in relation to the Ought self (Strauman & Higgins, 1987). One month after filling out the Selves Questionnaire, undergraduates filled out a battery of measures of depression and social anxiety. The study found that as the magnitude of subjects' actual self discrepancy to their Ideal self increased, their suffering from depression symptoms increased, and as the magnitude of their actual self discrepancy to their Ought self increased, their suffering from social anxiety symptoms increased.

Van Hook and Higgins (1988) tested the hypothesis that conflict between two self-guides would be uniquely related to confusion-related symptoms. Undergraduates who possessed a conflict between self-guides were compared to a control group of undergraduates who did not. Subjects' levels of actual self discrepancies to the Ideal and Ought selves were controlled both by selecting subjects so that these discrepancies would be equivalent between the two groups and by using subjects'
scores on these discrepancies as covariates in our analyses. As predicted, the subjects with a conflict between self-guides reported experiencing confusion-related symptoms significantly more often than subjects without this conflict — confusion, muddledness, uncertainty about self and goals, identity confusion, indecision, distractibility, and rebelliousness.

Our experimental tests of self-discrepancy theory were based on some additional knowledge activation assumptions of the theory. As discussed earlier, self-discrepancy theory postulates that people acquire self-other contingency knowledge from interactions with significant others, and this knowledge develops into representations of significant others' desires and values for them, which function as regulatory self-guides. Actual self representations become associated with these self-guides to form knowledge structures. Self-discrepancy theory makes the following knowledge activation assumptions regarding these knowledge structures:

1. Actual self matches and mismatches to a self-guide function like any other knowledge structure.

2. The likelihood that actual self matches and mismatches to a self-guide will be activated and produce emotions depends on the level of accessibility of the attributes in the actual self or self-guide.

3. The likelihood that actual self matches and mismatches to self-guides will be activated and produce emotions depends on their applicability to some considered event (i.e., on the similarity between the match or mismatch attributes and the attributes of the event).

4. When an attribute in the actual self or self-guide is activated, there is an increased likelihood that the actual self matches and mismatches to the self-guide as a whole will be activated.

If self-discrepancies function like knowledge structures (Assumption 1), then increasing the accessibility of a self-discrepancy should increase the likelihood of its activation (Assumption 2). One method of increasing the momentary accessibility of a construct is by recently activating or priming the construct (see Higgins & King, 1981; Wyer & Srull, 1981). Thus, if a person possesses more than one type of self-discrepancy, whichever type of self-discrepancy has been recently primed should be more likely to be activated. And as the likelihood of activating a particular type of self-discrepancy increases, the likelihood of a person experiencing the kind of discomfort associated with that type of self-discrepancy should increase. This hypothesis was tested in a study by Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman (1986, Study 2). As predicted, subjects high in both Ideal and Ought self-discrepancies experienced an increase in the kind of discomfort associated with the type of self-discrepancy that was recently activated by priming — an increase in dejection-related emotions when the Ideal self was primed and an increase in agitation-related emotions when the Ought self was primed. Priming effects were not found for subjects who were low in both types of self-discrepancies.

If self-discrepancies function like knowledge structures, then one would also expect that the likelihood of activating a self-discrepancy would increase as the applicability of the discrepancy to a considered event increased (Assumption 3). This prediction was tested in another study by Higgins et al. (1986, Study 1). As predicted, when subjects were asked to imagine the same hypothetical negative
event (e.g., receiving a poor grade in an important course) the predominantly Ideal discrepant subjects experienced an increase in dejection-related emotions whereas the predominantly Ought discrepant subjects experienced an increase in agitation-related emotions. There was no mood change difference between predominantly Ideal discrepant subjects and predominantly Ought discrepant subjects when they were asked to imagine a hypothetical positive event (e.g., receiving an excellent grade in an important course).

If self-discrepancies function like knowledge structures, and especially if they function like unitized knowledge structures, one would also expect that activation of even a single attribute in a self-discrepancy would be sufficient to activate the whole self-discrepancy and thus induce the discomfort associated with that self-discrepancy (Assumption 4). Since the self-guide attributes of self-discrepancies are positive (i.e., desired and valued), this implies that it should be possible to prime a single positive attribute and yet produce discomfort. This prediction was tested in a number of recent studies (see Strauman & Higgins, 1987; Strauman, 1989).

In one study (Strauman & Higgins, 1987, Study 2) a covert, idiographic priming technique was used to activate self-guide attributes in a task supposedly investigating the “physiological effects of thinking about other people.” Subjects were given phrases of the form, “An X person_____” (where X would be a trait adjective such as “friendly” or “intelligent”), and were asked to complete each sentence as quickly as possible. As predicted, for the predominant actual:Ideal discrepant subjects a dejection-related syndrome was produced (i.e., increased dejected mood, lowered standardized skin conductance amplitude, decreased total verbalization time) when, and only when, the primed Ideal attribute was associated with an actual-self discrepancy; and for the predominant actual:ought discrepant subjects an agitation-related syndrome was produced (i.e., increased agitated mood, raised standardized skin conductance amplitude, increased total verbalization time) when, and only when, the primed Ought attribute was associated with an actual-self discrepancy.

In sum, the results of these and other studies clearly support the basic proposal of self-discrepancy theory that different types of self-discrepancies, when accessible and activated, produce distinct emotional responses. It is time now to consider the implications of self-discrepancy theory for how shifts in the regulatory significance of others might influence emotional and behavioral vulnerabilities.

**Emotional Vulnerability as a Function of “Which” Other Standpoint Underlies Self-Regulation**

People in all cultures pass through a series of age-related phases during development (Denzin, 1977; Keniston, 1971). Each phase involves characteristic social motives and concerns, activities and tasks, social situations and settings, social positions and roles, social contacts and relationships, social restrictions and privi-
leges, and so on (see Higgins & Eccles Parsons, 1983). A critical social-life phase shift for adolescents in Western cultures is the shift from a phase in which social contacts and relationships are predominantly with parents in the role of “child” to a phase in which social contacts and relationships are predominantly with peers in the role of “friend,” “romantic partner,” or “spouse.” For most people, the dyadic relationship phase involving the role of “romantic partner” or “spouse” subsequently shifts to a “family” relationship phase involving the role of “parent.” These two social-life phase shifts can produce major changes in the regulatory significance of others, which in turn can influence self-discrepancy effects.

