

# THE EFFICACY OF SELF-REPAIR THROUGH COMPENSATORY CONSUMPTION

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Self-identity is one of the most frequently researched topics in consumer research and self-identity-related research has increased dramatically over the last three decades (Sedikides and Skowronski 2003; Tesser 2000). The reason for this popularity is easy to understand. Theories of the self posit that it is a central component in the regulation of affective, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes in both inter- and intrapersonal domains (Banaji and Prentice 1994; Markus and Wurf 1987; Sedikides and Skowronski 1997), and thus, as Reed and Forehand (2019) observe, it is difficult to imagine any human behavior that would not impact how individuals see themselves or how others see them. Indeed, the notion of the self-concept is both unique to humans and universal and is likely evolutionarily adaptive (Sedikides and Skowronski 2003), and therefore it serves to guide humans in the right direction as they navigate the physical and social world. Consequently, maintaining a well-functioning self-concept is critical to effective functioning, if not survival.

The focus of this chapter is on the strategies people take to maintain (augment, protect, repair; Tesser 2000) a well-functioning self-concept, with an emphasis on their efficacy (i.e., do they work in augmenting, protecting, or repairing the self-concept?). In doing so, in keeping with the goals of this volume, we explore the effectiveness of consumption-related strategies consumers adopt to deal with threats to their self-concept. Whether the common consumption-related strategies for dealing with self-threats work is an important question. At a basic level, threats to the self-concept (ones that produce perceived self-deficiencies), if left uncorrected, can morph into chronic self-deficiencies that can be both psychologically and physically debilitating (Adler 1964; Lecky 1961). At the consumer level, adopting consumption-related self-repair strategies that are ineffective, or worse, counterproductive, not only fails to repair a damaged self-concept but also wastes important financial resources that may lead to excessive debt.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, we begin with basic working definitions of the critical constructs we address in this review, explain their interrelations, and discuss the motivations for repairing threats to the self-concept. Next, we discuss the different types of strategies that individuals may adopt to counteract self-threats, with a particular focus on how individuals may use consumption as a means of repairing a threatened

self-concept (compensatory consumption) and whether compensatory consumption is effective for self-repair. We conclude by discussing some unanswered research questions that may inform future research.

## **Self-concept, Self-identity Threat, and Self-repair**

### *Definitions*

#### *Self-concept, Identity, and Self-esteem*

We begin with a set of working definitions of the key self-related constructs and processes we cover in this chapter. This step is crucial because, despite the anticipated overlap and redundancy with other chapters in this volume, highly consistent definitions are elusive due to variations arising from different theories of the self (and there are many; Higgins 1987). Thus, we refer to *working definitions* specific to this chapter, which may differ somewhat from definitions in other chapters in this volume. Although the definitions are detailed, understanding the interrelations among the self-related constructs is critical to understanding how and why self-repair occurs.

The *self-concept* is a mental representation of one's thoughts and beliefs about one-self – who one is and who one wants to be (Baumeister 1999; Reed and Forehand 2019; Rosenberg 1979). Thus, the self-concept consists of both the actual self (how we currently view ourselves) and the ideal self (the self we would like to be; Higgins 1987; Rogers 1961). Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory also includes the ought self (the self we think we should be that centers on one's obligations and responsibilities) and further differentiates between self-perspective (who we think we are or who we want to be) and other-perspective (what we think others think we are or should be). *Self-esteem* refers to global self-worth, or how we feel about ourselves in general (how we feel about our self-concept; Baumeister 1999). Consistent with Higgins' (1987) distinction between self- and other-perspectives within the self-concept, self-esteem can be personal (how I feel about myself, how well I am doing) and social (how I think others feel about me and how well they think I am doing; Leary et al. 1995; Maslow 1987).

The self-concept can further be viewed as a set of *self-identities*, which refer to how individuals define and categorize themselves (Baumeister 1999; Oyserman et al. 2012; Reed and Forehand 2019), and thus a person can have multiple self-identities. These identities may correspond to social roles (one's identity as a woman, spouse, mother, doctor, etc.) or basic human needs or identity motives (power/status, belongingness/affiliation, meaning, distinctiveness, etc.; Kenrick et al. 2010; Vignoles et al. 2006; Williams 2007). Social identities are malleable (Markus and Kunda 1986; Tajfel and Turner 1986); They can change over time in content (how we see ourselves) and which is most important (Amiot et al. 2015). Which self-identity is dominant may also be situationally induced – for example, the saliency of one's work self is replaced by the saliency of one's spouse self on the drive home from work; the importance of affiliation and belonging may become more important as one grows older or become chronic over time. The notion of multiple self-identities (multiple selves) has implications for self-esteem. As noted, global self-esteem refers to how we feel about our self-concept, and given that multiple self-identities comprise the general self-concept, it follows that self-esteem may

