THE PRIMARY ROLE OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

CLARITY FOR SELF-ESTEEM AND

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing recognition among many who work with society’s most disadvantaged cultural groups that cultural identity might be a primary issue related to their psychological adjustment. From his experience with Aboriginal peoples in Canada and inner city African American communities in the United States, Taylor (1997, 2002) theorizes that without a clear cultural identity, a person has no normative template with which to construct a clear personal identity, and by extension, to achieve positive self-esteem and well-being. The program of research I describe in the present thesis represents the first attempt to empirically investigate the extent to which the clarity of an individual’s cultural identity is predictive of their experience of personal self-esteem and psychological well-being. In Manuscript 1, I present a series of studies that were conducted with undergraduate students, Anglophone Quebecers, Francophone Québécois, Chinese North Americans, and Aboriginal Canadians. In these five studies, the results demonstrate consistently positive associations among cultural identity clarity, personal identity clarity, and self-esteem and markers of subjective well-being. Beyond this, the results confirm that personal identity clarity mediates the relationship between cultural identity clarity and both self-esteem and well-being in all cultural groups. Having clear and confident beliefs about one’s cultural group is associated with having clear and confident beliefs about one’s personal self, which in turn predicts markers of psychological adjustment. In Manuscript 2, I explore the causal direction of the relationship
between cultural identity clarity and self-esteem and well-being. A novel methodology involving computer-mediated communication is used to manipulate cultural identity clarity in a laboratory context. In two experiments, negotiating a computer-mediated social interaction with a clear cultural identity leads to higher levels of state well-being and self-regard; than does negotiating this interaction with an unclear cultural identity. In both manuscripts, cultural identity clarity is found to be predictive of personal self-esteem and psychological well-being. For the first time, I demonstrate an empirical link between clarity at a collective level of self-definition and psychological adjustment. Interventions based on clarifying cultural identity might be particularly effective for increasing psychological well-being for groups and individuals facing cultural identity challenges.
Parmi les chercheurs et les professionnels qui travaillent avec les membres des groupes sociaux les plus désavantagés, il existe un consensus grandissant : l'identité culturelle est au cœur de l'ajustement psychologique. Inspiré par ses expériences avec les groupes Autochtones du Canada et par celles avec les Afro-Américains aux États-Unis, Taylor (1997, 2002) a proposé une nouvelle théorie de l'identité. Cette théorie stipule que sans une identité culturelle claire, il est impossible de posséder les assises normatives nécessaires à la construction d'une identité personnelle claire. Ainsi, posséder une identité culturelle claire est ce qui permet aux individus d'acquérir une estime de soi positive ainsi qu'un niveau de bien-être psychologique élevé. Dans le programme de recherche mit de l'avant par la présente thèse, je propose d'étudier empiriquement, et pour la première fois, le lien prédictif entre la clarté de l'identité culturelle, l'estime de soi et le bien-être psychologique. Dans le premier manuscrit, je présente une série d'études qui ont été effectuées auprès de différentes populations, soit des étudiants universitaires de premier cycle, des Québécois anglophones, des Québécois francophones, des Nord-Américains de descendance chinoise et finalement, des Canadiens autochtones. Dans ces cinq études, les résultats démontrent que la clarté de l'identité culturelle est positivement associée à la clarté de l'identité personnelle, à l'estime de soi, et aux différentes mesures de bien-être psychologique. Par ailleurs, les résultats obtenus confirment le rôle médiateur de la clarté de l'identité personnelle entre la clarté de
l’identité culturelle et 1) l’estime de soi et 2) le bien-être psychologique.

Ainsi, posséder des croyances claires à propos de son groupe culturel permet de posséder des croyances claires à propos de soi, ce qui en retour prédit l’ajustement psychologique. Dans le deuxième manuscrit, j’explore si une relation causale existe entre la clarté de l’identité culturelle et l’estime de soi et le bien-être psychologique. C’est dans le contexte de deux études effectuées en laboratoire que je propose une nouvelle méthodologie permettant de manipuler la clarté de l’identité culturelle par le biais de la communication électronique. Les résultats démontrent que les individus qui se retrouvent dans une condition où l’identité culturelle est claire ont davantage d’estime de soi et de bien-être psychologique que les individus qui se retrouvent dans une condition où l’identité culturelle est peu claire.

Ensemble, les résultats obtenus dans les deux manuscrits démontrent que la clarté de l’identité culturelle prédit l’estime de soi et le sentiment de bien-être psychologique. Pour la première fois, de façon empirique, ces résultats établissent un lien prédicatif entre la clarté de l’identité culturelle et l’estime de soi et l’ajustement psychologique. Des outils d’interventions se fondant sur la clarification de l’identité culturelle pourraient être particulièrement utiles pour augmenter le sentiment de bien-être psychologique. Les membres des groupes socialement désavantagés ou les individus qui confrontent des défis culturels pourraient certainement en bénéficier.
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The program of research described in the present thesis arises from my own experience with some of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples and with those who work closely with them. Among the Aboriginal groups, researchers, teachers, and policy makers with whom I have worked, there seems to be a growing recognition of the psychological importance of cultural identity. There is an increasing anecdotal consensus that issues of cultural identity might be at the root of the well-being challenges faced by many Aboriginal communities.

In fact, in our multicultural and globalizing world, issues of cultural identity are pervasive. The increasing cultural diversity of nations worldwide, ongoing debates over reasonable accommodation in many immigrant-receiving countries, and recent compensation for historically oppressed groups are indicative of the current global weight of cultural identity concerns. Individuals who are attempting to navigate the complexities of living in two or more cultures, to exist in increasingly culturally complex social environments, or, like Aboriginal people, to emerge from a history of oppression and disadvantage, are thought to face considerable challenges impacting the clarity of their current cultural identities (Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallet, 2003; Taylor, 1997, 2002).

Many Aboriginal communities in Canada are characterized by high levels of academic under-achievement, high drop-out rates, low self-esteem, addictive behaviours and suicide (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Frideres, 1998;
Ratner, 1996; Statistics Canada, 2003). Taylor (1997, 2002) and others (e.g., Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003; Ratner, 1996) theorize that these personal well-being issues may actually be rooted in broader cultural identity concerns. Aboriginal peoples are negotiating a heritage culture that was largely destroyed during the colonization process, and, at the same time, they are dealing with a forcefully imposed and very powerful mainstream culture. They then face threats to the clarity of their current cultural identities (Chandler, et al., 2003; Taylor, 1997, 2002). The psychological experience of an unclear cultural identity might be associated with poor psychological adjustment.

From this theoretical context, and from my own work with Aboriginal people, I set out to explore the relationship between cultural identity clarity and psychological adjustment in a broader social psychological analysis. In the present thesis, I ask if the clarity of an individual’s cultural identity, the extent to which beliefs about one’s cultural group are clearly and confidently defined, is an important factor that might be related to the experience of personal self-esteem and psychological well-being.

I begin by outlining research linking identity clarity to both self-esteem and psychological well-being at a personal level of self-definition. Drawing upon the relevant social psychological literature, I then describe the importance of one’s group-based or collective identities for the global self, and discuss how a clearly defined collective identity might be associated with the construction of a clear personal identity. Based on converging theory and
research, I will argue that the clarity of one’s cultural identity, one of an individual’s pervasive and all-encompassing collective identities, is particularly important for the construction of a clearly defined personal identity, which in turn is associated with self-esteem and psychological well-being. In order to further clarify my definition of cultural identity clarity, I attempt to differentiate this concept from other already established social psychological constructs pertaining to collective or cultural identity.

The relationship between cultural identity clarity and personal self-esteem and well-being is then explored in two manuscripts. In Manuscript 1, cultural identity clarity is assessed among an array of very different cultural groups, and its relationship with personal identity clarity, self-esteem and well-being is tested. In Manuscript 2, the correlational results in Manuscript 1 are extended. Cultural identity clarity is manipulated using a novel experimental methodology, and the well-being effects of this manipulation are explored.

**Personal Identity Clarity, Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-being**

Although many psychological factors have been associated with self-esteem and well-being, identity clarity, the extent to which one’s self-knowledge is clearly, confidently and consistently defined, has long been thought to be of considerable importance. Classic psychological theorists proposed that the development and maintenance of a consistent personal identity is the foundation of an individual’s psychological health (Marcia, 1980; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1951). Knowing oneself and experiencing
oneself as possessing continuity and sameness was similarly argued to be essential for the experience of well-being (Erikson, 1968).

More recent theorizing by Campbell and her colleagues (Campbell, 1990; Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003; Campbell & Lavallee, 1993; Campbell, et al., 1996) describes the self-concept as having both a knowledge component and an esteem component. The knowledge component answers the question “who am I?” and is comprised of the characteristics or traits that make an individual unique, such as “I am athletic”, or “I am friendly”. The evaluative or esteem component of the self-concept answers the question, “Am I worthy?”, and includes an individual’s global evaluation of his or her personal characteristics. Campbell and her colleagues posit that there is a positive association between the knowledge and esteem components of the self-concept, in that having clearly defined self-knowledge is associated with feeling good about the self. Tests of their theory revealed that the self-concepts of people with high self-esteem were consistently characterized by greater clarity than the self-concepts of those with low self-esteem (Campbell, 1990). Low self-concept clarity, as measured by a self-report scale, was also associated with markers of poor psychological well-being including higher levels of negative affectivity, anxiety, and depression (Campbell, et al., 1996).

Campbell, Assanand, and Di Paula (2003) went on to review and test a number of theories exploring the psychological benefits of self-concept unity or clarity versus self-concept pluralism. They found strong empirical support

Related research (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997) investigated individuals’ ratings of their own Big Five personality traits across various life roles (e.g., student, child, friend). These researchers found that, rather than an individual's overall level on each of the Big Five personality traits, the degree of variability in their endorsement of traits across life roles was predictive of overall well-being, such that lower variability meant greater well-being. The researchers concluded that self-consistency is vital for health and optimal psychological functioning.

Although the causal pathway between personal self-concept clarity and psychological adjustment has been the subject of some consideration (see Campbell and Lavallee, 1993), many theorists and researchers have proposed that clearly knowing oneself actually causes one to like oneself and to feel good (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980). Baumgardner (1990) has shown that when the certainty of participants’ self-beliefs was experimentally increased, they reported an increase in feelings of positive self-regard. Pelham and Swann (1989) have also shown that the relative clarity or certainty of people’s self-beliefs is one important contributor to their global feelings of self-esteem. Taylor & Usborne (2009) argued that it
would be difficult for an individual to develop personal self-esteem without the benefit of a clearly defined and certain self-knowledge. Indeed, esteem is a form of self-evaluation that requires a concrete basis for engaging an evaluative process. An individual must clearly know who he or she is before arriving at an evaluation of the self; how can I know if I am worthy, without being certain about who I actually am? Identity clarity might thus be an important contributor to both self-esteem and psychological well-being.

Social psychological theory and research examining the relationship between identity clarity and psychological adjustment has thus far been focused exclusively at a personal level of self-definition. Such research has primarily explored the clarity of an individual’s personal characteristics and has relied on ratings and judgments of personal traits as indicators of clarity (e.g., Campbell, 1990; Sheldon et al., 1997; Stinson, Wood, and Doxey, 2008). However, from seminal research exploring the group-based or collective components of the self-concept (e.g., Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it is clear that an individual’s self-definition extends beyond the personal. I argue that in our increasingly multicultural societies, one’s collective and especially one’s cultural identities become particularly important for the self. It may be that collective or cultural identity clarity, clearly knowing oneself at a collective level of self-definition, is also related to the experience of self-esteem and well-being.
Collective Identity

In contrast to personal identity, which refers to characteristics that one believes to be unique to the self, collective identity involves an explicit connection to a group of people outside of the self (Ashmore, et al., 2004). A collective identity stems from a psychological identification with a particular group. It may arise from ascribed characteristics such as gender or ethnicity, or from achieved states such as occupation or team membership (Deaux, 1996; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Identification with a particular collective does not in fact necessitate direct contact with that collective. It is a subjective claim of group membership, in that it is acknowledged by the individual as personally defining in some respect (Deaux, 1996).

In social psychology, the importance of one’s collective or group-based identities was first emphasized by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social Identity theorists defined social or collective identity as the part of an individual’s self-concept that is derived from his or her knowledge of membership in a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. The shared traits, ideological positions, values, norms, behaviour, experiences and history that are associated with one’s group are internalized by the individual to make up an essential component of his or her self-concept (Ashmore, et al., 2004). The identity that arises from the group or groups to
which an individual belongs can thus be conceived as an integral component of one’s global self (Deaux, 1991).

In presenting a comprehensive framework for research exploring collective identity, Ashmore et al. (2004) concluded by defining key issues for future consideration by social psychologists. One of these key issues is what Ashmore et al. refer to as collective identity variability or certainty. They suggest that the certainty, or as we prefer, the clarity of one’s collective identity may be affected by the norms that pervade an individual’s social environment, especially in today’s multicultural societies where an individual might have to negotiate multiple, possibly competing norms, regarding his or her collective category. My program of research attempts to explore precisely this issue by investigating how the clarity of an individual’s cultural identity might be associated with personal identity, personal self-esteem and psychological well-being.

**Collective Identity Clarity**

Based on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Taylor (1997, 2002) has formally added to Campbell’s (Campbell, 1990; Campbell & Lavallee, 1993) conceptualization of the self-concept at the individual level. Campbell and her colleagues describe the self-concept as comprising a knowledge component and an esteem component, both of which are conceptualized at the personal level of self-definition. To the global self-concept, Taylor (1997, 2002) adds a collective level. He posits that this collective level is also composed of a knowledge component (collective
identity), and an esteem component (collective esteem). The collective identity component answers the question “what are the characteristics of my group?” and the collective esteem component answers the question “how is my group evaluated?” Consistent with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and with more recent collective identity theorists (e.g., Ashmore, et al., 2004; Deaux, 1991) who view collective identity as an essential component of one’s global self, Taylor has conceptualized a self-concept that includes both personal and collective levels, each of which have knowledge and esteem components (see Figure 1).

![The Self-Concept Diagram](image)

**Figure 1. Schematic representation of Taylor’s (1997, 2002) conceptualization of the self-concept.**

More importantly, Taylor posits a novel psychological relationship between the collective and personal components of the self-concept. He argues that a clearly defined collective identity is crucial, and therefore
primary for the development of a clearly defined personal identity, which is in turn associated with increased personal self-esteem and psychological well-being (e.g., Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, et al., 1996). Specifically, Taylor argues that the defining attributes for an individual’s personal identity are relative. That is, when an individual reflects on him or herself, and concludes that “I am athletic” or “I am friendly”, it is because he or she is comparing him or herself to a clear reference group, to a normative template that serves as a comparative standard on which to base his or her identity. A clearly defined collective identity that includes a clear definition of the values, traits, ideological positions, shared behaviour, experiences and history of one’s group can serve as such a normative template (Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006; Taylor, 1997, 2002; Terry & Hogg, 1996). If an individual knows that the group to which he or she identifies has a particular set of characteristics or a particular set of values, this collective knowledge will facilitate that individual’s analyses and conclusions about what makes him or her unique, what he or she should personally value, and how she or he should behave.

Although no research has directly tested Taylor’s theory, some social psychologists have drawn conclusions that are consistent with his assertions. Guimond et al. (2006) demonstrated that, to some extent, men and women define their personal selves in terms of the stereotypes of their group. These researchers argue that gender stereotypes might actually form the basis for one’s personal self-definition. Terry & Hogg (1996) found that the perceived
norms of a group to which an individual identifies serve to guide his or her personal intentions and behaviours.

Other research, although not arising directly out of Taylor’s theory, offers similar support for his arguments. Chen and her colleagues (Chen, Chen, & Shaw, 2004) found that the self-verification motive, the general human tendency for people to seek out information that verifies existing self-views (Swann, 1990), extends to a collective level of self-definition. The implication is that people are motivated to maintain a clear and consistent view of their collective identities. This may be because clear collective categories are thought to guide behaviour, locate individuals in their social world, regulate expectations and perceptions of one’s personal self, and provide validation for who we are, what we do, and what we believe (Hogg & Mullin, 1999).

Hogg and his colleagues have provided experimental evidence that clear collective identities can actually serve to reduce feelings of uncertainty surrounding the personal self-concept. Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, and Moffit (2007) found that personal uncertainty motivated group identification, and that people preferred to identify with groups that were clearly defined. People ideally turn to groups with clearly focused prototypes that are best suited to the reduction of personal uncertainty (Jetten, Hogg, & Mullin, 2000). Less uncertainty surrounding the personal self would be, in turn, related to self-esteem and psychological well-being (Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, 1990, Campbell et al., 1996). Such research points to the
importance of a clearly defined collective identity for personal uncertainty reduction, and by extension, for self-esteem and well-being.

There is thus initial indirect support for the over riding theoretical model explored in the present thesis: Cultural identity, among one of an individual’s important collective identities, might be related to personal self-esteem and well-being through its clarification of one’s personal identity.

**Cultural Identity**

An individual can have any number of different collective identities (Ashmore, et al., 2004). For example, one can simultaneously consider oneself to be a woman, a Canadian, and a student. In the present research, I have chosen to examine cultural identity as one of an individual’s important collective identities. This focus does not imply that cultural identity is the most important identity for individuals at all times, nor does it mean that an individual’s various collective identities exist in isolation from one another.

An essential first step in the present research is to focus primarily on one type of collective identity, and cultural identity is thought, especially in today’s increasingly multicultural social environments, to be one that is important and pervasive.

Indeed, cultural identity can act as a guiding template for many of life’s challenges including child-rearing, occupational and educational norms, gender roles, and negotiating romantic relationships, to name a few (Taylor, 2002). Culture provides insight into how to be a person in the world, what makes for a good life, how to interact with others, and which aspects of
situations require attention and processing capacity (Oyserman 2002).

Cultural psychologists go so far as to argue that one’s cultural identity can affect the very nature of one’s self-construal (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In fact, culture has been found to impact an array of psychological processes including spontaneous self-descriptions, self-enhancement, self-criticism, and emotional experience (e.g., Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Matsumoto, Kasri, & Kook, 1999; Rhee, Uleman, Lee, & Roman, 1995), as well as general reasoning about one’s social world (e.g., Ji, Nisbett, & Su, 2001; Norenzayan & Nisbett, 2000).

Such theory and research are based on the idea that individuals have culturally specific meaning systems, learned associative networks of values, beliefs, and knowledge that are shared by people from the same cultural group that influence their psychological experiences and behaviours (D'Andrade, 1984; Kashima, 2000). Given the underlying pervasiveness and psychological power of these culturally specific meaning systems, the clarity of an individual’s cultural identity might thus be fundamental for the development and maintenance of a clear personal identity, and by extension self-esteem and well-being. The focus of the present program of research is therefore on the nature of one of an individual’s important collective identities. I examine cultural identity clarity and its association with personal identity clarity and self-esteem and well-being.
Cultural Identity Clarity

Having chosen to focus on cultural identity, it is now important to further define what is meant by a clear versus an unclear cultural identity and how these different psychological experiences might be associated with the construction of a clear personal identity, and by extension with self-esteem and well-being.

Based on Taylor's (1997, 2002) theory of collective identity clarity, I argue that a clearly defined cultural identity provides the individual with a straightforward, guiding framework for how one functions in the world, what to value, and how to behave. This guiding framework can form the basis for the construction of a clear personal identity. A clear personal identity is itself associated with self-esteem and psychological well-being (e.g. Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996).

A concrete example of a clearly defined cultural identity shaping one’s personal identity comes from a recent article by McAdams (2006). McAdams examines people’s personal identities by exploring their personal narratives, depicting their individual life stories (see McAdams, 2001). McAdams (2006) demonstrated that the personal life stories of highly generative Americans were very much shaped by cultural forces. He argues that the life stories of these individuals, and by extension their personal identities, reflect much more than their own efforts to understand their own lives. They actually reflect the social norms, gender stereotypes, historical events and cultural assumptions that stem from their American culture. A clearly defined
American cultural identity has here guided the construction of clearly defined personal identities.