Self-discrepancies and Shifts in Parental Versus Peer Orientation:
The Confusion Syndrome

Adolescence is no longer considered to be a period that necessarily involves emotional stress or turmoil (e.g., Coleman, 1974; Offer, 1969), but it is clear that some children do have the kinds of emotional and self-evaluative problems described in the classic work of Blos (1962) and Erikson (1963). It is also clear that as children move into adolescence there is a general increase in the importance of friends for self-evaluation and emotional well-being (see Hartup, 1983; Larson, 1983; Youniss, 1980). That is, peers in general and friends in particular become “significant others.” Moreover, adolescents’ relationship with their friends tends to be different from their relationship with their parents, with parents being perceived as authority figures and friends being perceived as partners sharing mutual goals (see Hunter, 1984; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). The literature also suggests (e.g., Hunter, 1984; Larson, 1983) that adolescents tend to experience their parents’ influence in terms of threats and punishment (i.e., a negative outcome focus) whereas they experience their friends’ influence in terms of incentives and rewards (i.e., a positive outcome focus). This is not surprising given parents’ emphasis on chores compared to friends emphasis on “having a good time” (see Chafetz, 1981; Davey & Paolucci, 1980; Parsons, 1942; White & Brinkernoff, 1981). As friends become significant others, therefore, their preferences for how they would ideally like their friend to behave or be can come into conflict with the demands of parents for how their child ought to behave or be. This potential conflict can be a source of emotional and self-evaluative problems for some adolescents.

Higgins, Loeb, and Ruble (in press) have recently examined the self-evaluative problems associated with adolescents’ conflict between their friends’ ideals for them and their parents’ oughts for them (specifically, their mothers’ oughts for them). The Selves Questionnaire was administered to seventh, eighth, and ninth graders in a school district in which seventh and eighth graders were in junior high school and ninth graders were in high school. On the basis of the adolescent literature just described, we expected that conflicts or discrepancies between students’ ideal(friend) and ought(mother) self-guides should generally be greater for the later grades. As predicted, the ideal(friend)/ought(mother) discrepancy was significantly higher in grades 8 and 9 than in grade 7 and this difference persisted for a year as evident on a second measure taken a year later (p < .001).
This greater ideal(friend)/ought(mother) discrepancy for the later grades did not vary as a function of sex. Both males and females in grades 8 and 9 had this discrepancy more than males and females in grade 7, on both the concurrent measure and the measure taken a year later. Thus, male and female adolescents in the later grades were confronted with the same problem to the same extent. But just because there is no sex difference in the problem, there could still be a sex difference in the self-regulatory response to the problem.

Indeed, the adolescent literature suggests that there would be a sex difference in responding to this problem. The socialization literature reports a variety of differences in how boys are girls are treated (see Block, 1983; Fagot, 1978; Huston, 1983; Parke & Slaby, 1983; Radke-Yarrow, Zahn-Waxler, & Chapman, 1983; Rothbart & Maccoby, 1966; Rothbart & Rothbart, 1976). Mothers generally apply more pressure on girls than on boys to be obedient and responsible. They are more restrictive with girls than with boys and attempt more to control the activities of girls than boys. Boys are allowed and even encouraged to be independent from parental control more than are girls (see Block, 1984; Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Simmons et al., 1987). Adolescent girls maintain a compliant-dependent relationship with their parents more than do adolescent boys. Compared to adolescent boys, adolescent girls communicate more with their parents and maintain a parental orientation (see Huston & Alvarez, 1990; Noller & Callan, 1991; Singer, 1971).

On the basis of these socialization differences, one would expect that adolescent boys and girls would differ in how they respond to the ideal(friend)/ought(mother) conflict. Specifically, one would expect that boys would be more likely than girls to respond by resisting the demands of their ought(mother) self-guide and moving their own personal goals — their ideal(own) self-guide — in the direction of their ideal(friend) self-guide. And this should be especially true in high school where, as a social-life phase, friends become especially important in the lives of adolescents (see Higgins & Eccles Parsons, 1983). If so, then adolescent boys' ideal(own) self-guide should be less discrepant from their ideal(friend) self-guide after entering high school, whereas this pattern should be less evident for adolescent girls. As predicted, Higgins et al. (in press) found a significant Sex X Grade interaction, reflecting the fact that the ideal(own)/ideal(friend) discrepancy decreased between grades 8 and 9 more for boys than for girls, and this sex difference persisted for a year as evident on a second measure taken a year later (p < .01).

The concurrent measure also found a significant Sex X Grade X Type of Discrepancy interaction (p < .05). As expected, whereas the ideal(own)/ideal(friend) discrepancy decreased between grades 8 and 9 more for boys (from -1.4 to -1.6) than for girls (from -1.2 to -1.3), the ideal(own)/ought(mother) discrepancy increased between grades 8 and 9 more for boys (from 1.1 to 1.8) than for girls (from -2.2 to -2.4). It is notable that, consistent with the literature, the girls decreased both types of discrepancies from grade 8 to grade 9.

Our finding that adolescent boys are more likely than adolescent girls to respond to the ideal(friend)/ought(mother) conflict by moving their ideal(own) self-guide toward their ideal(friend) self-guide is consistent with various findings in the literature which indicate that adolescent boys are more likely than adolescent girls to be oriented toward, and behave in accordance with, their friends' standards than
their parents' standards. The literature reports that, compared to girls, boys spend relatively more leisure time with their friends than with their family and spend more time away from home (see Coates, 1987; Tietjen, 1982; B. Whiting & Edwards, 1988). The literature also reports that, compared to girls, boys prefer and choose friends more than parents for support and guidance and are influenced more by friends than by parents (see Brittain, 1963; Coates, 1987; Hout & Morgan, 1975; Jones, Shallcrass, & Dennis, 1972; Schneider & Coutts, 1985; Sebala & White, 1980). In contrast to this pattern for boys, girls have been described as being responsive to both parents and friends, as maintaining contact with both (e.g., playing with friends at home), and as generally "keeping a foot in each camp.

Let us now consider the implications for self-regulation and self-evaluation of the difference that Higgins et al. (in press) found in how high school boys and girls respond to an ideal(friend)/ought(mother) conflict. Consistent with the literature, the girls kept a foot in each camp by reducing the discrepancy between their own goals and the guides for them of both their friends and their parents. In contrast, the boys committed themselves more to their friends and moved their own goals more in line with their friends than their parents. This creates a problem for the boys, however, because their parents still have power over them and the boys must continue to deal with parental demands in their everyday life. Thus, the boys' response to the ideal(friend)/ought(mother) conflict maintains or even increases this conflict. In contrast, the girls' response reduces this conflict. This could make the high school boys more vulnerable than the girls to certain self-regulatory and self-evaluative problems. What might those problems be?

