

The Undesired Self: A Neglected Variable in Personality Research

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Personality theorists have given a great deal of attention to the relation between the *real self* and the *ideal self* with the implication that they are contrasting entities. The concept of an *undesired self* is introduced as a more compelling contrast with the ideal self. It is argued that the undesired self, in comparison with the ideal self, is the preferred reference point for making judgments of present-day life satisfaction. Hypotheses derived from this theoretical perspective were tested by using Identities \times Features matrices generated by 45 college subjects. The distance between the real self and the ideal self and the distance between the real self and the undesired self were calculated. It is shown that the latter distance correlates more highly with ratings of life satisfaction than does the distance between the real and ideal selves, which suggests that satisfaction (in both male and female subjects) is more a function of one's subjective distance from unwanted affects and circumstances than a function of one's proximity to ideal states of existence.

The concept *ideal self* is an important feature of several theories of human behavior. It is commonly portrayed as a mental image of the self perfected. Karen Horney proposed that the ideal self in a normally functioning individual is composed of reasonable goals around which behavior is organized and aspirations realized. For the neurotic, however, the ideal self-image is an immutable standard that can never be achieved. It haunts and cripples its victim with "the tyranny of the should" (Horney, 1950, pp. 64–65). Adler embraced the concept of fictional finalism, later called a guiding self-ideal, and made it a cornerstone of his individual psychology. For Adler, it is the "pull" of the future (fictional finalism), not the "push" of the past (e.g., infantile conflicts), that explains behavior (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, pp. 87–90). Consistent with Horney's view of the ideal self, Adler noted that the fictional finalisms of "normals" were flexible and could be modified when circumstances warranted revision. Neurotics, on the other hand, cling to unalterable fictional finalisms and dare not to tamper with them in order to preserve life's meaning.

Adler's emphasis on the pull of self-created fictions sharply contrasts with Freud's notion of the push of ego ideals. Freud located the ego ideal in the superego and argued that it consisted of pictures of untarnished parents, heroes, and heroines perfected by the infantile mind. These images become the standards by which the ego measures itself and assesses its worthiness (Freud, 1965, pp. 64–65).

Psychoanalytic psychology was not unique in drawing attention to the interplay of the real and ideal selves. William James (1890) noted that disappointment is frequently experienced when achievements fail to match aspirations. Both Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934) expressed similar ideas. For example,

Cooley wrote of the distress that arises when one's present self consistently falls short of one's social ideal self.

Given the relatively long history of these ideas, especially in a society that values individual achievements, it is not surprising that telic, or endpoint, theories of subjective well-being continue to be formulated. Whether stated in terms of need fulfillment (Wilson, 1960), goal attainment (Scitovsky, 1976), or the pursuit of life plans (Chekola, 1975), present-day telic theories continue to emphasize implicit comparisons between the self as now experienced and an imagined ideal. Diener, in his extensive review of subjective well-being literature (Diener, 1984), was critical of telic theories, stating that they are seldom formulated in testable, falsifiable language.

But not all comparison theories are telic. For example, drawing on social comparison theory, Carp and Carp (1982), Emmons, Larsen, Levine, and Diener (1983), and Michalos (1980) have empirically demonstrated that being better off than others is a factor in assessing one's own happiness. Other researchers, notably Brickman, Coates, and Janoff-Bulman (1978) and Padducci (1968) have focused on the relation between one's present and *past* life conditions and have underscored the promise of this reversal of the more familiar telic formula.

Despite these breaks in tradition, one could easily argue that the early work in psychoanalytic psychology and in sociology created a mind set on the problem by fixing attention on the relation between the real and ideal selves. This mind set was further reified by Rogers, who was the first to attempt to quantify the relation between these two variables (Rogers, 1954). Using a Q-sort technique, he had a female client distribute 100 statements twice during each of five time periods. The first sort was done according to the way she saw her present-day self (self-sort) and the second according to the way she would like to be (ideal sort). The five sessions occurred once before therapy, twice during therapy, once just after termination, and again one year after therapy. The correlations between the self-sort and the ideal sort increased steadily over the five testing periods, thus indicating that one result of successful therapy is the reduction of distance between the subjective real and ideal selves.

