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Mattering: Empirical Validation of a Social-Psychological Concept

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Mattering is the extent to which we make a difference in the world around us. People matter simply because: others attend to them (awareness), invest themselves in them (importance), or look to them for resources (reliance). We construct and validate a mattering index, using confirmatory factor analysis. We establish the discriminant validity of the mattering index, using self-consciousness, self-esteem, self-monitoring, alienation, and perceived social support. Finally, we discuss the potential importance of mattering as a dimension of the self-concept.

Twenty years ago (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981), Morris Rosenberg formally introduced a construct that has been an implicit part of social psychology since we began to focus on the self as an area of theoretical and empirical analysis: *mattering*. Mattering is defined as the perception that, to some degree and in any of a variety of ways, we are a significant part of the world around us. Surely, it is central to our sense of who we are and where we fit in to be able to say that others think about us (at least occasionally), seek our advice, or would care about what happens to us.

In contrast, if people do not share themselves meaningfully with us, if no one listens to what we have to say, if we are interesting to no one, then we must cope with the realization that we do not matter. The world not only can but does get along without us, and we are truly irrelevant. Such a terrifying experience might lead us to do almost anything to matter to others. The youth who acts out in socially undesirable ways may be motivated, at least in part, by the desire to matter to the significant others in his life who virtually ignore him. Similarly, perhaps we would gain a greater understanding of the problem of teenage pregnancy by considering the possibility that, in a world in which young girls are

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largely irrelevant, the teenage mother can count on the fact that she will matter to her newborn child.

Such intriguing possibilities only begin to suggest the importance of mattering in any theory of human development and social behavior. Indeed, in his original conceptualization, Rosenberg (Rosenberg & McCullough 1981) asserted that mattering is profoundly important, both for the self (there is little worse than feeling we are irrelevant to others) and society (as a significant element of the social bond). Further, he noted that it is the *perception* of mattering that is important; whatever the "objective" indicators of mattering, if people do not see them, they do not instill a feeling of mattering. Yet, this essential personal motivator and source of social cohesion has received very little empirical analysis to date. Early studies have provided evidence that mattering is important to self-esteem and depression (Rosenberg & McCullough 1981; see also Taylor & Turner 2001) and caregiving to an impaired person (Pearlin & LeBlanc 2001).

However, the results of these studies are somewhat limited by the nature of the measures of mattering available. For example, in Rosenberg and McCullough (1981), the authors were dependent on secondary analysis of several data sets that were collected from adolescent respondents well before the advent of the concept of mattering. As a consequence, in operationalizing this variable, they were forced to use items that had not been constructed to tap this construct and only obliquely reflected it. Further, the items used were narrow in scope, mainly referring to how much the child mattered to its parents; although parental mattering is clearly important (especially to young people), the general domain of the concept is much broader. Finally, other studies have also used indices that were limited in scope. Taylor and Turner (2001) used a five-item index that had less than ideal levels of validity and reliability; Pearlin and LeBlanc (2001) used a more reliable index, but it focused on a loss of mattering.

The purpose of the present effort is to develop and validate an index to measure this important construct and test its usefulness in advancing our understanding of the self-concept. We elaborate conceptually and operationally on the original treatment of mattering offered by Rosenberg & McCullough (1981). We explicitly discuss various ways in which people could matter to others. Further, we present evidence that the index we have developed to measure mattering evinces strong discriminant validity.

Forms of Interpersonal Mattering

Mattering can take a variety of forms. We distinguish two superordinate categories. The first of these categories involves being the focus of attention of others. Such *awareness* is purely cognitive: we matter in the merest of senses if others realize that we exist. In this case, we are recognizable to others as individuals, distinguishable from the masses that populate our surroundings. Evidence that suggests we matter in this fundamental way can be found in the fact that other people identify us at social gatherings or notice when we come or go.

In contrast, if we fail to command the attention of others when we are in their presence, we may feel like a "non-person." When others ignore us or act as if they have never seen us before, even though they have, it signals a serious failure to matter. As an example, John Nash, the main character in the film *A Beautiful Mind* (Grazer, Howard, & Goldsman, 2001), speaks to a friend of his need to capture the attention of his colleagues in mathematics:

JOHN NASH: I need to look through to the governing dynamics, find a truly original idea. That's the only way I'll ever distinguish myself. It's the only way I'll ever ...