A conflict between two self-regulatory guides, such as an ideal(friend) self-guide and an ought(mother) self-guide, produces self-regulatory confusion because moving toward one goal involves moving away from the conflicting goal. This conflict can be characterized as a double approach-avoidance conflict and there is evidence that it is associated with confusion and indecision (see VanHook & Higgins, 1988). For each of the three years of the study, the Higgins et al. (in press) study obtained concurrent measures of confusion (i.e., frequency of feeling "confused," feeling "mixed up," and feeling "can't make up my mind" during the previous week). To examine the correlations between ideal(friend)/ought(mother) conflict and feeling confused, Higgins et al. (in press) pooled the subjects from all three years in order to increase power and reliability. The study found that this correlation was significant only for grade 9 boys, $r(31) = .57, p < .01$. The correlation was not significant for grade 9 girls, grade 8 boys, or grade 8 girls ($r$'s of -.22, .23, and .13, respectively). The sex difference in correlations between grade 9 boys and grade 9 girls was highly reliable ($p < .01$).

There is another kind of problem to which boys entering high school could be uniquely vulnerable. As described earlier, the boys entering high school were the most motivated to move their own goals and aspirations in the direction of their friends' goals and aspirations for them (i.e., move their ideal(own) self-guide toward their ideal(friend) self-guide). But to the extent that they do not succeed in doing so, they will have a conflict between their ideal(own) self-guide and their ideal(friend) self-guide. Both of these self-guides are important to them and are likely to be used in self-evaluation. VanHook and Higgins (1988) predicted that
when two self-guides used in self-evaluation are in conflict, a person is likely to perceive themselves as being only moderately competent because “success” in relation to one standard is balanced by “failure” in relation to the conflicting standard; that is, such people are likely to be uncertain about their competence and to experience self-evaluative confusion. This prediction was supported by the findings of VanHook and Higgins (1988). One might expect, therefore, that for grade 9 boys in particular the greater the conflict between their ideal(own) self-guide and ideal(friend) self-guide, the more likely they will be confused and uncertain about their competence, as reflected in self-assessments of only moderate competence.

The Higgins et al. (in press) study obtained both a concurrent and a one-year post measure of perceived competence using the Harter (1982) Perceived Competence Scale for Children. [To measure perceived competence only, scores on the “mother” subscale of the Harter were excluded.] The concurrent measure was obtained in each of the three years of the study, and the one-year post measure was obtained in the second and third years of the study. The subjects across years were again pooled to increase power and reliability. Greater ideal(own)/ideal(friend) conflict was correlated with lower perceived competence only for the grade 9 boys on both the concurrent and the one-year post measure, $r(40) = -.52, p < .01$, and $r(19) = -.56, p < .05$, respectively. Moreover, on the concurrent measure in each of the three years the correlation for the grade 9 boys was significant ($p < .05$).

The correlations for grade 9 girls, grade 8 boys, and grade 8 girls were not significant on either the concurrent measure or the one-year post measure. Indeed, the difference in correlations for the grade 9 boys versus the grade 9 girls was significant for both the concurrent measure ($p < .01$) and the one-year post measure ($p < .05$). It should also be noted that the correlations for the grade 9 boys remained significant even when the scores on the social competence subscale of the Harter were excluded. Thus, the significant correlations for grade 9 boys were not due simply to some relation between a boy’s low social competence (e.g., social rejection) and his response to peers’ goals.

To reveal more clearly the nature of the significant correlation for grade 9 boys, these students were divided into three groups — Low conflict, Medium Conflict, and High conflict — by performing a tertiary split on their ideal(own)/ideal(friend) scores. The scores of each of these groups on perceived competence was then calculated for both the concurrent measure and the one-year post measure, separately. Scores on the Harter can vary from 1 (low perceived competence) to 4 (high perceived competence), with 2.5 representing moderate perceived competence. On the concurrent measure, the mean scores for the three groups of grade 9 boys were: Low conflict, $M = 3.3$; Medium Conflict, $M = 3.1$; and High conflict, $M = 2.8$. The difference among these groups was significant ($p < .01$). On the one-year post measure, the mean scores for these groups were: Low conflict, $M = 3.3$; Medium Conflict, $M = 2.7$; and High conflict, $M = 2.7$. The difference among these groups was also significant ($p < .05$). For grade 9 girls, in contrast, neither the concurrent measure nor the one-year post measure revealed any difference among groups at these three levels of conflict. It is evident from these results that the grade 9 boys with the highest ideal(own)/ideal(friend) conflict had the lowest perceived com-
petence, as would be expected given the negative correlation for grade 9 boys between this conflict and perceived competence. But these results also show that, as expected, the grade 9 boys with the higher ideal(own)/ideal(friend) conflict had more moderate perceived competence. Thus, consistent with our prediction and the results of VanHook and Higgins (1988), the grade 9 boys do not have low perceived competence or low self-esteem. Rather, they are confused and uncertain about their competence.

These findings of the Higgins et al. (in press) study are important in demonstrating that the same self-regulatory problem, such as an ideal(friend)/ought-(mother) conflict, can have different consequences depending on shifts in the self-regulatory role of different significant others. Before entering high school (grade 8 in this study), there was an increase for both boys and girls in the same self-regulatory problem — a conflict between the ideals held for them by their [best] friends as significant others and the oughts held for them by their parents [mother] as significant others. After entering high school (grade 9 in this study), the boys and girls responded differently to this self-regulatory problem. The boys moved their own aspirations toward their friends' aspirations for them and away from their parents' beliefs about their responsibilities, whereas the girls moved their own aspirations slightly toward both their friends' and their parents' standards for them. There are two distinct consequences of the boys' resolution. First, given the continuing real-world power of the parents, any conflict between their friends' aspirations for them and their parents' demands on them is serious, producing self-regulatory confusion in boys with high ideal(friend)/ought(mother) conflict. Second, given the self-evaluative importance of both their own aspirations and their friends' aspirations for them, any conflict between these two standards of evaluation is serious, producing in boys with high ideal(own)/ideal(friend) conflict confusion and uncertainty about their competence.