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Butler and Haigh (1954) and Friedman (1955) also used the Q-sort technique to measure distances between real and ideal selves in clinical research. Their results were similar to those reported Rogers's case study.

There is a 30-year gap between the work of Rogers and the contributions of Higgins and his associates (e.g., Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985). Using self-concept discrepancy theory, these investigators reported certain symptom-specific relations between actual-ideal discrepancies and actual-ought discrepancies. The former discrepancy is related to depression and the latter is associated with anxiety. Given these interesting results, it seems that a marriage between a branch of social cognition and clinical psychology is likely. However, it needs to be recognized that self-discrepancy theory is a new variation of earlier telic theories, all of which may have a common problem.

George Kelly, in his 4th Corollary, stated that a person's construction system is composed of dichotomous constructs (Kelly, 1955, p. 59). A popular example of this corollary is that tall is meaningless without some notion of short. The self theories mentioned above implicitly assume that the self dichotomous with the ideal self is the self presently experienced, the real self. Even if a dichotomous relation is not presumed, the two variables are frequently treated as though that is the case. A problem with this outgrowth of tradition is this: To pit the real self in opposition to the ideal self may rob the ideal self of its more logical rival, the un-ideal self, an aspect of the self system that we will refer to as the undesired self. This notion is consistent with Sullivan's theorizing about the *good me*, the *bad me*, and the *not me* (Sullivan, 1953). In his system, the ideal self would be derived from images of the good me, and the undesired self would contain images of the bad me and of the far more dangerous and disowned not me.

It is reasoned that the ideal self contains more than images and memories of me when I was good. It also consists of internalized images of perfected parents and fictional finalisms of culturally supported, highly desirable end states. The composite image, of which only fragments are seen at any given time, is generally unobtainable, and if a person comes close to realizing the image (in Western society anyway) it is probably revised and upgraded so that it can still serve as a source of motivation.

It is also theorized that the content of the undesired self is, on balance, less abstract than the content of the ideal self. Although it probably contains images of undesirable traits and unfortunate circumstances of others ("There but for the grace of God go I") and unrealized impulses to engage in socially unacceptable activities, it is also likely to contain memories of dreaded experiences, embarrassing situations, fearsome events, and unwanted emotions that actually occurred sometime in the individual's past. In this sense, it is postulated that the undesired self is more experience based and less conceptual than the ideal self and, thus, compared with the ideal self, is a more embedded and unshakable standard against which one judges his or her present level of well-being.

This notion, in part, was developed in a paper by Ogilvie and Lutz (1984) wherein the application of a new method for presenting multiple identities within subjects is discussed. The subject used as a case example in that paper judged her well-being by the degree to which she felt accepted by others. Among her positively construed identities were daughter-to-mother, stu-

dent, sister, and rescue squad member. Her most negative identities, identities in which she experienced rejection, were daughter-to-father and roommate. On a series of ratings she performed on various paired identities, she consistently imagined that her life would change a great deal if negative identities were removed but that change would be minimal if positive identities were to vanish. This suggested that the subject used her least desired identities as markers, or pegs, around which she could judge how her life was going. In interviews and in ratings that were repeated 4 months after the first set of ratings, the subject provided evidence that when she no longer felt rejected in one identity (e.g., daughter-to-father) she actively reconstructed another identity (e.g., sister) wherein rejection was likely. In other words, the subject used her undesired self to keep track of her everyday, real self. An unspoken fantasy in this case seemed to be that without a tangible undesired self, the real self would lose its navigational cues.