CHARLES HERMAN: Matter?

JOHN NASH: Yes.

Indeed, the United States military academies have devised the very effective punishment of "shunning" for serious violations of the military code. A person who is shunned is totally ignored by the other cadets: no communications can be addressed to or accepted from the norm violator. Fenigstein (1979) demonstrated the dramatic effects of shunning on participation in social interaction. In a similar vein, Goffman's (1963) analysis of the civil inattention accorded to those of lesser social status, such as servants, reflects the fact that such lower status people do not matter in the encounter.

Finally, it should be noted that cognitive interest in someone could be positive or negative. Most people would prefer that the attention they receive from others be positive. Failing this, however, people would be willing to act in socially undesirable ways, if it would mean not being ignored; negative attention is better than no attention at all. Children throwing temper tantrums or destroying property, may, at least in part, be attempting to assure that they matter to those in charge of them. Indeed, some people, feeling that they (or their cause) don't matter to anyone, may engage in particularly heinous behavior to force society to attend to them.

The second superordinate category of mattering implies a *relationship* between the person and the others to whom one matters. Because the relationship can be bidirectional, we distinguish two forms of relationship mattering, determined by the flow of the relationship between person and other.

The first of the relationship forms of mattering is *importance*. We feel that we matter to others if we are the object of their interest and concern. They may listen to our complaints about problems, inconvenience themselves to see that our needs are met, or take pride in our achievements. The fact that people invest time and energy in us in order to promote our welfare suggests that we are a significant part of their world. In this form of mattering, the flow of relationship is from the other to the person, as people share themselves with us for our own betterment.

In some cases, we may realize that others are trying to promote our welfare by positive means (although not necessarily for entirely altruistic motivations); at other times, we may have the distinct impression that we are the focus of negative reactions from others. In either case, we recognize that others are investing their efforts in us by relating to us. For example, Rosenberg (1989) found that adolescents who received positive support for their academic performance had the highest levels of self-esteem, presumably because they knew they mattered to their parents. What was more telling, however, was that those with punitive parents had higher levels of self-esteem than those whose parents ignored their performance; often, to be punished is to be convinced that parents really care, even if that caring is not pleasurable.

One sure sign of importance is whether we are someone's ego-extension. Does our behavior reflect on the other person? Have we been "appropriated" (Cooley 1922) by another? When our friends are proud of our achievements, or ashamed of our follies, we can be sure that we matter to them, even if this mattering can sometimes be oppressive.

Importance as a form of mattering is clearly linked to the notion of social support. Voluminous research has documented the significance of social support in our daily

lives. Especially relevant to our purposes, Ross and Mirowsky (1989) and Wethington and Kessler (1986) independently demonstrated that a *sense* of support had greater impact on a person's psychological well being than did more "objective" indicators of actual support. This sense of support is a fundamental precursor to importance: if we believe that others are available to provide us with the support that we need, then we understand that we are important to them; we know that we matter.

The second form of mattering involving relationships focuses on *reliance*. We matter to others if they look to us for the satisfaction of their needs or wants. In this form of mattering, the flow of relationship is from person to other. The joy that engulfs parents upon realizing that their children need them is due to the realization that they matter.

In the relationship forms of mattering, it is the element of choice involved that sends a clear signal: of all the people who might have been chosen as the regular and consistent target of their investment or the fulfillment of their needs, one has been singled out. Indeed, although being uniquely deserving of their care or qualified to provide what others need is *prima facie* evidence that one matters, it does not necessarily suggest a maximum degree of mattering; the fact that one has been chosen from a pool of possibilities might indicate an even stronger degree.

Finally, we emphasize that not all awareness, concern, or need on the part of others toward a person signals mattering. For example, those in positions of authority who treat people like objects or those who patently attempt to ingratiate themselves with someone are not likely to engender a feeling of mattering. We believe that mattering is distinguished by the sense that others are relating to a person largely as an end in itself and not as a means to some other end. Cognitive awareness by others is engendered by some intrinsically captivating characteristic; importance arises out of a sincere concern for the person's welfare; and reliance flows from a sense that others appreciate the resources that one has to offer.