I argue that having a clear cultural identity is associated with a clear personal identity; however, it is important to note here that this assertion does not necessarily imply that an individual is always consciously aware of his or her cultural identity. It may well be that, for an individual whose cultural group membership is not particularly challenging, one may actually take his or her cultural identity for granted (Ashmore et al., 2004). A mainstream Canadian or American, for example, like those interviewed in McAdams’ (2006) study, might implicitly know the values, norms and behaviours endorsed by his or her cultural group and could intuitively follow these guidelines without conscious awareness. The prevailing psychological focus of the individual with a clear cultural identity might then be his or her own personal identity. For example, unless I am travelling in a foreign country or negotiating a multicultural interaction, I may not always be consciously engaged with my identity as a mainstream Canadian, making my psychological focus most often at the level of my own personal identity. Nevertheless, my Canadian cultural identity provides me with clear norms, values and behavioural scripts with which I can consciously or unconsciously construct my own way of being in the world.

In contrast to a clear cultural identity, I argue that an unclear cultural identity would not provide the individual with a straightforward, guiding framework for how to function in the world, how to act, and what to value.
There would thus be no clear guiding framework, no comparative standard, with which the individual could construct a clear personal identity.

A real-world example of an unclear cultural identity comes from the experiences of Aboriginal Peoples in North America. In his collaboration with the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic, Taylor (2002) argues that Aboriginal peoples face particularly poignant cultural identity concerns. The traditional cultures of many Aboriginal groups were so damaged by colonization and by subsequent attempts at assimilation that the traditional norms, values and behaviours of these cultures, have become largely unclear (see Frideres, 1998). Equally devastating was that mainstream European culture was so swiftly and forcefully imposed on Aboriginal peoples, without a clear explanation of the underlying norms and values of this culture, that cultural identity confusion was a likely (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003; Taylor, 2002). For example, Aboriginal people had a formal European education system thrust on them, but were not provided with a complete understanding of its purpose, function and implicit meritocratic structure (Taylor, 2002). At the same time, their traditional educational system, which involved learning by example, was largely destroyed through the colonization process. Broadly speaking, Aboriginal peoples were left with a confusing array of norms, values, and behaviours with which to construct their personal identities, their personal way of being in the world, as the normative structures of both their Aboriginal and mainstream cultures were anything but clear (Taylor, 2002).
Such a lack of cultural clarity has thus far been theorized to give rise to certain negative well-being effects such as academic under-achievement, low self-esteem, addictive behaviours and even suicide (Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallet, 2003; Taylor, 2002). In a study by Ratner (1996), Aboriginal youth in downtown Vancouver, many of whom were experiencing difficulties such as homelessness, drug abuse, or involvement in prostitution, were interviewed and observed to be “in cultural limbo”. Outreach workers cited “lack of identity” as one of the primary factors affecting them.

Other programs of research highlight the identity confusion resulting from a destructive colonization process and propose that such confusion causes extremely negative psychological consequences. Chandler and his colleagues theorized that among First Nations Canadians, a lack of cultural continuity leads to a lack of personal continuity, which in turn increases the risk for youth suicide. Chandler & Lalonde (1998) found that First Nations communities in British Columbia that were able to engage in activities designed to restore a sense of cultural continuity such as securing the title to traditional lands, achieving some rights of self-government, gaining community control over education, police and health services, and establishing community based ‘cultural facilities’, had lower suicide rates than communities that were not engaging in these practices. Although these researchers provided no direct evidence for the psychological mechanisms involved in this phenomenon, they reasoned that these communities succeeded in providing their members with an otherwise missing measure of
cultural continuity essential to understanding themselves as connected to their own past and future (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998).

Such dramatic, real-world examples of an unclear cultural identity and its link to personal identity and to well-being support the view that the clarity of an individual’s cultural identity and its psychological correlates merit further research attention. The theoretical link among cultural identity clarity, personal identity clarity and self-esteem and well-being, will thus be empirically examined in the present thesis. Before proceeding, however, it is important to differentiate cultural identity clarity from other related constructs already established in the social psychological literature.

Cultural Identity Clarity and Related Constructs: Identification, Integration, and Knowledge

Cultural identity clarity is defined in the present program of research as the extent to which beliefs about one’s cultural group are clearly and confidently defined. Cultural identity clarity is theoretically distinct from related constructs that also pertain to individuals’ perceptions of their collective or cultural identities. Here, I differentiate cultural identity clarity from 1) cultural-group identification, 2) collective or cultural identity integration, and 3) cultural knowledge.

Identification with a particular group can be defined as the extent to which one feels connected to a group, that it is important for one’s overall self-concept (see Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Phinney, 1992; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Theoretically, cultural identity clarity
should not simply be a proxy for identification with a cultural group (Taylor, 1997, 2002). It is possible for someone to identify with a particular group, but to have an unclear knowledge of the values, norms and behaviours of that group. Indeed, one may have been born an Aboriginal person, identify as an Aboriginal person, but find that this identity provides no clear normative or behavioural prototype on which to rely. Conversely, one could potentially have a clear and confident knowledge of what it means to be a member of a particular cultural group, but not necessarily identify with this group. One might even reject or dis-identify with a cultural group to which one had once identified (Berry, 2005; Berry & Annis, 1998), regardless of the perceived clarity of that group identity. I argue that greater cultural identity clarity does not then necessarily mean a greater level of cultural identification, and vice versa.

Other research in the Social Identity Theory tradition explores a psychological concept that has been labeled social or collective identity integration (e.g., Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005). This research investigates the psychological effects of negotiating multiple and possibly competing collective identities whereby individuals are challenged to reconcile different collective identities into their sense of self. Collective identity integration, or what Benet-Martinez and her colleagues refer to as bicultural identity integration, is defined as the extent to which a person perceives his or her various collective or cultural identities as compatible (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002). Although identity integration is a
psychological process indicative of overall coherence in an individuals’ experience of his or her collective or cultural self, it is different from cultural identity clarity. Identity integration is the extent to which one feels able to coherently combine multiple collective or cultural identities; whereas, cultural identity clarity refers to the perceived clarity of the actual information or knowledge arising from one’s cultural identity or identities.

There is an established and varied literature on how immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities negotiate multiple collective or cultural identities (Berry, 2005; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). This body of literature, although not exploring cultural identity clarity and its relationship to other psychological variables, still contains conclusions that are supportive of the predictions made in the present thesis. Findings from this literature suggest that people who have coherently integrated multiple collective identities into their sense of self report greater psychological well-being than individuals who have non-integrated collective identities (e.g., Amiot, et al., 2007; Downie, Koestner, ElGeledi, & Cree, 2004). In a review of research exploring collective identity integration, Amiot et al. (2007) posit that successful collective identity integration reduces intraindividual conflict, producing a more coherent sense of self, thus influencing psychological well-being. This conclusion alludes to my predicted association among a clear and coherent experience of cultural identity, a clear and coherent experience of personal identity, and psychological adjustment.
Lastly, it is necessary to differentiate cultural identity clarity from simple cultural knowledge, knowledge about the history, values, norms and behaviours of one’s cultural group. Taylor (1997, 2002) highlights the knowledge component of one’s collective identity as being particularly important for the development of one’s personal identity; however, he points to the clarity or certainty of this knowledge component, not to the actual content of the knowledge or the amount of knowledge contained within it. Like self-concept clarity that is defined as the clarity and consistency of the knowledge component of the personal self-concept (Campbell, 1990), cultural identity clarity represents the extent to which individuals feel that they clearly and confidently know their cultural group, not to the amount or accuracy of knowledge that they possess about this group.

It is important to emphasize here that having a clear cultural identity does not require this cultural identity to be in any way accurate, unchanging, or simple. Like Baumgarder (1990), who cautions that greater self-certainty need not be equated with a more accurate sense of identity, I posit in the present program of research that it is an individual’s perception of the clarity of their cultural identity, and not any objectively based or ‘true’ identity that is important. The self, at both a personal and a collective level is exceedingly complex and must constantly adjust to the demands of a changing reality. Yet, the healthy self is experienced as a coherent whole made up of elements of reality that are linked together into a meaningful story (McAdams, 2001). Similarly, a clear cultural identity represents a coherent story, a clear and
confident knowledge of a group’s shared behaviours, values, norms, and characteristics. Thus, a clear cultural identity can be as layered, multifaceted and changing as a group’s values, norms and behaviours. It is a clear and confident perception of these potentially changing and multifarious elements that represents a clear identity.

The Present Program of Research

The clarity of one’s cultural identity has thus far been anecdotally and theoretically linked to personal identity clarity and to psychological adjustment. However, the association between cultural identity clarity, personal identity clarity and self-esteem and psychological well-being has never been directly empirically explored. The present thesis examines these associations in two related manuscripts.

The first manuscript describes a series of five studies exploring the associations between cultural identity clarity, personal identity clarity, self-esteem and markers of psychological well-being. Using a cultural identity clarity scale, it tests the predicted relationships among a variety of different cultural groups including undergraduate students from a number of different cultural backgrounds, Anglophone Quebecers, Francophone Québécois, Chinese North Americans, and a group of Aboriginal people living in a remote community. Finding support for the predicted associations among these vastly different cultural groups would indicate that it is the clarity of one’s cultural identity, regardless of the specific cultural identity under investigation, that is connected to well-being. That is, it is not the experience
of a specific cultural identity, one that is particularly celebrated, oppressed, or complex that is associated with psychological adjustment. Instead, regardless of a group's history, present reality, and prospects for the future, it is the extent to which one has clear and confident beliefs about his or her own cultural identity that is related to our person-level psychological variables.

The second manuscript attempts to establish a causal pathway between cultural identity clarity and psychological well-being. Because the vast majority of research linking culture to well-being is correlational in nature, it is necessary to test the direction of the relationship between cultural identity clarity and well-being. In manuscript 2, we take on the challenging task of simulating cultural identity in a laboratory context and manipulating the clarity of this identity. Using a novel methodology involving computer-mediated communication, we create, at least partially, what it might be like for participants to have a clear, conflicted or unclear cultural identity, and examine the resulting well-being effects.
MANUSCRIPT 1: The Primary Role of Cultural Identity

Clarity for Self-Esteem and Subjective Well-Being

Abstract

Knowing oneself and experiencing oneself as a clearly defined, stable entity has been consistently linked with self-esteem and psychological well-being (e.g., Campbell et al., 1996); however, this association has only been tested at the level of one’s personal identity. We propose that a clear cultural identity provides the individual with a clear prototype with which to engage the processes necessary to construct a clear personal identity, and by extension, to achieve self-esteem and well-being. Among undergraduates, Anglophone Quebecers, Francophone Québécois, Chinese North Americans, and Aboriginal Canadians, cultural identity clarity was positively related to self-concept clarity, self-esteem and to markers of subjective well-being. The relationship between cultural identity clarity and both self-esteem and well-being was consistently fully mediated by self-concept clarity. Interventions based on clarifying cultural identity might be effective in increasing psychological health for groups facing cultural identity challenges.
Introduction

Social psychologists have long argued that beyond the positive or negative content of one's self-concept, the clarity and consistency of one's self-beliefs contribute to psychological adjustment (see Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003). Indeed, many classic and current theorists posit that identity clarity is a key factor associated with the experience of psychological well-being (e.g., Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980). Researchers (e.g., Campbell, 1990; Baumgardner, 1990; Stinson, Wood, & Doxey, 2008) have empirically tested this relationship and found that people who have a well-articulated sense of who they are have more positive self-esteem and greater psychological well-being.

Knowing oneself and experiencing oneself as a stable, understandable entity has been consistently linked with psychological adjustment; however, this association has only been tested at the level of one's personal identity. The clarity of the identity that arises from the groups to which an individual belongs, and its association with self-esteem and psychological well-being have not been empirically explored. In our increasingly multicultural and global world, collective-level psychological variables and their association with personal well-being merit further research attention (see Amiot, de la Sablonnière, Terry, & Smith, 2007; Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004).

Through work with disadvantaged cultural groups, Taylor (1997, 2002) proposed a theory arguing for the primacy of identity arising from
shared group membership, hypothesizing that individuals without a clear collective identity might have difficulty developing a clear personal identity, a deficit that translates to poor psychological well-being. Although not yet empirically tested, Taylor’s theory of collective identity clarity might represent a comprehensive theory linking identity clarity at a cultural level to personal identity clarity, personal self-esteem and well-being. It might also have crucial implications for individuals experiencing cultural identity challenges which constitute threats to the clarity of this identity. In five studies, the present research investigates the associations among cultural identity clarity, clarity of personal identity and both self-esteem and subjective well-being among individuals from a number of very different cultural groups.

*Personal Identity Clarity*

Personal identity clarity, or self-concept clarity (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996), is defined as the extent to which one’s self-beliefs are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent and stable. In her seminal studies, Campbell (1990) found that the clarity or certainty of the knowledge component of one’s self-concept was consistently positively related to one’s level of self-esteem. Campbell and her colleagues (1996) subsequently developed a 12-item self-report measure of self-concept clarity and found that low self-concept clarity was independently associated with high neuroticism, low self-esteem, negative affectivity, anxiety, and depression. More recently, Stinson, Wood, and Doxey (2008) replicated
Campbell’s findings by demonstrating the positive relationship between self-concept clarity and self-esteem across different personal trait domains.

Other researchers have proposed that self-consistency, or self-clarity, is actually vital for optimal psychological functioning (e.g., Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne and Ilardi, 1997). Experimental work (Baumgardner, 1990) lends support to this proposal by demonstrating that participants whose self-certainty was increased through exposure to a “certain” diagnoses of their self-perceived traits experienced temporary feelings of positive self-regard (Baumgardner, 1990. As well, Pelham and Swann (1989) found that the relative certainty of people’s self-views was one contributor to their global self-esteem.

An array of research has therefore provided evidence for the importance of having clear, confident and consistent self-knowledge for psychological adjustment. However, this research has primarily focused on the clarity of an individual’s personal characteristics and has often relied on ratings of personal traits as indicators of clarity. Little is known about the importance of clearly knowing the self at a collective level and about how the clarity of one’s collective or cultural identity might relate to personal identity clarity and thereby to self-esteem and well-being.

**Collective Identity Clarity**

Be it one’s gender identity, one’s occupational identity, one’s cultural identity or another group-based identity, social or collective identity can be defined as that part of an individual’s self-concept which is derived from his
or her knowledge of membership in a social group (or groups), along with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The traits, ideological positions, shared behaviour, experiences and history that are associated with one’s group are internalized by the individual to comprise an important component of his or her self-concept (Ashmore, Deaux, McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004).

Any one individual can have a number of different collective identities (Ashmore et al., 2004). For example, one might consider oneself to simultaneously be a woman, a professor, and a Christian. Recent research in the Social Identity tradition has explored the effect of negotiating multiple and possibly competing collective identities by examining collective identity integration, whereby individuals are challenged to reconcile a number of different collective or cultural identities into their sense of self (e.g., Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002). Findings suggest that people who have well-integrated collective identities report greater psychological well-being than individuals who have non-integrated collective identities (Amiot, de la Sablonnière, Terry, & Smith, 2007, Downie, Koestner, ElGeledi, & Cree, 2004; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebind, and Vedder, 2001), and that greater collective identity interference, when the norms and values of one collective identity interfere with another, is related to lower levels of well-being (Settles, 2004). Given that collective identity integration is thought to reduce intraindividual conflict and produce a more coherent sense of self (Amiot et al., 2007), such research points to a
possible association among having a clear and understandable experience of collective identity, having a clear personal identity, and experiencing positive psychological well-being.

Taylor (1997, 2002), builds on Social Identity Theory and on research linking collective identity integration to well-being by arguing that a clearly defined collective identity is in fact essential for the development of a clearly defined personal identity, which in turn is crucial for personal psychological well-being. Specifically, he argues that the attributes comprising an individual’s personal identity are relative. That is, the assessment of the self—its possessions, and attributes, is largely a comparative process (Miller & Prentice, 1996). When an individual perceives him or herself to have a certain characteristic, such as athleticism or intelligence, it is because he or she is comparing him or herself to a clear reference group. In order for someone to conclude something about their personal identity, such as “I am athletic” or “I am intelligent”, they require a normative template to serve as a comparative standard. A clearly defined collective identity, complete with a clear definition of the values, traits, ideological positions, shared behaviour, experiences and history that are associated with one’s group, can serve as such a template (Guimond, Chata, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006; Taylor, 1997, 2002; Terry & Hogg, 1996). If an individual knows that his or her group has a particular set of characteristics or values, this clear collective knowledge will facilitate that individual’s analyses and conclusions about
what makes him or her unique, what he or she should personally value, and how she or he should behave.

Corroborating evidence for Taylor’s (1997, 2002) theory and the relationship between collective and personal identity clarity comes from research examining the role of clear groups in reducing personal uncertainty. Clear categories are thought to prescribe behaviour, locate us in the social world, regulate our expectations and perceptions of self, and provide us with validation for who we are, what we do, and what we believe (Hogg & Mullin, 1999). Hogg and his collaborators have shown that people identify with groups in part to reduce subjective personal uncertainty. Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, and Moffitt (2007) found that not only does self-conceptual uncertainty motivate group identification, but also that people prefer to identify with groups that are clearly defined. People ideally turn to a group that provides clearly focused and consensual prototypes that are best suited to uncertainty reduction (Jetten, Hogg, & Mullin, 2000). Hogg and his collaborators thus provide evidence for the relationship between a clear collective or group-based identity and personal certainty or clarity.

In this sense, collective identity clarity might be associated with self-esteem and psychological well-being through its clarification of personal identity (Taylor, 1997, 2002). A clear group-based identity is theorized to be associated with having a clearly defined personal identity, which in turn is related to self-esteem/well-being (e.g., Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell et al.,
32

1996; Sheldon et al., 1997). This theoretical model is depicted in Figure 2 and is used to guide our empirical investigations.

Figure 2. Schematic representation of the theoretical association among collective identity clarity, personal identity clarity and self-esteem/well-being.

Cultural Identity Clarity

In the present research, we have chosen to examine cultural identity as one of an individual’s important collective identities. This chosen focus does not mean that people have only this one collective identity, that it is the most important for an individual at all times, or that an individual’s various collective identities exist in isolation from each other. However, an essential first step in the present research is to focus primarily on one type of collective identity, and cultural identity is thought, especially in today’s increasingly multicultural social environments, to be one of an individual’s most important and pervasive (Taylor, 1997, 2002).

A clear cultural identity provides its members with a shared history, and a shared set of broadly-based norms, values and characteristics, along with detailed normative information and scripts about how to pursue the
values defined by the cultural identity (Taylor & Usborne, 2009). Someone with a clear cultural identity would intuitively know the implicit norms and behaviours valued and exhibited by their cultural group, and could rely on these when engaged in the construction of a clearly defined personal identity.

A concrete example of a clear cultural identity shaping personal identity is evident in a recent article by McAdams (2006). He posits that the personal identities of highly generative Americans, examined through their life stories, were shaped by social and cultural forces. He argues that these individuals’ life stories, and by extension their personal identities, reflect much more than an individual’s own efforts to make sense of his or her life. They actually reflect the social norms, gender stereotypes, historical events, and cultural assumptions stemming from their social world (McAdams, 2006). A clear cultural identity can act as the psychological basis upon which a personal identity is formed.