On the basis of the results of the case study just mentioned and the theoretical arguments that preceded it, the present study tests the following predictions:

1. There is a positive correlation between level of general life satisfaction and the distance between ratings of the real self and the ideal self. That is, the closer the real self is to the ideal self, the higher a subject's score will be on general satisfaction.
2. There is a negative correlation between level of satisfaction and the distance between ratings of the real self and the undesired self. That is, the further away the real self is from the undesired self, the more satisfied the subject will be.
3. The distance between the real self and undesired self is a better predictor of life satisfaction than is the distance between the real self and the ideal self.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were obtained from two undergraduate courses in psychology. One course, Principles of Personality Psychology, had an enrollment of 92 students. The procedures for filling out Identities \times Features matrices were described to the class, and rating forms were distributed. Students were informed that the exercise would take approximately 5 hr to complete and that participation in the research was optional. No extra credit or special treatment was granted to those who volunteered. Matrix forms were then distributed to the class members, who were given 10 days to complete them.

During the class period when the matrices were to be returned, the Life Satisfaction Questionnaire was given to the entire class. Students who had selected to participate in the study appended the questionnaire to their matrices. Students who had chosen not to participate completed and returned the Life Satisfaction Questionnaire only.

A total of 86 Life Satisfaction Questionnaires were obtained, and 29 female and 16 male students (52% of the class) completed the matrices. Four female and 2 male students were excluded from the sample because their matrices were either incomplete (three instances) or because they misunderstood the instructions and made up their own rating systems (three instances). This reduced the sample to 25 female and 14 male students.

Although no sex differences had been predicted, it seemed advisable to add more male subjects to the sample in order to allow for male-female comparisons. To that end, 6 more male subjects were obtained from a course on adult development and aging. There were only 6 men in a class of 32 students. All students were trained in using the proce-

dures in order to collect identity information on older individuals. As part of the training, each student completed a matrix on themselves and filled out the Life Satisfaction Questionnaire. Only the data from male subjects were preserved for the present study, thus bringing the total number to 20 male and 25 female subjects. For the entire sample, the mean age for male subjects was 20 years 1 month, and the mean for female subjects was 19 years 10 months.

Instructions to Subjects

In both courses, subjects were introduced to the notion that all persons can be viewed as having multiple identities. One can be a student, a son, a kitchen employee, a boyfriend, a chess player, a former high school wrestler, a brother, and so on. Subjects were asked to mention aloud other roles, relationships, activities, or "hats worn in life" that could also be construed as identities. Each descriptor mentioned was listed on a chalkboard under the heading *identities*. Subjects were then instructed to select, without restricting themselves to just the identities listed on the board, the identities that were descriptive of themselves. The identities selected to represent their lives were to be written in the rows of a matrix provided each student. One identity was to occupy one row. Preexisting on three of the rows in a random and nonsequential order were the following items: how I am most of the time, how I would like to be, and how I hope to never be.

Subjects were then asked to verbalize any traits, characteristics, qualities, and feeling states that they liked in themselves and in other people. These, too, were written on a chalkboard under the heading *features*. Following that task, characteristics (traits, feelings, qualities) that they did not like in themselves or others were called for and listed on the board. By the end of this exercise, between 50 and 60 features were listed. Subjects were then instructed to select the features (either from the ones listed or ones that occurred to them later) that were applicable to them when they occupied their various identities. They were also asked to include some additional features that they used to describe a person they liked and a person they disliked. They were then told to write the features across the top of their matrices to form the matrix columns.