Constructing and Validating the Index

In constructing the index to measure the various forms of mattering, our first concern was content validity: we wanted to make sure that we covered the major ways that each form of mattering could be realized in a person's everyday experience. To this end, we developed a list of constituent elements for each form of mattering. For example, in considering importance, we recognized that there are many ways in which one could be the object of another's concern. If others invest resources in me, promote my welfare, are attentive to my needs, take pride in what I do, criticize me for my own good, or suffer inconveniences for me, I can be confident that I am important to them. (For a list of the elements derived for each form of mattering, see Table 1.)

Having generated a list of elements, we then wrote at least two items for each. The resulting questionnaire contained 47 items, randomly ordered, in Likert format. Responses ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" on a five-point range; a score of 5 was assigned to the response revealing the greatest degree of mattering, and a score of 1 was assigned to the extreme that revealed the least mattering. The directions asked students not to focus on specific others in their lives in determining their responses, but to focus on other people in general.

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of the items, using the Analysis of Covariance Structures (LISREL 8) program developed by Joreskog and his

TABLE 1 Elements of Mattering

Awareness	*Importance*	*Reliance*
I am the object of other's attention	I am an object of other's concern	Other chooses/looks to me
Other:	*Other:*	*Other:*
Notices me*	Invests resources in me*	Seeks my advice*
Recognizes me*	Promotes my welfare*	Depends on me
Is familiar with me*	Is attentive to my needs*	Seeks support from me*
Remembers my name*	Provides emotional support for me	Seeks resources from me*
Is aware of my presence*	Takes pride in me*	Needs me*
Focuses attention on me*	Cares about what I do*	Misses me
Does not ignore me*	Criticizes me for my own good*	Trusts me to be there*
	Inconveniences self for me*	Values my contribution
	Sees me as an ego-extension*	
	Listens to me*	

Note. Items with asterisks are those covered in the final 24-item index.

associates (Joreskog, 1978, 1979; Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996). Confirmatory factor analysis requires that the number of factors be identified in advance, and that the epistemic link between the unobserved factor and the observed variables that are hypothesized to reflect it be specified as well.

In our analyses, we analyzed a three-factor model for mattering, positing awareness, importance, and reliance as distinct but related unobserved factors; each factor was reflected in responses to the items from the corresponding index. Our goal was to determine which of the original items performed satisfactorily as measures of the three posited factors of mattering. Our first criterion for selection was construct validity: An item was discarded if it failed to reflect the intended factor with sufficient strength. We used a standardized coefficient of .300 as the cutoff point; if the factor accounted for less than 10% of the variance in the item, we deemed it inadequate. (This is a conservative criterion often found in exploratory factor analysis.)

In a search for simple structure, we utilized a second criterion. Our model posited that the items are discriminant valid, i.e., they tap only the underlying factor that they were created to measure. We recognized two ways that an item could lack discriminant validity: first, the analysis could call for an epistemic link between the item and a second, unintended latent construct; and, second, items tapping different latent constructs could be linked by a covariance between their disturbances. The first pattern is what is commonly understood as a violation of discriminant validity. The second pattern suggests that some latent construct, unanticipated by the model, is causing covariance between the two items; in that case, the contaminated items are tapping more than one latent construct (one of which is outside the scope of the model). We consider the first violation more substantively serious, as it gives direct evidence that the item lacks discriminant validity.

Finally, we distinguished threats to discriminant validity from two sources. With *internal* discriminant validity, the question is whether items designed to reflect one

mattering factor also reflect one of the other mattering factors; with *external* discriminant validity, the question is whether a mattering item additionally taps a factor from some conceptually distinct, but related, construct.

We limited our search for departures from the ideal by ceasing to augment the model when the modification index suggested that the goodness of fit chi-square would be reduced by less than 15 units. Further, once this criterion was reached, we eliminated any offending direct measurement parameter whose standardized value was less than .200; if the unintended latent factor could not account for more than 4% of the variation in the item, we deemed it not a serious source of invalidity.

We initially distributed the questionnaire, with only the 47 mattering items, to 508 students from classes at a private college in New England. Using the criteria listed above, the results of this first round of analysis (not presented in this article) reduced the number of items to 26. Results show an acceptable fit of the model to the data; in particular, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) values (.950 and .027, respectively) reflect a satisfactory fit. The items do a good job reflecting their underlying latent constructs: standardized estimates for the measurement parameters range from .421 to .819 (median .619). The strongest correlations involve the importance factor (.663 with awareness and .637 with reliance); the results are consistent with the argument that these are, indeed, distinct factors. The reliance–awareness correlation of .490 also suggests the necessity of a three-factor model of mattering. Finally, a second-order factor analysis, positing a single second-order factor (mattering) above the three first-order factors of awareness, importance, and reliance, confirmed the distinctness of each of the three first-order factors. The full results are available from the first author.

