"Just as the self is foundational to our personal understanding of how we connect to the world, so The Self at Work will become foundational to our scholarly understanding of what it means to 'be' in the workplace."

Blake Ashworth, Human Rightse Sciences Honors Chair and Professor of Management, Arizona State University, USA

"The editors have assembled a dynamite volume that will be the definitive source for understanding the human self in the workplace. Packed with information and ideas from diverse perspectives, this book covers many vital aspects of workplace behavior, including task performance, decision-making, unethical behavior, striving for improvement, personal evaluation, identification with the company, collaborative relationships, leadership, blame, time, workplace aggression, organizational culture, alcohol and drug abuse, and performance management. Anyone interested in the psychological dynamics of organizations and work will find this book an invaluable addition to his or her library."

Roy F. Baumeister, Francis Eppes Centennial Scholar and Professor of Psychology, Florida State University, USA; author of New York Times bestseller Willpower

"The Self at Work presents a broad and inclusive view of self research and self theory as applied to the workplace. Topics from self-esteem and self-efficacy to narcissism and even cultural models of the self are included. The theory and research brought together in this volume have the potential to drive a full decade of research."

W. Keith Campbell, Professor of Psychology, University of Georgia, USA

"The Self at Work is an impressive and timely volume on an important topic. Understanding identity processes in work contexts has emerged as a cutting-edge area of study across a number of perspectives (e.g., employee, supervisor, organization). This volume brings together the writings of eminent scholars who have studied various aspects of the self at work. It is sure to be a valuable resource for anyone interested in state-of-the-art science review on essential topics in this field."

David V. Day, Professor of Psychology and Academic Director of the Kenis Leadership Institute, Claremont McKenna College, USA

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The SIOP Organizational Frontiers Series is sponsored by the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). Launched in 1983 to make scientific contributions accessible to the field, the series publishes books addressing emerging theoretical developments, fundamental and translational research, and theory-driven practice in the field of Industrial/Organizational Psychology and related organizational science disciplines including organizational behavior, human resource management, and labor and industrial relations.

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The Series originated in the hope that it would facilitate continuous learning and spur research curiosity about organizational phenomena on the part of both scholars and practitioners.

The Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology is an international professional association with an annual membership of more than 8,000 industrial-organizational (I-O) psychologists who study and apply scientific principles to the workplace. I-O psychologists serve as trusted partners to businesses, offering strategically focused and scientifically rigorous solutions to a number of workplace issues. SIOP's mission is to enhance human well-being and performance in organizational and work settings by promoting the science, practice, and teaching of I-O psychology. For more information about SIOP, please visit www.siop.org.
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THE SELF AT WORK

The Self at Work brings together researchers in industrial and organizational psychology and organizational behavior together with researchers in social and personality psychology to explore how the self impacts the workplace. Covering topics such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-control, power, and identification, each chapter examines how research on the self informs and further understanding of organizational topics such as employee engagement, feedback-seeking, and leadership. With their combined expertise, the chapter authors consider how research on the self has influenced management research and practice (and vice-versa), limitations of applying social psychology research in the organizational realm, and future directions for organizational research on the self. This book is a valuable resource for researchers, graduate students, and professionals who are interested in how research on the self can inform industrial/organizational psychology.

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First and foremost we would like to acknowledge the incredible efforts of the chapter authors, without whom this book would literally not be possible. We are particularly grateful for their willingness to, in many cases, take a leap of faith. Owing to the nature of the book, many chapters were written by co-authors who had never previously worked together. Separated by discipline yet united by their interest in the topic, we hope the authors have learned as much from working together as we have learned in reading their chapters.

Behind the scenes, a number of people also played key roles in helping this book come together. Ms. Wang encouraged Rust and Lane to consider submitting a proposal on the topic, and conversations with Doug Brown helped inspire the idea of bringing together researchers from social psychology and industrial-organizational/organizational behavior to collaborate on chapters. Rob Kilmori was instrumental in shepherding us through the early stages of submitting and revising our proposals, and the great feedback on our proposals from the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Organizational Frontiers Series Editorial Board helped improve the final product. Finally, on the publisher side, our collaborators at Routledge—Christina Chronister, Julie Tonich, and Lauren Verley—kept us on task and on time, and were key to putting together the volume.

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This volume is remarkable because it assembles a vast amount of research and insight regarding what we know (and don’t know) about the nature of the “self” construct. Moreover, it does so in a way that makes it easy for the reader to really see how the self at work “works.” And as it turns out, the self is indeed implicated in helping to understand much of worker behavior. As developed in the chapters of this book, we learn, for example, how the nature of the self might explain why employees come to join and identify with their company, where and when they respond to leaders, or why they are or are not engaged at work.

The nature of the self is also portrayed at the foundation for a better understanding of many of the problems facing work organizations. These include such things as when and how an organization might provide feedback in a way that will make a positive impact on learning, behavior or performance, and when and where the nature of the self can produce insubstantial relationships or even help to better “explain” and mitigate against worker absenteeism. With regard to the latter, at the time that this Foreword is being written, the United States is experiencing what is being termed an “opiate crime epidemic.” This is thought to be exacerbated by a feeling of anxiety on the part of so many individuals about the prospect of becoming re-employed. As you will learn from this volume, the sense of self can be a powerful force for promoting success in the workplace but also plays a major role in undermining one’s efforts to live up to the workplace-related aspirations of most Americans.

Louis Pyne, Russ Johnson, and Constance Schalek are extremely qualified to do this. In fact, any one of them could have personally written a book on the many important topics covered in this volume. But instead they have brought their years of research and teaching experience relative to self theory to bear in creating a very fine volume. They have done so as a great service by reaching out and engaging a set of chapter authors who are similarly well qualified. In short, this is a book that should not only be read for the wisdom that it imparts but also for its potential to motivate the reader to pursue future research relative to addressing the many yet to be answered questions that the intersection of self-theory and workplace behavior as well.
SELF-ENHANCEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS

D. Lance Ferris and Constantine Sedikides

The question of what motivates humans has been a central preoccupation of philosophers and psychologists, with numerous explanations given over the centuries (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008; Sedikides & Strube, 1997). Yet one of the most generative and intriguing explanations is also one of the simplest: people are motivated to feel positively about themselves and to have others view them positively. This is known as the self-enhancement motive. In both social and industrial-organizational/organizational behavior (IO/OB) research, this motive has provided a basis for many studies on, for example, why employers behave the way they do, rate others the way they do, react the way they do, and form attitudes the way they do. In fact, the self-enhancement motive, and its manifestations or strategies, have been argued to be so dominant within IO/OB that they have been proffered as a paradigm for the field (Pfeffer & Fong, 2005).