Once the rows and columns were labeled, subjects were asked to locate a quiet environment to complete the exercise. In that setting, they were to select one of their identities and imagine themselves in that identity. Let us say that the first identity selected was student and that the first six features in the columns were practical, shy, impatient, thinker, social, and jealous. Following the recommended procedure, the subjects would imagine themselves being a student and ask themselves, "As a student, to what degree am I practical?" If the answer was very practical, a 2 was to be placed in the corresponding cell. If they were somewhat practical as a student, a 1 would be entered. A zero was used if practical was not related to being a student. (Note that a zero was not used to indicate being impractical. If impractical was a feature germane to being a student or was applicable to any other identity, instructions were to include it and rate it separately for each identity.) After a judgment was made on practical, the next feature was used, and the raters were to ask themselves, "As a student, to what degree am I shy?" The procedure for rating self-as-student was to be followed until all features had been used. Then another identity was selected and the same procedures followed. Ratings of "how I would like to be" (ideal self), "how I am most of the time" (real self), and "how I hope to never be" (undesired self) were accomplished in the same manner. Table 1 shows a portion of a completed matrix.

Method of Matrix Analysis

The algorithms used to analyze the Identities \times Features matrices were derived by DeBoeck (1983) from the work of Seymour Rosenberg

Table 1
Example of an Identity \times Feature Matrix

Identity	Feature					
	Practical	Shy	Impatient	Thinker	Social	Jealous
Friend	0	0	1	0	2	1
Daughter to mother	2	0	2	1	1	0
Hope never	0	2	2	0	0	2
Future teacher	2	0	1	2	2	0
Employee	1	2	0	0	1	1
Me, mostly	1	1	1	1	2	1
Student	2	1	1	1	0	2
Would like to be	2	1	1	2	2	0

and his associates on methods for representing the structural relations among categories in various kinds of free-response data (Gara & Rosenberg, 1979; Kim & Rosenberg, 1980; Rosenberg, 1977; Rosenberg & Gara, 1985; Rosenberg & Jones, 1972; Rosenberg & Sedlack, 1972). On the basis of a comparison of features assigned to categories, Rosenberg has been particularly interested in three basic structural properties: these include equivalence (i.e., degree of overlap), superset/subset relations, and disjunction or contrast (i.e., degree of nonoverlap). Operating on a superset/subset premise, DeBoeck's algorithm first computes the co-occurrences of each element (in this case, feature) and determines the discrepancy scores between the expected and observed co-frequencies of features. It then looks for the category (in this case, identity) that is most typical of a given feature-specific set of data. That is, it determines which identity having a given feature is most typical of the pattern of co-occurrences unique to that feature in conjunction with all other features. Any identity that is most representative of one or more feature sets is defined as a *prototype*.

After prototypes have been determined, the algorithm computes the degree to which each identity "belongs to" each prototype. The resulting values, represented as percentage figures ranging from 1.00 to -1.00, take into account both shared and unshared feature ratings of each identity vis-à-vis each identity prototype. A high-positive belongingness value indicates that the pattern of ratings given an identity overlap considerably the ratings given a prototype. A high-negative value shows that the rating pattern given an identity is quite different from the pattern of scores received by a prototype. Table 2 shows a portion of a belongingness values matrix.

For the present study only two values in Table 2 were used. They are located in the row labeled "me, mostly" (i.e., real self) under how I hope to never be (undesired self) and how I would like to be (ideal self). The corresponding figures, which are boldfaced in the table, are -.12 and .64. The first value is used as an overlap or distance measure between the real self and undesired self. The second figure is used as a distance measure between the real self and ideal self. The first figure, -.12, indicates that the real self is somewhat distant from, but not fully dichotomous with, the undesired self. The second figure, .64, shows that there is a fair degree of overlap between ratings of the real self and ideal self.

In all 45 cases, how I would like to be (ideal self) and how I hope to never be (undesired self) were prototypes. This was anticipated (indeed, counted on) because ratings of both categories tended to produce unique, prototype-producing configurations. Therefore, the two distance measures were available for all 45 subjects.