We found nine associations between disturbance terms generated by our augmentation procedure out of a possible 325. However, only one of these associations reached a standardized value above .200 (.207); therefore we decided that our items do not suffer from this second form of a lack of discriminant validity.

For each of the three dimensions of mattering, nearly all elements identified in Table 1 are represented among the 26 surviving items. The only exceptions involve the two relationship forms of mattering. First, an item measuring emotional support did not load significantly on the importance (or any other) factor. Upon reflection, this result offers preliminary evidence that social support and mattering are not the same construct, although they may be positively associated. Second, on the reliance factor, items indicating that others miss the respondent when he/she is not around and others value the respondent's contributions did not load on any factor. Missing those who are absent is apparently qualitatively different from depending on them for resources; there are many other reasons why one person might miss another. Similarly, one can value a contribution from another without having sought it in the first place. We believe that these empirical results have helped us conceptually refine our understanding of the domain of mattering.

Having generated a list of items that both adequately reflect the intended underlying component of mattering and demonstrate *internal* discriminant validity (i.e., do not reflect multiple components of mattering), we turned our attention to establishing *external* discriminant validity: to determine if the mattering items do not (also) reflect constructs that would theoretically be related to mattering.

We focused on five such constructs: self-consciousness, self-monitoring, self-esteem, alienation (in the form of meaninglessness and normlessness) and perceived social support.[1] Self-consciousness is the chronic tendency to be the object of one's

own attention. Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss (1975) identify two general forms of self-consciousness: private self-consciousness is the cognitive awareness of one's own personal characteristics; public self-consciousness is the awareness that one is a stimulus for the behavior of others.

Self-monitoring (Snyder 1974, 1987) is the extent to which people observe, regulate, and control the self-presentations that they proffer in everyday social interactions. Several analyses have obtained a varying number of factors constituting self-monitoring. We have focused on the two-factor model (public performance and other-directedness) found in Briggs and Cheek (1988).[2]

Self-esteem is the global evaluation of one's personal characteristics and attributes (Rosenberg 1989). Using *ad-hoc* items to measure mattering, Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) found that mattering was highly related to self-esteem.

We focused on two forms of alienation identified by Seeman (1959): meaninglessness (the sense that there are no rules for living, so that outcomes of interaction are unpredictable) and normlessness (the belief that social norms are ineffective, so that socially disapproved behaviors are necessary for success). Perhaps responses to mattering are influenced by the degree to which one feels alienated from society; for example, people who score low on an awareness item may simply be reflecting the unpredictability of their lives (meaninglessness).

Finally, perceived social support is the sense that others provide the resources (material, psychological, and emotional) that help one carry on. We expect that perceived social support will be highly related to mattering, especially importance. Yet, they may still be distinguishable constructs. In particular, perceived social support is conceptualized (and operationalized) as a sense that others will provide for specific needs that one experiences (such as emotional support during difficult times or information required to accomplish a task). In contrast, Rosenberg conceived of importance as being more general, involving others' continual interest in a one's welfare, beyond the provision of specific forms of support. It is possible to know that we are important to others, even when specific needs are not at issue: the unexpected friendly telephone call when we are not in great need reminds us that we matter.

Furthermore, importance implies that people invest in us because they are sincerely interested in furthering our welfare. But not all promises of resources arise out of such an altruistic motivation. Sometimes, people provide support for us in order to further their own ends, in a manipulative ploy or an attempt at ingratiation (Jones & Wortman 1973). If we sense such ulterior motivations in another's "supportive" behavior, we are hardly likely to believe that we matter to him or her; instead, we will recognize that we are merely an object, a means to the other's selfish ends. In short, any social support that does not work through mattering is likely to do more harm than good.

In sum, we can understand importance and perceived social support as two overlapping but distinguishable constructs: one can feel important when specific support is not an issue, and one can receive support that does not reflect a sincere concern for one's own welfare on the part of others.