Self-discrepancies and the Transition to Becoming a Parent: Emotional Trade-offs

The impact of a new baby on parents' emotional health, especially their marital satisfaction, has received considerable attention (Fleming, Ruble, Flett, & Shaul, 1988; Oates & Heinicke, 1985; Ruble, Fleming, Hackel, & Stangor, 1988). This literature permits a number of conclusions. First, when emotional distress does increase, it is typically the mothers who experience the greater increase in suffering (e.g., Belsky, Lang, & Huston, 1986; Hobbs, 1965, 1968; Hobbs & Cole, 1976; Hobbs & Wimbush, 1977; Jacoby, 1969; Russell, 1974), particularly at the early parenting stage (Glenn & McLanahan, 1982; Spanier & Lewis, 1980). One interpretation of this sex difference has been that women are more invested in the parenting role than men at this point in time. Second, declines in satisfaction among women have been related to their pre-pregnancy employment (Dyer, 1963; Hobbs & Cole, 1976; LeMasters, 1957; Russell, 1974), with the suggestion that women who work prior to parenthood experience more changes in their lifestyles, personalities and social relationships with the birth of a first child. Women expe-
rience significant increases in responsibility and less leisure time (McHale & Huston, 1985). Increasingly differentiated gender roles across the transition are associated largely with the division of housework and childcare, as partners focus on the instrumental rather than the affectional aspects of marriage (Belsky et al., 1986; McHale & Huston, 1985).

A third conclusion that can be drawn from this literature is that the arrival of a child does not always increase emotional distress (Hobbs, 1965, 1968; Hobbs & Cole, 1976; Russell, 1974) and, indeed, it can even decrease emotional distress for some parents (see Hackel & Ruble, 1992). In regard to the sex difference noted above, women tend to experience more negative and more positive changes than men during the transition to parenthood (e.g., Belsky et al., 1986; Feldman & Nash, 1986; Rossi, 1968). Less traditional women are more dissatisfied as their responsibilities for household chores increase relative to what they expected following the birth of the child (Ruble, et al., 1988; Hackel, 1989). On the other hand, women who anticipate parenthood, as by visualizing themselves in the mother role during pregnancy, are more satisfied postpartum (Jessner, et al., 1970), have more confidence in themselves as mothers, and are more likely to perceive mothering characteristics in themselves (Deutsch et al., 1986). This suggests that incorporating the normative standards of the parental role can have emotional benefits for some women.

The literature on emotional responses to becoming a parent raises various questions: (a) Why do some individuals suffer during the transition to parenthood while others do not? (b) Why do women tend to experience more negative and more positive emotional changes than men during the transition? (c) Why do some individuals report dejection-related emotions (e.g., sadness, dissatisfaction) while others report agitation-related emotions (nervousness, tension)? and (d) Why are reports of dejection-related suffering more common than reports of agitation-related suffering? A possible answer to these questions was proposed by Alexander and Higgins (1993) in which situational variables, particularly social roles, were related to the individual difference variable of self-discrepancies.

As discussed earlier, self-discrepancy theory postulates that self-discrepancies function like knowledge structures, and thus can be understood in terms of general factors that influence knowledge activation. Knowledge activation provides a framework for understanding how individual differences and situational factors can combine to influence emotional responses. This includes the mechanisms that influence the likelihood that a knowledge structure will be activated and produce its effects (see Bargh, Lombardi, & Higgins, 1988; Higgins, 1989; Higgins & King, 1981; Wyer & Srull, 1981).

Socially defined roles, such as the role of parent, involve representations of societal norms. In contrast to self-guides, which are individual standards, social roles involve normative standards that are situationally defined for all people who enact a role (Higgins, 1990). Research on the transition to parenthood suggests that the parental role is a normative orientation that is activated after the birth of a child and is highly compelling. The sense of self as parent increases for men but especially for women from pregnancy to over a year after childbirth, while the salience of other roles like “romantic partner” and “spouse” decreases (Hackel, 1989;
Cowan et al., 1985; Fleming et al., 1988). From the perspective of self-discrepancy theory, how might the new duties and obligations associated with becoming a parent impact on individuals oriented toward their own life aspirations [ideal(own) oriented] versus on individuals oriented toward other responsibilities demanded of them by a significant other, particularly their spouse [ought(spouse) oriented]?

A variety of situational factors can influence knowledge activation (see, for example, Higgins & King, 1981; Wyer & Srull, 1986). Most relevant to the present study, focusing on a particular alternative within the same regulatory or evaluative system can inhibit the activation of other alternatives. The social role of parent involves norms or social prescriptions to fulfill certain duties and responsibilities. An individual's enactment of this role, therefore, could inhibit the activation of other norms or social prescriptions to fulfill certain duties and responsibilities.

Stated more simply, the more parental role responsibilities become the focus of concern, the less the responsibilities associated with alternative roles will be a focus of concern. This would be especially true for roles that involve different responsibilities in the same sphere of life, such as family obligations to child versus spouse. In such cases especially, the different role responsibilities are part of the same regulatory system (i.e., family "oughts") and function as alternatives. This leads to the prediction that for individuals who possess an actual/ought(spouse) discrepancy before becoming a parent, the shift from a focus on spouse responsibilities to a focus on parental responsibilities after becoming a parent should decrease their distress from their actual/ought(spouse) discrepancy. And given that activation of actual/ought discrepancies produces agitation-related suffering, there should be a decrease specifically in their agitation-related emotions.

What effect would the new role of parent have on parents possessing actual/ideal discrepancies? The ideal(own) self-guide does not involve duties and responsibilities nor does it involve the standpoint of others. Instead, the ideal(own) self-guide involves personal hopes, wishes, and aspirations, such as personal career aspirations. The ideal(own) self-guide, therefore, is part of a different regulatory system than the normative role of parent involving responsibilities to others. Thus, attention to the new role of parent will not inhibit the activation of ideal(own) self-guides and discrepancies to these self-guides.

But attention to the new role of parent could still have an effect on actual/ideal(own) discrepancies. Specifically, the resources allocated to the new role of parent necessarily takes resources away from attaining one's ideal(own) aspirations. The early postpartum period involves significant change in daily routines, performance of unfamiliar tasks, and increased fatigue, a context that clearly interferes with a person attaining his or her own hopes and wishes. Thus, parents' actual/ideal(own) discrepancies are likely to be frequently activated. This leads to the prediction that for individuals who possess actual/ideal(own) discrepancies prior to the birth of their child, the more attention they give to the parental role, the more they should suffer from these discrepancies. And given that activation of actual:ideal/own discrepancies produces dejection-related suffering, there should be an increase specifically in dejection-related emotions.