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the self-enhancement motive, noting some of the many phenomena to which it has been linked as well as touching on the debate over whether self-enhancement is "good" or "bad." We next discuss how self-enhancement has been used (and, at times, misused) in IO/OB research, including how it has typically been assessed, and we note contributions of IO/OB research to the self-enhancement literature. Finally, we consider future research directions for self-enhancement in IO/OB research.

Self-Enhancement: An Overview

Self-enhancement is the principle that people desire to view the self, and to have others view the self, in the most positive light possible. This principle manifests itself in a bifurcated motive: to increase the positivity with which the self is
viewed and to protect the self from threat. These motives are typically referred to as self-enhancement and self-protection, respectively, but ultimately serve the broader goal of viewing the self (and being viewed by others) positively. The “self” that is enhanced or protected by these motives is the self-concept, the “knowledge about personality traits, abilities, values, beliefs, expectations, motives, life events, relationships with significant others, possessions, and appearance” (Sedikides & Strube, 1997, p. 212), or, more broadly, “the totality of interrelated yet distinct psychological phenomena that either underlie, causally interact with, or depend upon relative consciousness” (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003, p. 110). The elements of the self-concept that are particularly enhanced or protected are central (important or defining) rather than peripheral to the individual (James, 1907; see also: Ferris, Brown, Liam, & Keeping, 2009; Gebauer, Wagner, Sedikides, & Neberich, 2013; Rosemberg, 1965). We will make this “centrality” assumption throughout this chapter.

The bifurcated motive is perhaps best conceptualized as the manifestation of hedonistic desires to approach pleasure (i.e., self-enhancement motive) and to avoid pain (i.e., self-protection motive) in the self-evaluation domain (Allice & Sedikides, 2009; Gregg & Sedikides, in press; Sedikides, 2012). The motive is used to inform other theories; indeed, it forms the bedrock for theories such as terror management theory (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schmeltzer, 1995), self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988), cognitive dissonance theory (Stone & Cooper, 2001), symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; see also Van Knippenberg & Haug, 2014), the self-evaluation maintenance model (Tesini, 1988), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997; see also Vancouver, Allice, & Halper, 2014), self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), and contingencies of self-worth model (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Yet, the motive does not constitute its own theory per se. This may be difficult to reconcile with IO/ OB researchers’ preference for explicit and quantifiable theories (Hambrick, 2007; Lian, Yam, Ferris, & Brown, 2017), as there is not a single boxes-and-arrows model illustrating what the motive predicts, although such models can be derived for separate phenomena (and inductive models exist, as we note later).

Despite this lack of a formal theoretical framework, self-enhancement research has been broad and unfettered. As Sedikides and Strube (1997, p. 214) put it:

Empirical tests of the self-enhancement perspective are characterized by remarkable diversity in the choice of independent variables, dependent variables, and experimental designs. This diversity stems from the lack of a single guiding theoretical proposition or a single primary moderator that would dictate a common methodology. Instead, a general assumption that humans are self-boosting or self-protective underlies the research.

A wide variety of phenomena, then, has been linked to the self-enhancement and self-protection motives. This variety has been labeled a “self-fooz” with each phenomenon symbolizing a different specimen (Tesser, Crepas, Beach, Cornett, & Collins, 2000) but all representing examples of what is known as the strategies that individuals implement to view or present the self in the best possible light. These strategies are cognitive (e.g., remembering only positive things about oneself) and behavioral (e.g., directly asking for positive feedback).

Self-Enhancement Strategies: Defensiveness, Positivity Embracement, Favorable Construals, and Self-Affirming Reflections

Research has suggested different taxonomies to provide some semblance of order to self-enhancement strategies that comprise the “self-fooz” (Allice, Zell, & Guernther, 2013; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008; Taylor & Brown, 1988). In this chapter, we follow the taxonomy developed by Hepper, Gruenewald, and Sedikides (2010; see also Hepper, Sedikides, & Cui, 2013 for cross-cultural evidence). This taxonomy was the first to use factor analysis to deduce which strategies co-occur, and hence which strategies may be fruitfully grouped together into superordinate self-enhancement strategy categories. Specifically, their analysis suggests four strategy categories: defensiveness, positivity embracement, favorable construals, and self-affirming reflections (Table 5.1). Although this taxonomy is not perfect (as indicated by a relatively poor fit for their confirmatory factor model), it provides some empirical basis for distinguishing among the various self-enhancement and self-protection strategies.

Defensiveness represents cognitive and behavioral strategies that protect the self from threats (either real or anticipated), and thus primarily represents strategies that serve the self-protection motive. For example, individuals engage in self-handicapping whereby they set up obstacles to performing well (e.g., drinking alcohol before an exam) so as to have something to blame in the case of failure (Jones & Bargas, 1978) or engage in defensive pessimism whereby they try to lower expectations of their performance (Norem & Cantor, 1986) so that they reduce disappointment in the face of bad news. Individuals also choose their friends with care, ensuring that their friends are competent — so that they can “look in the reflected glory” of their friends — but not so competent that the friends outperform the individual himself or herself on domains central to the individual’s self-concept (Tesser et al., 2000; see also Pembertron & Sedikides, 2001). Finally, when confronted with failure, individuals engage in self-serving attributions such that they blame failure on external factors or chance, and not on internal or interpersonal factors (Campbell & Sedikides, 1998; Zuckerman, 1979). Other defensive reactions to failure include de-emphasizing the importance of the
**TABLE 3.1 Self-Enhancement Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defensiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-handicapping</td>
<td>Avoiding getting feedback from coworkers on a presentation to be given to clients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensive pessimism</td>
<td>Trying to convince others that you aren’t very good at a task you are about to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective friendships, backing in reflected glory</td>
<td>Associating with those who flatter you; associating with high-status people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-serving attributions for failure</td>
<td>Blaming others when you fail or considering it just bad luck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altering self-image</td>
<td>Reconsidering how important being a salesperson is to one’s identity if one repeatedly performs poorly as a salesperson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discounting/Derogating negative feedback</td>
<td>Pointing out flaws in feedback/feedback providers or ignoring feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derogating outgroups</td>
<td>Insulting other groups (e.g., other departments, companies, or minorities).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Positivity Enhancement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeking and remembering positive feedback</td>
<td>Asking for feedback from a supervisor following a successful month of sales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorable self-presentation</td>
<td>Emphasizing successful projects instead of failures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-serving attributions for success</td>
<td>Taking sole credit when your team succeeds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Favorable Constructions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic optimism</td>
<td>Downplaying/ignoring risks associated with one’s decisions; assuming one’s efforts will always succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorable interpretations of ambiguous feedback</td>
<td>Interpreting mixed feedback as a good sign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overly positive self-perceptions; better-than-average beliefs</td>
<td>Believing one is superior than others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self-affirming Reflections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorable temporal comparisons</td>
<td>Thinking one has improved over time, or is improving faster than others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downward counterfactual thinking</td>
<td>Comparing oneself to or one’s situation to others that are worse off.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Domain in which one has failed** (Hill, Smith, & Lewicki, 1989), attacking the credibility of the failure feedback (Ditto & Lopez, 1992), portraying one’s competitor as a genius (Alicke, LoSchiavo, Zerbe, & Zhang, 1997), or derogating outgroups (Crocker, Thompson, McGraw, & Ingerman, 1987).
Is Self-Enhancement Good or Bad?