On the other hand, without a clear cultural identity, there might be no clear and well-known reference group, and thus no comparative mechanism by which an individual can even construct a coherent sense of personal identity, and by extension experience positive self-esteem and well-being. A real world example comes from the experience of Aboriginal Peoples in North America. Aboriginal people have had the traditional behavioural norms and values of their culture decimated through colonization (Frideres, 1998). At the same time, they have had the norms and values of the mainstream culture rapidly imposed on them in a decontextualized and
unclear manner (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Chandler et al., 2003; Taylor, 2002). The cultural identity of many Aboriginal people may then provide no clear normative script to which group members are meant to subscribe. Group members are left struggling with a bewildering and conflicting set of principles, a feeling of normlessness, with which they must construct a clearly defined personal identity (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Chandler et al., 2003; Taylor, 1997, 2002).

Present Research

Drawing on Campbell’s (1990) definition of self-concept clarity, we have operationalized cultural identity clarity in the present research as the extent to which beliefs about one’s cultural group are clearly and confidently defined. We measure cultural identity clarity using an adapted version of Campbell et al.’s (1996) self-concept clarity scale. Although cultural identity is a broad, multifaceted construct that can be measured in many ways, for this first attempt, we have relied upon past research pertaining directly to self-clarity.

In addition, we have operationalized personal identity clarity as Campbell’s (1990) definition of self-concept clarity and measured personal identity clarity using the original 12-item version of Campbell et al’s (1996) Self-Concept Clarity Scale. We examine both self-esteem and subjective well-being as outcome variables indicative of psychological adjustment. Self-esteem is included as a dependent variable across all of our studies given its established association with personal identity clarity (Baumgardner, 1990;
Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996; Stinson, Wood, & Doxy, 2008). In later studies, we add markers of subjective well-being, such as positive and negative affect, and life satisfaction, and test our model for these well-being outcomes.

Across all studies, and for all cultural groups under investigation, we had two main hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 was that there would be a positive relationship between cultural identity clarity and our person-level variables—personal identity clarity, self-esteem and well-being. Consistent with the work of Taylor (1997, 2002) and Hogg (e.g., Hogg, & Mullin, 1999; Jetten, Hogg, & Mullin, 2000), we expected that having clear and confident beliefs about one’s cultural group would be associated with having a clear knowledge of who one is personally. We also expected that the established relationship between identity clarity and both self-esteem and well-being (e.g., Campbell, 1990; Baumgardner, 1990; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997; Stinson, Wood, & Doxey, 2008) would extend to a cultural identity level of analysis such that having a clearly defined cultural identity would also be associated with one’s personal experiences of self-esteem and psychological well-being.

Hypothesis 2 was that the relationship between cultural identity clarity and both self-esteem and well-being would be mediated by personal identity clarity. Consistent with our theoretical model, we expected that having a clear cultural identity would be predictive of having a clear personal
identity, which in turn would predict self-esteem and markers of psychological well-being.

**STUDY 1**

The goal of Study 1 was to test, for the first time, our Cultural Identity Clarity Scale and to examine its relationship with Campbell et al.’s (1996) Self-Concept Clarity Scale as well as with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Because Study 1 represented a preliminary investigation, we did not seek to use the scale with any particular cultural group, but instead administered it to a cross-section of culturally diverse Canadian undergraduate students who were asked to refer to the cultural group to which they felt they belonged when filling out the scale.

**Method**

*Participants*

One-hundred and forty-one undergraduate students at a Canadian University in a large urban center (34 men and 106 women) participated in the study. Six participants were deleted from the analysis as their self-esteem scores were more than two standard deviations below the mean and fell outside the normal distribution. Data from 135 participants (32 men and 102 women) were analyzed.

*Materials and Procedure*

Participants were asked to complete a survey comprising an array of scales. Included in the survey were the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
(Rosenberg, 1965; $\alpha = .91$), the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (Campbell et al., 1996; $\alpha = .88$), and our eight-item Cultural Identity Clarity Scale, adapted from Campbell et al.’s (1996) Self-Concept Clarity Scale and designed to measure clarity at the level of the participant’s cultural group. Participants were asked to consider their membership in their own cultural group and respond to statements on the basis of how they feel about this group (see Appendix A for the full scale). Cronbach’s alpha for the cultural identity clarity scale was .86, indicating good reliability.

**Results and Discussion**

*Descriptives and Scale Intercorrelations*

The mean score reported by participants on the cultural identity clarity scale was 6.02 ($SD = 1.83$), falling close to the midpoint on the ten-point scale. Their mean self-concept clarity score was 3.03 ($SD = .72$) on a five-point scale, and their mean self-esteem score was 5.43 ($SD = .89$) on a seven point scale. Scores on all three scales were normally distributed.

The intercorrelations among these scales are shown in Table 1. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, cultural identity clarity was found to be significantly and positively related to our person-level variables–self-esteem and self-concept clarity. It is important to note that the self-concept clarity scale and the cultural identity clarity scale were significantly related ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), however they do not appear to be measuring the exact same construct, as their intercorrelation was not high.
### Table 1. Intercorrelations among cultural identity clarity, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem.

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Note: N = 135 * p < .05; ** p < .001

**Mediation Model**

In order to test our predicted mediation model, we conducted regression analyses examining if cultural identity clarity predicted self-esteem when our proposed mediator variable, self-concept clarity, was included in the analysis. According to Baron & Kenny (1986), if self-concept clarity fully mediates the effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem, self-concept clarity would be a significant unique predictor of self-esteem, and cultural identity clarity would drop to non-significance.

Cultural identity clarity significantly predicted self-concept clarity ($a = .28, p < .001$) and self-esteem ($c = .18, p < .05$) when it was the only predictor. However, when self-concept clarity was tested as a mediator, the direct effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem disappeared ($c' = .02, n.s.$), and self-concept clarity significantly predicted self-esteem, $b = .54, p < .001$. We conducted a Sobel test and ran bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to test the significance of the indirect effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem through self-concept clarity.

Consistent with Hypothesis 2, self-concept clarity significantly mediated the
relationship between cultural identity clarity and self-esteem, \( z = 3.03, p < .05 \); bootstrapping point estimate of .0752 with a 95\% bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval (BCa CI) of .0270 to .1258. Figure 3 illustrates this model.

\[ \text{Cultural Identity Clarity} \xrightarrow{c = .18^*} \text{Self-Esteem} \]

\[ \text{Self-Concept Clarity} \xrightarrow{b = .54^{**}} \text{Self-Esteem} \]

\[ \text{Cultural Identity Clarity} \xrightarrow{a = .28^{**}} \text{Self-Concept Clarity} \]

\[ \text{Cultural Identity Clarity} \xrightarrow{c' = .02^{ns}} \text{Self-Esteem} \]

*Note: a,b,c,d = standardized coefficients (\( \beta \)s). * \( p < .05 \); ** \( p < .001 \)

*Figure 3. The indirect association between cultural identity clarity and self-esteem.*

In order to have more confidence in our results, we tested an alternative model. We reversed cultural identity clarity and self-concept clarity in the model and tested whether cultural identity clarity would mediate the relationship between self-concept clarity and self-esteem. Support for this alternative model would point to a pathway between variables that is inconsistent with our theoretical predictions--one that would have personal identity clarity shaping cultural identity clarity. We found that cultural identity clarity did not significantly mediate the
relationship between self-concept clarity and self-esteem, $z = .30$, n.s.;

bootstrapping point estimate of .0077 with a 95% BCa CI of -.0418 to .0582,
meaning that this alternative model was unsuccessful.\(^1\)

**Discussion**

From this preliminary investigation, we found support for our two main hypotheses: Cultural identity clarity was positively related to both self-concept clarity and self-esteem, and self-concept clarity mediated the relationship between cultural identity clarity and self-esteem. However, in Study 1, cultural identity clarity was measured in a very general fashion, and may have taken many and varied forms. Since we were sampling a student population in a large urban centre, there could have been any number of cultural identities to which participants were referring when responding to the questionnaire.

The next step was to examine the relationship between cultural identity clarity, personal identity clarity, and self-esteem in the context of a specific cultural group, a group whose members would have the shared experience of the one cultural identity under investigation. We investigated if the clarity of a particular cultural identity, and not some more generalized experience of culture, would be related to our variables of interest. In the two

\(^1\)In all five studies, all of our meditation models and their alternatives were also submitted to path analyses using AMOS software (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). In all cases, the final meditational models presented in this paper were found to be the best fitting models (all $\chi^2$s $< 1.5$, $p$s $>.29$, RMSEAs $\leq .06$, CFIs $>.98$) compared to the alternative models which did not fit these criteria.
studies that follow, participants were self-identified members of particular cultural groups with clearly delineated histories and identities—Anglophone Quebecers (Study 2) and Francophone Québécois (Study 3). In these studies, we also compared our new construct of cultural identity clarity with other potentially related constructs, namely social identification and feelings of normlessness.

**STUDY 2**

Study 2 was conducted with Anglophone Quebecers, a distinct linguistic and cultural minority group in the province of Quebec. The Canadian province of Quebec was built upon a struggle between the minority Anglophone and the majority Francophone communities. This language-based identity is difficult to escape for anyone living in Quebec, rendering it an ascribed, unchanging identity (Bougie, 2005). Anglophones have historically been the elite minority in Quebec; however, with the growth of Francophone nationalism in the 1960s, the intergroup power distribution has to some extent reversed, leaving Anglophone Quebecers feeling increasingly threatened (Bourhis, 1994). The intergroup history between Anglophones and Francophones has most notably been marked by two provincial referendums where Quebecers voted as to whether or not Francophone Québécois would secede from Anglophone Canada. The Anglophone and Francophone cultural identities are therefore distinct identities, built upon a history of intergroup tension. Anglophone Quebecer participants would have internalized a unique cultural identity made up of
shared experiences, group-level traits, ideological positions, behaviours, and history associated with this identity.

In Study 2, we added a supplemental measure of self-esteem, a shortened version of the Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale (Skolnick & Shaw, 1970). This scale is a more specific measure of self-esteem than the Rosenberg in that it focuses on the self in actual social situations rather than on more generalized feelings about the self. We also sought to understand the relationship of the cultural identity clarity scale to other potentially related constructs. By exploring the relationship of our cultural identity clarity scale to a social identification scale and to a normlessness scale, we hoped to obtain a more specific indication of the parameters of cultural identity clarity.

**Method**

*Participants*

One-hundred and sixteen self-identified Anglophone Quebecer undergraduate students (33 men, 82 women, and one who did not indicate his or her gender) participated in Study 2. They were all native English speakers and had lived in the province of Quebec all of their lives or for at least 15 years.

*Materials and Procedure*

Participants completed a survey comprising an array of questionnaires. The survey included the Self-Concept Clarity Scale ($\alpha = .90$), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ($\alpha = .89$), ten items from the original Janis-
Field feelings of inadequacy scale (Skolnick & Shaw, 1978; \( \alpha = .80 \)) and the normlessness scale (Dean, 1961; \( \alpha = .73 \)). The normlessness scale measured the extent to which participants felt that they lacked a set of clear norms to guide their values and behaviour and included questions such as, *Everything is relative, and there just aren’t any definite rules to live by,* and *With so many ways of life going around, one doesn’t really know which to adopt.* Participants also completed our cultural identity clarity scale (\( \alpha = .84 \)) and a social identity scale (Porter, 1995, \( \alpha = .84 \)), both in reference to their identity as an Anglophone Quebecker. The social identity scale was used to measure the extent to which participants identified with the Anglophone Quebecker identity and included items such as, *I feel connected with Anglophone Quebeckers as a group,* and *Compared to my other identities, my identity as an Anglophone Quebecker is central to who I am.*

**Results and Discussion**

*Descriptives and Scale Intercorrelations*

Means reported by participants were 6.92 (\( SD = 1.54 \)) for cultural identity clarity, 5.71 (\( SD = 1.44 \)) for social identification, and 5.05 (\( SD = 1.68 \)) for normlessness on ten-point scales. The mean self-concept clarity score was 3.26 (\( SD = .78 \)) and the mean Janis-Field self-esteem score was 3.37 (\( SD = .60 \)) on five-point scales. Finally, the mean Rosenberg self-esteem score was 5.49 (\( SD = 1.01 \)) on a seven-point scale. All scale responses were normally distributed.
The intercorrelations among the scales included in Study 2 are shown in Table 2. The relationships between cultural identity clarity, self-concept clarity and the two self-esteem scales were positive and significant lending support to Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, there was no relationship between cultural identity clarity and social identification ($r = -0.06$, n.s.), and there was a significant negative relationship between normlessness and cultural identity clarity ($r = -0.28$, $p < .001$).

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<tbody>
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<td>-0.21*</td>
<td>-0.28**</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.28**</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.67**</td>
<td>-0.52**</td>
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<td>-0.55**</td>
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<td>3. Self-Esteem (Rosenberg)</td>
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<td>-0.66**</td>
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<td>-0.36**</td>
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<td>4. Self-Esteem (Janis-Field)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>0.18*</td>
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<td>6. Normlessness</td>
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</table>

Note: N = 116; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table 2. Intercorrelations among cultural identity clarity, self-concept clarity, self-esteem, social identification and normlessness in Anglophone Quebecers.

Mediation Model

We conducted multiple regression analyses followed by tests of the indirect effect to examine if self-concept clarity mediated the relationship between cultural identity clarity and self-esteem. We found that cultural identity clarity significantly predicted self-concept clarity ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$)
and self-esteem (Rosenberg; $\beta = .21, p < .05$) when it was the only predictor. When self-concept clarity was tested as a mediator, the direct effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem disappeared ($\beta = -.12, \text{n.s.}$), and self-concept clarity significantly predicted self-esteem, $\beta = .70, p < .001$. The Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem via self-concept clarity was significant, $z = 4.36, p < .001$, as did bootstrapping analysis (point estimate of .1951 with a 95% BCa CI of .1107 to .2816), providing evidence for full mediation.

The same relationship was obtained when the Janis-Field scale was used as the outcome variable. When self-concept clarity was added to the model as a mediator, the direct effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem (Janis-Field) completely disappeared ($\beta = .07, \text{n.s.}$), and self-concept clarity significantly predicted self-esteem, $\beta = .49, p < .001$. The indirect association between cultural identity clarity and self-esteem (Janis-Field) was significant using the Sobel test, $z = 3.67, p < .001$, and bootstrapping (bootstrapping point estimate of .0890 with a 95% BCa CI of .0425 to .1251), again providing evidence for full mediation.

Discussion

Variation in the perceived clarity of a single, specific cultural identity predicted personal identity clarity, which in turn predicted scores on two different self-esteem scales. In addition, participants who identified more with being an Anglophone Quebecker did not necessarily experience more clarity in this identity, indicating that our measure of cultural identity clarity
is not a proxy for social identification. Having a clear and confident perception of one’s culture appears to be quite different from feeling connected to this culture. The non-significance of this finding also lends support to our other reported correlational results. It is not simply that participants are endorsing all of our self-report measures, leading to significant positive correlations. Instead, it appears that they are completing our scale responses based on genuine feelings related to their experiences of both their cultural and personal identities.

Finally, there was a significant negative relationship between cultural identity clarity and normlessness, lending support to the theoretical position that an unclear cultural identity is associated with having no normative template on which to rely (Taylor, 1997, 2002). Consistent with our theorizing, it appears that having a clear and confident perception of one’s culture means also experiencing a more clearly defined, guiding normative framework.

In order to further verify the obtained relationships, these findings needed to be replicated among members of quite a different linguistic and cultural group. A replication of our results would indicate that it is not something that is particular to the Anglophone Quebecker identity that is creating the results, but is instead a more general phenomenon in which the clarity of one’s cultural identity, no matter which cultural identity it is, is related to our person-level psychological variables. We also sought to extend
our findings beyond self-esteem, and to explore the relationship between clarity and dependent variables indicative of subjective well-being.

**STUDY 3**

In Study 3, we tested the hypothesized relationship among cultural identity clarity, self-concept clarity, and both self-esteem and well-being with Francophone Québécois. The Francophone identity is quite different from the Anglophone Quebecer identity in that it is constructed around a completely different language, a different experience of history and even different norms, values, and characteristics. All materials used in Study 3 were in French, extending our scales to a different linguistic milieu, and ensuring that participants completed the questionnaires in the language associated with their cultural identity.

**Method**

**Participants**

Eighty-nine Francophone Québécois (64 women, 23 men, and 2 who did not specify their gender) participated in the study. They were all self-identified Francophone Québécois with a mean age of 21.38 (SD = 2.90) years old. They had all lived in Quebec all of their lives or for at least 15 years.

**Materials and Procedure**

Participants completed a survey including the validated French translation of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Vallières & Vallerand, 1990; \( \alpha = .86 \)). They also completed French versions of the cultural identity clarity questionnaire (\( \alpha = .82 \)), the self-concept clarity questionnaire (\( \alpha = .73 \)), the
social identity questionnaire (α = .93), the normlessness scale (α = .70) and
the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen,
1988). Cronbach’s alpha for positive affect was .86 and for negative affect it
was .85. All the scales were translated into French and then back-translated
to ensure their validity in a second language.

Results and Discussion

Descriptives and Scale Intercorrelations

Means reported by participants were 6.39 (SD = 1.59) for cultural
identity clarity, 6.05 (SD = 1.98) for social identification, 5.46 (SD = 1.82) for
normlessness, 4.07 (SD = 1.11) for self-concept clarity, 6.78 (SD = 1.51) for
positive affect, and 4.21 (SD = 1.73) for negative affect, all on ten-point scales.
The mean self-esteem score was 3.42 (SD = .50) on a four-point scale. All
scale responses were normally distributed.

The intercorrelations among all the scales are presented in Table 3,
and were found to replicate the relationships observed in Study 2. Cultural
identity clarity was positively and significantly related to both self-esteem
and self-concept clarity. Negative affect was negatively related to cultural
identity clarity and self-concept clarity; however, positive affect was
unrelated to these variables. In addition, the relationships obtained in Study
2 among normlessness, social identification, clarity and self-esteem were
replicated here.
### Table 3. Intercorrelations among cultural identity clarity, self-concept clarity, self-esteem, positive affect, negative affect, social identification and normlessness in Francophone Québécois.

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<td>.07</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
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<td>2. Self-Concept Clarity</td>
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<td>.52**</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.43**</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Self-Esteem</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>-.63**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Positive Affect</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>-.34**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.08</td>
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<td>5. Negative Affect</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>.38**</td>
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<td>6. Social Identification</td>
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<td>7. Normlessness</td>
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*Note: N = 89; * p < .05; ** p < .001

#### Mediation Model

We found that cultural identity clarity significantly predicted self-concept clarity ($\beta = .26, p < .05$) and self-esteem ($\beta = .24, p < .05$) when it was the only predictor. When self-concept clarity was tested as a mediator, the direct effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem disappeared ($\beta = .11$, n.s.), and self-concept clarity significantly predicted self-esteem, $\beta = .49, p < .001$. The Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem via self-concept clarity was significant, $z = 2.18, p < .05$, as did a bootstrapping analysis (point estimate of .0403, 95% BCa CI of .0072 to .0864), providing evidence for full mediation.
Next, we tested our prediction that self-concept clarity would also mediate the relationship between cultural identity clarity and negative affect. As seen in Figure 4, cultural identity clarity significantly predicted self-concept clarity \((a = .25, p < .05)\) and negative affect \((c = -.21, p < .05)\) when it was the only predictor. When self-concept clarity was tested as the mediator, the direct effect of cultural identity clarity on negative affect disappeared \((c' = -.09, \text{ n.s.})\), and self-concept clarity significantly predicted negative affect, \(b = -.40, p < .001\). The Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect of cultural identity clarity on negative affect via self-concept clarity was significant, \(z = -2.12, p < .05\); bootstrapping point estimate of -.1222 with a 95% BCa CI of -0.2705 to -.0161.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cultural Identity Clarity} & \rightarrow c = -.21^* \rightarrow \text{Negative Affect} \\
\text{Self-Concept Clarity} & \rightarrow a = .25^{**} \\
\text{Cultural Identity Clarity} & \rightarrow c' = -.09_{\text{ns}} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Note: \(a, b, c, d = \text{standardized coefficients } (\beta\text{s})\). * \(p < .05\); ** \(p < .001\)

Figure 4. The indirect association between cultural identity clarity and negative affect among Francophone Québécois.
Discussion

In Study 3, our hypotheses were supported among members of a different, and indeed competitive, linguistic and cultural group. The only finding that was inconsistent with our predictions was that no relationship was found between cultural identity clarity and positive affect and between self-concept clarity and positive affect. Although we are uncertain as to why this was the case, we wonder if it might be due to the specific correlates of the positive and negative affect scales of the PANAS (see Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988). Our results match those of Campbell et al. (1996) who found that their self-concept clarity scale was consistently correlated with negative but not positive affect from the PANAS.

