CHAPTER 3   SELF-ESTEEM

Chapter 3 aims to address the first research question pertaining to the conceptualisation of the second variable of concern to this research, namely self-esteem. The construct self-esteem will be presented from a historical perspective regarding the development of the self as a concept and its related constructs to enable the researcher to develop a conceptual framework for examining the interface of the variables personality preferences, self-esteem and emotional competence from the various paradigmatic perspectives which form the foundation of the proposed integrated model.

In this chapter then, the construct self-esteem and the related theoretical models will be explored. The variables influencing the development of self-esteem and the implications for leader development and Industrial and Organisational Psychology will also be discussed. The chapter will conclude with an evaluation of the theoretical foundations of the construct self-esteem, highlighting the contributions and limitations as relevant to this research.

3.1   PARADIGMATIC AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

The concept of self is described as being complex and related to self-esteem in theoretical contributions from research and literature by social psychologists, sociologists, behaviourists, humanists, cognitive social learning theorists, and the psychoanalysts (Schaefer, 1994). Kihlstrom and Klein (1994:194) contend that research indicates that the self is the "point at which cognitive, personality, and social psychology meet". Gurney (1986) states that the concept of self has one of the most interesting histories of any concept in psychology. The historical changes in the view of the self will be discussed from the perspective of the four forces within personality psychology (which includes psychoanalytic theory, behaviourism, existential and humanistic theories, and cognitive theories) and social psychology (which includes contemporary research on the self), which form the paradigmatic foundations for exploring the construct self-esteem.

3.1.1   Paradigmatic foundations

The paradigmatic foundations of the construct self-esteem will be reviewed from the historical perspectives of personality psychology and social psychology respectively.

3.1.1.1   *Personality psychology*

Mahoney and Patterson (1992) identified four forces within personality psychology that reflect historical changes in views of self. The first force was psychoanalytic theory, which viewed the self as being molded largely through unconscious forces and biological impulses, and as being relatively impervious to change beyond early childhood. In response to the intrapsychic and deterministic view, behaviourism emerged as the second force in psychology. In the classic behavioural view, the self and other mental processes were eliminated from the realm of scientific scrutiny, and the self was seen merely as the repository of environmental learning experiences (Lent & Hackkett, 1987).

According to Mahoney and Patterson (1992:667), both psychoanalytic and behavioural theories shared a "linear, unidirectional model of causality". In psychoanalytic theory, human action was propelled by intrapsychic forces; in behavioural theory, it was propelled by environmental events. In neither theory was the reciprocal interaction of the self and environment considered to any great extent. The third force, existential and humanistic theories, highlighted the potential for personal agency, placing the self at center stage (Lent & Hackett, 1987). Although the third force theories adopted a less deterministic view of behaviour than did the psychoanalytic or behavioural forebears, they were generally influenced by psychodynamic conceptions and, thus, largely emphasised the role of intrapsychic factors (Mahoney & Patterson, 1992).

In contrast, the fourth force in personality psychology, namely the cognitive social learning theories, has emphasised the self in interaction with the environment, and has prompted renewed interest in the self as an active agent and constructor of meaning (Borgen, 1991). Nurius (1986) observes that in contrast to earlier reliance on traitlike descriptors, the emerging view is of a self that is dynamic and future oriented, including self-knowledge about goals and motives, personal standards and values, and rules and strategies for regulating and controlling one's behaviour.

Weiner (1990) notes that the main motivation theories today are based on the interrelated cognitions of causal ascriptions, efficacy and control beliefs, helplessness, and thoughts about the goals for which one is striving, all of which concern perceptions about the self as a determinant of prior or future success or failure. The self-organising activities of the individual, that is, the complex developmental and dynamic processes through which people maintain a coherent sense of self and interpret their experiences, are highlighted, with affect accorded a central role. Individual problems and concerns are seen as resulting from a discrepancy between situational challenges and individual capacities, meaning structures, as well as emotional and behavioural functioning (Mahoney, 1991; Mahoney & Patterson, 1992).

3.1.1.2 Social psychology

From the perspective of social psychology, the self is represented in both affective and cognitive ways and may be in the form of verbal, image, neural, or sensorimotor representations (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Rather than being a single, monolithic structure, the self is a system or confederation of self-schemas derived from past social experiences. In other words, the self is a collection of more modular processing structures (self-schemas) that are elicited in different contexts and has specific cognitive, affective, and behavioural consequences (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Core aspects of the self are chronically accessible and highly stable schemas, but other, peripheral, aspects are more malleable schemas, with their accessibility depending on an individual's current motivational state and social situation. One important distinction which helps organise this confederation of self-schemas is the level at which the self is defined (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999).

3.1.2 Conceptual foundations

The Humanistic personality theories and mainstream Social Psychology literature provide the paradigmatic foundation for the conceptualisation of the concept self and the related concepts of self-concept, self-identity, self-perception, self-regard, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of these key concepts that form the conceptual foundations of the construct self-esteem. Each of these constructs will be discussed in turn.
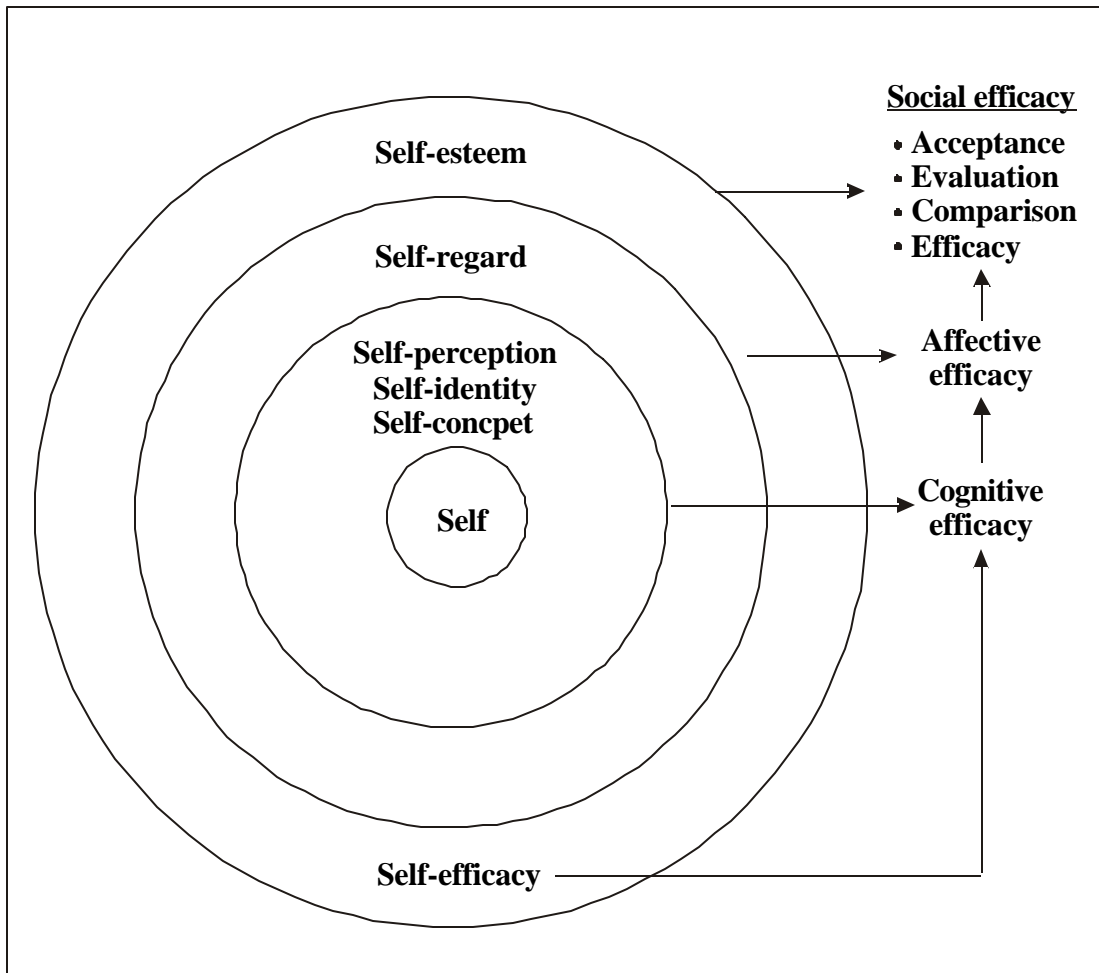
Figure 3.1   The conceptual foundations of self-esteem