Life Satisfaction

The Life Satisfaction Questionnaire was designed by students as a research exercise in a senior seminar. It contains 12 items that cover

Table 2
Belongingness Values of Nonprototype Identities to Prototype Identities

Prototype identity	Nonprototype identity			
	Daughter to mother	How I hope to never be	Student	How I would like to be
Friend	.47	-.61	.30	.37
Daughter to mother	1.00	-.42	.42	.69
Hope never	-.02	1.00	-.18	-.92
Future teacher	.67	-.72	.76	.73
Employee	-.28	.31	.07	-.32
Me, mostly	.37	-.12	.80	.64
Student	.55	-.24	1.00	.49
Would like to be	.62	-.89	.59	1.00

Note. The two boldfaced figures were the only values used in the present study. The first figure, $-.12$, was used as an overlap or distance measure between the real self and undesired self. The second figure, $.64$, was used as a distance measure between the real self and the ideal self.

social satisfaction, academic satisfaction, mood states, and general satisfaction. Ratings of 86 subjects (described earlier) were factor analyzed, and the first factor (rotated) accounted for 70.5% of the variance. The 3 items with the highest loadings on that factor are items commonly found in life satisfaction research (see Larsen, Diener, & Emmons, 1985). They include the following: "I generally think of myself as a happy person," "On the whole, I am satisfied with my life," and a Cantril-like self-anchoring ladder with 11 rungs numbered from -5 at the bottom to 5 at the top (Cantril, 1965). The peak of the ladder is labeled *completely satisfied* and the base is labeled *completely dissatisfied*. Respondents are instructed to mark where they are on the ladder in terms of present-day satisfaction. The first 2 items are rated on a 5-point, agree-disagree scale. The ladder was also converted to a 5-point scale because only 1 subject rated herself below the midpoint of the scale. Therefore, all scores from -5 to 1 were converted to 1 , thus making 1 the lowest level of satisfaction and 5 the highest. These 3 items were used as the measure of general life satisfaction; possible scores ranged from 3 (low satisfaction) to 15 (high satisfaction). The mean score was 10.71 and was somewhat skewed in the direction of high satisfaction. The standard deviation was 2.73 .

Results

The first hypothesis states that there is a positive correlation between level of general satisfaction and the distance between ratings of real self and ideal self. To test this prediction, satisfaction scores were correlated with the degree to which how I am most of the time belonged to how I would like to be. The results are plotted in Figure 1. For female subjects the correlation was $.419$ ($p = .036$). The correlation for male subjects was $.415$ ($p = .068$); with sexes combined, the correlation was $.368$ ($p = .013$). Thus, the prediction was statistically confirmed, slightly more so for women than for men.

The second hypothesis states that there is a negative correlation between level of satisfaction and the distance between ratings of real self and undesired self. In this instance, satisfaction scores were correlated with the belongingness values of how I am most of the time vis-à-vis how I hope to never be. These

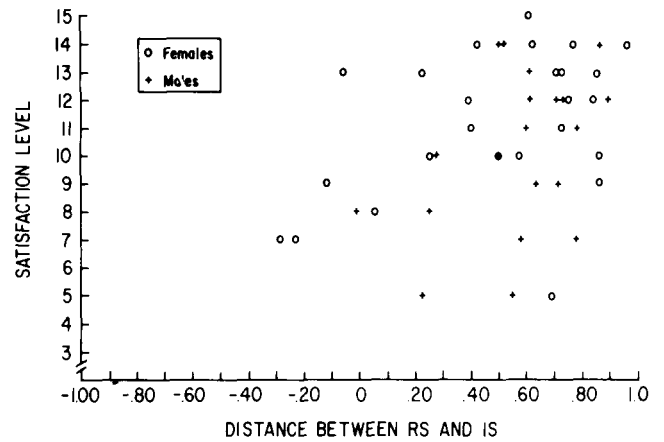


Figure 1. Scatterplot of correlations between satisfaction level and distance between real self and ideal self ($r = .368, p = .013$).

results appear in Figure 2. The correlation for female respondents was $-.676$ ($p = .0002$), and the correlation for male respondents was $-.779$ ($p = .0001$). With sexes combined the correlation was $-.719$ ($p = .0001$). Thus, the second hypothesis was clearly confirmed. This time the relation was stronger for men than for women.