Taken together, these four categories of self-enhancement strategies provide a hint of the wide variety of phenomena to which self-enhancement has been applied (for more comprehensive reviews, see Brown, 2010; Pfeffer & Fong, 2005; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Cai, 2015). However, these strategies can also be viewed as painting a picture of self-enhancing individuals as dangerously removed from reality, ignoring very real threats in order to feel good about themselves.

Indeed, a long-standing controversy in the social psychology literature (and not only) is whether using self-enhancement strategies is beneficial or harmful. It has been argued that "positive illusions," such as thinking that one is better than one truly is, can have beneficial interpersonal consequences, such as promoting psychological well-being, fostering creativity, and facilitating task performance (O'Mara & Gaertner, in press; O'Mara, Gaertner, Sedikides, Zhou, & Liu, 2012; Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, & McDowell, 2003). Along these lines, studies show that individuals self-enhance by devoting considerable time and effort towards those domains that they view as central to who they are (e.g., being an athlete, a hard worker, or sociable; Crocker, Katzman, Quinn, & Chase, 2003), and such effort may be fueled by the positive illusions (e.g., perceptions of competence; Bandura, 1991) that individuals harbor about themselves in these domains.

Yet even if self-enhancement has interpersonal benefits, its interpersonal consequences may be questionable. That is, believing that one is better than one really is allows one to tackle challenging tasks, but may also make one come across as conceited or arrogant (Sedikides, Hoorens, & Dufner, 2015). For example, in a study where observers rated peer interactions, Colvin, Block, and Funder (1995) reported that those individuals who self-enhanced were rated as more likely to brag, interrupt, and behave aggressively and irritatingly.

A recent meta-analysis by Dufner, Gebauer, Sedikides, and Duesen (2017) regarding the effects of self-enhancement strategies on interperson al adjustment (e.g., life satisfaction, depression, and positive affect) and interpersonal adjustment (e.g., other-rated social approval and status) can help inform the debate. Across almost 200 samples and over 125,000 participants, these authors found that self-enhancement was positively related to interperson al adjustment, and typically was positively related to interpersonal adjustment as well (with the exception of observer ratings of the focal participant's community). Notably, over time such positive effects for interperson al adjustment weakened; that is, although self-enhancement tactics led to a positive initial impression, over time they had neither a positive nor a negative influence on impressions. These findings for interperson al adjustment mirror those seen by Kennedy, Anderson and Moore (2015); overconfident individuals were perceived by observers as having high status, and these perceptions lingered even after it was revealed that the observed individuals were, in fact, incorrectly overconfident.

Taken together, the weight of the evidence suggests that self-enhancement is beneficial intrapersonally and neutral interpersonally. This may seem odd with the aforementioned possibility that self-enhancement strategies serve the individual from reality. However, the Duson et al. (2017) meta-analytic findings point to a reason that may also account for the primarily beneficial effects of self-enhancement strategies: individuals do not engage in self-enhancement strategies willy-nilly and without regard to reality. Rather, they deploy such strategies only when appropriate or feasible (Green, Sedikides, Gebauer, 2011). Indeed, numerous studies have examined boundary conditions outlining when individuals do and do not engage in self-enhancement strategies. These findings have been summarized in what is known as the SCENT model (Sedikides & Strube, 1997; see also Sedikides, Gaertner, & Cai, 2015).

The SCENT Model

The Self-Concept Enhancing Tactic (or SCENT) model was developed in 1997 by Sedikides and Strube as an inductive attempt to outline the circumstances under which individuals engage in self-enhancement. The model focuses on when and how individuals are likely to be motivated by self-enhancement versus other self-evaluative motives, including self-verification (i.e., the motive to maintain consistent self-perceptions as a way of elevating one's sense of control and predictability), self-assessment (i.e., the motive to obtain accurate information about the self as a way of reducing uncertainty), and self-improvement (i.e., the motive to improve the self as a way of creating a sense of progress). The model assumes that each of the four self-enhancing motives is adaptive and pragmatic from the individual's point of view, and that they do not operate independently of each other. This latter point—that the motives do not operate independently of each other—leads us to one of the model's more controversial postulates: that motives for self-verification, self-assessment, and self-improvement are ultimately in service of the motive to self-enhance.

According to SCENT, the sense of control/predictability, certainty, and progress fostered by engaging in self-verification, self-assessment, and self-improvement (respectively) are not ends unto themselves, but rather set the stage for long-term self-enhancement. This is perhaps most apparent in the motive for self-improvement, whose aim is to develop (over time) a more positive self, but can also be seen in motives for self-verification and self-assessment: the sense of predictability and certainty these motives engender allows the development of a coherent sense of self that, in the long run, can be enhanced. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how elements of the self could be enhanced or protected, if our social world requires that we be correct in our internal self-conceptualizations. In arguing that self-verification, self-assessment, and self-improvement ultimately serve self-enhancement in the long run, the SCENT model distinguishes between modest self-enhancement— or the explicit, unrestrained attempts to view the self positively or defend it against negative feedback
associated with self-enhancement strategies and tactical self-enhancement, or the indirect attempts to self-enhance via self-verification, self-assessment, and self-improvement. This distinction also recognizes that individuals do not self-enhance solely in light of possible risks or plausibility. Instead, they scrutinize the situation and judge whether, in light of inherent risks, self-enhancement is curtailed and tactical self-enhancement emerges as more likely. Individuals may also choose to appare objectively good traits at which they may be deficient but consider central to their self-definition, allowing short-term (self-pat) for long-term (self-activeness).