also be domain-specific (evaluations of how we are doing on each of the self-identities; Rosenberg et al. 1995; Woike and Baumgardner 1993), and global self-esteem can be conceptualized as a composite factor comprised of the domain-specific self-evaluations. However, all self-identities are not equal – some are more important than others. Consequently, global self-esteem is not a simple average of all domain-specific self-esteems but rather can be thought of as a weighted average of the domain-specific self-esteems, such that domain-specific self-esteem related to the more important self-identities contribute more heavily to global evaluations of self-worth than do less important ones (contingent self-worth; Crocker and Wolfe 2001). These definitions of the self-concept, self-identities, and self-esteem have important implications for self-repair.

### *Self-threats, Self-discrepancies, and Self-repair*

People are generally motivated to feel good about themselves (feel positive about their self-concept). In self-discrepancy theory terms, people feel good about themselves when they experience a sufficient alignment between their actual selves and their ideal or ought selves and they monitor the alignment by frequently comparing their ideal/ought and actual selves (Higgins 1987). However, situations frequently arise in which people feel threats to a particular self-identity (*self-threat*), which typically involve a failure or underperformance on a task that is central to one's identity: failing an exam, losing a sports competition, being excluded from a desired group, and so forth. Such threats can create discrepancies between the actual self and the ideal or ought self (*self-discrepancies*), resulting in reduced feelings of self-worth (Heine et al. 2006). These discrepancies are psychologically aversive and produce a negative affect (Higgins 1987; Rucker and Cannon 2019), and thus threatened individuals are highly motivated to reduce their self-discrepancies by bolstering their global self-esteem so that their evaluation of their actual self again aligns with their ideal self.<sup>1</sup> We refer to this process as *self-repair*.

Finally, when individuals experience self-discrepancies and attempt to reduce them, they have multiple means to do so (*self-repair strategies*). Examples include ignoring the problem or suppressing rumination about it, denigrating the source, changing the relevance or importance of the self-identity, affirming a different important aspect (self-identity) of the self-concept, and so forth (see Tesser et al. 2000 for a more comprehensive list). Further, these strategies can be executed directly, but they can also be facilitated through the use of products and services, which Rucker and colleagues term *compensatory consumption* (Mandel et al. 2017; Rucker and Galinsky 2013; Rucker et al. this volume).

### **Efficacy of Self-repair via Compensatory Consumption**

Rucker and Galinsky (2013, p. 207) define compensatory consumption as “the desire for, acquisition, or use of products to respond to a psychological need or deficit,” and Rucker and colleagues have delineated five distinct compensatory consumption strategies: direct resolution, fluid compensation, symbolic self-completion, escapism, and dissociation (see Rucker et al. this volume, for a detailed discussion of each strategy). Although substantial literature has accumulated demonstrating that threatened individuals engage in these compensatory consumption strategies, comparatively little research has directly assessed whether they are actually effective in reducing self-discrepancies (Mandel et al. 2017).

### *Within- vs. Across-Domain Compensation*

Most of the research that has assessed the efficacy of compensatory consumption can be classified along the dimension of within- versus across-domain compensation (Lisjak et al. 2015; Tesser 2000). *Within-domain compensation* refers to compensation strategies that attempt to bolster the specific aspect of the self that is threatened. For example, individuals who have experienced a threat to their intelligence (e.g., poor performance on an exam) may attempt to reduce the self-discrepancies directly by increasing their intelligence self-esteem. This could occur by employing a direct resolution strategy to make oneself smarter, such as subscribing to a brain training program (Kim and Gal 2014). Alternatively, within-domain compensation may occur through a strategy of symbolic self-completion (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982) in which consumers purchase products that are symbolic of success or mastery on the threatened dimension (e.g., dictionaries, encyclopedias, fountain pens, etc.; cf. Gao et al. 2009; Kim and Rucker 2012; Rustagi and Shrum 2019).