3.1.2.1   Conceptualisation of self

According to Khalsa (1990), the theoretical rationale for the concept of self-esteem stems from the work of William James. James (1890) was the first psychologist to concretely put forth a theory regarding self-esteem. James (1890) made a clear distinction between the self as the subject and the self as the object. He classified self as the self as known, or the me (sometimes called the empirical ego), and the self as knower, or the I (the pure ego). In understanding the Self in the widest sense, James (1890:292) divides the history of Self into three parts, namely its constituents - the material self; the social self; the spiritual self, and the pure Ego; the feelings and emotions they arouse, so-called Self-feelings; and the actions which they prompt, namely self–seeking and self-preservation.

Freud (1917) spoke of the self using the related terms ego, narcissism, well-being, self-regard, and self-esteem. His conception of self was based on his seduction

theory (Oedipus complex theory) with its conflicted and conflicting drives (Baker & Baker, 1987), libido theory, and on the pleasurable/unpleasurable principle. Pleasurable is defined as the internal world of the self, while the external, outside world represents unpleasurable (Dare & Holder, 1981). Freud's theory of self can more simply be referred to as person-object (Kohut, 1977). Freud hypothesised that humans, from birth, have internal basic needs that must be met from the external world in order to develop the ego. Kohut (1977:2) labels these internal needs "self-object" needs. These needs are separated into biological needs and psychological needs. Failure to meet these needs leads to a deficiency in pleasure, which takes the form of delay, or disturbance of ego functioning which in turn affects the positive colouring of the self-experience (Dare & Holder, 1981).

Jung (1921) expanded on Freud's (1917) theory of self, and viewed the self as the innate disposition which each person possesses to move toward growth, perfection, and completion. The self is the most comprehensive of all archetypes because it pulls together the other archetypes and unites them in the process of self-realisation. The self includes both personal and collective unconscious images and thus should not be confused with the ego, which represents conciousness only. Jung's (1921) view of self has been discussed extensively in chapter 2.

Sullivan (1953) contended that people develop their personality and sense of self within a social context. The self-system arises out of the interpersonal situation and its primary task is to protect people against anxiety, the principle stumbling block to favourable changes in personality. As children develop intelligence and foresight, they become able to learn which behaviours are related to an increase or decrease in anxiety. As the self-system develops, people begin to form a consistent image of themselves. Thereafter, any interpersonal experiences that they perceive as contrary to their self-regard, threatens their security. As a consequence, people attempt to defend themselves against interpersonal tensions by means of security operations, the purpose of which is to reduce feelings of insecurity or anxiety that result from endangered self-esteem. People tend to deny or distort interpersonal experiences that conflict with their self-regard.

Bandura (1999) sees the self system as a set of cognitive structures that give some degree of consistency to people's behaviour. The self system, which includes self-evaluation, self-regulation, and self-efficacy, allows people to observe and symbolise their own behaviour and to evaluate it on the basis of anticipated future

consequences. Then, using these cognitive processes as a reference point, people are able to exercise some measure of self-direction or self-regulation. According to Rogers (1959), infants begin to develop a vague concept of self when a portion of their experience becomes personalised and differentiated in awareness as "I" or "me" experiences. Once infants establish a rudimentary self structure, their tendency to actualise the self begins to evolve.

The terms "self" or "ego", have been used to refer to the "inner nature" or "essential nature" of humans (Fromm, 1941, 1947; Maslow, 1954; Moustakas, 1956); to the experience and content of self-awareness (Chein, 1944); to the individual as known to the individual (Hilgard, 1949; Murphy, 1947; Raimy, 1948; Rogers, 1951; Wylie, 1961,1974); to a constellation of attitudes having reference to "I", "me", or "mine" experiences (James, 1890; Sherif & Cantril, 1947); to individual identity and continuity of personal character (Erikson, 1956); to a set of mental processes operating in the interest of satisfying inner drives (Freud, 1933, Symonds, 1951); and, most simply, to the person. Turner (1976) speaks of "institutional" and "impulsive" selves; Franks and Morolla (1976) of "inner" and "outer" selves; Edelson and Jones (1954) of the "conceptual self-system"; Waterbor (1972) and Tiryakian (1968) of the "existential self" or the "existential bases of the self"; Seeman (1966) of "authentic" and "inauthentic" selves; Wylie (1961, 1968, 1974) and Snygg and Combs (1949) of "phenomenal" and "nonphenomenal" selves; Allport (1955) of the "proprium"; Sullivan (1947) of the "self-system"; Hilgard (1949) of the "inferred self"; and many others of the "self-image".

Despite this lack of agreement, the distinction (first made by James, 1890) that seems to have come to be recognised by most theorists is the distinction between the self as subject or agent and the self as object of the person's own knowledge and evaluation (Hall & Lindzey, 1957; Symonds, 1951; Wylie, 1974). Clemes and Bean (1981) describe the relationship between self-esteem and self-concept as complex and dynamic. Self-concept inclines individuals toward behaviour that is consistent with their personal beliefs; self-esteem influences how those beliefs are carried into action, and whether they are at all.

In summary, from a historical perspective, the following agreements about the self seem to exist: The concept of self is a complex phenomenon which is formed through a combination of both internal and external components. It covers the totality of perceptions and evaluations considered to a controlling or integrating force in

behaviour (Smith, 1988). It is formed out of different experiences and is largely based on varied levels and types of competencies in dealing with the environment (Coopersmith, 1967). At first, the child's self-concept is a relatively vague and simple abstraction, which has the common reference point "me". With experience and information, it becomes more complex: categorised, multifaceted and hierarchical (Bolus & Shavelson, 1982). Self is susceptible to change, particularly through the summation of the simultaneous and interacting effects deriving from multiple sources (Dare & Holder, 1981). However, not everyone develops self-schemata. Some people focus so little on themselves that the postulated cognitions simply do not occur (Buss, 1989).

3.1.2.2   *Conceptualisation of self-concept*

Rogers (1959) postulated two self sub-systems, namely the self-concept and the ideal self. According to Rogers (1959), the self-concept includes all those aspects of one's being and one's experiences that are perceived in awareness (though not always accurately) by the individual. Once people form their self-concept, they find change and significant learning quite difficult. Experiences that are inconsistent with their self-concept are usually either denied or accepted only in distorted forms. An established self-concept does not make change impossible, merely difficult. Change most readily occurs in an atmosphere of acceptance by others, which allows a person to reduce anxiety and threat and to take ownership of previously rejected experiences. The ideal self is one's view of self as one wishes to be. The ideal self contains all those attributes, usually positive, that people aspire to possess. A wide gap between the ideal self and the self-concept indicates incongruence and an unhealthy personality. Psychologically healthy individuals perceive little discrepancy between their self-concept and what they ideally would like to be.