The earlier review of the parenting literature indicates that mothers generally embrace and give attention to the new role of parent more than do fathers.
Therefore, the primary predictions — pre-actual/ought discrepancy being related to suffering less postpartum agitation, and pre-actual/ideal discrepancy being related to suffering more postpartum dejection — are more likely to be obtained for mothers than for fathers.

These predictions were tested in study by Alexander and Higgins (1993). Married couples expecting their first child were recruited during the last trimester of the pregnancy. They were given the Selves Questionnaire before the birth of their child, and they were given the Emotions Questionnaire both before and after the birth of their child. The Emotions Questionnaire is a measure of chronic emotional distress that measures how often respondents felt different kinds of emotional/motivational states during the prior week. Higher ratings indicate that the state was experienced more often. The measure includes dejection-related items (e.g., disappointed, dissatisfied, hopeless) and agitation-related items (e.g. fearful, threatened, agitated).

On the average, the measure of self-discrepancies, the Selves Questionnaire, was taken 6.5 months before the post measure of chronic emotional distress. To calculate partial correlation coefficients between target discrepancies and target moods, hierarchical multiple regressions were performed. For example, to examine the unique effect of pre-actual/ideal discrepancy on post-dejection, the post-dejection score was regressed on pre-actual/ideal discrepancy, with pre-dejection, post-agitation (the complementary post distress), and pre-actual/ought discrepancy (the complementary discrepancy) entered before the target as covariates.

The major purpose of the study was to examine the relation between pre-self-discrepancies and post-emotional distress. The first major hypothesis of the study was that individuals who possess actual/ought discrepancies prior to the birth of their child should suffer less from agitation-related distress after becoming a parent. The second major hypothesis of the study was that individuals who possess actual/ideal discrepancies prior to the birth of their child should suffer more from dejection-related distress after becoming a parent. The partial correlations obtained in the study supported both of these major hypotheses. A unique and negative relation was found between pre-actual/ought discrepancies and post-agitation, whereas a unique and positive relation was found between pre-actual/ideal discrepancies and post-dejection. Using median splits to reveal more clearly the nature of these correlations, it was found that the decrease in agitation from pre to post was greater for those high in actual/ought discrepancy than for those low in actual/ought discrepancy, and the increase in dejection scores from pre to post was greater for subjects high in actual/ideal discrepancies than for those low in actual/ideal discrepancies. The difference between these two coefficients was also found to be highly reliable ($p < .01$). Finally, it should also be noted that the relation between pre-actual/ideal discrepancy and post-agitation was not significant, nor was the relation between pre-actual/ought discrepancy and post-dejection.

Another prediction was that this difference between the pre-actual/ought discrepancy relation to post-agitation and the pre-actual/ideal discrepancy relation to post-dejection would be more evident for mothers than for fathers. This prediction was supported. For mothers, but not for fathers, the difference between the pre-actual/ought discrepancy relation to post-agitation and the pre-actual/ideal
discrepancy relation to post-dejection was highly reliable ($p < .01$). It is worth highlighting the strong relation found for mothers between pre-actual/ought discrepancy and decreased post-agitation as measured over six months later, $pr(24) = -.50, p < .01$! There was a reliable difference between mothers and fathers for this relation ($p < .05$).

The results of this study suggest some answers to questions in the literature concerning emotional responses to becoming a parent. One implication of the study is that a woman whose personal aspiration was to have a successful career is more likely to suffer from becoming a parent than a woman whose major concern was to fulfill her duties and obligations to her spouse. Declines in satisfaction among women who become parents should be greater, then, for women who were involved in pre-pregnancy employment, which is consistent with previous findings. This study can account for why women tend to experience more negative and more positive emotional changes than men during the transition to parenthood. Women embrace the new role of parent more than do men, and embracing this new role can either increase dejection or decrease agitation. Another implication of the study is that the increase in suffering is more likely to involve dejection-related emotions than agitation-related emotions. This could explain why post-partum distress is typically reported in the literature as involving dejection or depression rather than agitation or anxiety. Although severe levels of emotional distress were not examined in this study, the results suggest that post-partum depression is most likely for women who were not fulfilling their personal hopes and aspirations prior to becoming a parent.

Interpersonal Problems as a Function of “Whether”
Other Standpoints Underlie Self-regulation

Toward the end of elementary school, and especially the beginning of high school, children in Western cultures begin to regulate themselves in relation to multiple standpoints. As discussed earlier, both parental and peer standpoints influence self-regulation, and these standpoints can be in conflict. Moreover, children during this period are capable of mentally representing the conflict between standpoints on themselves, which motivates them to resolve the conflict. By searching for solutions to such conflicts, adolescents can construct regulatory principles beyond being a “good boy” or a “good girl” (see Kohlberg, 1976; Loevinger, 1976), such as their “own” standpoint that can function as the integrated, coordinated solution to the complex array of alternative self-guides.

Individual Differences in the Importance of Significant “Other”
Versus “Own” Standpoint in Self-regulation

The ability of adolescents to construct guides representing their “own” standpoint and use them for self-regulation does not mean that they necessarily will do
so. Some adolescents may be motivated to do so because their current guides representing different “other” standpoint are in conflict, as just described. Other adolescents may be motivated to do so because the activities valued or desired of them by their significant others are intrinsically negative (i.e., are unpleasant to engage in) or are instrumentally negative (i.e., produce negative effects). More generally, some adolescents may be motivated to construct guides representing their “own” standpoint because the beliefs and values represented in significant others’ guides for them conflict with their current perception of social reality (see Hoffman, 1980). As Mead (1934) suggested, regulation in terms of social conventions for specific situations (Mead’s “generalized other”) may be more adaptive than regulation in terms of the desires and expectancies of particular significant others. Indeed, some parents promote “own” standpoint self-regulation in their children by encouraging them to choose their own goals and make their own decisions, such as the training of independence and self-reliance that is postulated to underlie high achievement motivation (see McClelland, 1961).

But not all adolescents have these motivations to construct “own” standpoint guides. Some adolescents’ significant “other” standpoint guides may not conflict with one another or conflict with the adolescents’ intrinsic motivations, instrumental motivations, or currently perceived social reality. These adolescents may continue to regulate themselves in relation to “other” standpoint guides. There are also adolescents who are motivated to construct their “own” standpoint guides but continue to be regulated primarily in terms of “other” standpoint guides because they are so concerned with the responses of their significant others to them. And some parents may actively oppose “own” standpoint self-regulation in their children, such as the classic “authoritarian” parent.