What, then, determines when individuals do or do not engage in candid self-enhancement? Drawing on past research, Sedikides and Stuve (1997) argued in favor of various classes of moderators. Individual differences represent one such class, as people differ in the extent to which they seek self-enhancement. For example, narcissism can be regarded as a strong disposition towards self-enhancement (Chen et al., 2013); indeed, narcissists are likely the most people who seek self-enhancement. On the other hand, those with a strong epistemic motivation—that is, a desire for concrete information—may prefer accurate information over enhancing information. A second class of moderators represents the availability of resources. For example, people are more likely to engage in self-enhancement in an automatic manner, meaning facets that diminish cognitive resources increase self-enhancement tendencies (Swann, Hexon, Scanzellini, & Gilbert, 1990).

A third class of moderators addresses what people are actually self-enhancing. As we have seen, people seek to self-enhance on aspects (e.g., traits, characteristics, skills) that are relatively central to their self-definition (Ferris et al., 2009; Ferris, Latt, Brown, & Morrison, 2015; Ferris, Latt, Brown, Pang, & Keping, 2010). People are also more likely to self-enhance on aspects of the self that are relatively stable (vs. malleable), as being deficient on a stable aspect of the self implies that one cannot ever become proficient (Dweck, Steele, & Spencer, 2002). However, individuals are not self-enhance on all stable, important aspects of the self. An adult male’s height is stable (real, not many, important), but an objectively short male will still be an objectively short male. This points to another key parameter of self-enhancement: the extent to which ambiguity about the attribute exists influences the plausibility of self-enhancement (Brown, 1986; Dumming, Meyerovitch, & Holzberg, 1989). That is, it is easier to exaggerate one’s vaguely defined leadership abilities than to exaggerate one’s objectively good traits. Somewhat similarly, self-enhancement is also likely to emerge when the temporal context of what is being enhanced is less clear (and hence more ambiguous); it is easier to say one’s sales performance was excellent this month, if it objectively was not (Heller, Stepman, & Sedikides, 2011; Stepman, Sedikides, Heller, & Shidlovski, 2013).

A fourth class of moderators is the social context within which self-enhancement takes place. When individuals are accountable for the responses they give, they are less likely to self-enhance (Sedikides & Herbst, 2002; Sedikides, Herbst, Harbin, & Daniels, 2002). Similarly, individuals are less likely to self-enhance candidly with friends (Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, & Elliot, 1998; Tice, Butler, Murren, & Stillwell, 1995), who may (as noted previously) already be selected on the basis of providing positive feedback to the individual, thus reducing the need for more bold-faced attempts at self-enhancement. Alternately, close friends may know an individual well, meaning they hold relatively unambiguous perceptions of him or her, and can call the individual on obvious exaggerations of their abilities.

The contextual context represents a last class of moderators that influences manifestations of candid self-enhancement. Sedikides, Gaertner, & Cai (2015) recently updated the SCENT model to address questions regarding the cross-cultural nature of self-enhancement in light of arguments that self-enhancement is not prevalent, if it exists at all, in Eastern cultures (e.g., Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). Sedikides et al. (2015) argued that this may reflect cultural norms of modesty and the prevalence of cooperative-oriented situations in Eastern cultures (vs. competition-oriented situations in Western cultures), or Eastern preferences for the use of other-mediated self-enhancement (e.g., saying that one is not good at something, while expecting someone else to testify to how good you actually are). Supporting this argument, self-enhancement strategies do emerge when cultural norms of modesty are accounted for, when Easterners are placed in competitive situations, and when other-mediated self-enhancement serves the same purpose as candid self-enhancement does for Westerners. Moreover, Easterners and Westerners both self-enhance, but on different dimensions (depending on centrality to their self-definition): Westerners self-enhance on independent self-attributes (e.g., unique, free, original), whereas Easterners self-enhance on interdependent self-attributes (e.g., cooperative, loyal, patient) (Sedikides, Gaertner, & Topuchi, 2003; see also: Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005).

In sum, there are several moderators that limit when candid self-enhancement occurs, consistent with the SCENT model’s postulate that individuals are not boastful braggadocios but rather careful tacticians. Individuals primarily engage in self-enhancing strategies when plausible and when such strategies are unlikely to lead to negative effects for them, which helps explain why the use of self-enhancing strategies is typically associated with desirable (or null) consequences (Dufner et al., 2017).

How Self-Enhancement Has Been Used in IO/OB Research

We begin with a caveat: self-enhancement has not always been used correctly in IO/OB research. In particular, self-enhancement has occasionally
been incorrectly defined or operationalized. An self-referenced definition of self-enhancement (Liu, Lee, Hui, Kwan, & Wu, 2013; Pierce & Gardner, 2004) is Korman’s (2001, p. 122): “the motivation to attain outcomes that signify personal growth on the part of the individual and/or the approval of others for attaining socially desirable goals.” Although it is correct that self-enhancement involves seeking the approval of others, being motivated by personal growth outcomes is better viewed as self-improvement. This motive may serve self-enhancing functions, as noted above, but it is not self-enhancement per se. Also, self-enhancement definitions should not be limited to those that involve personal growth.

In addition, self-esteem is often used incorrectly as an operationalization of self-enhancement, particularly in the feedback literature (Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003). Self-esteem, however, does not equal the presence of self-enhancement, but rather its purpose: People strive to view themselves positively, but not viewing themselves positively does not mean that they have terminated their efforts to self-enhance. Confusing self-esteem level with self-enhancement has led to erroneous statements that constructs which affect self-esteem level also affect one’s motive to self-enhance. For example, in discussing the effects of being granted special treatment at work, Liu et al. (2013, p. 33) argued that such treatment “would lead to the development of self-enhancement, represented by [self-esteem level].” Although such constructs may affect self-esteem level, they are unlikely to influence the self-enhancement motive. Put differently, receiving or not receiving special treatment at work is not going to affect whether individuals ultimately want to view themselves in a positive light. Thus, individuals with low self-esteem should not be viewed as lacking the self-enhancement motive. Such individuals may go about satisfying this motive using different strategies than their high self-esteem counterparts; for example, low self-esteem individuals favor self-protection strategies, whereas high self-esteem individuals favor self-enhancement strategies (Tice, 1991).