Self-concept and self-esteem are both important constructs in the social learning and psychological process (Schaefer, 1994). Watkins and Dhawan (1989) suggest that the constructs of self-concept and self-esteem are intertwined but not synonymous. Self-concept refers to what a person thinks about him or herself, and self-esteem is how someone feels about the self-concept (Aldridge, 1989; Aldridge & Clayton, 1990). For example, a person may think of him/herself as an extravert. This would be part of that person's self-concept. However, how the person feels about being an extravert is part of self-esteem (Schaefer, 1994).

In terms of the organisational context, Lord, Brown, and Freiberg (1999) speak of the working self-concept, which is a continually shifting combination of core self-schemas and peripheral aspects of the self made salient by context. The working self-concept involves self-views and comparative standards that create motivational and affective implications for the individual. Comparative standards may have many forms and multiple sources (for example, social comparisons, group or organisational norms, past histories). Self-views refer to an individual's perceptions of his or her standing on the attributes made salient by a given context. A person's perceptions of his or her intellect, academic ability, social skills, athletic ability, and physical attractiveness are examples of self-views (McNulty & Swann, 1994; Pelham & Swann, 1989). Self-views are an important basis for self-evaluation, as well as the evaluation of others (Higgins, 1989; Dunning & Hayes, 1996). Self-expectations and social expectations may be based on activated self-views. Similarly, reactions to one's own or another's behaviour may be based on comparisons to self-relevant standards (Dunning & Hayes, 1996).

Due to the limited attentional capacity of human information processors, only a small portion of the potentially accessible aspects of the self are activated at any one time. The working self-concept is the highly activated contextually sensitive portion of the self that guides information processing and action on a moment to moment basis (Kihlstrom & Klein, 1994). According to Lord et al. (1999), leaders can influence self-relevant information processing of employees either directly, by activating various aspects of the working self-concept, or indirectly, by emphasising various levels of identity (for example, individual, interpersonal, or group as discussed in point 3.1.2.3).

Self-views are differentiated from possible selves. While self-views define who the individual currently is, possible selves define who the individual could be (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves contain hopes as well fears for the future. Both self-views and possible selves help explain the self-regulatory aspects of the self-concept (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Markus & Wurf, 1987). The linkages between goals and self-views or possible selves form cues that access different types of responses to goals (Higgins, 1998; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Goals are described as contextualised schemas that direct current information processing (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Goals are important because they are proximal determinants of behaviour, and they may be crucial for activating scripts that actually produce behaviour (Lord & Kernan, 1987). Goals also provide a standard that makes feedback meaningful.

Feedback from leaders or peers gains meaning through comparison with goals (Carver & Scheier, 1998).

Linking goals to self-views accentuates self-enhancement motivations and affective reactions to task feedback, whereas linking goals to possible selves promotes self-verification motivation and cognitive reactions to task feedback. One consequence of the enhanced affective orientation created when goals are linked to important self-views, is that not meeting one's goals may produce strong negative reactions and self-doubt. Such negative affect can also be a cause of stress and depression if hierarchical connections to self-structures prevent disengagement from goals that cannot be attained (Lord et al., 1999). The resiliency of task motivation when discrepancies are encountered will be higher when task goals are strongly linked to possible selves and lower when task goals are linked to self-views (Lord et al., 1999).

Lord et al. (1999) and Markus and Wurf (1987) maintain that the self-concept is malleable. They suggest that leaders can temporarily influence self-structures through activities that influence the accessibility of various self-concepts. For example, by emphasising similarities among workers, leaders can increase activation of collective identities while inhibiting individual-level identities. Markus and Wurf (1987) note that more permanent changes can occur when new self-conceptions are created, when the meaning of self-identities changes, or when the relationship among working self-concepts changes. These more permanent changes may occur when leaders or context or other group members repeatedly activate new working self-concept components, causing them to be assimilated into self-schemas that are chronically accessible.

In conclusion, self-concept refers to the cognitive aspect of self-esteem, namely the self-views of individuals which form an important basis for self-evaluation and the evaluation of others. Self-esteem also includes individuals' feelings about their self-views. In an organisational context, individuals' self-views will involve the working self-concept, self and other evaluations and possible selves that create motivational and affective implications for individuals.

3.1.2.3   Conceptualisation of self-identity

An individual's self-identity is usually seen as comprising both personal and social identities (Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). An

individual's personal identity is a self-categorisation based on the perceived similarities with and differences from other individuals (Banaji & Prentice, 1994), and it defines a person's sense of uniqueness as an individual. An individual's social identity, in contrast, is based on the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of relations to others or in terms of membership in social groups (Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Brewer & Gardner, 1996). The social identity anchors the self-concept in the broader social world (Miller & Prentice, 1994). Brewer and Gardner (1996) describe three levels of social identities, namely individual, interpersonal and group or collective social identities.

(a)   Individual level

According to Brewer and Gardner (1996), at the individual level, one emphasises interpersonal comparisons in terms of traits as a means to differentiate oneself from others. Global self-worth is based on favourable comparisons to others, particularly in Western cultures (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997), and self-enhancement motivation or self-serving biases are common. Biases that heighten self-perceptions of competence or egocentric biases that overemphasise one's own contribution to a project (Ross & Sicoly, 1979) can justify an economic exchange in which one receives greater outcomes than others.

Individual level identities foster possible selves that reflect progress in terms of personal characteristics; becoming more skilled, wealthier, healthier, or better educated can be a powerful image that sustains and justifies current activities. Leaders can help nourish such images by conveying high expectations of and confidence in employees (Lord et al., 1999).

(b)   Interpersonal level

At the interpersonal level, Brewer and Gardner (1996) note that self-concepts are defined in terms of roles that specify one's relation to others (for example, child-parent, student-teacher, subordinate-leader). At this level, mutual benefits and interdependent selves become more salient, and self-worth, as conveyed through reflected appraisals, depends on appropriate role behaviour (for example being a good subordinate or leader). Self-representations are also dependent on the reflected self, or the self as seen through the reactions of others. The interpersonal relation of superiors to subordinates affects subordinates' identification and self-

concepts, which, in turn, are critical determinants of social and organisational processes (Lord et al., 1999).

Interpersonal level identities suggest possible selves tied to improved role relationship – being respected by superiors and colleagues or loved and understood by one's spouse can motivate continued efforts at maintaining or improving social relations. According to Lord et al. (1999), mentoring activities of leaders are a future-oriented means of affecting possible selves at the interpersonal level.

(c)   Group or collective level

At the group level, one identifies with a particular group such as one's work team or organisation, using the group prototype as a basis for intergroup comparisons and self-definition. A key issue at this level is often the collective welfare of the group. Group-level identification makes racial or ethnic differences particularly important (Lord et al., 1999). Similarly, organisational identities may be especially important when the self is defined at the group level (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Poor social treatment communicates to an individual that he/she is not respected or valued by a group. Under such circumstances, identification with a leader and incorporation of a work group into one's self-identity seems unlikely. Brewer and Gardner (1996) assert that reflected appraisals are crucial sources of self-relevant information at the interpersonal level. Thus, one's affective relation with one's supervisor may convey a reflected self that includes role performance, acceptance as a group member, and expectations regarding future outcomes. The nature of one's interpersonal relations with supervisors and justice concerns will guide individuals toward either collective or individual level identities.

Group level identities suggest future collective selves. Such identities can be particularly powerful because they translate the notion of individual life trajectories to a social domain and into a group trajectory. According to Lord et al. (1999), the development of an organisation or a society thus becomes a rationale for current activities that ultimately transcends one's individual mortality. By articulating such future collective states, leaders can both inspire hope and justify continued striving even though current situations may be unacceptable to followers.