*Across-domain compensation* refers to compensation strategies in which threatened individuals attempt to reduce self-discrepancies by boosting their self-esteem on an important aspect of self-identity that is unrelated to the domain of the self-threat. The theoretical underpinnings of this strategy are rooted in research showing that compensation strategies are flexible (Steele 1988), substitutable (Tesser 2000), and fluid (Stone et al. 1997), and consistent with the notion that a threat to a particular aspect of the self may reduce general self-worth, and thus boosting another important aspect of the self may reduce the overall self-discrepancy by boosting general self-worth. As with within-domain compensation, across-domain compensation strategies may be through either direct resolution or symbolic self-completion.

### *Efficacy of Within-Domain Compensatory Consumption*

#### *Direct Evidence: Situational Self-discrepancies*

Most of the studies that provide a direct assessment of the efficacy of compensatory consumption are within-domain studies that situationally (experimentally) manipulate self-threats. For example, in a series of studies, Lee and colleagues (Lee and Shrum 2012; Lee et al. 2017) tested the proposition that different types of social exclusion (being implicitly ignored vs. explicitly rejected) threatened different underlying needs (power and social self-esteem, respectively) and that individuals would respond to these different self-threats through different types of compensatory consumption (conspicuous consumption, charitable giving, respectively). Their experiments confirmed their predictions, but they also showed that the need to compensate through consumption was eliminated when participants were given the opportunity to self-affirm on the threatened domain. These studies provide indirect evidence of the efficacy of within-domain compensation by showing that within-domain compensation (boosting the threatened needs) resolves the self-discrepancy and eliminates the need for compensatory consumption but do not provide direct evidence that the compensatory consumption act itself resolves the self-discrepancy.

Other studies have provided direct evidence for the efficacy of within-domain compensatory consumption. For example, Gao et al. (2009, Study 1) tested the efficacy of within-domain compensatory consumption using a sequential choice task. First, participants were either threatened or not on the intelligence domain and then provided the opportunity to

symbolically compensate by choosing between either a set of intelligence-related or intelligence-unrelated products (e.g., classical CD vs. pop music CD). Next, participants were given a second chance to compensate by choosing between an intelligence-related (fountain pen) or an unrelated (candy) product. Participants who had not initially been given a choice among intelligence-related products were significantly more likely to choose the intelligence-related product (fountain pen), but this effect was not observed for those who initially chose between intelligence-related products. These findings suggest that the initial compensatory consumption sufficiently reduced the self-discrepancy.

Similar findings have been observed in other self-domains. For example, in a series of studies, Rustagi and Shrum (2019, Study 1, 2) used a similar sequential choice task to test the efficacy of compensatory consumption across two self-domains (power, intelligence). Their findings replicated those of Gao et al. (2009) on the intelligence domain and extended it to the other two domains. In each case, the initial compensatory compensation eliminated any subsequent compensatory consumption by threatened individuals, suggesting that the initial compensatory consumption successfully reduced the self-discrepancies.

The sequential task procedure in the studies just discussed provides an implicit measure of the efficacy of compensatory consumption. The logic is that if compensatory consumption following a self-threat sufficiently reduces the self-discrepancy, then participants should not exhibit compensatory consumption given a second opportunity because the self-discrepancy has been ameliorated. In contrast, other studies have taken a more explicit approach by measuring the self-concept domain before and after compensation. For example, Loveland et al. (2010, Study 4) tested the proposition that threats to belongingness needs increase preferences for nostalgic products because nostalgic products facilitate reconnection with the past and that the consumption of nostalgic products can thus satiate the need to belong. Participants were first either threatened (excluded) or not (included) on a social exclusion task and then completed an implicit (accessibility of belonging words) and explicit (Need to Belong scale) before and after consuming a nostalgic product (eating a nostalgic cookie). Compared to included participants, excluded participants indicated higher levels of the need to belong and greater accessibility of belonging words before compared to after the exclusion manipulation (the manipulation was successful) but consuming the nostalgic (but not the non-nostalgic) cookie eliminated the effect for both dependent variables (accessibility and need to belong did not differ from the included group), indicating that consuming a nostalgic product successfully reduced the self-discrepancy in need to belong. Similar findings were reported by Rucker et al. (2011; reported by Rucker et al. 2012). Participants were threatened or not on the domain of power and then were given a pen as a participation reward that was advertised as either high status or high performance. Based on measures of power before and after the power threat, for those who received the power threat, receiving the pen associated with status restored feelings of power but receiving the pen associated with performance did not, but no effects were noted for those who did not receive a power threat.