Measurement of Self-Enhancement in IO/OB

How should self-enhancement be measured, in the absence of self-esteem? The assessment of the self-enhancement motive (both in IO/OB and other literatures) can be complex, its existence is typically inferred from patterns of outcomes, and not measured itself. That is, its existence is assumed based on the pattern of results across many studies, which are best explained by inferring that humans have a desire to view themselves positively (and not view themselves negatively). In this sense it is like gravity: it is not measured directly, but its existence is inferred by examining a pattern of results (i.e., the speed at which objects fall to the ground in a vacuum) and invoking the construct (i.e., gravity) as an explanation. Along these lines, IO/OB studies often invoke self-enhancement without directly assessing the motive. This is not meant as a criticism. Indeed,

this approach is fairly common in social psychological research; and reflects difficulties in measuring the motive itself versus manifestations of it (e.g., its effects on cognition, affect, and behavior).

Organizational researchers have nevertheless operationalized self-enhancement in creative ways. The aforementioned condition of self-esteem level (i.e., high/low self-esteem) with the existence of the self-enhancement motive is the most common (albeit erroneous) method. Another attempt involves using the residuals of a self-deception measure regressed on measures of narcissism and self-esteem, in the belief that, once narcissism and self-esteem are accounted for, whatever remains must represent self-enhancement (Meller, 2009). However, given that narcissism represents tendencies to self-enhance and self-esteem represents the outcome of self-enhancement, this approach would inadvertently remove a good deal of variance attributable to self-enhancement itself, and hence we do not recommend it.

Rather than directly assessing the presence the self-enhancement motive, a more common (and more laudable) approach in IO/OB is to presume its existence but measure individual differences in self-enhancement strategies. That is, while self-enhancement is thought to be a universal motive, individuals can differ in (a) the type of self-enhancement strategies they use, (b) the domains in which they self-enhance, and (c) the strength of the motive itself. The types of strategies used require the most attention in the impression management literature (Bolino & Turnley, 1999; see also Leary & Bolino, this volume), and they are numerous (Table 5.1). The specific domains in which individuals self-enhance can also be assessed. Mirroring the empirical fact that people are most likely to enhance on aspects or domains that are central to their self-definition (Gebauer et al., 2013; Ferris et al., 2009; Sedikides et al., 2016), measures of contingencies of self-worth have been used. Such measures assess the extent to which one bases their self-esteem on success and failure, in particular life domains (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). The domain of interest has been the workplace (Ferris et al., 2010, 2015; for a review, see Ferris, 2014).

With respect to individual differences in strength of the self-enhancement motive, Yun, Takeuchi, and Liu (2007) developed a six-item measure, whereas Audia and Brion (2007) used a 42-item measure proposed by Taylor and colleagues (2003). However, one of the more common ways of assessing the self-enhancement motive is via scales of dispositional narcissism. Narcissists seek exceedingly positive self-perceptions and desire to be perceived very favorably by others (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006; Thomasa, Brunelsman, & Sedikides, in press). Consequently, they use many of the self-enhancement and self-protection strategies outlined previously, often without heed to some of the more traditional barriers to candid self-enhancement. As such, narcissism has been characterized as “an unchecked desire for self-enhancement” (Chen et al., 2013, p. 1203) and has been labeled “the self-enhancer personality” (Morf, Harvath, & Torchetti, 2011, p. 399). In assessing narcissism, IO/OB
researchers typically use measures like the Narcissistic Personality Inventory or its derivatives (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006; Emmons, 1987). Interestingly, Chattoojee and Hambrick (2007, 2011) developed an unobtrusive measure to assess narcissism in chief executive officers. Their index of CEO narcissism relies on the prominence accorded to the CEO in both photographs in the company’s annual report and in company press releases, the CEO’s use of first-person singular pronouns when interviewed, and the CEO’s cash and non-cash compensation relative to the second-highest paid executive in the company.

Finally, one of the more complex methods of assessing individual differences in the self-enhancement motive involves the use of round-robin social network data to distinguish statistically between tendencies to view the self positively (i.e., to self-enhance) from tendencies to view others positively and to be viewed positively by others (for more details, see: Kwan, John, Kenny, Bond, & Robins, 2004; Kwan, John, Robins, & Kuang, 2008; for an organizational illustration of this technique, see: Van der Kam, Lansen, Van der Vegt, & Stoker, 2014). It is important to account for these latter two tendencies, in order to ensure that viewing the self positively is not simply a reflection of the tendency to view everyone positively or a reflection of reality when one is indeed being viewed positively by others. Although this method represents a useful way to assess individual differences in self-enhancement motive strength, its reliance on time- and effort-intensive round-robin social network data likely limits its utility for most IO/OB research. Moreover, whether it produces results different from other measures of individual differences in self-enhancement motive strength that are easier to collect (e.g., measures of narcissism) is unknown.

Besides the Yun et al. (2007) six-item measure, the Taylor and colleagues (2003) 42-item measure, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Emmons, 1987), and round-robin designs (Van der Kam et al., 2014), researchers could consider assessing directly the self-enhancement motive with a two-time scale that Gregg, Hepper, and Sedikides (2011) developed. The items are: “In general, I would like to be described as a confident person” and “In general, I would like to be described that I have excellent qualities.” The scale has both face and construct validity, as well as high discriminant validity. It differentiates from equivalent two-item assessments of the self-verification, self-assessment, and self-improvement motives. Nevertheless, the short two-item nature of the scale presents both pros (i.e., easy to administer in field studies) and cons (i.e., reviewers may be unsympathetic towards any potential low reliability associated with shorter scales) for IO/OB researchers.

Illustrative Examples of Self-Enhancement Research in IO/OB

We turn next to some of the ways in which the self-enhancement literature has been used by IO/OB researchers, drawing again on Hepper and colleagues (2010) taxonomy of defensiveness, positive/embarrassment, favorable contrasts, and self-affirming reflections strategies to frame our exposition. Given space limitations, our aim is to provide an illustrative rather than comprehensive treatment.