Collective identities in the workplace foster a positive collective self-esteem, which in turn enhances levels of job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Many researchers (Blash

& Unger, 1995; Lorenzo-Hernandez & Ouellette, 1998; Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Phinney, 1991) suggest that there is a link between collective self-esteem and personal self-esteem, and that individuals with positive feelings toward their group affiliation will also feel positively about themselves. Against this background then, it appears that collective self-esteem is related to higher personal self-esteem and minority group members seem able to distinguish between others' perceptions of their group and their own feelings of personal identity.

(d)   Multiple identities

Managing multiple identities refers to the task of developing a self-view as a leader while maintaining a sense of self that incorporates racial and gender identity. McCauley et al. (1998) point out that women especially struggle with shaping a multifaceted identity in a business world that emphasises the leadership role to the exclusion of others. The second identity-related tension is figuring out what it takes to fit into an organisation. According to McCauley et al. (1998), all leaders, regardless of race and gender, struggle with this issue.

From the perspective of Social Identity Theory (Turner, 1982), acceptance of one's racial group as a positive reference group would enhance positive racial (collective) self-esteem, whilst rejection of one's racial group as a positive reference group would lead to self-estrangement and maladjustment. Mokgathle and Schoeman (1998) point out that individuals progress from a least adaptive stage to the most developed, mature, and integrated level of racial identity. Each of these stages reflects different states of psychological well-being. Individuals vary in terms of their racial identity level of development and their level of self-esteem. Furthermore, individuals vary in terms of their self-identity security, especially with regard to gender roles. McCauley et al. (1998) maintain that racial identity and gender roles have an impact on leader identity. Against this background then, it appears that developing a view of oneself as a leader is a complicated process, involving multiple stages of growth and development.

3.1.2.4   Conceptualisation of self-perception

The terms self-perception, self-awareness and self-consciousness are closely related to the concept self-identity, particularly in the context of self-appraisals. According to self-perception theory (London & Smither, 1995), individuals often infer their beliefs

by examining their own behaviour. A state of increased, objective self-awareness will lead to attitude-behaviour consistency. Individuals in a state of objective self-awareness view themselves as an observer would view them; hence there is high agreement between behaviour ratings of self and others. However, Atwater and Yammarino (1992) contend that self-ratings seem to be unreliable indicators of behaviour. Self-ratings may be useful if they are thought of as providing information about the self-rater's dispositions. A number of studies have suggested that individuals who rate themselves in specific ways have particular individual characteristics. For example, Fahr and Dobbins (1989) discovered that leniency bias in self-ratings was related to self-esteem. Compatible with consistency theory (Korman, 1971), and contrary to self-enhancement theory (Greenwald, 1997), leniency bias in self-reports was positively related to self-esteem, especially for self-ratings made on ambiguous performance dimensions.

Additionally, self-reports and criterion measures of behaviour were more highly related for individuals high in private self-consciousness than for those low in private self-consciousness (Froming & Carver, 1981; Gibbons, 1983). Private self-consciousness is essentially self-awareness or self-focus (Buss, 1980). Nasby (1989) found the self-reports of individuals high in private self-consciousness to be more reliable than reports from those who scored low on this measure. Mabe and West (1982), in their review of the validity of self-evaluations, concluded that the individual characteristics of intelligence, achievement status, and internal locus of control were positively associated with more accurate self-evaluations. The reasoning for these relationships was that more intelligent and capable individuals exercise better judgment concerning their performance, and those with an internal locus of control are more likely to seek and retain personally relevant information. Ashford (1989) points out in this regard that the task of self-assessment has a number of relevant antecedents, which include how the self-rater gathers and interprets information and the fragility of the self-rater's ego and thus level of self-esteem.

Yammarino and Atwater (1997) indicate that the feedback received from multi-rater assessments, such as 360° assessments, increases the accuracy of self-perceptions. It could also be predicted that by using feedback obtained from a 360° assessment, perceptions of the various rater groups could be aligned by discussing the differences in ratings. This process can facilitate the clarification of expectations that could lead to aligned frames of references and, consequently, aligned ratings (Theron & Roodt, 2001). According to Yammarino and Atwater (1997), differences in

ratings obtained from 360° assessments may be attributed to factors such as biodata, individual characteristics, job relevant experiences, cognitive-affective processes, and context or situation.

Biodata refers to biographical factors such as gender, age, educational level, and level in the organisation. It relates to stereotyping as a result of any biographical differences between raters and the ratee. Individual characteristics, including interpersonal orientation, locus of control, intelligence, analytical ability and levels of self-esteem can influence ratings. Job relevant experiences can directly or indirectly influence assessment data. Past successes or failures on the job tend to predict future ratings. People's cognitive processes, that is, how they gather, process, store, retrieve and use information, including their attitudes, beliefs and frames of reference, can influence the way they rate themselves and others. Raters tend to use their own preferences as a standard against which they rate others. Lastly, contextual factors can also play a role. Contextual factors such as familiarity with the respondent, job pressures and political processes can contribute to differences in ratings (Theron & Roodt, 2001).

3.1.2.5   *Conceptualisation of self-regard*

According to Rogers (1959), the need for positive regard is found in all human beings and remains a strong and persistent motivator throughout one's life. Positive regard refers to the need to be loved, or accepted by another person. People value those experiences that satisfy their needs for positive regard. After the self emerges, people begin to develop the need for self-regard as the result of their experiences with the satisfaction or frustration of their need for positive regard. If the child generally dislikes himself or herself, he or she will develop feelings of negative self-regard. However, if he or she likes himself or herself independently of others' attitudes toward him or her, the child will continue to have positive self-regard. Positive self-regard includes feelings of self-confidence and self-worth (Rogers, 1959).

The source of positive self-regard lies in the positive regard one receives from others, but once established, it is autonomous and self-perpetuating. This conception of Rogers (1959) is quite similar to Maslow's (1970) notion that people must satisfy their love and belongingness needs before self-esteem needs can become active, but once people begin to feel confident and worthy, they no longer require a replenishing

supply of love and approval from others. In conclusion, it appears that self-regard refers to the affective aspect of self-esteem, including feelings of self-confidence and self-worth.

3.1.2.6   Conceptualisation of self-esteem

The concept of self-esteem has become enormously important in psychology, education, training and individual mental health. Various researchers (Battle, 1992; Branden, 1969, 1994; Gilmore, 1974; Khalsa, 1990; Mensch & Kandel, 1988; Reasoner, 1994; Reasoner & Gilberts, 1991; Schaefer, 1994; Stefenhagen & Burns, 1987) recognise that individuals experience a need for self-esteem; that there is a relationship between the degree of individuals' self-esteem and the degree of their mental health; and that there is some relationship between the nature and degree of individuals' self-esteem and their motivation, that is, their behaviour in the spheres of work, love and human relationships.

According to Branden (1969, 1994), a person's view and estimate of him or herself – his or her self-concept and self-evaluation – are the vital center of his or her psychology: they are the motor of his or her behaviour. To live, humans must hold three things as the supreme and ruling values of their lives, namely reason, purpose and self-esteem. Reason, as their only tool of knowledge; purpose, as their choice of the happiness which that tool must proceed to achieve; and self-esteem, as their inviolate certainty their minds are competent to think and their being is worthy of happiness, that is, is worthy of living.

How we identify, measure, improve and sustain positive levels of self-esteem have thus become important questions for all kinds of educators and trainers to ask and answer. Effective counseling and psychotherapists certainly can be called educators and trainers. Helping clients to improve and sustain a healthy self-esteem is a practical application of the knowledge presently available about self-esteem. Although the construct self-esteem is now becoming more universally understood, many definitions of the construct exist. The various aspects pertaining to the construct self-esteem will now be discussed.