Nonetheless, the relationship between cultural identity clarity, self-concept clarity and self-esteem has now been replicated twice with individuals belonging to two competing cultural groups, and has been generalized to a different linguistic context. In addition, this relationship has been extended to include one indicator of subjective well-being—the absence of negative affect. The next step was then to examine our model with individuals who identify with a cultural group that may not necessarily provide them with a straightforward, single cultural identity.

STUDY 4

A body of cross-cultural research has shown that individuals from Western Cultures and individuals from Eastern cultures differ in terms of various psychological processes (e.g., Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, &
Norasskkunkit, 1997) and in terms of reasoning about their social world (Ji, Nisbett, & Su, 2001; Norenzayan & Nisbett, 2000). Although research has indicated a variety of successful techniques for integrating competing cultural identities (e.g. Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993), bicultural identities, in particular those made up of both Eastern and Western cultural identities remain complex and thus particularly interesting to examine in the context of our present focus on cultural identity clarity.

In study 4, we tested our model among a group of self-identified Chinese Canadians and Chinese Americans. Finding support for our model among individuals who are negotiating two different, and perhaps competing cultural identities would represent more compelling evidence for the importance of clarity in one’s global experience of cultural identity. A Chinese North American identity that is perceived by the individual as clearly defined could potentially act as a valuable guiding framework for an individual who is living in two cultures, and thus be associated with a clear personal identity and personal self-esteem and well-being.

**Method**

**Participants**

One-hundred and thirty self-identified Chinese North Americans (30 men, 97 women and three who did not indicate their gender) participated in Study 4. They were all undergraduate students at a large urban university and were recruited through advertisements sent to members of the Chinese
Student Society and posted on campus classifieds that called for the participation of Chinese Canadians/Americans. All participants were fluent in English.

*Materials and Procedure*

Participants completed a survey including English versions of the Cultural Identity Clarity Scale (\( \alpha = .84 \)), the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (\( \alpha = .90 \)), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (\( \alpha = .91 \)). Participants completed the cultural identity clarity scale in reference to their identity as a Chinese North American. Participants also completed The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, Griffin, 1985; (\( \alpha = .84 \)). The PANAS was not included in the present study.

*Results and Discussion*

*Descriptives and Scale Intercorrelations*

The mean score for cultural identity clarity was 6.67 (SD = 1.65) on a ten-point scale. The mean score for self-concept clarity was 3.17 (SD = .83) on a five-point scale. Finally, mean scores were 5.29 (SD = 1.18) for self-esteem, and 4.58 (SD = 1.25) for life-satisfaction on seven-point scales. All scale responses were normally distributed.

The intercorrelations among the scales are presented in Table 4. Cultural identity clarity was positively and significantly related to self-esteem, to life satisfaction and to self-concept clarity. It is interesting to note here that the correlation between cultural identity clarity and self-concept clarity was higher with Chinese North Americans (\( r = .60, p < .001 \)), than it
was in Studies 1 through 3 ($rs = .28$, .42, and .26, respectively), indicating that these two constructs might be more closely related for Chinese North Americans than they are for the previous cultural groups under investigation. A salient or visible cultural identity is perhaps more closely linked to the experience of one’s personal identity.

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<td>4. Life Satisfaction</td>
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*Note: N = 130; * $p < .05; **p < .001*

Table 4. Intercorrelations among cultural identity clarity, self-concept clarity, self-esteem and life-satisfaction in Chinese North Americans

*Mediation Model*

We found that cultural identity clarity significantly predicted self-concept clarity ($\beta = .60$, $p < .001$) and self-esteem ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$) when it was the only predictor. When self-concept clarity was tested as a mediator, the direct effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem disappeared ($\beta = .09$, n.s.), and self-concept clarity significantly predicted self-esteem, $\beta = .54$, $p < .001$. The Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem via self-concept clarity was significant, $z = 4.86$, $p <$
.001, as did bootstrapping analysis (point estimate of .2283 with a 95% BCa CI of .2283 to .3216), providing evidence for full mediation.

We went on to investigate our prediction that self-concept clarity would mediate the relationship between cultural identity clarity and life satisfaction. As seen in Figure 5, cultural identity clarity significantly predicted self-concept clarity ($a = .60, p < .001$) and life satisfaction ($c = .23, p < .001$) when it was the only predictor. When self-concept clarity was introduced to the model as a mediator, the direct effect of cultural identity clarity on life satisfaction disappeared ($c' = .08$, n.s.), and self-concept clarity significantly predicted life satisfaction, $b = .26, p < .05$. The Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect of cultural identity clarity on life satisfaction via self-concept clarity was significant, $z = 2.35, p < .05$; bootstrapping point estimate of .1185 with a 95% BCa CI of .0340-.2151.

Note: a,b,c,d = standardized coefficients ($\beta$s). * p < .05; **p < .001.

Figure 5. The indirect association between cultural identity clarity and life satisfaction among Chinese North Americans.
Discussion

Cultural identity clarity predicted personal identity clarity, which in turn predicted self-esteem and life-satisfaction among Chinese North Americans. The perceived clarity of a combined Chinese North American identity might be important for the psychological adjustment of those negotiating Eastern and Western cultures simultaneously. These findings are consistent with past research on cultural identity integration. Such research demonstrates a positive relationship between having well-integrated collective or cultural identities and well-being (e.g., Downie, Koestner, ElGeledi, & Cree, 2004; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebind, and Vedder, 2001). The current study expands upon this past research by suggesting that, for individuals who are successfully juggling two or more cultural identities, personal identity clarity might be the mechanism through which well-being is arrived at.

Beyond the negotiation of conflicting cultural identities, we now turn to a group thought to be experiencing even greater cultural identity challenges. In study 5, we investigate the cultural identity clarity of a group of Aboriginal people who are negotiating a devalued heritage culture and an imposed, and at times confusing and unclear, mainstream culture (see Frideres, 1998). Finding support for our theoretical model among Aboriginal people would extend our results to a particularly interesting group facing complicated cultural identity concerns and some well-being challenges.
STUDY 5

Not only was Aboriginal culture decimated during colonization (Frideres, 1998), but equally devastating was that Aboriginal people had no clear portrait of the imposed European culture. While the visible aspects of European culture overwhelmed them, they were never exposed to the fundamental values that lay at the core of European culture (Taylor, 2002). Aboriginal peoples are thus currently negotiating a powerful mainstream culture at the same time as they are trying to uphold the values of their own, historically oppressed culture. Consequently, they are left potentially struggling with a bewildering set of principles with which they must construct an identity, potentially giving rise to negative well-being effects such as academic under-achievement, low self-esteem, addictive behaviours and even suicide (see Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallet, 2003; Taylor, 2002).

An investigation into cultural identity clarity and its association with personal identity and psychological well-being for Aboriginal peoples is a particularly important task. Successfully demonstrating a relationship between these variables among a group of First Nations in Canada, would point to the psychological importance of reclaiming or redefining a clear Aboriginal cultural identity.

In Study 5, the associations among cultural identity clarity, personal identity clarity and general feelings of positivity were tested in a field study. Members of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation from the Northwest Territories, Canada, participated in the research. The research itself was
conducted in the town of Yellowknife and in surrounding, primarily Dene communities. Yellowknife is the capital of the Northwest Territories, situated in Northern Canada, approximately 400 kilometres south of the Arctic circle. It is a remote community, subject to harsh weather conditions, and made up of individuals from a number of different Aboriginal groups, as well as mainstream Canadians and other minority group-members.

**Method**

**Participants**

Seventy-six members of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (56 women and 20 men) participated in the present research. Participants represented a wide range of ages. Twenty participants were between 18 and 25 years of age, 15 participants were between 26 and 34 years of age, 20 participants were between 35 and 44 years of age, 13 participants were between 45 and 54 years of age, and finally 8 participants ranged in age from 55-64 years. All participants were fluent in English. Participants were recruited through advertisements in local newspapers and by researchers going door-to-door in small, primarily Dene areas. Two participants were deleted from the analysis due to missing data on all of the scales.

Given the historic and current disadvantaged status of many Aboriginal peoples in Canada, participants in the present study were likely to have obtained a level of education below that of the average population. School drop-outs among Aboriginal peoples are markedly higher than they are among the average Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2001). Also,
from our experiences working in Aboriginal communities, we expected that
the participants in Study 5 would likely have had little experience with paper
and pencil questionnaires and scale responses. The study materials were
thus designed to be very brief, simple, and straightforward so as to be easily
understood by all the participants.

Materials and Procedure

Participants completed a short paper and pencil questionnaire in
English. If they indicated that they needed help with the questionnaire, the
researcher was available to answer any questions. All participants first had
to indicate to which group they felt connected in order to ensure that they
identified as an Aboriginal (Dene) person. They were then asked to refer to
this Dene identity when responding to our cultural identity clarity items. The
questionnaire was made up of shortened, and simplified versions of the
questionnaires used in the previous studies, comprising three questions
derived from our Cultural Identity Clarity scale, four questions derived from
the Self-Concept Clarity scale (Campbell et al. 1996), five questions from the
Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale, and a mood scale asking participants how often
in the past week they felt *depressed, confident, tired, hopeful, worried, and happy*. This scale was previously used to test the subjective well-being of a
group of urban street youth (Usborne, Lydon, & Taylor, 2009). All answers
were given on a ten-point Likert scale. Questions from the self-esteem scale
and the mood scales were combined, providing an overall index of positivity
(Cronbach's alpha = .80 ). The modified self-concept clarity scale also had
adequate reliability ($\alpha = .67$); however the reliability of the modified cultural identity clarity scale was much lower ($\alpha = .32$). Given that the three items that made up this scale, I spend a lot of time wondering what my [Dene] cultural group really stands for (reverse coded), Sometimes I think I know other cultural groups better than I know my own [Dene] group (reverse coded), and In general, I have a clear sense of what my [Dene] group is, had been used successfully in other studies, we decided to nonetheless use a composite of these items to measure cultural identity clarity. Participants were also asked to provide their gender and to circle their age range.

**Results and Discussion**

*Descriptives and Scale Intercorrelations*

The means reported by participants were $6.86 (SD = 1.75)$ for cultural identity clarity, $6.73 (SD = 1.85)$ for self-concept clarity, and $7.34 (SD = 1.33)$ for positivity. All scale responses were normally distributed.

The intercorrelations among all the scales are presented in Table 5. In support of Hypothesis 1, the relationship between cultural identity clarity and self-concept clarity was significant, and the relationship between cultural identity clarity and positivity was marginally significant.
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<td>.21†</td>
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<td>.67**</td>
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<td>Positivity</td>
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*Note: N = 74; † p < .10; *p < .05, **p < .001.

Table 5. Intercorrelations among cultural identity clarity, self-concept clarity, and positivity in members of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation.

Mediation Model

Replicating our results from previous studies, we found that cultural identity clarity significantly predicted self-concept clarity ($\beta = .36, p < .001$), and was a marginally significant predictor of positivity ($\beta = .21, p = .07$) when it was the only predictor. When self-concept clarity was tested as a mediator, the direct effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem disappeared ($\beta = .02, \text{n.s.}$), and self-concept clarity significantly predicted self-esteem, $\beta = .65, p < .001$. The Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect of cultural identity clarity on self-esteem via self-concept clarity was significant, $z = 2.90, p < .05$; bootstrapping point estimate of .1718 with a 95% BCa CI of .0452 to .3053, providing evidence for full mediation. The same relationship was obtained when controlling for the age of participants.

Discussion

Here, a clear Dene identity was found to be associated with clearly knowing the personal self, which in turn was related to positive feelings about oneself and one's life. These findings are consistent with those of
Chandler & Lalonde (1998) who point to the importance of reclaiming a strong and clearly defined cultural identity for Aboriginal groups. Chandler et al. (2003) posit that a lack of cultural continuity leads to a loss of personal continuity, which in turn increases risk for suicide. Consistent with such theorizing, our findings suggest that clarification of cultural identity might provide participants with a clearer idea of who they are personally which in turn is associated with increased positivity.

**General Discussion**

In a series of five studies, among five very different cultural groups, the extent to which beliefs about one’s cultural group were clearly and confidently defined was positively related to a clear and confident definition of the personal self and to self-esteem and markers of psychological well-being.

Our theoretical mediation model was supported among all five groups. Of particular interest were the results obtained among individuals facing cultural identity challenges. For individuals negotiating two cultural identities, and even for those living in a remote Northern community who have had their cultural identity compromised through a destructive colonization process (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Taylor, 1997, 2002) cultural identity clarity predicted self-esteem and well-being via personal identity clarity.
Implications for Identity, Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being

Extending Campbell’s (1990) seminal research and more recent research (Stinson, Wood, & Doxey, 2008) pertaining to self-concept clarity, we found that cultural identity clarity is an important variable to consider when examining the relationship between identity clarity and well-being. The established relationship between clarity and well-being now includes a collective identity level of analysis, a level that, although a crucial component of the self-concept (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Tafjel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Taylor 1997, 2002), has been missing from previous theories linking identity clarity to well-being.

In its support for Taylor’s (1997, 2002) theory of collective identity clarity, our research also suggests that clarity at both a personal and collective level may be fundamental for positive self-esteem and well-being. Although no causal relationship was established here, our research points to an alternative way of thinking about clarity at both a personal and collective level—-as a pre-cursor to well-being. Such a pathway is consistent with Baumgardner’s (1990) research demonstrating that increased self-certainty leads to positive affect, as well as with research by Pelham and Swann (1989) who found that the certainty of people’s self-views is a contributor to global self-esteem. Having a clear group identity can be a guiding force which reduces personal uncertainty (e.g., Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007). Having a clearly defined personal identity is then itself associated with positive self-esteem and well-being.
Cultural Identity Clarity: Applied Implications

Cultural identity is a fundamental component of the self and can thus be incredibly powerful and resilient (see Taylor, 2002). Indeed, a threat to one’s cultural identity is often met with attempts to reclaim or rediscover one’s true cultural identity. Our research presents a model that might help us understand why such attempts are so important.

For example, Aboriginal peoples have recently focused on reclaiming their culture through attempts to revitalize their language, re-learn traditional practices, and redefine who they are in today’s world (e.g., Lawrence, 2003; Tsosie, 2002). First Nations communities that have engaged in practices emphasizing cultural continuity such as securing the title to traditional lands, having some rights of self-government, having community control over education, police and health services, and establishing community based ‘cultural facilities’ had lower suicide rates than communities that were not engaging in these practices (Chandler and Lalonde, 1998). The present research, together with such findings point to the psychological importance of reclaiming and defining a clear cultural identity.

Similarly, for bicultural individuals experiencing distress due to the challenges associated with integrating different cultural identities, Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones (2006) describe and suggest an intervention aimed at clarifying what it means to them to have a bicultural identity. For those living with cultural identity challenges, clarifying this identity might help one
to know who they are personally and by extension to feel good about themselves. Beyond targeting person-level variables such as self-esteem or psychological well-being on a case-by-case basis, the clarification of cultural identity might be an effective method through which personal identity clarity and well-being can be established.

It is important to note that our research does not stipulate that one’s cultural identity be in any way accurate, unchanging, or simple. Like Baumgarder (1990), who cautions that greater self-certainty need not be equated with a more accurate sense of identity, the present findings indicate that it is an individual’s perception of the clarity of their cultural identity, and not any one ‘true’ identity that is crucial. The self, at both a personal and a collective level is complex and constantly adjusting to the demands of reality. It is a confident understanding of the story constructed out of these changing and diverse elements that represents a clear identity.

Limitations and Future Directions

The findings from our research have important theoretical and applied implications, yet they are preliminary in that they represent a first look at the construct of cultural identity clarity. Although our hypotheses and the mediation model we tested was based on a well-developed theory of cultural identity clarity (Taylor, 1997, 2002) and converging social psychological evidence (e.g., Hogg & Mullin, 1999), no causal conclusions can be made from the present research. Associations among cultural identity clarity and our person-level variables were consistently demonstrated;
however, the pathway from cultural identity clarity to both self-esteem and well-being via personal identity clarity now needs to be explored in experiments where cultural identity clarity is manipulated and its effects examined.

Furthermore, we relied entirely upon an adapted version of a previous self-report measure of clarity in order to examine cultural identity clarity. Although relying exclusively on self-reports, our findings were consistent with related research that has used alternative measures of cultural clarity. Bougie (2005) measured the coherence of Francophone and Anglophone Quebecers’ cultural narratives to measure identity clarity and found preliminary evidence that coherence was positively related to collective esteem. Chandler and Lalonde (1998) used archival information to examine concrete markers of cultural continuity. It is now necessary for similar alternative measures of cultural identity clarity to be employed and related to personal identity clarity, self-esteem and well-being in order to provide a more confident understanding of these relationships.

Finally, the present research has consistently demonstrated a particular meditational relationship among our variables of interest in an array of very different cultural groups. However, more investigation is needed into the mechanisms driving this relationship. It is important to determine what specifically needs to be clear about a cultural or personal identity in order for an association with well-being to exist. The next step is to understand if clarifying a particular component of an individual's cultural
identity, such as the norms, or values, or behaviours associated with this identity, might have specific effects on self-concept clarity, self-esteem and well-being.
TRANSITION TO MANUSCRIPT 2

The studies reported in Manuscript 1 demonstrated repeated evidence for the positive relationship between cultural identity clarity and psychological adjustment. Among undergraduate students, Anglophone Quebecers, Francophone Québécois, Chinese North Americans, and Aboriginal Canadians, cultural identity clarity was found to be positively related to self-concept clarity, self-esteem and to markers of subjective well-being. Beyond this, the relationship between cultural identity clarity and both self-esteem and well-being was consistently fully mediated by self-concept clarity. Having clear and confident beliefs about one’s cultural group, regardless of the cultural group under investigation, was predictive of having clear and confident beliefs about one’s personal self-concept, which in turn was predictive of self-esteem and well-being.

The findings in Manuscript 1 provide clear empirical support for Taylor’s (1997, 2002) theory of collective identity clarity and extend the psychological relationship between identity clarity and self-esteem and well-being to a cultural level of self-definition. That cultural identity clarity and well-being are associated has therefore been well established. However, this association was demonstrated in Manuscript 1 using only cross-sectional data and correlational analyses. Although based on theorizing about the psychological primacy of cultural identity clarity, I could not be certain, from Manuscript 1, whether or not perceived clarity actually lead to self-esteem and well-being, or conversely, if greater self-esteem and well-being lead one
to feel more personal and cultural identity clarity. The next step was then to test the direction of the relationship between cultural identity clarity and both self-esteem and well-being. To do so, it was important to design an experimental paradigm that manipulated cultural identity clarity in a controlled laboratory setting and to examine the effects of this manipulation on state-well being and self-regard.

The successful development of such a laboratory paradigm involved overcoming two important challenges. The first was to find a realistic and natural method by which identity could be both explored and manipulated in a controlled, laboratory fashion. The second was to develop a more focused definition of cultural identity clarity. Clearly, it would be impossible to simulate the entire experience of cultural identity in a brief laboratory experiment. I therefore had to focus on a particular aspect of an individual’s cultural identity and manipulate the clarity of this aspect.