Defensiveness. A study by Park, Westphal, and Stern (2011) on CEOs and members of the board of directors provides a pointed demonstration of defensiveness strategies. These authors found that CEOs of high social status (assessed by corporate and nonprofit board appointments, elite education, membership in elite social clubs, and stock ratings of firms for which the CEO acted as an outside director) were more likely to be targets of flattery by the other board members. This showcases elements of the strategies for selective friendships and basking in reflected glory on the part of the board members. Yet likely prompted by such flattery, CEOs manifested self-enhancing perceptions of their judgment and leadership capabilities as operationalized by differences between self- and other-rated measures of these capabilities. CEOs subsequently were less likely to change the strategic direction of their firm (e.g., by altering resource allocations among advertising, research, and development) in the face of poor performance, thus manifesting discounting of negative feedback and displacing failures on others rather than their own choices. Ironically, the high-status CEOs who were the targets of the flattery eventually were more likely to be ultimately dismissed from their positions, because they failed to alter the strategic direction of their firms (see also the Energy Clash Model of narcissism in organizations; Sedikides & Carylbell, in press).

Jordan and Andra (2012) argued in a theoretical article that organizational decision-makers facing poor organizational performance would engage in activities that amount to altering their organization’s self-image. In particular, they maintained that decision-makers would change the direction of the organization away from goals on which they perform poorly (e.g., customer satisfaction) towards goals on which they perform well (e.g., number of clients served), or would increase the abstraction of the relevant goal to allow more positive evaluations (e.g., considering number of clients served as part of client satisfaction). Moving beyond goals but still in line with altering self-images, other studies have suggested that organizational members disengage their sense of self from their work when self-enhancement strategies are thwarted. Specifically, Woo, Sims, Rupp, and Gibbons (2008) found that participants in an assessment center program were less engaged when they received feedback from others that was inconsistent with their own positive self-ratings. Sitzmann and Johnson (2012) similarly found that participants in an online training program were more likely to quit the training in the face of discrepant performance feedback. Finally, Chen and colleagues (2013) found that, when subject to uncivil treatment (e.g., being insulted or slighted) that presumably thwarted their desire for self-enhancement, individuals disengaged from their workplace and became poorer performers. This was particularly the case for narcissists, who have a stronger motive for self-enhancement.
To line with the notion that individuals defensively strike out when receiving negative feedback, organizational research has shown that those who are mistreated at work react with deviant behavior. For example, Tepper, Mitchell, Hoggard, Kwan, and Park (2015) found that mistreated employees engaged in retaliatory hostile acts to avoid viewing themselves as a victim, whereas Ferris, Spence, Brown, and Heller (2012) demonstrated in a diary study that employees treated unfairly were more likely to engage in deviant behavior, especially those with high self-esteem (Sedikides & Gregg, 2013).

Finally, evidence indicates that individuals discount negative feedback. For example, Beer and Brown (2012) found that individuals would be less likely to adopt a suggestion for a project in which they were involved, if the suggestion involved parts of the project that should be eliminated (i.e., negative feedback about the project), such as dropping items from a proposed new restaurant menu or dropping a “buy one, get one free” deal from a proposed sales initiative. However, individuals were more likely to adopt such suggestions if they were not personally involved with the project, illustrating the notion that they were particularly resistant to negative feedback about something associated with the self.

**Positivity Embrace.** Much research on organization-based self-esteem—that is, self-esteem levels within the organizational domain—has drawn upon the notion of positivity embrace, with authors arguing that organizational actions are interpreted as positive feedback from an organization that satisfies the employees’ self-enhancement motive (Pierce & Gardner, 2004; see also Brown & Zeigler-Hill, this volume). For example, Liu and colleagues (2013) proposed that employees who receive ideiosyncratic deals—that is, customized deals that are better than the ones coworkers receive—interpreted them as signals that they are “valuable and special to the employer, in that the employer is willing to make special provisions for their work” (p. 834). Similarly, Gardner, Huang, Niu, Pierce, and Lee (2015) proposed that relational psychological contracts (i.e., contracts that provide training and development, fair treatment, and otherwise consider the well-being of the employee) are a form of “positive feedback” to the employee that confirms the employee is valued (p. 927). Consistent with these proposals, results from both studies indicated that these organizational signals increased organization-based self-esteem.

Other research on reactions to feedback also draws on the notion of positivity embrace. For example, Aneel and Lievens (2006; see also Aneel, Strauss, & Lievens, this volume) reported that employees were more satisfied with positive feedback, and Baer and Brown (2012) reported that employees would be more likely to adopt a suggestion for a project if the suggestion (i.e., feedback) entailed improvement (cf. Gaertner, Sedikides, & Cai, 2012). However, they were more likely to embrace such a suggestion when they were personally involved with the project. Taken together with their findings described under the prior Defensiveness section, the Baer and Brown study shows that employees reject negative suggestions and embrace positive ones, but only when they are personally involved in the relevant project or view it as an extension of themselves (Belk, 1988; Gebauer et al., 2013).

Consistent with the notion that individuals desire positive feedback about themselves, Stevens, Mitchell, and Tripp (1990) hypothesized that recruiters who told applicants that the organization viewed them positively would be more likely to recruit those who emphasized the fit of their organization for the candidate but obtained mixed results. Finally, Chatterjee and Hambrick (2014) found that social rewards (i.e., media praise and awards) had a stronger relationship with risky CEO actions (e.g., paying higher premiums during acquisition) for narcissistic CEOs, suggesting that narcissistic CEOs were particularly attracted and responsive to positive feedback.

**Favorable Construals**. Via an experimental and archival study, Audia and Boston (2007) illustrated how ambiguous feedback is interpreted favorably. They proposed that decision-makers (undergraduate students in the experimental study, and CEOs in the archival study) frequently encounter multiple performance indicators (e.g., stock prices, revenue growth, international expansion) that may provide ambiguous performance feedback regarding the company’s performance, where one indicator suggests the company is doing well while another indicator suggests otherwise. Moreover, some indicators (e.g., stock prices) may be considered more valid than others (e.g., international expansion). When confronted with such ambiguous input, decision-makers were less likely to make changes to the organization’s strategy (e.g., introduce new products) so long as at least one of the indicators signaled that the company was performing well—even when decision-makers were explicitly told the indicator was less valid. Moreover, when only the less valid indicator signaled that the company was performing well, decision-makers were more likely to rate that less valid indicator as more important than the more valid one.