Interpersonal Problems as a Function of Significant “Other” Versus “Own” Standpoint in Self-regulation

As described earlier and illustrated in Figure 1, self-discrepancy theory assumes that even advanced self-regulatory systems retain some connection to self-other contingency knowledge. Even when an “own” standpoint guide is constructed, some connection to the early interpersonal history is likely to be retained as part of the general self-regulatory system. But there is a major difference between “own” standpoint and “other” standpoint regulatory systems in the extent to which self-other contingency knowledge, i.e., expectations about others’ responses to them, directly underlies self-regulation and self-evaluation (Moretti, 1992).

Individuals who regulate in terms of parental guides, for example, and especially those whose actual self is discrepant from those guides, are motivated to meet the guides because they are concerned with their parents’ response to a discrepancy. That is, they are motivated to meet the guides because they believe that their parents’ would be upset by a discrepancy and respond negatively to them. These individuals’ self-regulatory and self-evaluative processes, then, directly utilize their self-other contingency knowledge involving themselves and their parents.
In contrast, individuals who regulate in terms of their "own" guides are motivated to meet the guides because they themselves would be upset by a discrepancy. Their concern is not with others' responses to a discrepancy but with their own response to failing to attain a goal or meet a standard that they themselves have set. These individuals' self-regulatory and self-evaluative processes, then, do not directly utilize their self-other contingency knowledge involving themselves and their parents. Their earlier acquisition of self-other contingency knowledge is still important, however, because their sensitivity to current discrepancies — the intensity of their own response to failing to attain a goal or meet a standard — is affected by the emotional and motivational significance of their earlier discrepancies. To the extent that their parents treated a discrepancy very seriously and responded to it intensely when these individuals were growing up, they are now likely themselves to treat a discrepancy very seriously and respond to it intensely.

What are the implications of significant "other" versus "own" standpoint self-regulation for interactions and relationships with others? Consider, for example, children interacting with their peers. Children who are concerned with parental standpoints, i.e., are concerned with how their parents would respond to their actions, will interact with their peers in the manner desired or valued by their parents. It is their expectations about their parents' reactions to their behavior that underlie their orientations and responses to others. Their parents, for example, may desire or expect them to be "friendly" when interacting with their peers. And being "friendly" has a particular meaning to the parents, such as being polite or well-behaved. When interacting with their peers, children who are concerned with parental standpoints will try to behave in a manner that matches their parents' concept of "friendly" rather than focusing on the desires or expectations of their immediate interaction partner. When interacting with their peers, these children will be regulated by the imagined responses of their parents to their actions rather than the responses of their immediate interaction partner to their actions. This may please their parents but it is unlikely to please their peers.

In contrast, children who are concerned with their "own" standpoint are not trying to match the viewpoint of any particular significant other. In order to meet their own goal of being "friendly," for example, they are likely to tune their behavior to be the kind of "friendly" required by the immediate social situation, to match the meaning of "friendly" defined in that specific social situation (e.g., defined by their partner's current concerns). Thus, their interactions with their peers are more likely to be successful. The literature suggests that the construction of an "own" standpoint can benefit children by incorporating certain social realities that were previously ignored (see Hoffman, 1983). Increased sensitivity to the specific concerns of one's peer partner in the immediate situation could be an example of incorporating new social realities.

As suggested earlier, the developmental shift described by Mead (1934) between children regulating in terms of particular significant others versus "the generalized other" may also involve incorporating new social realities. To identify which meaning of "friendly" to match in a specific situation, for example, a person may be guided by the social definition of that situation. The social definition of the situation may be expressed in the actions of the other persons with whom he or
she is interacting. That is, the immediate participants representing the “generalized other” could define “friendly” for that situation. Alternatively, the situation may be sufficiently conventional that “friendly” is defined upon entry into that situation. In either case, the “generalized other” defines the kind of “friendliness” desired or valued in the situation rather than the person’s significant others. In this way, regulation in terms of the “generalized other” contributes strategically to “own” standpoint regulation (without substituting for it!), and the person is likely to be more sensitive to the social reality of the immediate situation as perceived by his or her interaction partners.

According to this analysis, then, adolescents who regulate themselves in terms of a “parental” standpoint are likely to interact with their peers less effectively than adolescents who regulate themselves in terms of their “own” standpoint. Self-discrepancy theory postulates that a person’s concern with meeting a self-guide standpoint on them will increase as the discrepancy between his or her actual self and that guide increases. This leads to the prediction that children with a discrepancy between their actual self and their parents’ guides for them are more likely to be unpopular with their peers, and that children with a discrepancy between their actual self and their own guides for themselves are more likely to be popular with their peers. This prediction was tested in a recent study by Klein (1992).

Seventh and eighth grade, junior high school children filled out the Selves Questionnaire, and their actual/ideal(own), actual/ought(own), actual/ideal(parent), and actual/ought(parent) discrepancies were calculated. For the latter two discrepancies, whichever discrepancy was greater between their actual self and either their mother or their father self-guide was taken as the actual/parent discrepancy for the ideal(parent) self-guide and for the ought(parent) self-guide. A variation of an established sociometric measure was used to measure children’s popularity with their same-sex classmates. The children were also given hypothetical scenarios approximating stressful events that might occur among junior high school students, such as moving to a new school and getting the other kids to let you play with them on your first day at the school, and were asked to respond to these events as they would in real life. The subjects were asked to volunteer strategies for dealing with each stressful event. These spontaneous strategies were classified as “hostile,” “demanding attention,” “appealing to authority,” “avoidant,” “positive/active” (e.g., introducing yourself and asking if you can play), and “positive/passive” (e.g., quietly join the group so that eventually you’ll be chosen).

As predicted, both actual/ideal(parent) and actual/ought(parent) discrepancies were uniquely and significantly associated with low popularity (where the contribution of “own” standpoint discrepancies to these relations was statistically controlled), whereas both actual/ideal(own) and actual/ought(own) discrepancies were uniquely and significantly associated with high popularity. The difference in each domain (ideal; ought) between “parental” standpoint discrepancies and “own” standpoint discrepancies in their relation to popularity was highly reliable. In addition, the study also found that the actual/parent discrepancies, and especially the actual/ought(parent) discrepancy, were uniquely associated with children volunteering “hostile” and “avoidant” strategies. In contrast, actual/ideal(own) dis-
crepancies were uniquely associated with children volunteering “positive” strategies.