The third prediction made in the study was that the distance between real self and undesired self (real self/undesired self) is a better predictor of general satisfaction than is the distance between real self and ideal self (real self/ideal self). A visual comparison of Figures 1 and 2 shows that to be the case. However, this visual comparison may be misleading because the distance measures, real self/undesired self and real self/ideal self, were obtained from the same individuals and were significantly correlated with each other. For sexes combined, the correlation of real self/undesired self and real self/ideal self was $-.41$ ($p = .005$), for women only the correlation was $-.41$ ($p = .07$), and for men the correlation was $-.42$ ($p = .07$). Statistically, the task is to control for this covariance and to assess whether the two predictors correlate equally with general satisfaction.

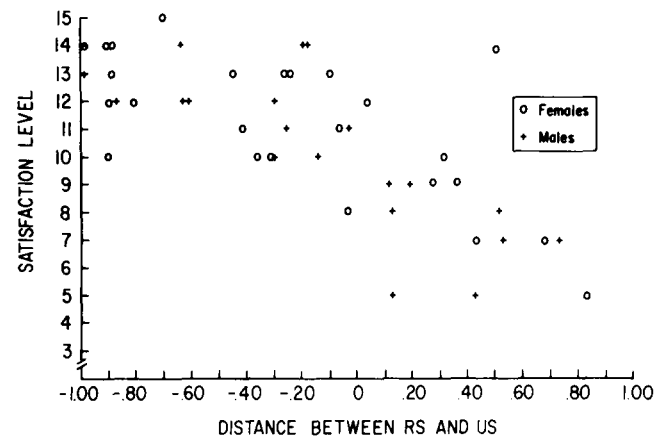


Figure 2. Scatterplot of correlations between satisfaction level and distance between real self and undesired self ($r = -.719, p = .0001$).

The most conservative statistic to test this null hypothesis in a small sample is a *t* test proposed by Williams (1959) and recommended by Steiger (1980). This statistic shows the two correlations to be significantly different for the entire sample ($t = 2.45$; $p < .02$), but not significantly different when the sample is broken down by sex (for men, $t = 2.08$, *ns*; for women, $t = 1.47$, *ns*).

Multiple regression is another statistical model that is often used to determine if one of two or more variables is a better predictor of a dependent variable. Using that technique, real self/undesired self is clearly superior to real self/ideal self in predicting general satisfaction for the entire sample and for both sexes. Holding the variance shared by real self/ideal self and real self/undesired self constant, the remaining variance explained by real self/undesired self is much greater than the variance explained by real self/ideal self. This is true for the entire sample and for male and female subjects computed separately (for the full sample, $p < .0001$ for real self/undesired self and $p = .19$ for real self/ideal self; for women, $p < .002$ for real self/undesired self and $p = .32$ for real self/ideal self; and for men, $p < .0001$ for real self/undesired self and $p = .28$ for real self/ideal self). In summary, the multiple regression model shows that real self/ideal self is a subset of real self/undesired self, with the latter going well beyond the former in terms of the amount of additional variance explained.

Thus, using both statistical models, the third hypothesis is supported for the entire sample. The results of multiple regression strongly supported the hypothesis for both men and women, whereas the *t*-test method showed no significant differences between the two independent measures when the sample was broken down by sex. Despite these somewhat mixed and method-driven results, it is believed that sufficient evidence has been given to warrant the inclusion of the undesired self in future personality research.

Finally, in the introduction it was theorized that the ideal self is more conceptual than the undesired self. The reasoning behind this was that the undesired self is composed, in part, of actual experiences of discomfort, whereas the ideal self, on balance, consists of less-tangible ideas concerning one's potential for perfection. The accuracy of this thinking was assessed in the following manner. All of the features to which subjects assigned a 2 when they judged how I hope to never be (undesired self) and how I would like to be (ideal self) were extracted from their matrices. In total, there were 406 undesired-self features and 627 ideal-self descriptors. Fifty undesired-self and 50 ideal-self features were randomly selected from each group. When a feature was selected that duplicated a feature already drawn from the pool, it was replaced by the one that corresponded to the next randomly generated number.