(a)   Definitions of self-esteem

The term "self-esteem" is commonly used to refer to the evaluations people make and maintain about themselves. It includes attitudes of approval or disapproval and the degree to which people feel worthy, capable, significant, and effective. Self-esteem is generally considered the evaluative component of the self-concept, a broader representation of the self that includes cognitive and behavioural aspects, as well as evaluative or affective ones (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991).

William James (1890), perhaps the founder of self-esteem psychology, saw self-esteem as the discrepancy between one's ideal self and one's perceived self. Briggs (1975:3) reported that self-esteem is a person's judgment of him or herself, how one feels or what one believes about oneself including the sense of self-respect and self-worth. These feelings, she stated, are based on the conviction that the person is lovable and worthwhile – meaning that individuals are competent enough to handle themselves and their environment and have something to offer others. Maslow (1970:45) differentiates between self-esteem and reputation. Reputation is the perception of the prestige, recognition, or fame a person has achieved in the eyes of others, whereas self-esteem is a person's own feelings of worth and confidence. Self-esteem reflects a desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom. In other words, self-esteem is based on real competence and not merely on others' opinions.

Roman (1986:58) defines self-esteem as believing in oneself, knowing that one did the best one knew how to. It involves making oneself right rather than wrong and allowing oneself to feel good about who one is. Self-esteem involves self-respect and self-worth. Self-respect means speaking and acting from a level of integrity and honesty that reflects one's higher self. It means standing by what one believes in and acting in a way that reflects one's values. Self-worth means paying attention to how one feels. It is letting one's feelings be real for one and honouring them. Creating self-esteem and self-worth involves honouring oneself with one's words, actions and behaviour.

Branden (1994:27) describes self-esteem as the integration of two interrelated components, namely self-efficacy and self-respect, and the disposition to experience oneself as competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and as worthy of

happiness. Self-efficacy refers to confidence in the functioning of one's mind, in one's ability to think, understand, learn, choose, and make decisions; confidence in one's ability to understand the facts of reality that fall within the sphere of one's interests and needs; self-trust; and self-reliance. Self-respect refers to assurance of one's value; and affirmative attitude toward one's right to live and to be happy; comfort in appropriately asserting one's thoughts, wants, and needs; and the feeling that joy and fulfillment are one's natural birthright.

Clemes and Bean (1981:35, 36) equate self-esteem with the feeling of satisfaction that results when individual needs are met. This occurs by the way people handle the world or are able to influence events through their own abilities and by how they are influenced by the world or by their environment. Reasoner and Gilberts (1991:19) refined the definition of Clemes and Bean by adding that self-esteem is the degree of satisfaction one feels about oneself, the sum total of the feelings one has about one's multiple self-concept or self-images.

In a study by Kinney and Miller (1988:359), the classic definition of self-esteem by Stanley Coopersmith is quoted as "the evaluation a person makes and maintains with regard to him or herself." Coopersmith (1967:50) suggests that self-esteem expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which an individual believes him or herself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy. Rosenberg (1981) offers a definition of self-esteem based on the principle of attribution that states that people draw conclusions about what they like by observing their behaviour through the behaviour of others. This means that individuals' interpretation of their behavior, not just their behaviour, is what influences their self-esteem.

Bolus and Shavelson (1982) refer to self-esteem as the perception of self, which is reinforced by self and others. Jackson and Paunonen (1980) report in their review of personality structure and assessment that self-esteem is viewed both as an enduring personal disposition characterised by temporal consistency (the trait view) and also as a variable state of self-evaluation regulated by environmental events (the situational view). Purkey (1990) states that self-esteem is a habit of seeing oneself in a given way and one's disposition to expect oneself to succeed, to be competent, sufficient, lovable and capable in any future situation.

Hewitt (2002:139) anchors self-esteem within the realm of emotions and defines self-esteem as a reflective emotion that has developed over time in social processes of invention, that individuals learn to experience and to talk about, that arises in predictable social circumstances and that is subject to social control. Anchoring self-esteem within the realm of the emotions captures the reality of the experience from the individual's standpoint, which is an expansion of definitions that refer to self-esteem as the evaluative dimension of self-regard or self-concept. Finally, Battle (1992:3) describes self-esteem as referring to the perceptions or cognitive self-evaluations, and subjective feelings that the individual possesses about his or her own worth - the self being a composite of an individual's feelings, hopes, fears, thoughts, and views of who he or she is, what he or she is, what he or she has been, and what he or she might become in terms of the self and in terms of his or her relationship to others. Cognitive evaluations and feelings of acceptance by others are therefore important aspects of the construct self-esteem.

Against the background of the aforegoing literature review, it appears that although the definitions of self-esteem offer various distinctions of the construct self-esteem, a common thread seems to be the emphasis on the cognitive, affective and social aspects of self-esteem:

(i)   Cognitive aspect of self-esteem

- Perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and cognitive self-evaluations revolving around the self; one's capability to deal with life's challenges – a sense of self-efficacy (Hewitt, 2002; Maslow, 1970);
- Perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and cognitive evaluations about one's self-worth or worthiness to be happy and successful (Battle, 1992; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991; Branden, 1994; Bolus & Shavelson, 1982; Briggs, 1975; Coopersmith, 1967; Purkey, 1990; Rosenberg, 1981).
- Evaluation or judgements of self; approval or disapproval of self (Briggs, 1975; Coopersmith, 1967; Hewitt, 2002; Jackson & Paunonen, 1980; James, 1890; Rosenberg, 1981).
- Satisfaction of cognitive needs (Maslow, 1970).

(ii)   Affective aspects of self-esteem

- Feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction about oneself (mood); positive self-regard; reflexive feelings of self-worth; satisfaction of emotional needs (Battle, 1992; Branden, 1994; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991; Briggs, 1975; Clemens & Bean, 1981; Hewitt, 2002; Reasoner & Gilberts, 1991; Rogers, 1959).

(iii)   Social aspects of self-esteem

- Cognitive self-evaluations and reflexive feelings about acceptance by others based on the interpretation of the behaviour of others and perceptions and feelings about the self (Battle, 1992; Bolus & Shavelson, 1982; Hewitt, 2002; Maslow, 1970; Rosenberg, 1981).
- Self-appraisal and comparison with other people or ideal self regarding accomplishments, and individually efficacious functioning (Battle, 1992; Hewitt, 2002; Maslow, 1970; Rosenberg, 1979; Swann, 1996).
- Sense of belonging and acceptance as a healthy functioning and participative member in a social group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hewitt, 2002; Kinicki & Kreitner, 2003; Maslow, 1970).

Furthermore, self-esteem is seen as distinct from self-concept or self-image. The term self-esteem is used to denote the sum total of the feelings one has about one's multiple self-concepts or self-images and one's sense of belongingness and efficacious functioning as a member of a social group.

Based on the literature review, the following self-esteem definition is adopted for the purpose of this research as it integrates the principles of the humanistic perspective and multi-dimensional approaches to self-esteem and allows applicability to organisational contexts: Self-esteem is a socially constructed emotion denoting feelings and perceptions about one's multiple self-concepts and self-images which are based on the psychological need for acceptance and belonging within one's social group, the desire for efficacious and authentic functioning, competence and achievement in comparison to other members of one's group (Battle, 1992; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hewitt, 2002; Maslow, 1970).

(b)   Self-esteem versus self-efficacy

A primary aspect of self-esteem that is emphasised, directly or indirectly, by the various definitions discussed previously is the sense of self-efficacy, especially in terms of self-regulation (Branden, 1969; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Branden (1969, 1994, 1997) explicitly states that self-esteem pertains to a person's conviction of his or her fundamental efficacy and worth. He defines self-esteem as the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness. Self-esteem is the confidence in the efficacy of one's mind, in one's ability to think. By extension, it is confidence in one's ability to learn, make appropriate choices and decisions, and manage change. Self-esteem is also the experience that success, achievement, and fulfillment – and therefore happiness – are appropriate to us.