Several aspects of the Loveland et al. (2010) and Rucker et al. (2011) findings are noteworthy relative to the Gao et al. (2009) and Rustagi and Shrum (2019) studies. First, they both measured actual consumption. Second, for the Loveland et al. (2010) study, consumption of the nostalgic product reduced self-discrepancies but merely choosing between nostalgic and non-nostalgic products did not (Study 3). This finding departs from the other studies that have found that simply choosing compensatory products is sufficient to restore the threatened self. It also departs from other research showing that using a luxury product

can increase self-esteem and merely thinking about owning a luxury product can reduce self-discrepancies related to status (Sivanathan and Pettit 2010).

Although the research just reviewed suggests that within-domain compensatory consumption can successfully reduce or eliminate self-discrepancies, in some instances, it can backfire. For example, whether the connection between the compensatory product and the self-threat is explicit or implicit affects self-repair. An example of an implicit connection for an intelligence self-threat is a magazine such as *National Geographic*, which is naturally associated with intelligence, whereas including the slogan “Informative, Intelligent, Insightful” makes the connection explicit. When the connections are made explicit, within-domain self-repair is inhibited (Rustagi and Shrum 2019) and self-control is reduced (Lisjak et al. 2015). These effects occur because the explicit connections lead to more rumination about the self-threat, which taxes cognitive resources and impedes self-repair. Notably, rumination did not increase for either implicit connections or across-domain compensation.

### *Indirect Evidence: Chronic Self-discrepancies*

The research just reviewed provides experimental evidence that within-domain compensatory consumption can be effective for individuals who momentarily experience a self-threat. In contrast, cross-sectional and longitudinal research suggests that it may not be effective for those with chronic self-deficits and may even be counterproductive. For example, indirect evidence of the lack of efficacy of compensatory consumption can be found in research on the effects of materialism, and the findings are mixed. Material possessions are closely linked to self-identity (Belk 1988) and people frequently use possessions to signal to others important qualities of themselves (Berger and Heath 2007). Shrum et al. (2013) define materialism as the acquisition and use of products and services for their symbolic signaling value, and thus people may turn to material goods to bolster threatened aspects of the self. Indeed, materialism is associated with both chronic and situational deficits in many core aspects of the self (e.g., self-esteem, power, social isolation, and loneliness; Chaplin et al. 2019; Shrum et al. 2022). Most research finds that materialism is either negatively correlated with happiness and life satisfaction (Shrum et al. 2022) or uncorrelated with it (Jaspers et al. 2023), suggesting that attempting to repair the self through general materialistic pursuits is ineffective at best. For example, in a high-powered three-year longitudinal study ( $N = 6,551$ ), negative bi-directional between-person effects were found for the relation between materialism, measured by the Material Values Scale (MVS; Richins and Dawson 1992), and life satisfaction. However, there were no within-person effects, suggesting that increases in materialism at one point in time for a particular person did not cause that person to be less happy later. Interestingly, within-person effects were observed for the relation between life satisfaction and the happiness facet of the MVS (the belief that they would be happier if they had more possessions), meaning that if an individual experienced a reduction in life satisfaction, they developed stronger beliefs that possessions would make them happier. The combination of results suggests that people do compensate for self-deficits through materialistic pursuits, but this does not lead to greater happiness.

However, another high-powered five-year longitudinal study ( $N = 2,789$ ) found that different types of materialism could either increase or reduce loneliness (Pieters 2013). In that study, increases in general materialism (measured by the MVS) were associated with later increases in loneliness, and vice-versa. Notably, the effect of increases in loneliness on later increases in materialism was greater than the reverse. In contrast, examination of the



effects of the individual types of materialism (facets of the MVS) showed contrasting effects. Increases in both the happiness facet and the success facet (the belief that possessions are indicators of success) caused later increases in loneliness (and vice-versa), whereas increases in the centrality dimension (the general importance of possessions) reduced loneliness over time. These latter findings suggest that for some people, possessions may provide a salve that reduces their feelings of loneliness.

Despite some limited evidence that materialistic goal pursuits can have restorative effects for some people in some instances, most of the research suggests that using materialism to bolster self-identity is not effective. Part of the reason for the ineffectiveness may be due to unintended consequences. For example, people presumably use possessions to signal personal qualities such as power and status to others because they think it will cause others to evaluate them more favorably, but the opposite may be the case. In one study, participants considered more materialistic people to be more extrinsically motivated, selfish, and self-centered (Van Boven et al. 2010). Another example of unintended consequences of compensatory consumption can be found in research on social media use. Lonely adolescents understandably turn to social media to increase the size of their social networks, employing a presumed direct compensation strategy to combat loneliness by developing more social relationships. However, research suggests that just the opposite occurs, that increasing social media use increases feelings of loneliness (Fumagalli et al. 2023) in part because social media usage may displace or crowd out the development of more high-quality social interactions, which are a much larger determinant of loneliness than the number of social contacts (Shrum et al. 2023).