The 100 features drawn in this manner were again randomly placed on two rating forms with 50 features on each form. The rating instructions were as follows:

This sheet contains words that various people have used to describe themselves. You are asked to rate these words along a concrete-abstract dimension. There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise. Simply circle the number (1 for *very concrete*; 7 for *very abstract*; or any number between these two extremes) that best reflects what each word conveys to you in terms of its concrete-abstract quality.

Thirty-two undergraduate students rated the words; 16 rated the first list and 16 rated the second. In each group, 10 of the raters were women and 6 were men. This relatively large number of raters was used in order to control for numerous individual differences regarding the images generated by certain words. For example, the word *thoughtful* might be judged to be highly concrete by one rater and to stretch the limits of abstractions by another. Of interest here was, on balance, where does a word fall on a concrete-abstract dimension when rated by 16 judges?

The mean rating for each word and its original undesired-self or ideal-self status (1 for undesired self and 2 for ideal self) were then correlated by using Pearson's *r*. The correlation was .495 ($p < .0001$), which indicated overall that ideal-self features are judged to be more abstract than are undesired-self features. Perhaps more compelling than the aforementioned statistic is the list of the 20 words judged to be most abstract versus the 20 words judged to be the most concrete, which appears in Table 3. Four of the 20 words in the most abstract list were drawn from the undesired-self features, and the remaining 16 were drawn from the ideal-self features. By contrast, the majority of the words (15 of 20) judged to be most concrete were from the pool of undesired-self features. Overall, the words judged to be most abstract were qualitatively quite different from the words that were rated in the direction of concrete. The first list contained words that connote contentment (e.g., peaceful, satisfied, serene), expansiveness (e.g., creative, open, well rounded), and positive emotions (e.g., happy, warm, hopeful). By contrast, the second list contained words that denote more tangible states of discomfort (fat, tired, nervous, impatient, stupid), negative affect (grumpy, bad tempered), and socially admonished traits (cruel, conceited, spoiled, rude, messy, lazy).

Although these results offer no conclusive proof that the subjects themselves had experienced undesired-self features and had held ideal-self features as unexperienced abstract concepts, the results are in large measure consistent with the theory that gave impetus to this study.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that the implicit standard individuals use to assess their well-being is how close (or how distant) they are from subjectively being like their most negative images of themselves. In some respects, this finding is counter-intuitive. It contradicts a culturally supported, telic notion that satisfaction is a state reached only when certain goals are met, certain rewards are reaped, or certain ideals are obtained. In two undergraduate classes with a total enrollment of 263 students, 89% of the students stated that they believed that satisfaction is more a function of becoming like their ideal selves than it is a function of becoming unlike their undesired selves. In less formally collected information, faculty colleagues held the same view by a margin of 7 to 1. This commonly held belief is not supported by the present research. In fact, it appears that there is both a push and a pull involved in satisfaction, with the push being more powerful than the pull in terms of a standard for measuring one's present place in life. Indeed, it is suggested that the contents of the push help determine the goals contained in the pull. For example, one individual communicated to me that his most negative image of himself is being hopelessly de-

Table 3
A Comparison of Ideal-Self and Undesired-Self Features in Terms of Abstract and Concrete Mean Ratings