Self-efficacy is a construct derived from social cognitive theory – a theory positing a triadic reciprocal causation model in which behaviour, cognitions, and the environment all influence each other in a dynamic fashion (Bandura, 1977; 1986). Wood and Bandura (1989:408) stated that "self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands".

Although self-efficacy is described as a judgment about task capability related to work performance, it relates to self-esteem in the sense that the task becomes self-management (Branden, 1994). The efficacy judgment changes over time as new information and experience are acquired. Efficacy beliefs involve a mobilisation component; self-efficacy reflects a more complex and generative process involving the construction and orchestration of adaptive performance to fit changing circumstances. Thus, people who have the same skills may perform differently based on their utilisation, combination, and sequencing of these skills in an evolving context (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

Gist and Mitchell (1992) differentiate between self-esteem and self-efficacy by pointing out the differences between the two constructs. Self-esteem is considered as a trait reflecting an individual's characteristic, cognitive and affective evaluations of the self (e.g., perceptions and feelings of self-worth). By contrast, self-efficacy is a judgment about task capability that is not inherently evaluative. Brockner (1988) observes that self-efficacy always refers to task-specific capability. Self-esteem refers to a global construct that taps individuals' self-evaluations (and not merely their

confidence judgments) across a wide variety of situations. According to Schaefer (1994), the operational definition of task-specific self-esteem appears to be synonymous with self-efficacy.

Branden (1969) defines self-efficacy as particularised efficacy, referring to the individual's effectiveness in specific areas of endeavour, resulting from particular knowledge and skills he or she has acquired. Branden (1994) points out that the productive achievement of goals is a consequence and expression of healthy self-esteem can be viewed as metaphysical (or spiritual) efficacy which pertains to the individual's basic relationship to reality and which reflects the reality-oriented nature of his or her thinking processes. Metaphysical efficacy leads to particularised efficacy. The individual maintains his or her metaphysical (spiritual) efficacy by continuing to expand his or her particularised efficacy throughout his or her life – that is, to expand his or her knowledge, understanding and ability. Continual intellectual growth is a necessity of self-esteem, as it is a necessity of one's life (Branden, 1969; 1994).

An individual who develops healthily derives intense pleasure and pride from the work of his (her) mind, and from the achievements made possible by that work. Feeling confident in his or her ability to deal with the facts of reality, he (she) will want a challenging, effortful, creative existence. Creativeness will be his (her) highest love, whatever his or her level of intelligence. Feeling confident in his own value, he or she will be drawn to self-esteem in others; what he or she will desire most in human relationships is the opportunity to feel admiration; he or she will want to find others and achievements he or she can respect that will give him or her the pleasure which his or her own character and achievements can offer others. In the sphere both of work and human relationships, his or her base and motor is a firm sense of confidence, of efficacy – and, as a consequence, a love for existence, for the fact of being alive. What he or she seeks are means to express and objectify his self-esteem (Branden, 1969, 1994).

Branden (1969, 1994) differentiates between cognitive and affective efficacy. Cognitive efficacy refers to one's confidence in the functioning of one's mind, in one's ability to think, understand, learn, choose, and make decisions; confidence in one's ability to understand the facts of reality that fall within the sphere of one's interests and needs. Furthermore, it refers to self-trust in and self-reliance on the functioning and reasoning capabilities of one's mind – one believes and trusts that one is

competent to cope with the basic challenges of life. Cognitive inefficacy refers to the extent to which the individual fails or refuses to make awareness the regulating goal of his (her) consciousness – to the extent that he (she) evades the effort of thought and the responsibility of reason. The result is cognitive inefficacy.

Emotional or affective efficacy refers to one's confidence in one's ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. In addition, it involves one's ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion and feelings when they facilitate thought. It is the ability to monitor or regulate one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action. Emotional efficacy requires an affirmative attitude toward one's right to live and to be happy; comfort in appropriately asserting one's thoughts, wants, and needs; the feeling that joy and fulfillment are one's natural birthright (BarOn, 1998; Branden, 1994). According to Branden (1994), the nature of one's self-esteem and self-image does not determine one's thinking, but it affects one's emotional efficacy, so that one's feelings tend to encourage or discourage thinking, to draw one toward reality or away from it, toward efficacy or away from it.

(c)   Levels of self-esteem

Mulligan (1988) states that self-esteem fluctuates as it is maintained and supported by selectively interpreting facts, standards and situations. It depends not on how good people think and feel they are, but also on how good they want to be (their ideal self). People tend to draw their self-esteem from a sense of their own values, which are the qualities they use to judge themselves and others. People often value what they are good at and devalue what they consider themselves poor at. A low rating on a quality that one does not value will have little effect on one's self-esteem, whereas a high or low rating on a quality that one does value will have a significant effect. A great deal of positive self-esteem seems to exist where people can make choices. According to Mulligan (1988), this explains why people who have limited choice are more likely to have chronic low self-esteem, which is often called an inferiority complex. Branden (1994) describes the collapse of self-esteem as the cumulative result of a long succession of failures to use one's mind properly – that is the basis on which one interprets facts, standards and situations and the self-evaluations one makes.

According to Schaefer (1994), the problem of self-esteem is not a new one. It has been a topic of concern for many years. In research over the last twenty years, levels of self-esteem have been found to relate to a number of constructs. For example, Rotheram (1987) found self-esteem to relate to both social behaviour and academic success. Gurney (1987) reviewed several research studies by his colleagues and found that levels of self-esteem are associated with aspects of adjustment. Above average levels of self-esteem are positively associated with characteristics related to better adjustment, more independent and less defensive behaviour, less deviant behaviour, greater social effectiveness, and greater acceptance of other people.

Many experts in the field of mental health and education have performed numerous research studies and have found low self-esteem to be the preeminent cause of many emotional, educational, and life problems. For example, Gilmore (1974), in his studies of the productive personality, found self-esteem to be associated with productivity. High self-esteem characteristics include academic achievement, creativity, and/or leadership. Conversely, low self-esteem is characterised by poor academic achievement, non-creativity, and/or conforming and following behaviour. In his studies of adults, he found that, generally, self-esteem was the antecedent to success in life. Self-esteem can range from negative to positive self-esteem (Hewitt, 2002). Briggs (1975, 1977) lists three levels of global self-esteem, namely low self-esteemers (who are convinced of their inferiority and feel unlovable, channeling their energy into highly creative methods to fail), middle self-esteemers (who are self-doubters and continually adopt a false self to please others), and high self-esteemers (who are self-validators and are realistically aware of both their strengths and shortcomings, and accept them).

Robson (1988) discussed the connection between self-esteem, love and dignity and found negative self-esteem to inhibit motivation. He also isolated other consequences of low self-esteem with substantiated consequences found by other researchers. Consequences of low self-esteem include the following partial list: multiple interpersonal problems and academic failure, dependency, masked hostility, depression, anxiety, submissiveness, apathy, feelings of isolation, unloveability, withdrawal, passivity, compliance, tendency to denigrate others, blaming others for own failings, reduction in problem-solving and decision-making skills, tendency to accept unfavourable assessments as true, and a lessened association between task performance and satisfaction.

Tice (1993) maintains that people with high self-esteem are those who really endorse very positive statements about themselves. Low self-esteem, however, is not the opposite. People with low self-esteem do not depict themselves as worthless and incompetent failures. Rather, they are people who are essentially neutral and noncommittal in their self-descriptions, attributing neither strongly positive nor strongly negative traits to themselves. They are low in self-esteem only in a relative sense, that is, in comparison to the very flattering way that people with high self-esteem portray themselves. Low self-esteem people are motivated to protect their sense of self-esteem and will therefore behave in a cautious, noncommittal fashion in their self-descriptions. High self-esteem people, on the other hand, are motivated to enhance their sense of self-esteem and will therefore behave in a self-aggrandising, risk-taking fashion.

