

# A Theory of Self-Esteem\*

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## *Abstract*

*Self-esteem has been conceptualized as an outcome, motive, and buffer, but there is no overall theory of self-esteem. In this article it is suggested that identity theory can provide a theoretical framework for the integration of the various conceptualizations of self-esteem. We suggest that self-esteem is an outcome of, and necessary ingredient in, the self-verification process that occurs within groups, maintaining both the individual and the group. Verification of role identities increases an individual's worth-based and efficacy-based self-esteem. The self-esteem built up by self-verification buffers the negative emotions that occur when self-verification is problematic, thus allowing continued interaction and continuity in structural arrangements during periods of disruption and change. Last, a desire for self-esteem, produced in part through self-verification, stabilizes the group because it motivates individuals to form and maintain relationships that verify identities.*

Self-esteem continues to be one of the most commonly researched concepts in social psychology (Baumeister 1993; Mruk 1995; Wells & Marwell 1976; Wylie 1979). Generally conceptualized as a part of the self-concept, to some self-esteem is one of the most important parts of the self-concept. Indeed, for a period of time, so much attention was given to self-esteem that it seemed to be synonymous with self-concept in literature on the self (Rosenberg 1976, 1979). This focus on self-esteem has largely been due to the association of high self-esteem with a number

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# A Theory Of Self Esteem

**Jianjun Gao**



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