To address the first challenge, I developed a novel methodology involving computer-mediated communication, a method by which I believed a clear cultural identity, an unclear cultural identity, and even a conflicted cultural identity could be simulated in a controlled, laboratory context. Computer-mediated communication is a means through which individuals are able to modify their self-presentation (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002) and act out entirely new identities (Hancock, 2007). One often hears dramatic anecdotal examples of individuals enacting entirely new identities in online chat and gaming contexts, identities that appear all encompassing
and real. I propose that the ease with which people take on new and complex identities over the Internet could allow us to, in a realistic manner, ask participants to enact a clear, conflicted, or unclear cultural identity during a computer-mediated social interaction, and to examine the subsequent effects of this exercise on state well-being and self-regard.

In order to address the second challenge inherent to examining a construct as complex as cultural identity in a laboratory context, I had to develop a more focused definition of cultural identity clarity. Given the historical embeddedness and psychological complexity of any cultural identity, I did not set out to capture cultural identity in its entirety in the laboratory. As a starting point, I focused on a basic aspect of a cultural identity that could be manipulated. Based on Taylor’s (1997, 2002) theorizing about the function of collective and cultural identity, I manipulated the clarity of the guiding normative template that a cultural identity provides to group members. In contrast to Manuscript 1, where cultural identity clarity was operationalized as the extent to which global beliefs about one’s cultural group are clearly and confidently defined, Manuscript 2 is more specific in its operationalization of cultural identity clarity. Its focus is the extent to which the guiding normative template for appropriate social interaction contained within a cultural identity is perceived by the individual as clearly and confidently defined. I examine the effect of this perception on state well-being and self-regard.
MANUSCRIPT 2: Cultural Identity Clarity in the Laboratory: Understanding the Relationship Between Cultural Identity Clarity and Psychological Well-being

Abstract

Recent research has pointed to the importance of cultural identity clarity for self-esteem and psychological well-being (e.g., Taylor, 1997, 2002; Usborne & Taylor, 2009); however, this research has been based on theoretical and correlational evidence. The causal pathway from cultural identity clarity to well-being has not yet been empirically examined. The present research is an initial attempt to manipulate cultural identity clarity in a laboratory setting and examine its impact on state well-being and self-regard. Using identity manipulations involving computer-mediated communication, participants were lead to experience a clear, a conflicted, or an unclear cultural identity. Negotiating a computer-mediated social interaction with a clear cultural identity led to the highest levels of well-being and self-regard compared to negotiating this interaction with a conflicted or an unclear cultural identity, which led to the lowest levels. These results suggest that experiencing a clearly defined cultural normative template might lead to greater psychological well-being.
**Introduction**

Recent psychological theory and research has highlighted the positive relationship between having a clear, confident and coherent view of one’s cultural identity and markers of psychological adjustment. Perceiving one’s cultural identity as clearly defined has been associated with increased personal self-concept clarity, self-esteem and psychological well-being among members of an array of different cultural groups (Usborne & Taylor, 2009). In addition, the extent to which one has coherently integrated multiple collective or cultural identities into one’s sense of self has been positively linked with psychological well-being (see Amiot, de la Sablonniere, Terry, & Smith, 2007; Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Downie, Koestner, ElGeledi, & Cree, 2004). More dramatically, markers of cultural continuity in Aboriginal communities have been associated with a decreased incidence of youth suicide in these communities (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998).

Together, these research programs point to the emerging importance of cultural identity clarity for psychological well-being. They have explored the relationship between cultural identity clarity, personal identity and psychological adjustment; however, their methodologies have relied primarily upon archival information or on correlations of self-report questionnaires. They were thus not able to address a causal direction among these variables. The causal pathway from cultural identity clarity to psychological well-being has yet to be determined. The present research attempts to address this issue by manipulating a construct as complex and
multifaceted as cultural identity in a controlled laboratory setting. The well-being effects of two preliminary cultural identity clarity manipulations will be explored in laboratory experiments.

We begin by describing existing theoretical and empirical support for the relationship between cultural identity clarity and well-being. We proceed to describe three real-world experiences of cultural identity—the negotiation of a clear cultural identity, a conflicted cultural identity, and an unclear cultural identity, and explain how these experiences inspired our cultural identity clarity manipulation. We then test the relationship between cultural identity clarity and state self-regard and well-being using an experimental paradigm involving computer-mediated communication.

*Cultural Identity Clarity and Well-Being*

Identity clarity and psychological well-being have long been theoretically associated. Classic theorists have assumed that greater identity clarity leads to greater self-esteem and well-being (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1951; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997). Researchers (Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, 1990; Campbell, et al., 1996; Stinson, Wood, & Doxey, 2008) have empirically tested this relationship and found that people who have a well-articulated sense of who they are, personally, have more positive self-esteem and experience more positive self-regard, and psychological adjustment. Furthermore, increasing “certainty” pertaining to one’s personal self has been found to actually lead to more positive self-regard (Baumgardner, 1990).
Taylor’s (1997, 2002) theory extends the relationship between identity clarity and self-esteem/well-being to a collective level of self-definition. Taylor posits that a clearly defined collective identity is crucial for the development of a clearly defined personal identity, which in turn is important for self-esteem and personal well-being. Specifically, he argues that the attributes that comprise an individual’s personal identity are relative. When an individual perceives him or herself as having a particular characteristic, it is because he or she is comparing him or herself to a clear reference group. Indeed, the assessment of the self—its possessions, attributes, and accomplishments—is thought to be largely a comparative process (Miller & Prentice, 1996). Therefore, in order for someone to internalize information about their personal identity, they require a normative template to serve as a comparative standard. A clearly defined collective identity, complete with a clear definition of the norms, traits, ideological positions, shared behaviour, experiences and history that are associated with one’s group, can serve as such a template (Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006; Taylor, 1997, 2002; Terry & Hogg, 1996). That is, if an individual has a clear knowledge that the group to which he or she identifies has a particular set of characteristics, norms, and value inducing scripts, this knowledge will facilitate the individual’s analyses and conclusions about what kind of person he or she is or should be. A clear personal self-knowledge would then be related to self-esteem and psychological well-being (e.g., Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996).
Evidence for Taylor’s (1997, 2002) theory comes from research examining the role of clearly defined groups in reducing personal uncertainty. Clear categories are thought to prescribe behaviour, locate an individual in the social world, and provide validation for who we are, what we do, and what we believe (Hogg & Mullin, 1999). Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, and Moffitt (2007) found that self-conceptual uncertainty at the personal identity level actually motivates identification with groups, and that people prefer to identify with groups that have a clearly defined normative template. Individuals turn to a group that provides clear prototypes because they are best suited to personal uncertainty reduction (Jetten, Hogg, & Mullin, 2000). Having a clear group identity limits uncertainty surrounding the personal self. Less personal uncertainty is, in turn, associated with increased self-esteem and psychological well-being (Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, 1999; Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003).

Among the array of group or collective identities available to an individual, a person’s cultural identity might be particularly important. A cultural identity provides its members with a shared history, and a set of norms, values and characteristics, along with detailed normative information and scripts about how to successfully pursue the values and norms defined by the cultural identity (Taylor & Usborne, 2009). A clear cultural identity then serves as a broadly-based, guiding template for an individual’s values, thoughts and behaviours. Cultural psychologists go so far as to argue that
one’s cultural identity influences the very nature of the self-concept (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), impacting an array of psychological processes (e.g., Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Rhee, Uleman, Lee, & Roman, 1995), and general reasoning about one’s social world (e.g., Ji, Nisbett, & Su, 2001; Norenzayan & Nisbett, 2000). Such research is based on the idea that individuals rely on culturally specific meaning systems, learned associative networks of values, beliefs, and knowledge that are shared by people from the same cultural group (D’Andrade, 1984). These cultural meaning systems are frameworks that affect people’s affect, cognition, and behaviour (Kashima, 2000). Given the psychological importance of cultural identity, a clear cultural identity, complete with a clearly defined normative template, might be important for the development of a clear personal identity, which in turn is associated with self-esteem and psychological well-being.

Usborne and Taylor (2009) conducted a direct test of the relationships among cultural identity clarity, personal identity clarity and both self-esteem and well-being. They examined these relationships among members of a variety of very different cultural groups. Using a cultural identity clarity scale, adapted from Campbell et al.’s (1996) self-concept clarity scale, these researchers found evidence for a positive association among cultural identity clarity, personal identity clarity, self-esteem, and subjective well-being among mainstream Canadians, Francophone and Anglophone Quebecers, Chinese Canadians, and Aboriginal Canadians.
Furthermore, they demonstrated that the relationship between cultural identity clarity and self-esteem and well-being, was consistently mediated by personal identity clarity. The authors concluded that having a clearly defined cultural identity might facilitate the development of a clearly defined personal identity, which in turn is associated with increased self-esteem and well-being. These findings provided support for the predicted relationship between cultural identity clarity and psychological adjustment. However, the direction of the relationship between the variables could not be confirmed given the non-experimental nature of these studies.

Although there is theoretical and correlational support for the importance of cultural identity clarity for psychological well-being, a direct test of the consequences of having a clear cultural identity, an unclear cultural identity, or even a conflicted cultural identity has never been conducted. In the present research, we attempted to devise a methodology by which such cultural identity conditions could be simulated in a controlled, laboratory context, and their effects on well-being examined. We did so in order to test the causal direction of the relationship between cultural identity clarity and well-being.

*Cultural Identity Clarity Conditions: Clear, Conflicted and Unclear*

The inspiration for our laboratory paradigm arose from the experiences of individuals facing real-world cultural identity challenges. Indeed, in today’s increasingly globalized and multicultural world, an array of potential cultural identity concerns might arise. Individuals from the
mainstream culture, immigrants to a new culture, or long-standing ethnic minorities who are emerging from a history of oppression and discrimination might all have very different challenges related to cultural identity. Here, we chose to explore and to simulate three different cultural identity experiences. These include the negotiation of a clearly defined cultural identity, a conflicted cultural identity, and an unclear cultural identity.

*A Clear Cultural Identity.* Theoretically, a clear cultural identity provides group members with a straightforward way of acting, of thinking, and of being. For example, a mainstream Canadian or American, might intuitively know the values, norms and behaviors endorsed by their cultural group, and would thus have access to a guiding framework for following these norms, pursuing these values, and engaging in appropriate behaviours. For example, knowing, consciously or unconsciously, that in certain situations, one’s group values individual success over relationships, or even that one’s group values relationships at the expense of individual success, would allow an individual to know what to values to promote, what to say and indeed how to behave in an array of situations pertaining to the pursuit of these values.

For members of mainstream groups, for whom group memberships are not “problematic” or challenging, a cultural identity might be taken for granted (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). Cultural knowledge would be so natural and engrained that it would not be necessary to even consciously deliberate much about one’s cultural identity or list its key
ingredients (Taylor, 1997). One could intuitively rely on the normative framework provided by this cultural identity without always having to consciously engage it.

Our first laboratory condition was therefore meant to represent this experience of someone with a clear, familiar and straightforward experience of cultural identity. We attempted to replicate the experience of an individual who has access to a very well-defined, familiar normative template that provides group members with a clear idea of what they should value and how they should behave.

* A Conflicted Cultural Identity. A conflicted cultural identity might arise when an individual is faced with the challenge of juggling two competing cultural identities, as might be the case for newcomers to Canada or to any other immigrant-receiving country. Research examining individuals navigating two or more cultures, has focused on the process of acculturation (e.g., Berry, 2005; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993), and has often examined the extent to which one’s heritage culture and new culture are experienced as conflicting (see Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Berry, 2005; Downie, et al., 2004; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). For example, research with Chinese American biculturals details the different culturally specific meaning systems embodied by each or their cultural identities, and explores how these individuals negotiate these two systems (see Benet-Martinez, et al., 2002).
Recent research has explored cultural identity integration, whereby the extent to which individuals are able to reconcile a number of different, possibly conflicting collective or cultural identities is examined (e.g., Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martinez, et al., 2002). Findings suggest that people who have well-integrated collective identities report greater psychological well-being than individuals who have non-integrated collective identities (Amiot, et al., 2007; Downie, et al., 2004; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001), and that greater collective identity interference, the extent to which pursuing one identity conflicts with the goals of the other, is related to lower levels of well-being (Settles, 2004). Settles argues that enacting identities associated with dissimilar or conflicting cultures may require a greater use of cognitive, emotional, or psychological resources than enacting identities associated with similar cultures. For example, reconciling one cultural identity that values relationships at the expense of individual success, and another that values individual success over relationships might be a considerable challenge.

Thus, our second cultural identity clarity condition was meant to represent the challenging experience of negotiating two conflicting or discontinuous cultural normative frameworks. The condition is meant to be analogous to the experience of an immigrant or second generation bicultural, for example, who would be involved in reconciling conflicting cultural values and norms.
An Unclear Cultural Identity. We would argue that an even more challenging experience of cultural identity might be the identity challenge of some long-standing cultural minorities who are emerging from a history of oppression. Members of these groups are attempting to negotiate cultural values, norms and behaviours that are beyond conflicting in that they are potentially unclear. For example, the heritage culture of Aboriginal peoples has been so disrupted through colonization, and a powerful and confusing mainstream culture has been so swiftly imposed on them, that identity confusion is possible (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Frideres, 1998; Taylor, 2002). In his collaboration with the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic, Taylor observes that not only was Inuit culture decimated during colonization, but equally devastating was that the Inuit had no clear portrait of the imposed European culture. While the visible aspects of European culture overwhelmed the Inuit, they were never exposed to the fundamental values that lay at the core of this European culture. For example, the Inuit had European education thrust on them but they were not provided with a clear understanding of its role and function, nor could they rely on more traditional educational norms and values, as these had been made largely unclear by a history of forced assimilation (Frideres, 1998; Taylor, 2002). The current cultural identity of many Aboriginal peoples may not actually provide a clear normative script to which group members are meant to subscribe.
More generally, an unclear cultural identity offers no clear normative framework nor critical information pertaining to what one should value, what one should think and indeed how one should behave. For example, an unclear cultural identity might not provide group members with any clear information about whether or not they should even value relationships at the expense of individual success or vice-versa, leaving them without a guiding framework for negotiating situations pertaining to such values. Our third cultural identity clarity condition, then, attempts to capture the experience of someone negotiating such an unclear normative template. This laboratory condition is meant to be analogous to the experience of an individual who has no clear norms and guidelines on which to base his or her own values, thoughts and behaviours.

*The Present Research*

The present experiments represent first attempts at simulating experiences of cultural identity clarity in the laboratory. Cultural identity is a broad, multifaceted and ever-changing component of the self-concept and is thus difficult to replicate in its entirety in a laboratory context. Thus, our methodology does not aim to represent the entire experience of an individual wrestling with cultural identity concerns. Given the historical embeddedness and psychological complexity of any cultural meaning system, we cannot claim to have captured cultural identity in its entirety in the laboratory; whatever cultural identity manipulation we chose would have to be less than complete. As a starting point, we therefore focused on one basic aspect of a
cultural identity that could be manipulated—the normative template that it provides for group members. In Experiment 1, we asked participants to adhere to prototypical norms and values associated with particular, well-researched cultural orientations. In Experiment 2, we manipulated the extent to which the guiding normative framework provided by a cultural identity was perceived by the individual as clear, conflicted or unclear.

In order to realistically manipulate identity, however, a novel methodology was required—one that would enable us to simulate the experience of actually using and being immersed in our cultural identity clarity conditions in the laboratory context. We turned to an increasingly popular domain where young people today express, construct, and even re-construct their own identities. Like narrative methods of exploring identity (e.g., Hammack, 2008; McAdams, 2001, 2006), we believe that computer-mediated communication is a holistic methodology by which issues of identity can be explored and even manipulated in a laboratory context. Indeed, in our modern, technology-driven world, we find many anecdotal, and now more scientific descriptions of individuals who enact fully formed and elaborate identities in an online chat or gaming context. Individuals may go so far as to change their age, or even their gender online. We thus used computer-mediated communication as a vehicle through which our participants could potentially experience the negotiation of a clear, conflicted or unclear cultural identity.
Online Identity Paradigm

Specifically, computer-mediated communication offers the possibility for individuals to modify their self-presentation (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002), express previously unexpressed aspects of the self (McKenna & Bargh, 1998) and act out new identities (Hancock, 2007). Participants asked to present traits in online blogs were found to actually internalize these traits, shifting their own identities towards them (Gonzales & Hancock, 2008). The ease with which people take on new identities over the Internet and the resulting identity shift allowed us to, in a realistic manner, ask participants to take on and enact a particular cultural identity in the laboratory. Spears, Postmes, Lea, & Wolberts (2002) have even argued that the decreased salience of personal accountability and identity on the Internet makes group-level collective identities all the more important. Online, computer-mediated communication was thus used in our experiments as a method by which certain aspects of a clear, conflicted or unclear cultural identity could be manipulated.

In Experiment 1, participants were asked to take on a novel clear, conflicted, or unclear cultural identity during a computer-mediated discussion. In Experiment 2, participants were asked to think of instances where their own, existing cultural identity was either clear, conflicted, or unclear. They were then asked to rely on this identity while engaged in a computer-mediated conversation. In both experiments, after enacting either
a clear, conflicted, or unclear cultural identity, participants’ state well-being and feelings of positive self-regard were assessed.

The hypothesis for our two experiments was that participants in the clear cultural identity condition would experience the greatest levels of temporary subjective well-being and self-regard stemming from the online conversation, followed by participants in the conflicted cultural identity condition, and finally by those in the unclear condition. According to Taylor’s (1997, 2002) theory of cultural identity clarity and subsequent cor relational tests of this theory (Usborne & Taylor, 2009), an assigned cultural identity that represents a clear normative template would serve as a guiding framework that a participant could count on to help them define a clear online persona. The result should be greater feelings of temporary self-regard and well-being. In contrast, an assigned cultural identity that includes no clear normative framework would provide a very unclear template upon which participants could construct a clear online persona, thereby negatively influencing feelings about the self and state well-being. Finally, an assigned cultural identity that includes a normative template that is conflicting with a participant’s pre-existing cultural template (Experiment 1) or that is perceived as containing conflicting elements (Experiment 2) would make it challenging, but not impossible for the participant to construct a clear online persona. Indeed, negotiating conflicting cultural identities is a challenging but viable task (see Berry, 2005; LaFromboise, et al., 1993; Ryder, et al., 2000). Enacting a conflicted cultural identity would therefore result in levels
of self-regard and state psychological well-being falling in between those of participants in the clear and unclear conditions.

EXPERIMENT 1

For Experiment 1, we sought an array of empirically established cultural norms and values to serve as the template for our cultural identity clarity manipulation. The concept of individualism/collectivism (Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) provided a well-researched framework of such norms and values. People with an individualistic orientation are thought to give priority to personal goals over the goals of the group (Triandis, 1989, 1995). The normative imperative for individualists is to stress independence from others and to discover and express one’s unique attributes (Johnson, 1985; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Miller, 1988). On the other hand, people with a collectivistic cultural orientation tend to subordinate their personal goals to collective goals (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). They see themselves as largely connected to other people, making their normative imperative to support interdependence between individuals (Hsu, 1985; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Miller, 1988). These characteristics might vary between cultures, but within any given culture, individuals will also vary in the extent to which they exhibit individualistic or collectivistic orientations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Individualism and collectivism are probably overly-simplistic categorizations and are ones that are the focus of much theoretical debate (see Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). These concepts were, however, useful in the present context because they provided
an established array of cultural norms and values from which we could draw. In Experiment 1, participants’ pre-existing individualistic and collectivistic orientations were established. Participants were later assigned to take on cultural identities that followed an individualist cultural orientation, a collectivist cultural orientation, or an unclear cultural orientation.