Studies conducted by Roth, Snyder, and Pace (1986) found that high self-esteem people are more likely to use a self-enhancing strategy than low self-esteem individuals. High self-esteem people are more likely to present themselves in an unrealistically positive manner than are low self-esteem individuals. According to Campbell (1990), low self-esteem is associated with a relatively impoverished knowledge structure about the self. People with low self-esteem lack a firm, elaborate self-concept and find it difficult to present themselves in either a strongly positive or negative fashion. People with high self-esteem, in contrast, appear to be habitual self-enhancers. Boasting comes easily and naturally to them, leaving them able to process the social interaction fully. People with low self-esteem appear to be cautious, uncertain people who desire success but fear failure – the fear often outweighs the desire, resulting in an attitude of self-protection. Encountering a new or demanding situation, their first concern apparently is to prevent disaster, and so they act in ways designed to protect themselves from the dangers of failure, social rejection, and often humiliations (Tice, 1993).

People who are high in self-esteem are confident that they have important positive qualities and that they do not have important negative qualities. When they do feel that they possess some negative attribute, they typically see it as relatively unimportant. Consequently, they approach evaluative situations with a high degree of confidence and are not particularly concerned about failure; they see evaluative situations as an opportunity to do well and to enhance the self. People who are high in self-esteem will handicap themselves (for example, fail to practice) in evaluative situations when self-handicapping will result in further self-enhancement by

succeeding in spite of obstacles (Tice, 1993). When they fail, however, people who are high in self-esteem are surprised, because this failure is inconsistent with their self-concepts (Fries & Frey, 1980; Stephan & Gollwitzer, 1981). The discrepancy between the feedback and their self-concepts arouses negative affect, which motivates a search for explanations for the outcome that are consistent with their self-concepts (Brown & Rogers, 1991). In addition to attributing the negative outcome to external causes, a number of other cognitive strategies may be available, such as devaluing the importance of the task, deciding that the evaluator is not credible, or focusing on negative information about other people. Eventually, one of these strategies will restore self-regard and positive affect.

According to Heatherton and Ambady (1993), high self-esteem individuals are often considered to be better in setting and meeting their goals and commitments than are those with low self-esteem. Under certain circumstances, however, people with high self-esteem become overconfident, persevere at unsolvable tasks, or function poorly under pressure, suggesting that the approach of those with high self-esteem is not universally superior. This inferior response is most likely to occur when the abilities or capacities of high self-esteem persons are questioned or when other aspects of their self-esteem or ego are threatened. It appears that an optimal level of self-esteem for self-regulation is neither excessively high nor particularly low.

(d)   Stability of self-esteem

Self-esteem instability has been conceptualised in terms of either long-term or short-term fluctuations in one's contextually based global self-esteem which have important implications for psychological functioning (Kerniss & Waschull, 1995; Rosenberg, 1986). Long-term fluctuations reflect change in one's baseline level of self-esteem that occurs slowly and over an extended period of time. Short-term fluctuations between feelings of worthiness and worthlessness must be dramatic to be considered unstable. Although some people with unstable self-esteem may experience dramatic short-term shifts from feeling very positively to very negatively about themselves, others may fluctuate primarily in the extent to which they feel positive or negative about themselves. The tendency to exhibit fluctuations can be viewed as a dispositional characteristic that interacts with contextual factors to result in specific patterns of fluctuations (Kerniss & Waschull, 1995).

Rosenberg (1986) and Kernis and Waschull (1995) suggest that an important factor in the development of unstable self-esteem is the tendency to rely excessively on personal and social sources of evaluation as a basis for determining one's overall self-worth. People who place substantial importance on such evaluations would be more susceptible to short-term fluctuations in perceived self-worth. Unstable self-esteem is also associated with heightened ego-involvement or perceiving that one's self-worth is continually "on the line" in everyday activities. Ryan (1993) makes a distinction between contingent and true self-esteem. Contingent self-esteem is based upon one's ability (or inability) to live up to one's (or important others') expectations or standards. As such, it involves a heightened sense of ego-involvement in the promotion of one's agendas, and is subject to the vicissitudes of one's successes and failures. In contrast, true positive self-esteem is based on feelings of worth that derive from one's authenticity, rather than the achievement of specific outcomes and thus is more stable and secure.

An impoverished or uncertain self-concept could lead individuals to rely on, and be more affected by, specific evaluative information, thereby contributing to unstable self-esteem (Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, 1990). According to Kernis and Warschull (1995), instability is related to pervasive emotional and behavioural difficulties among individuals who rate low in self-esteem. Instability among people who rate high in self-esteem is related to greater attempts to get along with others and to maintain control over the details of their lives. In so doing, they may be able to maximise the extent of goodwill they receive from others, as well as from themselves.

Berry, Kernis, and Cornell (1993) report the results of analyses in which stability and level of self-esteem were used to predict scores on the Five-Factor Inventory which measures five broad facets of personality: neuroticism; extraversion; agreeableness; conscientiousness; and openness to experience. Main effects for level of self-esteem emerged for neuroticism and extraversion, indicating that high self-esteem (compared to low self-esteem) was related to lower neuroticism and greater extraversion. Unstable self-esteem (compared to stable self-esteem) was related to greater neuroticism. Among people who rated high on self-esteem, instability was related to greater agreeableness and conscientiousness, but was not related to neuroticism. Among people who rated low on self-esteem, instability was related to greater neuroticism, but to lower agreeableness and conscientiousness.

High scores on neuroticism are thought to be indicative of negative emotionality, insecurity, and excessive worry. On the other hand, high scores on agreeableness are thought to reflect good-naturedness, helpfulness, forgivingness, and straightforwardness, whereas low scores are associated with heightened suspiciousness, uncooperativeness, and irritability. Finally, high conscientiousness scores are associated with heightened tendencies to be organised, reliable, self-disciplined, neat, and persevering, whereas low scores are associated with being aimless, lazy, and careless (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

(e)   Self-esteem enhancement

An important question regarding the construct of self-esteem is the question of whether or not self-esteem can be changed through either internal or external means. Put simply, can self-esteem be enhanced?

One problem in answering this question lies in the definition and description of self-esteem itself. Both Coopersmith (1967) and Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976) observe self-esteem to be very resistant to change because of its stable quality. Self-esteem is resistant to change because it provides a stable assessment of the self to the self, and is actively defended by the self against alteration (Sullivan & Guglielmo, 1985). However, despite this resistance to change quality, Coopersmith (1967) and others found that self-esteem could be altered.

Peter Gurney (1987a) has chronicled dramatic self-esteem gains from three research studies using behaviour modification techniques to increase the frequency of children's positive self-referent verbal statements (PSRV). In a study by Hauserman, Miller and Bond (1976), in which an attempt was made to enhance elementary children's self-esteem by prompting and reinforcing PSRV, a significant difference in global self-esteem was found between the experimental and the control group. The results of a study by Danzig (1978) indicated that educable mentally retarded pupils' self-esteem was enhanceable through reinforcement of pupils' PSRVs. Significant gains were found in total self-esteem scores and the frequency of positive self-referent statements. Lastly, Phillips (1984) used contingent praise to increase the frequency of PSRVs in disadvantaged elementary children. The hypothesis relating to the function of praise in increasing the frequency of PSRVs was accepted.