These results are generally consistent with evidence in the literature that unpopular children are more inclined to avoid social relationships than popular children (e.g., Asher & Renshaw, 1981; Renshaw & Asher, 1983), and that insecurity and anxiety in early parent-child interactions, which would be associated with actual/parent discrepancies, predicts less desire to explore new relationships later in life (e.g., Easterbrooks & Lamb, 1979; Leiberman, 1977; Waters, Wippman, & Sroufe, 1979). The results of the Klein (1992) study, however, go further in suggesting that the mediating variable is unpopular children’s over-concern with their parents’ responses to their behavior, and their use of parental standards to guide their behaviors even when interacting with other children. Indeed, the literature suggests that parents of unpopular children are less satisfied with their behavior, less accepting of their children, colder towards them, and are more controlling and strict with them (e.g., Armentrout, 1973; Elkins, 1958; Putallaz, 1987; Winder & Rau, 1962), all of which may increase children’s concern with meeting their parents’ standards for them. In addition, there is evidence that parents of popular children tend to promote independence (e.g., Baumrind, 1973), which may increase children’s self-regulation in terms of their “own” rather than their parents’ standards for them.

One explanation for the relation between children’s concern with meeting their parents’ standards for them and lower popularity is that these children are paying attention to how their behavior relates to their parents’ standards rather than paying attention to the responses of their peers when they interact with them. There is, in fact, considerable evidence that unpopular children are socially inattentive when interacting with their peers and and engage in more “off-task,” “tuned out,” and “daydreaming” behaviors than popular children (e.g., Asarnow, 1983; Gottman, 1977; Gottman et al., 1975; Northway, 1944; Putallaz, 1983; Vosk et al., 1982). Another explanation is that parental rejection both increases children’s concern with meeting their parents’ standards for them and produces anger and resentment that contributes to hostile interactions with others (see Lefkowitz, Eron, Walder, & Huesmann, 1977). Both of these explanations are compatible with self-discrepancy theory and the results of Klein’s (1992) study.

The results of Klein’s (1992) study are consistent with the general prediction that self-discrepancies involving “parental other” standpoint will have a different impact on social interaction and interpersonal relations than self-discrepancies involving “own” standpoint. This prediction was based on the hypothesis that people with “parental” standpoint discrepancies are concerned with the reactions of their parents to their behavior (e.g., acceptance/rejection; approval/disapproval) whereas people with “own” standpoint discrepancies are not.

The Klein (1992) study, however, did not measure the subjects’ beliefs about the extent to which they would feel accepted or approved by their parents when they failed to meet their parents’ standards for them. If such a measure of “self-other contingency beliefs” were obtained, our analysis would predict that these beliefs would underlie the relation of “parental” standpoint discrepancies to interpersonal relations, but they would not underlie the relation of “own” standpoint discrep-
cies to interpersonal relations. That is, "parental" standpoint discrepancies should not predict interpersonal relations independent of self-other contingency beliefs about parental reactions to failure to meet their standards, whereas "own" standpoint discrepancies should predict interpersonal relations independent of these beliefs. In addition, self-other contingency beliefs themselves should predict interpersonal relations. Specifically, the analysis presented earlier leads to the prediction that the more people believe their parents would not accept or approve of them when they failed to meet the parental standards, the more they would self-regulate in terms of these parental standards, and, thus, the less effective their interpersonal interactions would be. These predictions were tested in a study by Moretti (1992).

Undergraduates enrolled at Simon Fraser University completed a revised Selves Questionnaire in which they listed attributes for their actual self and for the Ideal and Ought selves combined (attributes someone wishes them to possess or feels they should possess) from their own standpoint and from their parents' standpoint. The subjects were also asked to rate the extent to which they would feel accepted and supported by their parents when they failed to meet important standards that their parents held for them (a measure of "self-parent" contingency beliefs), and the extent to which they would accept and support themselves when they failed to meet their own important standards (an exploratory measure of "self-self" contingency beliefs). The subjects also filled out an inventory of interpersonal problems that included overcontrolling behavior (Domineering), suspiciousness and distrust (Vindictive), having difficulty expressing anger and feeling that they are taken advantage of (Exploitable), feeling that they try too hard to help and support others, perhaps at their own expense (Overly Nurturant), difficulties associated with being too intrusive and attention seeking (Intrusive), difficulty experiencing and expressing affection toward others (Cold), and being socially anxious and withdrawing (Socially Avoidant). In addition to these subscales, subjects were asked to indicate whether they were currently involved in an intimate relationship.

In order to assess the unique contribution of the independent variables, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed entering associated variables into the equation prior to entering the variable of interest. As predicted, "parental" standpoint discrepancies were not uniquely associated with interpersonal problems, but "self-parent" contingency beliefs were uniquely associated with interpersonal problems. The more the subjects believed that their parents would not accept and support them when they failed to meet important standards that their parents held for them, the more they suffered the interpersonal problems of being Domineering, and Vindictive. It is not the that these subjects avoid interpersonal relationships. Indeed, they appear to pursue them with vigor. But they experience considerable conflict in the process.

It should also be noted that these interpersonal problems were uniquely associated with these "self-parent" contingency beliefs — they were not uniquely predicted by "own" standpoint discrepancies or "self-self" contingency beliefs. These findings support the interpretation of the results of Klein's (1992) study that it is a concern with parents' reactions that makes adolescents' with "parental" standpoint discrepancies interact poorly with their peers.
The study also found that “own” standpoint discrepancies were uniquely associated with the interpersonal problems of being Socially Avoidant, as well as infrequent involvement in intimate relationships. This is an interesting finding in light of Klein’s (1992) finding that “own” standpoint discrepancies were uniquely associated with being popular among one’s peers. The interpretation of this finding of Klein’s (1992) study was that adolescents concerned with their “own” standpoint are guided by the social definition of the peer interaction situation, including the responses of the other persons with whom he or she is interacting. Their goal in the interaction is to meet their “own” standards for being “friendly,” “interesting,” and so on. Thus, the interaction is dominated by self-evaluative needs. This could undermine enjoyment of the inherent pleasures of interacting with other people (see Deci & Ryan, 1985), which, in turn, could reduce feelings of affection and decrease motivation to sustain or develop relationships, especially intimate relationships. Indeed, it has been suggested that “loving” someone requires perceiving one’s interactions with him or her to be intrinsically motivated (e.g., Seligman, Fazio, & Zanna, 1980). This is not a requirement for “liking” someone, however (see Seligman et al., 1980). Intimacy is not necessary for a person to be liked by others. It is sufficient for the person to interact appropriately with them, which is likely if he or she is guided by their responses and by the social definition of the interaction situation. These individuals may be perceived as easy to be around, i.e., popular and agreeable, but relationships with them rarely go beyond a superficial level. One is reminded of the successful salesperson or politician who is popular with others but has few intimate relationships. It should be noted that “self-parent” contingency beliefs in this study were not uniquely associated with frequency of involvement in intimate relationships. Thus, although adolescents with “parental” standpoint discrepancies may be generally unpopular with their peers (Klein, 1992), their concern with parental responses to them is not necessarily associated with a lack of intimate relationships. This may be because they are also concerned with the responses to them of the few peers who are also significant others, and this concern permits or even promotes feelings of intimacy with those peers.