We used a measure developed by Sherbourne and Stewart (1991). Positive social interaction involved the availability of others for good times; emotional/informational support involved empathic understanding and advice; and affective support measured the provision of positive affect by others. The fourth form of perceived support (tangible) was omitted from consideration because its items dealt mainly with support during illness

Our purpose in this analysis was to determine if items designed to tap mattering would also reflect any of these other constructs. For example, perhaps an item written for the awareness component of mattering is contaminated because it measures public self-consciousness as well. We are also able to discover the extent to which the items tapping the other constructs are themselves discriminant valid.

Discriminant validity is assessed using the parameters of the measurement model. In particular, evidence for discriminant validity exists if the analysis shows that the estimates for parameters linking an observed index with its intended latent construct are strong and significant, whereas the estimates for parameters linking an observed index with other latent constructs are not significant or trivial.

We had data from two independent surveys utilizing the 26 mattering items from the analysis in Study 1. In both samples, a wide variety of majors was represented in the data. The first questionnaire included measures of the two forms of self-consciousness (Fenigstein et al., 1975) and self-monitoring (Snyder 1987). Data came from 388 students at a private university in the northeast. First-year students constituted 7.8% of the sample; sophomores made up 35.1%; 32.2% were juniors; 18.9% were seniors, and 5.9% were graduate or special students. The majority (58.9%) was female.

The second questionnaire included measures of perceived social support (the MOS Social Support Survey; Sherbourne & Stewart 1991), self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1989), and items crafted to measure meaninglessness and normlessness as forms of alienation; it was administered to 544 students at the same university, independent of the first sample. First-year students made up 42.9% of the sample; 23.9% were sophomores; 17.1% were juniors, 14.7% were seniors; and the remaining 1.3% were graduate or special students. The majority of the sample (59.5%) was female.

To determine the discriminant validity of the mattering items, we performed a series of confirmatory factor analyses using LISREL 8. Because the data were collected in two separate samples and because of size limitations within each sample, we could not conduct an analysis using all the latent constructs at once. Instead, we conducted a number of analyses, pairing the three factors of mattering with each of the constructs included in the two data sets. The first analysis included the forms of self-consciousness distinguished by Fenigstein et al. (1975). The second included the two factors of self-monitoring reported in the Briggs and Cheek (1988) study. The third analysis included perceived social support; from the MOS Social Support Index, we used measures of emotional support (four items), informational support (four items), positive interaction (three items) and affect support (two items) (Sherbourne & Stewart 1991). The last analysis utilized Rosenberg's (1989) self-esteem index and measures of alienation (meaninglessness [four items] and normlessness [four items]) crafted for another study.[3]

Analysis and Results

Following our criteria, we augmented the model by freeing up the requisite parameters called for by the modification indices, using a modification index value of 15 as the cutoff point; further, once that criterion was reached, we eliminated any augmenting parameters whose standardized estimate was less than .200. The goodness-of-fit statistic (CFI) and Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) for each of these analyses are as follows: self-consciousness, .938 and .045, respectively; self-monitoring, .881 and .043; perceived social support, .943 and .026; and self-esteem

and alienation, .913 and .036. We believe the lower values of CFI are primarily due to the large number of observed indicators used in each analysis, forced on us by our desire to evaluate the performance of each specific item.

We now present the results of each analysis, indicating items from the mattering and other indices that evinced lack of discriminant validity or disturbance correlations. (A complete description of the results is available from the first author.)

Self-consciousness

Only one of the mattering items (''I am a familiar face to most people,'' from the awareness factor) revealed a lack of discriminant validity by loading on the public self-consciousness factor (standardized parameter estimate .208). All other items from all other factors loaded only on the hypothesized factors. Finally, there were no disturbance correlations involving any of the mattering items.

Self-monitoring

None of the mattering items loaded on any of the self-monitoring factors. However, three of the self-monitoring items loaded on the awareness component of mattering: ''At a party, I let others keep the jokes and stories going'' (.272), ''In a group of people, I am rarely the center of attention'' (.472), and ''I feel a bit awkward in public and do not show up as well as I could'' (.514). There were no disturbance correlations involving any of the mattering items in this analysis.

Perceived Social Support

One item measuring awareness also reflected perceived social support: ''I am a familiar face to many people'' (.206). Two support items did load on the importance factor of mattering: ''I have someone in my life who gives me information to help me understand a situation'' (.232) and ''I have someone in my life who understands my problems'' (.230). No disturbance correlations involving mattering were in evidence.