Researchers have also been concerned with the extent to which employees perceive themselves more positively than others, such as in 360-degree performance rating contexts that include self-ratings as well as ratings by peers, subordinates, and supervisors (e.g., Brett & Awan, 2001; Smither, London, & Reilly, 2005). For example, van der Kamp and colleagues (2014) found that leaders who perceived themselves as more transformational than subordinates were more likely to experience task and relationship conflict with subordinates at work; task conflict in particular mediated the negative effect of these excessively positive self-perceptions on ratings of the leader’s performance. Examining the sources of such differences, Judge and colleagues (2006) reported that high levels of narcissism among managers were associated with greater differences between self-ratings and other-ratings of leadership ability.

Finally, in a conceptual replication of the better-than-average effect, Mecon and Thompson (2007) found that team members perceived their performance and qualifications as being more of a threat to other team members than the
performance and qualifications of other team members posed a threat to themselves. In other words, members thought they were a threat to others, but they thought of themselves as more competent than average. This perception of competence had implications for interpersonal interactions in teams: outside individuals were less satisfied when interacting with those they thought they were more threatening than average.

Also relevant to the better-than-average effect are numerous studies showing people believe that anything with which they associate is more better, as a result. For example, Slocum (1956) found that employees were more likely to rate positively an employee whom they knew participated in (and agreed with) the decision to hire the employee than when they did not participate in the hiring decision; when supervisors participated in the decision, they were more likely to disagree with the employee than when they agreed; both participated in the hiring decision; and agreed to the hire. Hideg, Michela, and Ferris (2011) similarly reported that undergraduates were more likely to support affirmative action policies when they had participated in the creation of the policy than when they did not (see also Pfeffer, Cialdini, Hannan, & Knoepfle, 1998), while Hsu and Elsbach (2013) reported that MBA students, faculty, and staff were more likely to view their school as having favorable attributes when they considered it an extension of the self.

Self-affirming reflections. Fewer studies have examined self-affirming reflections to threats, although Jordan and Audia (2012) contended in a theoretical article that organizational decision-makers are likely to invoke downward comparisons as counterweights in the face of poor organizational performance, for example, decision-makers might claim that companies stock prices would be even lower if the company had not introduced a new product that was a poor seller. Yet, although studies have not examined whether employees spontaneously engaged in self-affirming reflections following a threat to the self, some research has demonstrated implications of self-affirmations for organizational phenomena. For example, Hideg and Ferris (2014) found that affirming action-oriented policies for women that address discrimination in the workplace would not be supported by either women or men, because such policies threaten an individual's sense of competence. For women, such policies suggest that they have unidimensional competence: for men, policies could undermine their personal values and make them feel disempowered.

Although the self-affirming reflection strategies outlined by Hepper and colleagues (2010, 2013) primarily reflect cognitive reactions, a behavioral reaction that affirms the sense of self may be possible as well. Along these lines, Ferris and colleagues have argued that employees whose sense of self is contingent on their workplace performance are more likely to maintain high levels of performance in reaction to threats such as workplace ostracism (Ferris et al., 2013) or ambiguity and conflict in the workplace (Ferris et al., 2009, 2010). Employees indeed maintained a higher performance level in terms of reducing deviant behaviors (Ferris et al., 2009, 2015), increasing in-role performance (Ferris et al., 2010, 2015), and increasing citizenship behaviors (Ferris et al., 2015). By maintaining high levels of job performance, employees may have behaviorally reaffirmed central aspects of the self.

Contributions of IO/OB Research to the Self-Enhancement Literature

As the above review indicates, much of the IO/OB research on self-enhancement applies concepts and strategies from the self-enhancement literature in social/personality psychology to organizational phenomena. At the same time, however, at least two areas of organizational research have contributed to the broader self-enhancement literature. The first area is feedback. Feedback is a critical component of performance appraisal systems within organizations, based on the idea that receiving feedback leads to improved employee performance. However, employee reactions to feedback are highly variable, with one meta-analysis suggesting that feedback interventions led to decreased performance in over a third of the 131 studies examined (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). From a self-enhancement perspective, this finding makes sense. Employees prefer receiving self-enhancing feedback, and so the effectiveness of received feedback should be reduced if it threatens the self. This statement has received empirical backing by Kluger and DeNisi, who found that feedback interventions that focus attention narrowly on the task itself or learning processes tend to be more effective than feedback interventions that focus attention more broadly on the self.

As few employees are perfect, receiving threatening feedback is part and parcel of most performance evaluation systems. To improve reactions to such feedback, organizational research has focused extensively on factors that help to mitigate the threatening nature of it. Some of this work has shown that employee reactions to threatening feedback are ameliorated by the consistency of feedback over time (Stone & Stone, 1985) or when positive feedback precedes negative feedback (Stone, Guesal, & McIntosh, 1984), whereas other work has focused on the context within which the feedback occurs (e.g., the organizational culture, economic conditions, or competitive environment; Levy & Williams, 2004). Moreover, reactions to feedback are improved to the extent that feedback is timely, specific, and private (Far, Baytrakaya, & Johnson, 2012).
That is, by focusing on specific behaviors (and not the individual himself or herself) with enough lead time to allow the individual to improve before performance evaluations, and doing so in a private manner which reduces concerns about others' perceptions of the feedback recipient's competence, the threatening nature of feedback can be curtailed (London, 2003).

The second area where organizational behavior research has made a contribution to the self-enhancement literature is methodological, addressing a long-standing controversy within the self-enhancement literature. In particular, researchers have debated whether individuals seek to self-enhance or to self-verify. From a self-enhancement perspective, an individual prefers to be viewed positively by others; from a self-verification perspective, an individual prefers that others' views of the individual are congruent with the individual's self-perceptions regardless of whether these are positive or negative (Kwang & Swann, 2010; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). To compare these predictions, congruence (i.e., self-verification) effects have been empirically examined using either difference scores representing the magnitude of the difference between self-perceptions and other-perceptions, or interactions between self-perceptions and other-perceptions (Kwang & Swann, 2010).

However, neither a difference score nor an interaction approach is suitable for assessing congruence effects (space limitations preclude a detailed discussion of the reasons for this; see Edwards, 1994, 2001). Instead, congruence analyses require the use of polynomial regression—an analytical technique widely known in organizational research, but (to our knowledge) not used in social psychological research. A study by Anseel and Lievens (2006; see also Woo et al., 2008) examining reactions to feedback illustrated how the conditions supporting self-enhancement or self-verification perspectives are influenced by whether or not congruence effects are properly operationalized and analyzed.