Participants were asked to take on these identities in the context of an online, computer-mediated conversation with other participants. The participants who were asked to take on a cultural identity that was consistent with their pre-existing cultural orientation were in the clear cultural identity condition. Participants who took on a cultural identity that was inconsistent with their pre-existing cultural orientation were in the conflicted cultural identity condition. Finally, participants who took on a cultural identity that provided them with no clear normative template on which to rely during the online conversation were in the unclear cultural identity condition.

Our dependent variables were designed to measure feelings of state well-being and self-regard arising from the online conversations. Directly after the online conversation, participants were asked about their positive and negative affect, their perceived competence and their self-regard. We hypothesized that participants in the clear cultural identity condition would have the highest levels of positive affect, perceived competence and self-regard, and the lowest levels of negative affect, followed by those in the conflicted cultural identity condition, and finally by those in the unclear
cultural identity condition.

Because participants’ online conversations were typed, computer-mediated conversations, we were also able to conduct an exploratory content analysis of the words participants actually used in their online conversations. The typed conversations were analyzed using software developed by Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth entitled Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (2001). This program analyzes written text on a word-by-word basis and calculates the percentage of words in the text that match pre-determined language categories (Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2003). Of particular interest for the present experiment were the psychological process categories including overall affect, positive emotions, negative emotions, optimism, anxiety, anger, and sadness. We made parallel, but exploratory hypotheses pertaining to the content of participants’ conversations, such that participants experiencing a clear cultural identity would use more words falling into the positively valenced categories, and fewer words falling into the negatively valenced categories, followed by those experiencing a conflicted identity and by those experiencing an unclear identity throughout the conversations.

**Method**

**Participants**

Fifty-five participants (42 women and 13 men) took part in Experiment 1. They were all undergraduate students at a large urban university in Canada, with an average age of 20.46 years (SD = 2.46).
Participants were recruited through advertisements on campus seeking individuals wishing to participate in a study examining computer-mediated communication. Participants were primarily Caucasian, however 17 participants indicated that they were of minority or mixed Canadian-minority ethnicity. Participants’ ethnic backgrounds, however, were unrelated to our dependent variables, thus participants of all ethnicities were analyzed together.

Materials and Procedure

Pre-Measures: One month before coming to the laboratory participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire containing a number of scales. These were a measure of collectivism/individualism (Triandis, 1995; \( \alpha = .75 \)), the Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974; \( \alpha = .71 \)), the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (\( \alpha = .93 \)), as well as demographic questions, including gender, age, and ethnicity. The individualism/collectivism scale was included to provide an indication of each participant’s pre-existing individualistic/collectivistic orientation. Because our experimental methodology included role playing, a known correlate of self-monitoring style (Snyder, 1974), we measured participants’ self-monitoring tendencies. Similarly, we measured participants’ global self-esteem, as our dependent variables, self-regard, affect, and perceived competence may have been associated with baseline levels of self-esteem.

Online Identity Paradigm. Participants were scheduled to come into the laboratory in groups of five or six people. Each participant was seated at
an individual computer and was given an instruction sheet detailing 1) a
cover story for the research, 2) their laboratory task, and 3) their assigned
cultural identity.

First, participants were told a cover story. They were told that the
study in which they were participating was investigating the efficacy of
computer-mediated communication for discussing important policy issues.
They were informed that, specifically, the researchers wanted to determine if
people could convincingly take on a new identity during such discussions.
Participants were told that because of the anonymity of this new form of
communication, it was important to determine if people could ‘fake’ an
entirely new identity online.

Second, participants were told that their task would be to engage in a
computer-mediated conversation with the other participants in the room,
but that they would have to assume a new cultural identity while engaged in
this online conversation. They were reminded, that they would have to fully
immerse themselves in their new identity without letting any of their own
personal characteristics interfere with the process. Participants were
instructed to discuss issues facing incoming first-year university students
with the other participants in the room, while taking on this new identity.
Their discussion task was to come up with helpful tips for new university
students pertaining to all areas of campus life.

Third, participants were randomly assigned to take on either an
individualistic cultural identity, a collectivistic cultural identity, or an unclear
cultural identity while engaged in the discussion of issues facing incoming university students. Participants assigned an individualistic identity were asked to take on the identity of a prototypical member of a “Western culture”. They were told, “You are someone who gives priority to personal goals over the goals of the group. You are adept at expressing your internal thoughts and feelings, and at being direct and saying what’s on your mind. You have opinions that are stable, and you enjoy standing out as unique.” Participants were asked to follow a certain set of identity-consistent normative guidelines throughout the online conversation that, they were told, were typical of Western cultural groups. Examples of these were: “Group members must try to stand out as unique”, and “Group members must be direct—they freely and directly express their own feelings and opinions”.

Participants assigned a collectivistic identity were instructed to portray a prototypical member of an “Eastern culture”. They were told, “You are someone who gives priority to group goals over the goals of the individual. You are sensitive to the context in which you find yourself and are adept at adjusting, and restraining yourself in order to maintain social harmony. You have opinions that are variable, and you enjoy fitting into the group.” Participants were asked to follow a certain set of identity-consistent normative guidelines throughout the online conversation that, they were told, were followed by typical members of Eastern cultural groups. Examples of these were: “Group members must try to fit into the group”, and “Group
members must be indirect—they try and gauge what others in the group are thinking before presenting their opinions.”

In the unclear condition, the participants were instructed to portray “a member of a cultural group that is totally different from your own.” They were simply told “it is very important to fully immerse yourself in your new identity without letting any of your own opinions or personality traits interfere with the process.” Participants were given no normative guidelines to follow throughout the online conversation.

After reading the instructions, participants engaged in an online conversation with the other participants in the session using an instant messaging software. This software allows conversation among all participants to take place in real time. Every participant was able to contribute to the conversation at any time and to see the contributions of all other participants on their own screen. All participants appeared to be highly engaged in the task as the conversations began and unfolded naturally, often appeared to be quite animated, and continued throughout the entire time allowed. The conversations lasted for 20 minutes, at which point the experimenter asked participants to end their conversations and fill out a final questionnaire.

Dependent Measures: Following the online discussion, participants individually completed a set of questionnaires. As a manipulation check, participants were asked the extent to which they felt that they had accurately enacted a prototypical member of an Eastern or Western culture during the
online conversation. In order to check for the perceived clarity of their online identities, they were also asked how clear they found their assigned cultural identity to be during the online conversation. Positive affect was assessed through questions asking the extent to which participants felt satisfied, confident, and positive throughout the online conversation (α = .77). Negative affect was assessed through questions asking the extent to which participants felt anxious and frustrated throughout the online conversation (α = .69). Perceived competence was assessed through questions asking the extent to which they felt that they were successful, performed well, contributed to the online conversation, and had high quality dialogue (α = 90). Participants answered on Likert scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much). Finally, feelings of self-regard were assessed through a question that asked How did you feel about yourself personally during the online conversation?, to which participants answered on a Likert scale from 1 (very negatively) to (very positively). Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were fully debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Results

Manipulation Checks

In order to check if participants took on the cultural identities that they were assigned, they were asked the extent to which they felt that their online persona accurately captured a prototypical member of a Western culture and a prototypical member of an Eastern culture. Participants assigned an individualistic identity indicated that their online persona more
accurately captured a member of a Western culture \( M = 6.55, SD = 2.04 \) than did participants assigned a collectivistic identity \( M = 3.50, SD = 2.01 \), \( F(1,35) = 26.80, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .43 \). Participants assigned a collectivistic identity indicated that their online persona more accurately captured a member of an Eastern culture \( M = 6.06, SD = 1.63 \), than did participants assigned an individualist identity \( M = 3.11, SD = 1.79 \), \( F(1,35) = 27.41, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .44 \). Thus, for those assigned individualistic or collectivistic identities, participants felt that they had successfully enacted these identities.

Because we hoped to manipulate the extent to which participants experienced their assigned cultural identities as clearly defined, we also investigated the extent to which participants perceived their online identities to be clear. The overall ANOVA was significant \( F(2,52) = 7.09, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .21 \), such that participants assigned an unclear cultural identity indicated that they perceived their identity as significantly less clear \( M = 3.11, SD = 2.06 \), than did participants assigned an individualistic cultural identity \( M = 5.89, SD = 2.42 \) and participants assigned a collectivistic cultural identity \( M = 5.17, SD = 2.46; ps < .05 \). While participants assigned an individualistic or collectivistic identity felt that they were accurately enacting a clearly defined identity during their online conversation, participants in the unclear condition felt that they were enacting an identity that was unclear.

**Preliminary Analyses**

Because our main analyses took participants’ pre-existing cultural orientations into account, it was first important to establish participants’
existing orientations. Based on Triandis’ (1995) scale of
individualism/collectivism, and using his method of calculating
individualism/collectivism, 33 participants were found to have a pre-existing
individualistic cultural orientation and 22 were found to have a pre-existing
collectivistic cultural orientation. Participants’ pre-existing cultural
orientations were unrelated to any of the dependent variables.

During the manipulation, 13 participants were requested to take on a
cultural identity that was consistent with their pre-existing cultural
orientation (clear condition participants), 24 participants were assigned a
cultural identity that was inconsistent with their pre-existing cultural
orientation (conflicted condition participants), and 18 participants were
required to deal with an unclear cultural identity (unclear condition
participants). The clear condition thus consisted of individualists who took
on an individualistic identity, and collectivists who took on a collectivistic
identity; whereas, the conflicted condition consisted of individualists who
took on a collectivistic identity and collectivists who took on an
individualistic identity. The unclear condition consisted of individuals of both
orientations, asked to take on a new, and completely unclear cultural
identity. The main analyses compared scores across the clear, conflicted, and
unclear conditions.

Because our procedure involved role-playing, a known correlate of
self-monitoring style (Snyder, 1974), participants’ self-monitoring scores
were included in all of our well-being analyses as a covariate. In addition,
participants’ baseline self-esteem scores were included as a covariate for our variable examining state self-regard, as self-esteem scores were marginally significantly correlated with scores on this dependent variable, $r = .25, p = .06$, but not on the other dependent variables.

*State Well-Being and Self-Regard*

*Positive Affect.* The positive affect experienced by participants was examined using a univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and planned comparisons between conditions. Results revealed that participants who portrayed a clear identity that was consistent with their existing orientation experienced significantly more feelings of satisfaction, confidence, and positivity stemming from the online conversation than did participants who took on an identity that was conflicting with their existing orientation, or than did participants who took on an unclear identity (see Table 1 for estimated marginal means). The overall ANCOVA comparing the three conditions was also significant $F (2,51) = 6.49, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .20$.

*Negative Affect.* Participants who took on a clear identity that was consistent with their existing orientation experienced significantly less anxiety and frustration stemming from the online conversation than did participants who took on an identity that was conflicting with their existing orientation, and marginally significantly less anxiety and frustration than did participants who took on an unclear identity (see Table 1 for estimated marginal means and standard errors). The overall ANCOVA exploring participants’ negative affect in each of the three conditions was marginally
significant $F(2,51) = 2.48, p = .09, \eta^2_p = .09$.

*Perceived competence.* Participants who took on a clear identity that was consistent with their pre-existing cultural orientation felt significantly more competent throughout the online conversation than those who took on an unclear cultural identity. They felt marginally significantly more competent than those who took on an identity that was conflicting with their pre-existing cultural orientation (see Table 1). The overall ANCOVA exploring participants’ feelings of perceived competence across all conditions was significant, $F(2,51) = 3.45, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .12$.

*Self-regard.* Participants in the clear condition reported significantly more positive feelings towards themselves than did participants in the unclear condition. Other contrasts between conditions were non-significant (see Table 6). The overall ANCOVA examining participants’ feelings towards themselves across conditions produced a result that approached significance, $F(2,50) = 2.3, p = .11, \eta^2_p = .09$. 

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Table 6. Estimated marginal means (and standard errors) for positive affect, negative affect, feelings of competence, and self-regard as a function of cultural identity clarity condition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clear</th>
<th>Conflicted</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>7.39\textsubscript{a} (.49)</td>
<td>5.45\textsubscript{b} (.34)</td>
<td>5.23\textsubscript{b} (.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td>2.56\textsubscript{a} (.60)</td>
<td>4.17\textsubscript{b} (.42)</td>
<td>4.04\textsubscript{b}*. (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Competence</td>
<td>7.11\textsubscript{a} (.52)</td>
<td>6.02\textsubscript{b}*. (.37)</td>
<td>5.28\textsubscript{b} (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Regard</td>
<td>7.04\textsubscript{a} (.59)</td>
<td>6.23 (.41)</td>
<td>5.33\textsubscript{b} (.49)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different subscripts differ at the \( p < .05 \) level of statistical significance. * Mean differs at the \( p < .10 \) level.

Content Analysis

An exploratory analysis was conducted on the actual text of participants’ online dialogues. The text was analyzed using software developed by Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth entitled Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (2001), an externally validated instrument designed to analyze written text on a word-by-word basis and calculate the percentage of words in the text that match pre-determined language categories (Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2003). Of particular interest for the present experiment were an array of psychological process categories including overall affect, positive emotions, negative emotions, optimism, anxiety, anger, and sadness.

Analyses of variance indicated significant differences among conditions for the negative emotion, optimism, and anger language categories. The remaining categories showed no significant differences. The overall ANOVA
was significant for “negative emotion” words, \( F(2,52) = 5.17, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .17 \), such that participants in the unclear condition expressed the most negative emotion words compared to participants in the clear and conflict conditions (see Table 2 for means and standard deviations). For words fitting into the category of “optimism”, the overall ANOVA was significant, \( F(2,52) = 4.81, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .16 \), such that participants in the unclear condition expressed significantly fewer optimism words than participants in the conflict condition (see Table 2). Finally, the overall ANOVA was significant for “anger” words, \( F(2,52) = 5.65, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .18 \). Participants in the unclear condition expressed significantly more words falling into the category of anger than did participants in the clear-consistent and conflict conditions (see Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clear</th>
<th>Conflicted</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotion Words</td>
<td>1.05 (a^* (.68))</td>
<td>.87 (a (.81))</td>
<td>1.94 (b (.58))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism Words</td>
<td>.72 (.39)</td>
<td>.97 (a (.62))</td>
<td>.42 (b (.50))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger Words</td>
<td>.19 (a (.20))</td>
<td>.20 (a (.46))</td>
<td>.80 (b (.93))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Means with different subscripts differ at the \( p < .05 \) level of statistical significance.
* Mean differs at the \( p < .10 \) level.

Table 7. Means (and Standard Deviations) for words fitting into the “negative emotion”, “optimism”, and “anger” language categories as a function of cultural identity clarity condition.
Discussion

In Experiment 1, we assigned participants a new online cultural identity, and thus hoped to simulate, at least partially, the experience of what it might be like for an individual to navigate a social situation with a clear, conflicted, or unclear cultural normative template on which to rely. Overall, participants who were required to take on a clear identity, consistent with their pre-existing cultural orientation, stood out as experiencing the highest levels of positive affect, competence and positive self-regard, and the lowest levels of negative affect compared to participants who were asked to take on a cultural identity that was conflicting with their existing cultural orientation, and compared to participants who were given no clear normative guidelines on which to base their online personas. A clear and familiar cultural identity thus appeared to guide the successful construction of an online persona, thereby resulting in greater feelings of well-being and personal self-regard. In addition, participants who took on an unclear cultural identity during the online conversation expressed the most words falling into the categories of “negative emotion” and “anger” and the fewest words falling into the category of “optimism” compared to participants in the other two cultural identity clarity conditions. Although, exploratory, these results provide us with more evidence for the negative well-being effects of taking on an unclear cultural identity during a computer-mediated interaction. Overall, the results represent initial evidence that cultural identity clarity might actually promote feelings of personal well-being and self-regard.
We were successful in so far as our laboratory analogue was able to temporarily affect well-being and self-regard by briefly simulating roles with clear and familiar, conflicting or totally unclear cultural norms. However, we recognized that this laboratory paradigm was a first attempt at manipulating cultural identity clarity in the laboratory, one that relied upon a collection of very specific norms and values based on particular, assigned, and admittedly simplistic cultural identities. A second attempt at manipulating cultural identity clarity was needed which took quite a different approach to simulating clear, conflicted, and unclear cultural identities in the laboratory. Finding support for our hypotheses using a different manipulation, one that was based on participants’ actual, existing identities, rather than on role playing an assigned identity, would provide more compelling evidence for the well-being effects stemming from the experience of a clear, conflicted, or unclear cultural identity.

In Experiment 2, we therefore based our cultural identity conditions on participants’ existing cultural identities. Rather than having participants take on an entirely new identity online, we manipulated participants’ experiences of their own cultural identities. They were made to think of their existing identity as either clear, conflicted or unclear, and the well-being effects of this manipulation were examined. In addition, a possible mechanism for the relationship between cultural identity clarity and state well-being and self-regard was explored. According to Taylor’s (1997, 2002) theory, and supporting research (Usborne & Taylor, 2009), experiencing an
unclear cultural identity leads to feelings of uncertainty surrounding one’s personal identity, which in turn produces negative self-esteem and well-being effects. In Experiment 2, we examined feelings of personal uncertainty arising from the cultural identity manipulation and investigated their role in producing feelings of well-being and self-regard.

**EXPERIMENT 2**

In the second experiment, participants were all self-identified members of a particular cultural group. They were Anglophone Quebecers, members of a distinct linguistic and cultural minority group in the province of Quebec. The Canadian province of Quebec was built upon a historical struggle between the minority Anglophone and the majority Francophone communities. Anglophones have historically been the privileged minority in Quebec; however, with the growth of Francophone nationalism in the 1960s, the intergroup power distribution has now, to some extent, reversed, leaving Anglophone Quebecers feeling increasingly under threat from their Francophone counterparts (Bourhis, 1994). In the context of the present research, the Anglophone cultural identity is a distinct identity made up of a shared language, history and a set of collective norms and values associated with this identity.

The identity manipulation used in Experiment 2 was based on McGregor, Zanna, Holmes, and Spencer’s (2001) manipulation of personal uncertainty using a deliberative mindset technique. McGregor et al. induced personal uncertainty by asking participants to write a short paragraph about
a time when they faced a personal dilemma. They then had to write about the specific values that were in opposition, and to describe how they felt during this dilemma. This manipulation made a particularly uncertain time salient for participants and led them to perceive themselves as more personally uncertain than did control participants.

For the present experiment, a similar procedure was used to induce feelings of cultural identity clarity, conflict, or unclarity. Participants were asked to reflect on their Anglophone Quebecer cultural identity and to write a short paragraph about a time when they found this identity to comprise normative guidelines that were either clear, conflicted, or unclear. They were then asked to engage in an online, computer-mediated interaction which required them to make use of this cultural identity.

As in Experiment 1, participants’ positive and negative affect, perceived competence and self-regard were measured directly after they engaged in the online interaction. First, we hypothesized that participants who were led to experience their cultural identity as clear would report greater positive affect, less negative affect, lower perceived competence and higher self-regard than those who were led to experience their identities as conflicted, followed by those who were led to experience their identities as unclear. Second, we hypothesized that feelings of personal uncertainty experienced during the online interaction would account for the expected well-being effects. Based on the results of Experiment 1, we made parallel predictions pertaining to the actual content of participants’ online
interactions, such that participants in the unclear condition would express the most words falling into the “negative emotion” and “anger” language categories, and the fewest words falling into the “optimism” category compared to the other conditions.

Method

Participants

Seventy self-identified Anglophone Quebecers (24 men and 46 women) participated in Experiment 2. They were all undergraduate students who responded to online advertisements at a large urban university in Quebec for a study examining cultural identity. All participants had lived in Quebec from birth or for at least 15 years. Twenty-four participants were in the clear condition, 22 in the conflict condition, and 24 in the unclear condition. They received monetary compensation or course credit for their participation.