Self-esteem

One item from the importance factor loaded on self-esteem: ''Many people invest time and energy in furthering my welfare'' (−.316). In addition, one self-esteem item (''I certainly feel useless at times'') reflected the awareness factor of mattering (.234). The mattering items were not involved in any disturbance correlations.

Alienation

For both forms of alienation, none of the mattering items showed a lack of discriminant validity; similarly, none of the alienation items tapped mattering. Finally, none of the mattering items was involved in a disturbance correlation.

The relationships between the latent constructs are of interest, for they reveal the extent to which aspects of mattering are closely identified with aspects of other constructs. For example, it would not be unexpected that the awareness component of mattering would be related to some form of public self-consciousness. Table 2

TABLE 2 Discriminant Validity Analysis: Correlations between the Latent Constructs

	Self-consciousness		*Self-monitoring*					
Mattering	*Private*	*Public*	*Public performance*	*Other directed*	*Perceived social support*	*Self-esteem*	*Meaninglessness*	*Normlessness*
Awareness	*−.010*	−.135	.407	−.162	.453	.691	−.376	−.116
Importance	*.052*	*−.097*	*.071*	−.315	.748	.795	−.530	−.267
Reliance	.155	*−.080*	*.067*	−.194	.494	.526	−.161	−.150

Note. Coefficients in italics failed to achieve statistical significance ($p > .05$).

presents the correlations for each analysis. Note that these associations do *not* signal a lack of discriminant validity. As argued above, discriminant validity is an issue involving the epistemic links between observed measures and latent constructs. Rather, latent construct associations address the issue of theoretical linkage between distinct, but related concepts.

The associations between mattering and the other latent constructs are as expected: mattering is positively related to self-esteem and perceived social support; it is negatively associated with all forms of self-consciousness and alienation; mattering is correlated positively with the public performance factor of self-monitoring but negatively with the other directed factors.

In addition, in some instances, the correlations between a component of mattering and another latent construct are quite high. The awareness component is strongly related to self-esteem. Importance is powerfully related to self-esteem and perceived social support, suggesting that these two constructs are difficult to distinguish empirically from mattering. Neither of these outcomes is surprising. The perception of social support is certain to give rise to the impression that others are concerned for one's welfare. Further, believing that others invest in a person's welfare is *prima facie* evidence that one is a worthwhile person: people would not waste their time on someone who is seriously deficient. Finally, it is important to note that the correlations reported in Table 2 are between latent constructs. This means that the relationships have been purged of measurement error (Blalock, 1969); as a result, their magnitudes must be higher than those obtained by correlating the scores of indices made up of the individual items.

Still, it is necessary to provide evidence that mattering is not simply another version of either of these two concepts. In future analyses, we will analyze a structural equation model that relates perceived social support to self-esteem, positing mattering as a critical intervening variable. If the relationship between social support and self-esteem changes in a theoretically meaningful way when mattering is introduced as a mediating variable, it would support the notion that these constructs are conceptually distinct, if highly related.

A Final Model

The mattering index showed a remarkable level of discriminant validity. However, two items listed above did fail to meet the criteria set in our analysis. Accordingly, we reanalyzed the data for each of the three samples in a model in which the two offending items were eliminated. The CFI and RMR for the model applied to each sample are: .934 and .028 (Sample 1); .908 and .029 (Sample 2); .939 and .026 (Sample 3). Table 3 gives the maximum likelihood and completely standardized solutions for the measurement model, and Table 4 presents the estimates for the parameters of the structural model (the associations between the latent variables).

Considering the measurement model, we are struck by the similarity of the estimates. The maximum likelihood estimates from Sample 2 tend to be somewhat smaller than the others (except those reflecting importance), but they also have smaller standard errors. As a result, the within-group standardized estimates are generally larger for Sample 2.[4] Overall, however, the coefficients show remarkable stability across samples.