### *Efficacy of Across-Domain Compensatory Consumption*

Only a few studies have assessed the potential efficacy of across-domain compensatory consumption and even fewer have provided direct assessments. Indirect evidence was provided by a study showing that across-domain compensation through self-affirmations eliminates the need for compensatory consumption (Sivanathan and Pettit 2010, Study 2). Participants were either threatened or not on the domain of status and then were asked to indicate how much they would pay for a status or non-status watch. In addition, some participants were given the opportunity to self-affirm in a different domain (writing about their most important values). Consistent with compensatory consumption predictions, threatened participants were willing to pay more for the status watch (but not for the non-status watch). However, this effect was eliminated for those who self-affirmed before indicating how much they would pay for the watch, suggesting that the self-affirmation in an unrelated self-domain successfully reduced the self-discrepancies.

Wang et al. (2023, Study 5) provided more direct evidence of the efficacy of across-domain compensatory consumption. Participants were either threatened or not on the domain of academic competence and then presented with an advertisement for an across-domain service pertaining to athleticism (fitness club) and indicated their intention to join the club. Participants then rated their feelings of self-worth and academic competence. In addition, participants also completed a measure of analytic-holistic thinking style. Threatened participants indicated a greater willingness to join the fitness club, but this was only true for holistic thinkers. More relevant to self-repair, holistic thinkers (but not analytic thinkers) rated themselves higher on global self-esteem but lower on academic competence. These results suggest that, at least for holistic thinkers, across-domain

compensation eliminated a global self-discrepancy (global self-worth) but the academic competence self-discrepancy remained, with the latter result consistent with research on fluid compensation (Stone et al. 1997).

### **Future Research Directions**

As numerous reviews make clear, there is little doubt that individuals frequently attempt to reduce self-discrepancies through consumption (Mandel et al. 2017; Rucker et al., this volume; Wheeler and Bechler, this volume). What is not at all clear is whether the self-repair strategy of compensatory consumption is effective. The purpose of this chapter was to address this question. What we found as we delved deeply into the literature is that, despite the voluminous literature documenting compensatory consumption, a dearth of studies has directly tested its efficacy in restoring the threatened self. Nevertheless, virtually all of those studies show that compensatory consumption can repair self-discrepancies under a variety of conditions, with the only potential exceptions being indirect (non-experimental) studies that have investigated the relations between implicit chronic self-deficits (e.g., materialism) and well-being outcomes. Of course, the lack of studies showing a lack of effectiveness may be due to publication bias, yet the research we have reviewed converges nicely to the same conclusion across multiple self-threat domains and multiple consumer compensatory responses. However, there are still important research questions that remain unanswered that would benefit from future research endeavors.

### ***Is the Compensatory Consumption Process Conscious or Nonconscious (and What Are the Implications for Self-repair)?***

Whether the process is conscious or nonconscious has received little if any attention. In our own research, we have assumed that the process is nonconscious. Indeed, the research showing that compensatory consumption can have no effects (Rustagi and Shrum 2019) or even backfire (Lisjak et al. 2015) when the connections between the self-threat and the compensatory products are made explicit suggests that, at the least, compensatory consumption is only effective when the process is nonconscious. That said, according to recent surveys, a vast majority of people report having personally engaged in each of the five compensatory consumption strategies noted earlier and having observed others engaging in them (Rucker and Cannon 2019; Rucker et al., this volume) and an analysis of social media posts indicated that individuals spontaneously (i.e., without elicitation) articulated both within- and across-domain compensation strategies (Goor et al. 2021, Study 1).