Materials and Procedure

Pre-measures. Approximately one month before coming to the laboratory, participants completed the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (1965; \( \alpha = .90 \)), and a measure of social identification to the Anglophone Quebecker cultural identity (Porter, 1995). The connectedness subscale (\( \alpha = .66 \)) of the social identification measure was used to determine the extent to which participants felt connected to the Anglophone Quebecker cultural group. Questions included, “I feel connected with Anglophone Quebecers as a group”
and “I distance myself from Anglophone Quebecers as a group” (reverse coded). Demographic information was also collected at this point.

Cultural Identity Manipulation. Building on McGregor et al.’s (2001) manipulation of personal uncertainty, participants were asked to reflect upon a time when their Anglophone Quebecer cultural identity was clear, conflicted, or unclear. In the clear identity condition, participants were asked to: “Think of a situation when your group membership provided you with very clear norms and guidelines about what to say, what to do, how to act, and/or what to think. You knew exactly how an Anglophone Quebecer would behave in this situation, and you were able to behave in this way.” In the conflicted identity condition, participants were asked to: “Think of a situation when your group membership created conflict between two opposing values, norms, behaviours and/or thoughts. Because your Anglophone Quebecer identity has some inconsistencies within it, you did not know if you should behave according to one set of norms or according to another, competing set of norms.” Finally, participants in the unclear identity condition were asked to: “Think of a situation when your group membership provided you with no clear norms and guidelines about what to say, what to do, how to act, and/or what to think in a specific situation. You had no idea how an Anglophone Quebecer would behave in this situation, and you felt that you were unable to behave appropriately.” All participants were given examples of such a situation, to provide them with an idea of what type of situation might be appropriate to describe.
In line with McGregor et al.’s (2001) identity manipulation, participants were asked to write a short description of such a situation. They were then asked two follow-up questions corresponding to the identity conditions. They were asked to describe the norms and values that were clear/conflicted/ or unclear in the situation, and they were asked to articulate why they thought that they felt clear/conflicted/ or unclear during this situation. These follow-up questions were designed to allow participants to further process the situations that they had described and to deepen their impression of having a clear, conflicted, or unclear cultural identity.

**Online identity paradigm.** Following the cultural identity manipulation, participants were informed that they would be engaging in a computer-mediated interaction with a Francophone Quebecker. They were asked to discuss the role of Quebec in the new globalized world, a very general topic that, when discussed with a Francophone Quebecker, was designed to make a participant’s identity as an Anglophone Quebecker particularly salient. Participants would thus have to make use of their Anglophone Quebecker identity when participating in this conversation.

The Francophone Quebecker with whom participants interacted was an actual Francophone Quebecker who was an experimental confederate. The confederate was sitting at a computer in another room and simply asked to engage in a discussion with the participant about Quebec’s role in the new globalized world. The confederate was not told about the purpose of the study and was blind to the condition of the participant. The online
discussions were conducted in English and lasted for 15 minutes. All participants appeared to be fully engaged in the activity and discussed the topic for the full time allowed.

*Dependent Measures.* Directly after the online discussion, participants individually completed a series of questions. First, as a manipulation check they were asked the extent to which they found their Anglophone Quebecer identity to be clearly defined when they were engaged in the online discussion. In order to assess positive and negative affect, participants were administered the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) and were asked to complete this scale referring to how they felt throughout the online discussion. Cronbach’s alpha was .91 for positive affect and .86 for negative affect. Perceived competence was assessed by asking participants the extent to which they felt confident during the interaction, convincing, positive about the interaction, that they performed well, and that the quality of their dialogue was good (α = .83). Participants responded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much). Participants were asked how they felt about themselves personally during the online interaction and answered on a scale from 1 (very negatively) 10 (very positively). Finally, feelings of personal uncertainty were assessed using McGregor et al.’s scale (2001; α = .93) of personal uncertainty. Similar to the PANAS, it asked the extent to which participants felt a series of 20 adjectives indicating uncertainty, such as mixed, unsure of self, unclear, throughout the online interaction. Participants’ online dialogues were also subjected to a
content analysis using the LIWC (Pennebaker, et al., 2003) software. Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

When asked to describe a situation in which their Anglophone Quebecer identities were either clear, conflicted, or unclear, participants were able to do so. Here, we provide an example of one response in each of the three conditions in order to present information about how participants might have responded to our identity manipulation. A participant in the clear condition described an unspoken, but clear norm he or she experienced when going to job interviews in Quebec: "In regards to job interviews. Since I am an Anglophone, going into a job interview requires me to prove that I am adequate in the French language, thus it is important as an Anglo to make sure to prove above and beyond that I can in fact speak French. However, when dealing with job interviews for English positions simply mentioning I speak French is good enough. There is an understanding." A participant in the conflict condition described a conflict between his or her identity as an Anglophone, and wanting to fit into a group of Francophone Quebecer friends: "When I would go to my French high school, most of my friends were Francophone and would often be in favour of more Francophone rights and sovereignty, which I would oppose as an Anglophone. However, it would reach a point that I would be so opposed in my beliefs that sometimes I would either
let their comments pass or agree with them to remain part of the group. While my true beliefs made me feel one way, my desire to be their friend made me act in another way.” Finally, a participant in the unclear condition wrote about not knowing how to behave as an Anglophone Quebecer when meeting new people: “In meeting new friends while on vacation last year, I was placed in the situation where I was stuck between 2 stereotypes. While on the one hand, I am Canadian, on the other, I am a Quebecer. While Anglo Canadian and the French Quebecer stereotypes seem pretty well defined, the Anglo Quebecer does not. In fact, I don’t think that I adhered to one way of behaving or another; rather at the same times I felt I was behaving more stereotypically Canadian, and others, were more like a Quebecer.” Overall, the situations given by participants appeared to indicate that they understood the assigned task and thought about a time in their lives that was representative of a point when they felt that their cultural identity was clear, conflicted, or unclear.

Manipulation Check

In order to check the extent to which our cultural identity clarity manipulation resulted in feelings of clarity or not in their Anglophone Quebecer identities, participants were asked the extent to which they experienced their Anglophone identity as clearly defined throughout the online interaction. The overall ANOVA was significant, $F(2,67) = 3.52, p < .05$, such that participants in the unclear condition ($M = 5.38, SD = 2.20$) indicated that their identities were significantly less clear than those in the conflict condition ($M = 7.09, SD = 1.95$), $F(1,67) = 7.05, p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .10$, and also less
clear than those in the clear condition at a level that only approached significance ($M = 6.21$, $SD = 2.38$), $F (1,67) = 1.74$, $p = .19$, $\eta^2_p = .03$.

Because the cultural identity clarity manipulation was focused entirely on the participant’s Anglophone Quebecer identity, we expected that it would be most effective for those participants who felt highly connected to this cultural identity. We performed a median split on participants’ connectedness to identity scores and conducted a manipulation check. Participants who scored above the median of 7.50 were defined as highly connected to the Anglophone Quebecer cultural identity, and participants who scored equal to or below 7.50 experienced relatively low connectedness to this identity. For participants who indicated that they were highly connected to their Anglophone Quebecer cultural identity, the overall ANOVA comparing identity conditions on the extent to which this identity was perceived as being ‘clear’ was significant, $F (2,29) = 4.59$, $p < .05$, such that participants in the unclear condition ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 2.54$) reported that their identities were significantly less clear than those in the clear condition ($M = 7.50$, $SD = 1.18$), $F (1,29) = 6.21$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .18$; and than those in the conflict condition ($M = 7.67$, $SD = 1.58$), $F (1,29) = 6.83$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .19$.

However, for participants who indicated that they were less connected to their Anglophone Quebecer identity, the overall ANOVA comparing the three conditions was non-significant, as were the contrasts between conditions.

It appears that our cultural identity clarity manipulation worked primarily for those who were more highly connected to their Anglophone
Quebecer identity. For the following analyses of the dependent variables we therefore conducted 3 (condition) X 2 (connectedness to identity) univariate ANOVAS. No differences in baseline self-esteem scores were found between conditions indicating no need to include global self-esteem as a covariate in the analyses.

**State Well-Being and Self-Regard**

*Positive Affect.* The PANAS (Watson, et al., 1988) was used to explore affect stemming from the online interaction. Participants' positive affect scores were subjected to a 3 (condition) by 2 (connectedness to identity) ANOVA and planned comparisons between conditions. There was no main effect of condition and a significant main effect of connectedness, $F(1,64) = 8.20$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2_p = .10$, such that those who were highly connected to the Anglophone identity experienced more positive affect overall. Importantly, this main effect was qualified by a significant condition by connectedness interaction, $F(2,64) = 3.53$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .11$ (see Figure 6). Planned comparisons revealed that for those with high connectedness, participants in the clear condition reported significantly more positive affect ($M = 7.78, SD = 1.60$) than those in the unclear condition ($M = 5.60, SD = 2.18$), $F(1,29) = 8.65$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2_p = .23$. Participants in the conflict condition also reported marginally significantly more positive affect ($M = 6.97, SD = 1.12$) than participants in the unclear identity condition, $F(1,29) = 3.20$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2_p = .10$. There were no significant differences between conditions for those with low connectedness to the Anglophone Quebecer identity.
Positive affect as a function of cultural identity clarity condition and connectedness to the Anglophone Quebecer identity.

**Figure 6.** Positive affect as a function of cultural identity clarity condition and connectedness to the Anglophone Quebecer identity.

*Negative Affect.* For participants' negative affect scores, there were no main effects of condition or of connectedness, but there was a marginally significant condition by connectedness interaction, $F(2,64) = 2.58, p = .08, \eta_p^2 = .08$ (see Figure 7). Planned comparisons revealed that for those who were highly connected to the Anglophone Quebecer identity, participants in the clear condition experienced significantly less negative affect ($M = 1.95, SD = .69$) than participants in the unclear condition ($M = 3.21, SD = 1.70$), $F(1,29) = 5.11, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .15$. Participants in the conflict condition also experienced marginally significantly less negative affect ($M = 2.14, SD = 1.22$), $F(1,29) = 3.44, p = .07, \eta_p^2 = .11$ than did participants in the unclear
condition. There were no significant differences between conditions for those who had low connection to the Anglophone Quebecker identity.

Figure 7. Negative affect as a function of cultural identity clarity condition and connectedness to the Anglophone Quebecker identity.

Perceived Competence. There were no significant main effects of condition or connectedness for participants’ feelings of perceived competence. Importantly, there was a marginally significant condition by connectedness interaction effect, $F(2,64) = 2.80, p = .07, \eta^2_p = .08$ (see Figure 8). For participants with a high level of connectedness, participants in the clear condition ($M = 7.34, SD = 1.79$) indicated significantly higher perceived competence than participants in the unclear condition ($M = 5.57, SD = 2.10$), $F(1,29) = 5.56, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .16$. Participants in the conflict condition ($M = \ldots$
7.58, SD = 1.16) also indicated significantly higher perceived competence than did participants in the unclear condition, $F(1,29) = 6.73, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .19$

For participants with low connectedness to the Anglophone Quebecer identity, there were no significant differences between conditions.

![Bar graph showing perceived competence across conditions for low and high connectedness.](image)

Figure 8. Perceived competence as a function of cultural identity clarity condition and connectedness to the Anglophone Quebecer identity.

Positive Self-Regard. Finally, an analysis of participants’ levels of positive self-regard revealed that there were no significant main effects of condition or connectedness. There was a condition by connectedness interaction that approached significance, $F(2,64) = 2.20, p = .12, \eta^2_p = .07$ (see Figure 9). Consistent with our predictions, for participants with a higher level of connectedness, participants in the clear identity condition ($M = 8.44, SD = 1.42$) had significantly higher self-regard than participants in the unclear
identity condition ($M = 6.69, SD = 2.06$), $F(1,28) = 4.21$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2_p = .13$. For participants with low connectedness to their Anglophone Quebecer identities, there were no differences between conditions.

Figure 9. Positive self-regard as a function of cultural identity clarity condition and connectedness to the Anglophone Quebecer identity.

Content Analysis. As in Experiment 1, an analysis was conducted on the actual text of participants’ online dialogues using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (2001). However, no significant differences were found between the cultural identity clarity conditions in any of the psychological language categories.
Exploring a Possible Mechanism: Personal Uncertainty

For participants who were highly identified with the Anglophone Quebecer cultural identity, we found that a manipulation of cultural identity clarity led to significant differences in participants’ state well-being and self-regard. Next, we sought to explore the psychological mechanism that might explain these differences. That is, we investigated what our cultural identity clarity manipulation might actually be doing to produce the well-being effects. Based on Taylor’s (1997, 2002) theory, and the work of Hogg and his colleagues (e.g., Hogg et al., 2007; Jetten, Hogg, & Mullin, 2000) who find that membership in clearly defined groups serves to reduce personal uncertainty, we hypothesized that feelings of personal uncertainty might be driving the obtained well-being effects. The cultural identity manipulation may have elicited differential levels of personal uncertainty experienced during the online interaction. These feelings of personal uncertainty might then have led to the well-being effects.

When examining participants’ personal uncertainty scores, we found no significant differences for those who reported having a low connection to the Anglophone Quebecer identity. However, for participants who were highly connected to this identity, participants in the unclear condition had significantly more feelings of personal uncertainty ($M = 3.63, SD = 2.10$) than those in the clear condition ($M = 2.14, SD = 1.22$), $F(1,29) = 4.70, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .14$ and more feelings of personal uncertainty at a level that approached
significance than those in the conflict condition ($M = 2.54, SD = 1.18$), $F(1,29) = 2.38, p = .13, \eta^2_p = .08$.

Examining only those participants who indicated a high level of connectedness to the Anglophone Quebecer identity, we included feelings of personal uncertainty as a covariate in our analyses designed to explore the well-being differences across the three identity conditions. We did so in order to examine if personal uncertainty would account for these differences in participants who were highly connected to the Anglophone Quebecer identity. When uncertainty was added as a covariate to our previous analyses exploring well-being differences between conditions, these differences either disappeared or dropped in their level of significance. For positive affect, the significant difference between the conflict and unclear conditions dropped to non-significance, $F(1,28) = 1.66, \text{n.s.}$, and the difference between the clear and unclear conditions decreased from $F(1,29) = 8.65, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .23$ to $F(1,28) = 4.66, p = .04, \eta^2_p = .14$. Similarly, for negative affect, the obtained differences between conditions dropped to non-significance when personal uncertainty was added as a covariate, $F(1,28) = .98, \text{n.s.}$ (clear vs. unclear); $F(1,28) = 1.08, \text{n.s.}$ (conflict vs. unclear). For perceived competence the significant difference between the clear and unclear conditions dropped to non-significance, $F(1,28) = 1.47, \text{n.s.}$, and the significant difference between the conflict and unclear conditions dropped to marginal significance $F(1,28) = 3.88, p = .06, \eta^2_p = .12$. Finally, for positive self-regard the significant difference between the clear and unclear conditions, dropped to non-
significance when personal uncertainty was entered as a covariate, $F(1,27) = .55$, n.s. Although more exploration of the personal uncertainty mechanism is needed, for those highly connected to the Anglophone Quebecer identity, it appears that the cultural identity manipulation created feelings of personal uncertainty which were, at least in part, driving the obtained well-being effects.

**Discussion**

Overall, for participants who were highly connected to their Anglophone Quebecer cultural identity, experiencing an unclear cultural identity lead to lower levels of positive affect, perceived competence, and positive self-regard, and higher levels of negative affect stemming from an online interaction with a Francophone Quebecer, compared to experiencing either a clear or a conflicted cultural identity. Participants who experienced the Anglophone Quebecer identity as the most unclear, as per the manipulation check, experienced the most negative effects on well-being and self-regard compared to the clear and conflicted conditions. Furthermore, this finding was not due to the negatively valenced nature of the unclear identity manipulation, as the conflicted condition was also negatively valenced and did not produce such negative effects.

Unlike Experiment 1, the difference between conditions was not reflected in a content analysis of participants’ actual dialogues. This inconsistency was perhaps due to the different topic of conversation and the more subtle identity manipulation used in Experiment 2. In fact, the mean
percentage of words falling into the psychological language categories in Experiment 2, were, for the most part, lower than the levels observed in Experiment 1, potentially indicating that the overall conversation topic elicited less of a response that could be detected in the words that participants used.

Finally, in Experiment 2, a possible mechanism for the relationship between cultural identity clarity and well-being was explored. When highly connected to a cultural identity, manipulation of this identity to make it seem more unclear elicited personal uncertainty, which in turn appeared to drive the observed effects on well-being and self-regard. This finding is consistent with our theoretical position (Taylor, 1997, 2002) and with the research of Usborne and Taylor (2009) in that it demonstrates that an unclear cultural identity might lead to personal identity uncertainty which in turn is associated with negative psychological adjustment. More specifically, it appears that experiencing an unclear cultural identity, even just briefly during a contrived laboratory experiment, creates feelings of personal uncertainty which in turn might lead to negative state-well being and self-regard. Again, Experiment 2 provides initial support for our theorizing that cultural identity clarity actually promotes well-being.

**General Discussion**

Combined, the results of the two experiments supported our predictions. We found that negotiating a computer-mediated social interaction with a clear cultural identity consistently led to more positive
well-being effects than did negotiating a computer-mediated interaction with an unclear cultural identity. Engaging in an interaction with a conflicted cultural identity did not produce the same positive effects as a clear cultural identity (in Experiment 1), nor did it produce the same negative effects as an unclear cultural identity (in Experiment 2). Together, the two experiments represent a first attempt at manipulating a culture-level psychological variable in the laboratory and examining the effect of this manipulation on personal well-being. They provide us with an initial indication that the clarity of one’s cultural identity might actually influence one’s personal experience of self-regard and psychological well-being.

**Theoretical Contributions**

The present research extends existing theoretical and correlational support for the relationship between cultural identity clarity and well-being. Taylor (1997, 2002) and others (e.g., Amiot, et al., 2007; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Hogg & Mullin, 1999) argue for the importance of a clearly defined group identity for the construction of a clear personal identity, thereby impacting self-esteem and well-being. Although previous research has found correlational support for such theorizing (e.g., Usborne & Taylor, 2009), the present research was the first attempt to explore the directionality of the relationship between cultural identity clarity and well-being in a controlled, laboratory context.

Manipulating cultural identity, an exceedingly complex and multifaceted component of one’s self-concept, in the laboratory is an
ambitious task. The present research thus represents an important initial attempt at exploring a culture-level psychological variable in a controlled laboratory context. By demonstrating the well-being effects of a temporarily induced experience of cultural identity in the laboratory, it provides support for Taylor’s (1997, 2002) theory. In addition, it suggests a potential mechanism by which well-being might be created from the clarity of one’s cultural identity. Consistent with the work of Hogg and his colleagues (Hogg & Mullin, 1999; Hogg, et al., 2007), Experiment 2 demonstrated that an unclear cultural identity appears to increase feelings of personal uncertainty, a state which is then associated with poorer well-being.

In presenting a comprehensive framework for research exploring collective identity, Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe (2004) concluded by defining key issues for future consideration by social psychologists. One of these key issues is what they refer to as collective identity variability or certainty. These authors suggest that the certainty, or as we prefer, the clarity of one’s collective identity may be affected by the norms that pervade an individual’s social environment, especially when an individual has to negotiate multiple, possibly competing, or indeed confusing norms, regarding his or her cultural category. The present research has responded to this important call by creating conditions in the laboratory that are meant to be analogous to the experiences of individuals who are negotiating competing or unclear norms, and has examined resulting feelings of well-being. Future research is now needed to replicate and expand such findings in order to
further address the psychological importance of feelings of certainty and clarity surrounding one’s collective or cultural identity.

*Applied Contributions*

In our global and increasingly multicultural world, cultural diversity is a salient reality, and negotiating cultural identity challenges has become increasingly common. The present research, in its support for the importance of cultural identity clarity, points to the potential positive effects that cultural identity clarification might have for the well-being of individuals who are negotiating an unclear or even a conflicted cultural identity. A dramatic real-world example of the benefits of cultural identity clarification comes from the work of Chandler and his colleagues. (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003). These researchers posit, that in the case of Aboriginal Canadians, a lack of cultural continuity or clarity leads to a loss of a sense of personal continuity, which in turn increases risk for suicide.