The standardized coefficients in the measurement model reveal substantial construct validity for the individual items across all samples. Consider each of the components of mattering. For awareness, the coefficients range from a low of .307

TABLE 3 Interpersonal mattering: Final model confirmatory factor analysis measurement model parameter estimates

	Maximum likelihood			*Completely standardized*		
Item	*Sample 1*	*Sample 2*	*Sample 3*	*Sample 1*	*Sample 2*	*Sample 3*
Awareness Cronbach's alpha	**.835**	**.872**	**.816**			
Most people do not seem to notice when I come or when I go	1.000	1.000	1.000	.595	.745	.637
In a social gathering, no one recognizes me	.734 (.076)	.875 (.052)	.704 (.072)	.511	.731	.585
Sometimes when I am with others, I feel almost as if I were invisible	1.279 (.129)	1.236 (.077)	1.252 (.125)	.532	.702	.600
People are usually aware of my presence	1.134 (.090)	.820 (.049)	.943 (.080)	.731	.733	.745
For whatever reason, it is hard for me to get other people's attention	1.448 (.113)	.953 (.055)	1.129 (.103)	.753	.753	.677
Whatever else may happen, people do not ignore me	1.201 (.099)	.919 (.054)	.971 (.093)	.692	.744	.636
For better or worse, people generally know when I am around	1.055 (.087)	.781 (.046)	1.027 (.089)	.692	.734	.722
People tend not to remember my name	.985 (.097)	.647 (.067)	.520 (.095)	.549	.429	.307
Importance Cronbach's alpha	**.839**	**.859**	**.792**			
People do not care what happens to me	1.000	1.000	1.000	.701	.690	.550
There are people in my life who react to what happens to me in the same way they would if it had happened to them	.848 (.086)	1.142 (.095)	.979 (.139)	.472	.566	.445
My successes are a source of pride to people in my life	.659 (.070)	1.028 (.076)	.777 (.118)	.456	.637	.408
I have noticed that people will sometimes inconvenience themselves to help me	.871 (.083)	1.183 (.087)	1.010 (.131)	.506	.646	.502
When I have a problem, people usually don't want to hear about it	.859 (.072)	1.152 (.084)	1.040 (.124)	.582	.653	.563

(*continued overleaf*)

TABLE 3 (*continued*)

Item	*Maximum likelihood*			*Completely standardized*		
	Sample 1	*Sample 2*	*Sample 3*	*Sample 1*	*Sample 2*	*Sample 3*
Much of the time, other people are indifferent to my needs	1.015 (.075)	1.052 (.092)	1.202 (.137)	.661	.537	.609
There are people in my life who care enough about me to criticize me when I need it	.692 (.064)	.905 (.073)	.688 (.100)	.520	.585	.431
There is no one who really takes pride in my accomplishments	.994 (.071)	1.140 (.080)	.932 (.112)	.683	.680	.562
No one would notice if one day I disappeared	1.152 (.080)	1.001 (.080)	1.163 (.132)	.705	.589	.611
If the truth be known, no one really needs me	1.144 (.085)	1.282 (.095)	1.217 (.146)	.657	.639	.560
Reliance Cronbach's alpha	**.833**	**.872**	**.829**			
Quite a few people look to me for advice on issues of importance	1.000	1.000	1.000	.562	.749	.601
I am not someone people turn to when they need something	.809 (.086)	.802 (.057)	.811 (.090)	.520	.620	.562
People tend to rely on me for support	1.223 (.106)	.863 (.052)	.968 (.089)	.713	.731	.734
When people need help, they come to me	1.066 (.093)	.880 (.050)	1.089 (.097)	.702	.768	.772
People count on me to be there in times of need	1.293 (.104)	.900 (.048)	1.151 (.106)	.811	.811	.729
Often people trust me with things that are important to them	1.107 (.097)	.778 (.046)	.703 (.078)	.698	.732	.565

Note. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

TABLE 4 Interpersonal mattering: Final model confirmatory factor analysis structural model parameter estimates

	Maximum likelihood			*Correlations*		
	Awareness	*Importance*	*Reliance*	*Awareness*	*Importance*	*Reliance*
Awareness						
Sample 1	.210 (.030)	.154 (.018)	.100 (.015)	1.000	.653	.473
Sample 2	*.416 (.042)*	*.199 (.020)*	*.221 (.024)*	*1.000*	*.710*	*.553*
Sample 3	**.267 (.041)**	**.139 (.020)**	**.112 (.019)**	**1.000**	**.682**	**.445**
Importance						
Sample 1		.266 (.031)	.149 (.019)		1.000	.626
Sample 2		*.190 (.022)*	*.160 (.018)*		*1.000*	*.593*
Sample 3		**.156 (.029)**	**.113 (.018)**		**1.000**	**.592**
Reliance						
Sample 1			.212 (.033)			1.000
Sample 2			*.383 (.039)*			*1.000*
Sample 3			**.236 (.039)**			**1.000**

Note. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

to a high of .753, with a median of .692; for importance, the range is .408 to .705, median .587; and for reliance, the range is .520 to .772, median .722. Each item reflects a distinct facet of the mattering components, and reflects it well. Each index also possesses a high degree of internal consistency, as revealed in the magnitude of Cronbach's alpha (found in Table 3). Finally, Cronbach's alphas for the full mattering index (including all items from awareness, importance, and reliance) from the three samples are also impressive (Sample 1 .904; Sample 2 .922; Sample 3 .886).