Abstract				Concrete			
Word	<i>M</i>	Word	<i>M</i>	Word	<i>M</i>	Word	<i>M</i>
Peaceful	5.56	Sensitive	4.56	Fat	1.50	Energetic ^b	2.43
Artistic	5.56	Serene	4.50	Bad tempered	2.13	Cruel	2.50
Creative	5.54	Awkward ^a	4.50	Impatient	2.19	Conceited	2.50
Intelligent	4.88	Withdrawn ^a	4.44	Organized ^b	2.19	Nervous	2.56
Satisfied	4.81	Warm	4.44	Tired	2.25	Spoiled	2.63
Good-natured	4.81	Open-minded	4.43	Messy	2.31	Rude	2.63
Happy	4.81	Raw ^a	4.43	Sloppy	2.38	Grumpy	2.63
Liberal	4.75	Hopeful	4.38	Active ^b	2.38	Lazy	2.68
Well-rounded	4.63	Open	4.31	Stupid	2.38	Stubborn	2.69
Erratic ^a	4.56	Sentimental	4.31	Honest ^b	2.38	Friendly ^b	2.69

^a Words from list of undesired-self features.

^b Words from list of ideal-self features.

pendent, needy, and selfish. His primary goal in life is to be constantly available for the unselfish help of others and, thereby, to become a living contrast to his undesired self. In this instance, it is likely that his ideal self was derived from his undesired self and not vice versa, and it is suspected that this is the normal course of events.

This revised way of thinking about the self-system has implications for therapists. Rather than focusing on making goals more realistic (e.g., breaking up the "tyranny of the should"), more rapid insight might be gained by working with the equally nonrational "tyranny of the should *not*." This might be especially useful for persons who appear to be propelled through life by the push or avoidance of unwanted emotions and undesired conditions of life—emotions and conditions that provoked anxiety in the past but, in fact, have no objective bearing on the present.

However, caution must be applied to unrestrained speculation. For instance, the question of the generalizability of these results is unanswered. The data used in this study were gathered from students who volunteered to participate. Several motives, including a desire to please the instructor, a belief that noncooperation would affect one's grade (despite clear statements that it would not do so), and a desire to learn more about themselves, may have made participators different from nonparticipators in ways that made them unrepresentative of the general population.

Setting aside this problem and assuming that the sample was a representative one, one must note that the sample was only representative of college students. One thing distinctive of many students is that they are in the process of reevaluating their relationships with their parents and are forming new relationships with peers. They are also reassessing their goals, and by virtue of having to select courses to take and deciding on majors, they are determining new directions for their lives. In sum, they are in the throes of identity formation at a level beyond the identity issues faced by adolescents. Thus, the results of this study may hold for only 19- to 21-year-olds attending college.

Next, a few comments on the procedures and methods used in this research. In terms of procedures, all identities and all features used by subjects were self-generated. These identities

and features provided the context for ratings of their undesired, ideal, and real selves. This enabled subjects to describe the particulars of their lives in their own terms. The self-generative emphasis of this study makes it similar to and different from the Q-sort technique used by Rogers in his research on the real and ideal self. A strength of Rogers's study was that his subjects created their own self-sorts and ideal sorts. However, the contents of the cards to be sorted were experimenter generated and may have included items that were irrelevant to the lives of his subjects and excluded items of central importance.

Finally, the method of matrix analysis used discards assumptions of linearity and symmetry. Stated simply, the algorithms do not force inconsistent or contradictory data into a mold of consistency. For example, several subjects gave the same ratings to their ideal selves and to their undesired selves on several features. One subject, for instance, rated herself as a flirt and a compulsive thinker on the category how I hope to never be. Later, she gave the same ratings to flirt and compulsive thinker when making judgments of how I would like to be. The algorithm cared not about such contradictions and, instead, computed a statistic that described a degree of overlap between the undesired and ideal selves; a statistic that described a paradox that made sense only in the subjective experience of the subject.

In summary, the results of this study suggest that the past tendency to theorize about the relation between the real and ideal selves has diverted us from another dimension of personality herein called the undesired self. It has been proposed that the undesired self is an implicit baseline individuals use to subjectively measure their well-being. This view challenges the heretofore preferred notion that satisfaction is mostly a function of drawing close to one's construction of an ideal self. Evidence has been given that this more comprehensive view of the self may warrant further attention by personologists.

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