Indeed, Chandler and Lalonde (1998) found that Aboriginal communities that have engaged in practices emphasizing cultural continuity such as securing the title to traditional lands, having some rights of self-government, having community control over education, police and health services, and establishing community based ‘cultural facilities’ had lower suicide rates than communities that were not engaging in these practices. Perhaps, the act of reclaiming and re-defining aspects of one’s Aboriginal identity serves to more clearly define the nature of this identity, providing a clear guiding
framework for the construction of personal identity, and thereby leading to more positive psychological adjustment.

Similarly, Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones (2006) suggest an intervention aimed at individuals who are negotiating conflicting cultures simultaneously. They posit that a bicultural individual might be helped by exercises to clarify what it means to be bicultural, to solidify thoughts and feelings about being bicultural, and to define what it is to be bicultural. Like Schwartz et al. infer, it is important to note here that the present research does not support the notion of a static, unchanging cultural identity, or one true cultural identity. Instead it implies that an individual’s perception of having a clearly defined cultural identity, as evidenced by the cultural identity manipulation in Experiment 2, might decrease personal uncertainty, leading to positive effects in terms of psychological adjustment.

Methodological Contributions

Both of the experiments described in the present research were entirely novel in their attempt to simulate cultural identity in the laboratory using computer mediated communication. As a forum through which entire identities can be expressed, altered and even created (see Gonzales & Hancock, 2008), we believe that computer-mediated communication might be an untapped methodology with which social psychologists can explore many aspects of the complex psychological construct of identity. Indeed, simulating, even partially, complex identities in the laboratory has thus far seemed an almost impossible task. However, using a forum through which
today's young people are increasingly accustomed to expressing, creating and enacting identities, the present experiments indicate that we might be able to advance our understanding of identity issues using computer-mediated communication. Researchers are increasingly arguing for the importance of understanding and exploring identity, particularly cultural identity, in a holistic, all-encompassing fashion (see Ashmore, et al., 2004; Hammack, 2008; McAdams, 2001). We posit that a computer-mediated methodology may be one way of working towards this goal.

Limitations and Future Directions

The novel, laboratory nature of our experiments, meant that they lacked some realism. Indeed, Experiment 1 asked participants to take on entirely new, and especially in the case of our unclear condition, quite extreme versions of a cultural identity online. We attempted a more realistic manipulation of cultural identity in Experiment 2; however, like many laboratory experiments, we could not be certain that our conditions were entirely representative of real-world cultural identity experiences and challenges. Our experiments are important first attempts at exploring complex identity concerns in a laboratory context; however, future research is necessary in order to build on these attempts and explore methods of simulating cultural identity challenges in the laboratory using existing, important cultural identities. This way, the direct effects of real-world cultural identity concerns on well-being and other psychological outcome
variables might be further understood, an important task in our increasingly diverse societies.

In addition more research is needed to examine and understand the differential well-being effects of negotiating a conflicted versus an unclear cultural identity. Research to date has primarily focused on the processes of acculturation (e.g., Berry, 2005) or of integrating conflicting cultural identities into one’s sense of self (e.g., Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005). The present research makes the distinction between negotiating conflicting cultural identities and living with an unclear cultural identity arising from a history of oppression and discrimination. We found evidence, primarily in Experiment 2, that an unclear cultural identity may be more associated with negative well-being than a conflicted cultural identity. However, future experimental and non-experimental research needs to further explore these two cultural identity challenges and examine their differential relationship with psychological well-being.

Finally, the present research explored one possible mechanism linking cultural identity clarity to well-being. Here, it appeared that an unclear cultural identity affected well-being through its induction of personal uncertainty, However, in order to be more certain of this causal pathway, future experimental studies need to examine the relationships between these variables in a step-wise fashion, manipulating each of these variables in turn, and examining their effects. Future research must also examine other mechanisms through which the clarity of one’s cultural identity might affect
well-being. Such research should specifically pinpoint the means by which cultural identity clarity is created, and determine what specific aspects of clarity are important for an individual’s adaptive functioning.

Conclusion

For the first time, cultural identity challenges were simulated in a laboratory context and their well-being effects were examined. Consistent with theory and research connecting cultural identity clarity to psychological adjustment, the positive well-being effects of a clear cultural identity and the negative effects of an unclear cultural identity were observed. Although preliminary in their laboratory design, our experiments point towards a methodology which allows for a controlled exploration of cultural identity challenges and their psychological effects. Combined with future research into the psychological experience of cultural identity clarity, it will perhaps be possible to bring more certainty and success to those juggling a conflicting cultural existence or struggling with unclear standards on which to base their identity.
GENERAL DISCUSSION

The guiding question underlying the present program of research was whether or not the clarity of a person's cultural identity would be related to his or her experience of personal self-esteem and psychological well-being. Based on Taylor's (1997, 2002) theory of collective identity clarity, I proposed that cultural identity clarity would be predictive of both self-esteem and well-being. The manuscripts contained in the present thesis demonstrated strong support for my prediction.

The studies in Manuscript 1 revealed positive associations among cultural identity clarity, personal identity clarity, and both self-esteem and markers of subjective well-being among members of a number of very different cultural groups. In addition, personal self-concept clarity was shown to consistently mediate the relationship between cultural identity clarity and both self-esteem and well-being in all cultural groups under investigation. Having clear and confident beliefs about one's cultural group was, for the first time, associated with having clear and confident beliefs about one's personal self, which in turn predicted markers of psychological adjustment.

In Manuscript 2, two novel cultural identity clarity manipulations using computer-mediated communication were found to elicit differential well-being effects. Across the two experiments, negotiating a computer-mediated social interaction with a clear cultural identity lead to the highest levels of state well-being and self-regard; whereas negotiating this
interaction with an unclear cultural identity lead to the lowest levels. Negotiating this interaction with a clear, but conflicted cultural identity lead to levels of state well-being and self-regard that fell in between those of the participants assigned clear and unclear identities. A potential explanatory mechanism behind these results was also explored. The cultural identity clarity manipulation in the second experiment was found to elicit feelings of personal uncertainty, which appeared to be driving the observed well-being effects.

Together, these findings represent an original contribution to knowledge with both theoretical and applied implications. I will outline these implications and provide suggestions for avenues of future research.

**Theoretical Contributions and Future Directions**

Although the identity arising from the group or groups to which an individual belongs is acknowledged to be a fundamental and influential component of the self-concept (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Deaux, 1996; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it has received relatively scant research attention compared to the more common social psychological focus on personal identity. In their comprehensive review of research pertaining to collective identity, Ashmore et al. (2004), call for more research exploring the nature and function of people’s collective identities. They suggest an investigation into what they refer to as collective identity variability or certainty—the extent to which an individual living in a multicultural context has a clear and consistent experience of his or her
collective identity or identities. The present program research, in its specific examination of the psychological effects of experiencing clarity in one’s cultural identity, has taken up this challenge. It demonstrates an empirical link between cultural identity clarity and psychological adjustment.

The present program of research is, however, the first attempt to define cultural identity clarity and to explore its relationship with other psychological variables. Future research must further investigate and delineate the parameters of cultural identity clarity. In the present thesis, I have defined cultural identity clarity in a very general fashion, basing myself largely on Campbell’s (1990, Campbell et al., 1996) seminal work on self-concept clarity. In the second manuscript, however, I focus on only one aspect of an individual’s cultural identity—the normative template that it provides to an individual. It is now important to more specifically understand what it means to have a clear or an unclear cultural identity and to ask if it is indeed a global perception of clarity and confidence in beliefs about one’s cultural identity, or a more specific experience of clarity in the normative template, or even in the values or behaviours associated with one’s culture. Perhaps by going beyond self-report measures and existing laboratory manipulations, and directly asking individuals to detail their experiences of cultural identity clarity or lack thereof, we might gain a more thorough understanding of this concept.

A second theoretical contribution of the present research program is its extension of the psychological relationship between identity clarity and
adjustment (see Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, 1999; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980) to a cultural level of self-definition. Based on a theoretical framework linking collective identity clarity to psychological adjustment (Taylor, 1997, 2002), the results from the present thesis demonstrate the role of cultural identity clarity in this relationship. Specifically, cultural identity clarity has been examined in the present research as a pre-cursor to both personal identity clarity and to well-being. Clearly and confidently knowing oneself at a collective level has now been empirically demonstrated to be predictive of identity clarity at a personal level which in turn is related to self-esteem and psychological well-being.

These findings point to a new way of understanding the social psychological relationship between identity clarity and adjustment. Although identity has long thought to be a potential contributor to self-esteem and well-being (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Pelham & Swann, 1989), the personal versus collective components of identity have not been well described or understood. Furthermore, the direction of the relationship between identity and both self-esteem and well-being has been the subject of some debate (see Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003; Campbell & Lavallee, 1993). Here, identity clarity has been expanded to include personal and collective components, and both components can now be viewed as potentially important antecedents to psychological adjustment.

Collective identity, and especially cultural identity is, however, a very broad, multifaceted construct, that is, for each cultural group, and individual
within a cultural group, rooted in a complex history and experiences (see Gjerde, 2004; Okazaki, David, & Abelman, 2008; Phinney, 1996). Although the present research was based on a rich theoretical platform, it is important to acknowledge that the nature of one’s cultural identity, and indeed one’s personal identity, cannot be fully captured in self-report measures, nor can it be created in its entirety in a laboratory context. In order to further examine the relationship between identity clarity and psychological adjustment and to more specifically understand the components of and the direction of this relationship, more comprehensive methodologies must now be employed. For example, narrative methods of exploring personal and cultural identity (e.g. Hammack, 2008; McAdams, 2001, 2006) may be particularly useful as they embed a group’s identity in its history. Furthermore, targeted investigations into the various components of a person’s cultural identity, such as the values, characteristics and perceived history associated with this identity and their relationship to personal identity, self-esteem and well-being, might provide us with a more comprehensive view of the psychological link between identity and adjustment.

A final theoretical contribution of the present thesis is its suggestion of a psychological pathway between cultural identity clarity and both self-esteem and well-being. In both manuscripts, personal identity clarity or certainty was explored as an explanatory mechanism for the positive relationship between cultural identity clarity and psychological adjustment. Consistent with Taylor and with Hogg and his colleagues (Hogg & Mullin,
1999; Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007), cultural identity clarity was found to be predictive of one’s perception of personal identity clarity which in turn was predictive of positive self-esteem and well-being. It appears that having a clear group identity can be a guiding force that reduces personal uncertainty. Having a clearly defined personal identity is then related to self-esteem and well-being.

Such findings may have important implications for existing social psychological research examining people’s negotiation of multiple collective or cultural identities. It has been consistently shown that people who have well-integrated collective identities, those who experience their multiple collective identities as coherent and compatible, have greater psychological well-being compared to those who experience their identities as disparate (Amiot, de la Sablonniere, Terry, & Smith, 2007; Downie, Koestner, ElGeledi, & Cree, 2004; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). The present research proposes a mechanism by which this relationship might exist. Having a clear experience of collective or cultural identity, even of multiple collective identities, might clarify one’s experience of personal identity, which in turn would lead to increased well-being.

Although the present research provides evidence for a potential mechanism linking cultural identity clarity to self-esteem and well-being, future research now needs to be more specific in its definition of the psychological variables involved in this relationship. It is important to consider what components of an individual’s cultural identity must be clearly
defined in order for this identity to serve as a basis for a clear personal identity. Examining the clarity of the norms, values, behaviours, and scripts contained within a cultural identity, for example, along with their associations with personal identity clarity and well-being might be an important avenue for future research. Specifically, future research could ask: What needs to be clear about a cultural identity in order for it to be predictive of personal identity clarity and positive well-being?

Based on Taylor's theorizing (1997, 2002), as well as on research exploring the importance of group norms for guiding behaviour (e.g., Terry & Hogg, 1996), and on my own experimental investigations in Manuscript 2, my suggestion would be that the clarity of the norms associated with one’s cultural identity might be particularly important for psychological adjustment. The clarity of the norms dictating how one should behave, what one should value, what the consequences of a certain action might be, for example, could be crucial for developing certainty in one’s personal way of being and by extension contribute to self-esteem and well-being. Indeed, norms seem to be important culture-level characteristics that represent an efficient guiding framework for the construction of a clear way of existing in the world. Some research has explored the powerful effect of norm clarity on the expression of prejudice (Zitek & Hebl, 2007). Other research has examined the extent to which well-established norms can automatically activate normative thoughts and behaviour (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2003). Such research could be extended to an analysis of cultural norm clarity and
how the clarity of particular cultural norms might specifically affect identity development and well-being.

**Applied Contributions and Future Directions**

The context for my investigation into the importance of cultural identity clarity for self-esteem and psychological well-being was personal experience with the plight of some of society’s most disadvantaged groups. My thinking about cultural identity clarity and my program of research has been largely influenced by the cultural identity concerns of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal communities have had their traditional cultures seriously threatened by a swiftly, and at times forcefully imposed European culture (Frideres, 1998). Taylor (2002) argues that the result of this cultural collision between a powerful mainstream culture and an oppressed traditional culture is a very unclear array of cultural norms and values with which Aboriginal peoples were meant to construct an identity. It is for groups facing such complex cultural identity challenges that I believe my research might have the most applied value.

Today, Canada’s Aboriginal peoples are focused on reclaiming a strong and proud Aboriginal identity through attempts to revitalize language, re-learn traditional practices and re-define who they are in today’s global and rapidly changing world (e.g., Barios, Lawrence, 2003; Tsosie, 2002). Although intuitively important for a people emerging from a history of colonization and oppression, the psychological impact of such attempts has not been empirically explored. My research provides evidence for why such
attempts might be so crucial for the psychological well-being of Aboriginal peoples. The findings from the present research suggest that reclaiming a clearly defined Aboriginal identity might be important for the development of a clear personal identity, for an individual to clearly know who they are as a person in the world, which in turn is related to the experience of positive self-esteem and psychological well-being. These findings are consistent with Chandler et al.’s (2003) suggestion that cultural continuity is essential for personal continuity, which in turn decreases risk for youth suicide. A clearly defined Aboriginal cultural identity might thus be crucial for personal identity development and, by extension, for well-being among Canada’s Aboriginal peoples.

The empirical link obtained in this thesis also points to novel interventions aimed at increasing well-being among those facing cultural identity challenges. For Aboriginal peoples as well as for individuals who are attempting to navigate the complexities of living in two or more cultures or to exist in increasingly culturally complex social environments, interventions aimed at clarifying cultural identity might be particularly important. Indeed, many of the challenges faced by such individuals are collective or cultural level concerns. Targeting these challenges at the level of one’s cultural identity, rather than boosting self-esteem and well-being on a case-by-case basis, might be an effective method of increasing psychological well-being among individuals facing cultural identity challenges.
For example, Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones (2006, p.23) suggest an intervention for bicultural individuals that involves them clarifying what it means to be bicultural. They posit, that, for example, “a Colombian-American might be helped by exercises to clarify what it means to be ‘Colombian’ and ‘American’, as well as to solidify her thoughts and feelings about being ‘Columbian’ and ‘American’ and as a person capable of defining, rather than being defined by, her cultural identifications”.

In future research, similar interventions might be developed for other individuals facing cultural identity concerns. For example, research might explore the psychological effect of exercises designed to encourage bicultural individuals, immigrants, Aboriginal people, or even members of the mainstream culture, to clearly define their own cultural identities, for themselves. Other research might investigate the psychological effects of community initiatives or group-interventions designed to allow group members to clearly define who or what a particular cultural community is in today’s globalizing world. Of course, all the potential interventions would need to be designed and carried out by the very individuals who are facing cultural identity concerns. A number of community or participant-driven methods aimed at increasing cultural identity clarity using both global and specific methods might need to be examined.

It is important to note that when I suggest interventions aimed at increasing cultural identity clarity, I do not mean that a person or group has to determine one ‘true’, accurate, or unchanging cultural identity. Cultural
identity can be as changing and multi-layered as the individual him or herself or as a cultural group over time. From my research, it appears that it is the perceived clarity of one's cultural identity that is important. A coherent and confident personal understanding of that part of an individuals' identity that comes from his or her cultural group is what seems to be important for personal identity clarity and for well-being. Even if a cultural group works together to reclaim a clearly defined cultural identity, as might be the case with Aboriginal peoples, it is a clearly defined personal understanding of the identity that arises from one’s cultural group that seems to be the crucial factor involved in positive psychological adjustment.

My experience in Aboriginal communities often involves working with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers who, on a day-to-day basis, are faced with the many challenges of teaching in these communities. I have had the opportunity to engage in discussions with teachers about their experiences and about the self-esteem and well-being of their students. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers in these communities often refer to the importance of a clearly defined Aboriginal identity for their students, an identity which includes knowing their traditional language, and understanding what it means to be Aboriginal in today's globalizing world. Rather than seeking to boost a student's self-esteem directly, one might focus instead on clarifying the cultural normative template that this student relies upon to develop an understanding of who he or she is personally. Indeed, the teachers with whom I have spoken often acknowledge the importance of
having very clear normative guidelines in the classroom, guidelines that they feel their students might otherwise be missing. A clear cultural identity, one that is defined by the Aboriginal peoples themselves and is complete with a clear, guiding normative template, might contribute to the self-esteem and well-being of Aboriginal young people.

**Conclusions**

Inspired by work with Aboriginal peoples who are negotiating complicated cultural identity concerns, the program of research described in the present thesis explored the relationship between cultural identity clarity and psychological adjustment. Cultural identity clarity was been found to be of primary importance for personal identity clarity, self-esteem and well-being. Knowledge of this novel, and now empirically examined relationship might influence the way in which we view and potentially even treat well-being issues faced by individuals and groups facing cultural identity challenges. Combined with future research into the importance of cultural identity clarity for psychological adjustment, the present research points towards an alternative route to more optimal psychological functioning for members of some of society's most disadvantaged groups.
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Appendix A: Cultural Identity Clarity Scale

We would like you to consider your membership in your cultural group. Think of your cultural group and respond to the following statements on the basis of how you feel about this group.

Using the 0-10 scale presented below, indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate number on the line next to that item.

1. My beliefs about my cultural group often conflict with one another. *(reverse scored)*

2. On one day I might have an opinion of my cultural group and on another day I might have a different opinion. *(reverse scored)*

3. I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of society my cultural group really is. *(reverse scored)*

4. Sometimes I feel that my cultural group is not really the society that it appears to be. *(reverse scored)*

5. Sometimes I think I know other cultural groups better than I know my group. *(reverse scored)*

6. My beliefs about my cultural group seem to change very frequently. *(reverse scored)*

7. If I were asked to describe my cultural group, my description might end up being different from one day to another day. *(reverse scored)*

8. In general, I have a clear sense of what my cultural group is.
APPENDIX B: MCGILL ETHICS APPROVAL FOR STUDIES IN MANUSCRIPTS 1 AND 2
APPENDIX C: MCGILL ETHICS APPROVAL FOR

MANUSCRIPT 1, STUDY 5
APPENDIX D: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH LICENCE FOR MANUSCRIPT 1, STUDY 5

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Inuvik, Northwest Territories

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ON: 11-Feb-08

TEAM MEMBERS: Megan Cooper, Dr. Donald Taylor

AFFILIATION: McGill University

FUNDING: SSHRC

TITLE: The Importance of Collective Identity Clarity

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH:
The goal of this study is to explore the theory of cultural identity in a questionnaire for Aboriginal people in Dettah, Ndilo and Yellowknife.

DATA COLLECTION IN THE NWT:
DATE(S): February 22 to 28, 2008
LOCATION: Dettah, Ndilo and Yellowknife

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[Signature]
Andrew Applejohn
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