Turning to the structural model (the relationships between the latent factors of mattering), we see a pattern somewhat similar to that found in the measurement model: the unstandardized (maximum likelihood) estimates involving the awareness factor tend to be somewhat larger for Sample 2; correspondingly, the correlations found in the completely standardized solution are also larger. Nevertheless, the magnitudes of these estimates are remarkably similar.

The relationship between awareness and importance is the strongest, followed by that between importance and reliance. As before, we believe that these results do not call for a simpler factor structure for mattering; although the correlations are impressive, they show that the components of mattering are distinct. Indeed, confirmatory factor analysis models using a two-factor solution, with awareness and importance collapsed into a single factor, did not fit the data. Taken together, the results in Tables 3 and 4 lend great confidence to our understanding of both the adequacy of the individual items as measures of their respective Mattering components and the extent to which these components are associated.

Discussion

Our analyses have yielded a 24-item index that is a strong and effective measure of mattering. It evinces a high degree of several forms of validity: content validity, in

that items in the index cover a great many facets for each of the three components of mattering, as conceptualized by Rosenberg and McCullough (1981); construct validity, in that coefficients of the measurement model are highly significant and of sufficient magnitude (in standardized form) to demonstrate that the items are indeed reflecting the construct they were designed to measure; and discriminant validity, in that these items do not tap other constructs that are theoretically meaningful correlates of mattering.

Two goals present themselves. First, the validity of the mattering index would be enhanced by data from other populations. To this end, with Richard Gelles, we have collected data from a nationwide sample of 2004 adolescents (ages 11 – 18) to examine the role of mattering in risky and antisocial behavior. In addition, the next wave of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Survey (Sewell & Hauser, 1975) will include the current index to study the importance of mattering in the lives of the elderly.

Second, we believe that Rosenberg (Rosenberg & McCullogh, 1981) was correct in identifying mattering as one of the primary motivators in the self-concept. We fully expect that further analyses will reveal that mattering is integrally involved in a wide range of social phenomena. The work by Taylor and Turner (2001) and Pearlin and LeBlanc (2001) provide preliminary evidence indicating the breadth of its impact. The range of social and personal issues that would benefit from an analysis that includes mattering is nearly endless. A new chapter in the understanding of the self awaits elaboration.

Notes

1. Other constructs could also be identified. We chose these five because of the theoretical link that can be made to mattering. Establishing discriminant validity is an ongoing process. Future studies linking mattering to other theoretically meaningful constructs would provide opportunities to advance this investigation.
2. We performed analyses with the three-factor structure discovered by Briggs, Cheek, and Buss (1980) and a single factor structure argued for by Snyder (1987). We prefer the two factor structure because, contrary to Miller and Thayer (1989), it provided the best fitting model for the analysis, both in goodness-of-fit measures and a more parsimonious and more easily interpretable set of parameters.
3. It is possible that failing to include all latent constructs in a single analysis might bias the results. To gain some insight regarding this problem, within each sample, we collected the non-mattering items into three parcels for each latent construct, thereby reducing the number of observed indicators sufficiently to include more latent constructs within each analysis; self-consciousness and self-monitoring were included in one analysis and perceived social support, self-esteem, and the alienation factors were included in a second. The results of these analyses revealed no meaningful differences from those of our original analyses; because the original analyses allowed us to examine the performance of the individual indicators for the other latent constructs as well, we report these results in the text.
4. We recognize that across independent samples, it is generally inappropriate to compare standardized estimates. However, in this case, we feel relatively confident in doing so. First, all the observed variables are measured in exactly the same metric; second, the standard errors of the maximum likelihood estimates do not vary greatly across samples. As a result, the standardized estimates should not be unduly affected by the characteristics of the distributions in each sample.

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