People also seem to intuitively know which compensation strategies will work for them. For example, consider the findings of Goor et al. (2021, Study 6). Participants were either threatened or not on the domain of job-related status and then presented with two phone covers that varied whether the cover had an explicit within-domain threat-related slogan (Best Job Ever) or across-domain slogan (Best Mom/Dad Ever). They were then asked how each cover would make them feel about their life. Compared to non-threatened participants, threatened participants said the within-domain, job-related cover would make them feel worse but that the across-domain, parent-related cover would not. Thus, consistent with the research on the effects of explicit connections, participants seemed to correctly infer that the within-domain product would have detrimental effects. Of course, being able to consciously recognize, remember engaging in, and intuiting the effects of compensatory



consumption and being aware of the process when it occurs are different things, and thus pinning down these types of processes is a potential avenue for future research. Another possibility is that some compensatory strategies (e.g., direct resolution) may involve more conscious processing than others (e.g., symbolic self-completion). Along with answering this question, a critical question for future research is how the conscious/nonconscious question relates to the effectiveness of the compensatory consumption strategies.

### ***Are There Boundary Conditions for the Efficacy of Compensatory Consumption?***

#### *Individual Differences*

Does the efficacy of self-repair via compensatory consumption depend on chronic levels of fundamental motives (self-esteem, power, belongingness, etc.)? As one example, some research suggests that self-affirmation (an across-domain compensation strategy) is more effective (or only effective) in boosting global self-esteem following a self-threat for those already dispositionally higher in self-esteem (for a review, see Sherman and Cohen 2006). If so, it raises the question for whom compensatory consumption will be beneficial. One possibility is that they are only effective for those who are already dispositionally higher on the fundamental motives, and thus may not be effective in restoring momentary increases in self-discrepancies for those who have chronic self-deficits. The answer to this question may have implications for why we see strong negative correlations between general compensatory consumption (e.g., materialism) and psychological well-being measures, perhaps because those higher in materialism tend to have greater self-discrepancies (lower self-esteem, power, etc.).

#### *Strength and Saliency of the Self-threat*

Another question pertains to the strength of the self-threat and its resulting saliency in terms of degree and longevity. For example, the research we reviewed showing that compensatory consumption can be an effective salve for a wounded self-concept is almost exclusively lab studies that use very subtle manipulations to induce self-discrepancies. Thus, it is unclear how effective relatively subtle compensation strategies such as symbolic self-completion would be in the face of much stronger (and very common) self-threats (demotion, not making tenure, unfaithful spouse, death of a loved one). Although inducing strong self-threats in the lab is neither ethical nor practical, varying the severity of the threat within an ethical range may provide important insights.

### ***Within- or Across-Domain Compensation: Which Works Better and When?***

Given that individuals often have a choice regarding whether they compensate within- or across-domain, which is more effective and under what conditions? To our knowledge, no research has addressed this question, but research has addressed which of the two strategies individuals seem to prefer, and the findings are mixed. Tesser (2000) contended that the various compensation strategies—whether within- or across-domain, are substitutable. However, Stone et al. (1997) noted that they may not be perfectly substitutable, and choice may be a function of availability. In his studies, most participants were willing to compensate

across-domain when that was the only choice but preferred to compensate within-domain when given the choice between the two. In contrast, Goor et al. (2021) found that in the case of status threats, participants preferred to compensate with an across-domain product but that this effect was attenuated if the participants believed that high-status goals were attainable. However, like Lisjak et al. (2015) the compensation products involved functional products (e.g., mugs, coffee, charms) that varied within- and across-domain conditions via taglines and slogans that explicitly connected the product to the self-threat domain (in within-compensation conditions). Thus, it is unclear which strategies would be preferred if the products were only implicitly (symbolically) connected to the self-threat domain (e.g., fountain pen for status, dictionary for intelligence, etc.). Answers to these questions may provide a path to understanding which compensation strategies are more effective and when.

In conclusion, we have posed three potential research questions pertaining to the efficacy of self-repair via compensatory consumption. Each is complex and poses its own challenges, but we also stress that the three questions are likely not independent but may interact. Whether within- or across-domain compensation is most effective may depend on the strength of the threat, individual differences in chronic self-dispositions, or whether the process is conscious or nonconscious. Whether a compensatory process becomes conscious may depend on the strength of the threat and underlying chronic dispositions. The possibilities are numerous and obtaining answers is daunting, but we think the prospects are exciting and the potential effects on psychological well-being are important.

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### Note

- 1 In theory, self-discrepancies (the gap between ideal/ought and actual self) can be reduced by (1) movement of the actual self toward the ideal/ought self, (2) movement of the ideal/ought self toward the actual self (the ideal/ought self becomes more realistic and achievable), or (3) both (Rogers 1959), and research shows that both can occur (Watson et al. 2014). Because self-repair through compensatory consumption is primarily achieved through the first, we only address this strategy.

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