General Summary and Conclusions

This chapter focused on a critical aspect of socioemotional development — how people regulate themselves in relation to the desires and demands of the significant others in their lives. Both developmental changes in mental representational capacity and social life transitions were considered as sources of qualitative shifts in the role of significant others in self-regulation. Two basic types of shifts in self-regulation were considered — shifts in the relative importance of different significant others, and shifts in the relative importance of significant “others” versus one’s “own” personal viewpoint. The major purpose of the chapter was to examine
the emotional, behavioral, and self-evaluative consequences of such shifts as mediated by their impact on individuals’ self-discrepancies.

Shifts in the relative importance of different significant others were described for two life transitions — a shift in the relative importance of one’s parents versus one’s peers during early and middle adolescence and a shift in the relative importance of one’s spouse versus one’s child in early and middle adulthood. Each of these shifts involves a change in which social-life role is being emphasized. The former shift involves a change from being a “child” to being a “friend,” and the latter shift involves a change from being a “romantic partner” to being a “parent.”

In one study on shifts in the relative importance of different significant others, Higgins et al. (in press) found that the likelihood of adolescents experiencing a conflict between their parents’ oughts for them (represented by their mother) and their friends’ ideals for them increased for both the boys and the girls before high school, but the boys and the girls differed in how they responded to this conflict after entering high school. The boys were more likely than the girls to shift their self-regulatory concern from their parents to significant others to their friends as significant others, as reflected in their reducing the discrepancy between their own goals and their friends’ goals for them. This sex difference resulted in the same self-discrepancy, an ideal(own)/ideal(friend) discrepancy, having different self-evaluative consequences for the boys than for the girls. For the high school boys only, an ideal(own)/ideal(friend) discrepancy that remained was strongly associated (both concurrently and a year later) with self-evaluative problems of confusion. Although this study was concerned with normal developmental shifts, the results suggest that adolescent boys are at risk for severe problems of identity confusion and its associated rebelliousness when there is a conflict between their personal hopes and aspirations and their close peers’ goals for them.

In another study on shifts in the relative importance of significant others, Alexander and Higgins (1988) found that the emotional consequences of becoming a parent varied depending on both the type of self-discrepancy the parents possessed before the birth of their child and the attention the parents gave to their new role. This study found that the parents, and especially the mothers who typically pay more attention to their child than do fathers, experienced an increase in dejection-related emotions after the birth of their child if they possessed an actual/ideal(own) discrepancy before the birth, but experienced a decrease in agitation-related emotions after the birth of their child if they possessed an actual/ought(spouse) discrepancy before the birth. The results of this study demonstrate that self-discrepancies can combine with social roles to predict (over six months later) the emotional response of individuals to the transition from “romantic partner” (when one’s spouse is the significant other) to “parent” (when one’s child is the significant other). The new parents in this study did not suffer from post-partum depression. Still, the direction of the results suggest that it is women whose personal hopes and aspirations were unfulfilled before the birth of their child who are most at risk for part-partum depression after becoming a parent.

Shifts in the relative importance of significant “others” versus one’s “own” personal viewpoint were also considered. Adolescents are capable of constructing their “own” standpoint that is distinct from the standpoints of significant others.
And some adolescents are motivated to regulate themselves in relation to their "own" standpoint because their parents' goals and values for them conflict with one another or conflict with the adolescents' current perception of social reality. Other adolescents, however, continue to regulate themselves in relation to significant others. Children who are concerned with parental standpoints, i.e., who are concerned with how their parents would respond to their actions, will interact with their peers with their parents' demands and desires in mind rather than with their peer partners' demands and desires in mind. In contrast, children who are concerned with their "own" standpoint are not trying to match their parents' viewpoint. Rather, in order to meet their own interaction goals, they are likely to tune their behavior to the requirements of the immediate social situation, to match the social definition of the immediate situation (e.g., as defined by their partner's current concerns).

Self-discrepancy theory postulates that a person's concern with meeting a self-guide standpoint on them will increase as the discrepancy between his or her actual self and that guide increases. This leads to the prediction that children with a discrepancy between their actual self and their parents' guides for them are more likely to be unpopular with their peers, and that children with a discrepancy between their actual self and their own guides for themselves are more likely to be popular with their peers. Consistent with this prediction, Klein (1992) found that junior high school students with actual/ideal(parent) and actual/ought(parent) discrepancies tended to be less popular with their peers, whereas students with actual/ideal(own) and actual/ought(own) discrepancies tended to be more popular with their peers. This study also found that the actual/parent discrepancies, and especially the actual/ought(parent) discrepancy, were uniquely associated with children volunteering "hostile" and "avoidant" strategies for dealing with stressful peer interaction scenarios. In contrast, actual/ideal(own) discrepancies were uniquely associated with children volunteering "positive" strategies.

Self-discrepancy theory predicts that the more people believe their parents would not accept or support them when they failed to meet the parental standards, the more they would self-regulate in relation to the parents as significant others. Thus, their interpersonal interactions should be especially problematic. Consistent with this prediction, Moretti (1992) found that the more undergraduates believed that their parents would not accept and support them when they failed to meet important standards that their parents held for them, the more they suffered the interpersonal problems of being domineering, vindictive, and intrusive. Together, the results of the Klein (1992) and Moretti (1992) studies suggest that one source of conduct disorders involving peer conflict might be overcontrol in relation to parental standards when interacting with peers.

The results of these different studies indicate that both shifts in the relative importance of different significant others and shifts in the relative importance of significant others' versus one's own standpoint has important emotional, behavioral, and self-evaluative consequences. These consequences depend on the type of self-discrepancies possessed by individuals at different social-life phases, as well as the interpersonal significance of the discrepancies during different life transitions. What is clear from our findings is that a fuller understanding of develop-
mental vulnerabilities requires a social-cognitive model of self-regulatory development, social-life phases and transitions, and their interrelation.

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