In the Anseel and Lievens (2006) study, prior to completing an in-basket task, participants provide self-ratings of their expected percentile (e.g., top 5 percent, 10 percent, 15 percent) on various management-related competencies: information management, decisiveness, problem awareness, and coordinating ability. Next, participants received feedback on those competencies using the same scale, thus mimicking 360-degree feedback procedures where self-ratings and other-ratings are provided (Brett & Awtar, 2001). By using polynomial regression, Anseel and Lievens were able to separate out self-enhancement effects (represented by a significant main effect for higher feedback scores) from self-verification effects (represented by congruence between feedback scores and self-ratings), assessed by higher-order quadratic and interactive effects between self-ratings and feedback scores (Edwards, 1994). For comparison, these authors also eschewed a polynomial regression approach and instead used the typical difference scores approach.

Anseel and Lievens' (2006) results revealed that self-enhancement effects were robustly supported; main effects for feedback valence emerged. On the other hand, self-verification effects only emerged when difference scores—i.e., the improper analytical technique—were used. When polynomial regression analyses were used, no congruence effects emerged. Although the additional studies are needed to supplement these findings, the Anseel and Lievens study provides an indication of how an organizational analytical approach can inform a long-standing issue in the self-enhancement and self-verification literatures.

Future Research Directions and Conclusion

An interesting project for future research would be to consider rehabilitating somewhat the image of narcissists. As noted above, most organizational research on narcissism regards narcissism as an extreme form of self-enhancement, and typically perceives it as an undesirable trait (although this perception may be unwarranted; Grijalva, Harris, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015). Indeed, narcissism is sometimes referred to as part of a “dark triad” of negative personality traits along with Machiavellianism and psychopathy (O’Boyle, Fossyth, Bunks, & McDaniel, 2012). Recently, however, another type of narcissism has been proposed, that of communal narcissism. These are persons who self-enhance excessively not through agentic means (e.g., focusing on being the smartest person in the room) but rather through communal means (e.g., focusing on being the most helpful person in the room); Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012; see also: Giacomini & Jordan, 2015; Luo, Cai, Sedikides, & Song, 2013). Communal narcissists view themselves as very caring and helpful, and as very competent at listening and adept at making friends. Although the grandiosity associated with (agentic) narcissism is still present, their desire for self-enhancement is accomplished by the belief that they improve the lives of others. Consequently, it is possible that communal narcissism is related to engaging in helping and prototypical behaviors for the group (in contrast, agentic narcissism is associated with engaging in deviant behaviors at work; O'Boyle et al., 2012). Despite being a relatively new concept, communal narcissism represents a natural fit for interdependent organizational settings.

Moving beyond specific research topics, we argue that researchers would do well to consider how the self-enhancement motive, and its related strategies, could apply to their own literatures. An article by Pfeffer and Fong (2005) is particularly instructive in this respect. These authors illustrated how organizational research on power can be viewed through a self-enhancement lens. They use the self-enhancement motive both to explain prior findings in the literature and show how it leads to new empirical questions. The approach would arguably work for virtually any research topic (Jordan & Adua, 2012).

The Pfeffer and Fong (2005) approach is notable because their broader proposal was that self-enhancement should be used as a paradigm for all of IO/ OB. Although they used power as their specific example, they maintained that the self-enhancement motive and strategies are interwoven throughout
many IO/OB topic areas. As a fundamental human motive, it should not be surprising to regard self-enhancement as relevant to much of what is researched in IO/OB. Yet, at the same time, there seems to be a lack of awareness of just how pervasive self-enhancement is in IO/OB. Indeed, one observation from our reviewing of the literature was that many studies that clearly address self-enhancement themes—such as narcissism (Judge et al., 2000), social comparison (Vidyaarthi, Liden, Anand, Erdogan, & Ghosh, 2010), or self-affirmation (Klines & Sim, 2010)—do not claim that they investigate self-enhancement: these relevant articles do not include self-enhancement in their titles, abstracts, or keywords.

An optimistic interpretation of such studies is that they indicate the prevalence of the self-enhancement motive: they take it as a fact and are unnecessary of singling out. A pessimistic interpretation is that researchers do not appreciate the larger body of relevant literature, and thus perhaps miss out on the opportunity to rely on it for new insights. Failing to recognize the omnipresence of the self-enhancement motive and strategies may also obscure links among research areas. The motive connects research on affirmation action policies and mergers and acquisitions, on recruitment and creativity, as well as on feedback seeking and deviance. Like Pfeffer and Fong (2005), we advocate, in conclusion, that the self-enhancement motive and strategies are worthy of the status of a "paradigm" for the IO/OB literature. We encourage researchers to be aware of them, test them, apply them, and modify or qualify them, as it may be.

Note

1 This lack of measurement can give rise to clashes when different principles provide inconsistent explanations for an observed relation. For example, this issue lies at the heart of debates over whether humans self-enhance or self-verify (Kwan & Swann, 2010; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008).

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SELF-CONTROL IN WORK ORGANIZATIONS

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In other chapters in this volume, authors discuss the importance of regulating various self-referenced identities, goals, needs, motives, emotions, and behaviors. To do so, it requires that employees have sufficient self-control at their disposal. However, this may not always be the case, especially when employees feel depleted from prior instances of suppressing thoughts, emotions, or behaviors. In this chapter we review foundational research on self-control and ego depletion theory, and how this work has informed investigations of employee self-control and depletion at work. We conclude with discussions of some of the challenges facing this line of research and fruitful directions for future research.

Overview of Self-Control and Ego Depletion Theory

It seems counterintuitive that refraining from a task would use energy. However, recent research has found that when people exert self-control they may become fatigued and perform worse on later attempts at self-control (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). To understand these results, an energy model of self-control has been put forth. This model of self-control suggests that in order to override an impulse, stop a behavior, or change a mood or thought, people need to exert effort and energy. If they do not expend this energy, they will give into temptation or continue their present action. In other words, this energy or resource (often called self-control strength) is necessary for any and all acts of agency.

Even more importantly, people seem to act as if this self-control strength is limited (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998; Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994) and that it is depleted in the process of exerting self-control (Muraven, Baumeister, & Tice, 1999). For example, whenever people exert self-control in order to make difficult or complex decisions, cope