Another study conducted by Reasoner and Gilberts from 1982 to 1985 (Reasoner & Gilberts, 1991) substantiates the findings from the three earlier researchers that self-esteem has enhanceable qualities. The report, Building Self-Esteem Implementation Project by Reasoner and Gilberts (1991), noted that the academic self-esteem of students could be significantly enhanced. In addition to increases in levels of self-esteem, students were found to be more cooperative, engaged in less anti-social behaviour, were more highly motivated in the classroom, exhibited fewer discipline problems, and were absent less frequently. One additional finding from the study indicated that teachers who participated in the self-esteem project also reported higher levels of personal self-esteem, engaged in more sharing of materials, enjoyed teaching to a greater degree, gave more positive evaluations of their schools, and improved their relationships with colleagues (Reasoner & Gilberts, 1991). Battle (1992) reports measures of self-esteem change in both children and adults resulting from intervention. He provides numerous case reports and examples of programmes applied to enhance self-esteem.

The above studies reflect the changeability or enhanceability construct of self-esteem in both children and adults. Valuable contributions arise from these studies. One contribution includes viewing self-reinforcement (Gurney, 1987b, 1987c), modeling (Bandura, 1977), and other behavioural modification (Gurney, 1987a; Reasoner & Gilberts, 1991) as a link between the self-concept and overt behaviour. Another valuable contribution from examining the changeability theory based on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory is a move towards an operational definition of self-concept. Bandura (1977) states that a social learning approach, a negative self-concept is defined in terms of frequent negative self-reinforcement of one's behaviour; conversely, a favourable self-concept is reflected in a disposition to engage in high positive self-reinforcement.

Additional research goes beyond the question of changeability by identifying age preferences more likely to succeed in long-term changes in self-esteem. These researchers found in a variety of studies that the younger the individual, the more profound and more lasting the changes that occur (Gurney, 1987b, 1987c; Koniak-Griffin, 1989; Portes, Dunham, King, & Kidwell, 1988; Searcy, 1988). Gurney (1987b, c) investigated the stability and consistency of global self-esteem and found that while adult self-esteem is open to change, enhancement will be more difficult to produce than in young children. This finding suggests that enhancement of self-esteem may be associated with the age of the subjects. The older the subject, the

more intensive the experience required for change in self-esteem, and over a longer period of time.

In reviewing Coopersmith (1967), Gurney (1987b, 1987c) states the following in terms of changing self-esteem: global self-esteem is more stable than its subscales; change in self-esteem will not be rapid; older children and adults should be open to change in self-esteem as with any other attitude; self-attitudes of adolescents tend to remain the most stable; stability may be less strong in early childhood and thus enhancement will likely be more successful in young children; enhancement will likely be more successful in young children, since even a brief exposure to an educational process may produce self-esteem enhancement. According to this statement, it appears that success of change is dependent on the subject's age.

This research focuses on adults in organisational contexts, more specifically, whether self-esteem influences the demonstration of emotional competent behaviour. It is important to note in this regard that efforts aimed at raising or enhancing self-esteem work indirectly on self-esteem by addressing the source of self-esteem, namely internally generated practices. Self-esteem enhancement is facilitated or encouraged through teaching individuals self-management and emotional intelligence competencies that facilitate the adoption of new beliefs and self-understanding, dissolve repressive barriers, liberate self-expression, and activate self-healing. Once individuals understand and consciously integrate the self-management practices into their way of life, they usually start to experience growth in self-efficacy and self-worth which raises the level of their self-esteem and in turn increases the mastery of emotional competencies (Battle, 1992; Branden, 1994; Reasoner, 1994).

(f)   Group or collective self-esteem

Self-esteem can be explored as a personal, individual construct or as a collective self-esteem. Collective self-esteem is the aspects of the self-concept relating to race, ethnic background, religion, feelings of belonging in one's community, and the like (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Many researchers (Blash & Unger, 1995; Lorenzo-Hernandez & Ouellette, 1998; Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Phinney, 1991; Phinney, Cantu & Kurtz, 1997) have suggested that there is a link between collective self-esteem and personal self-esteem. Positive feelings toward one's group affiliation will lead to positive feelings about oneself. Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, and Broadnax (1994) studied the distinction between public appraisals of African Americans and

personal self-esteem, finding that there was no significant relationship between the two. This suggests that African Americans separate personal feelings about their groups from how they believe society values them. According to Martinez and Dukes (1997), the sense of a broader identity source (personal and group) helps to lessen the impact of negative stereotypes and social denigration of minority group members. As collective self-esteem is related to higher personal self-esteem, and minority group members seem able to distinguish between others' perceptions of their group and their own feelings of personal identity, the individual's development of an ethnic or other minority group identity could be quite valuable to personal well-being. In this regard, a longitudinal study of ethnic identity and self-esteem conducted by Phinney and Chavira (1992) found that the exploration of cultural background appeared to promote personal self-esteem and, in turn, exploration of ethnic issues.

Kinicki and Kreitner (2003:93, 94) report a model of organisation-based self-esteem that was developed and validated with seven studies involving 2,444 teachers, students, managers, and employees. Organisation-based self-esteem is defined as the self-perceived value that individuals have of themselves as organisation members acting within an organisational context. The results indicate that organisation-based self-esteem tends to increase when employees believe their supervisors have a genuine concern for employees' welfare. Flexible, organic organisation structures generate higher organisation-based self-esteem than do mechanistic (rigid bureaucratic) structures. Complex and challenging jobs foster higher organisation-based self-esteem than do simple, repetitious, and boring jobs. Active enhancement of organisation-based self-esteem appears to build greater task motivation, productivity and job satisfaction. The concept of organisation-based self-esteem is especially relevant to flatter organisation structures where employees operate in teams, with limited contact between leaders and their subordinates, and where individual responsibility is toward team members.

3.2   THEORETICAL MODELS

According to Schaefer (1994), there is both a unidimensional theory of self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967)   theory one   and a multidimensional theory of self-esteem (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985; Marsh, Smith, & Barnes, 1983).

3.2.1 Unidimensional theories of self-esteem

The unidimensional theory conceptualises the self-esteem construct as global, while the multidimensional theory posits that self-esteem is both hierarchical and multifaceted. Theory one is founded on Coopersmith's theory that the total self-esteem arises developmentally from the infants' earliest reception by their parents (Sullivan & Guglielmo, 1985).

Cairns (1990) critically examined the two theories and found the unidimensional approach to the conceptualisation and measurement of self-esteem deserving of criticism on both theoretical and empirical grounds. He found that it ignores the idea that the self-concept is composed of specific aspects as well as a general or total self-concept. Also, the unidimensional approach ignores the idea that the overall self-concept is relatively independent from the more specific factors of self-concept.

3.2.2 Multidimensional theories of self-esteem

The second theory is based on theorisation by Shavelson and his associates that one's total self-esteem is a composite sum of separate self-evaluations in many specific areas of performance (Sullivan & Guglielmo, 1985). The multidimensional theory adheres to the concept that there are different types of self-esteem within each individual. These types include physical, social, academic, and general self-esteem, which when combined equal global or overall self-esteem. Battle (1982, 1990, 1992) agrees that the construct self-esteem comprises a number of facets or components. He differentiates these self-esteem components as general, social, academic, and parent-related self-esteem for children; and general, social, and personal self-esteem for adults. When combined, the components equal overall self-esteem. Furthermore, each of these components of global self-esteem consists of various factors. Battle (1992) emphasises particularly the cognitive (self-evaluations, sense of self-efficacy), affective (subjective feelings, mood) and interpersonal needs (social acceptance by others) related to self-esteem.

According to Schaefer (1994), researchers seem to agree that the multidimensional approach is a better way to view the self-esteem construct (Battle, 1990; Cairns, 1990; Markus, 1977; Markus & Wurf, 1987). The multidimensional approach is based on earlier research by Shavelson and associates (Watkins, Maukai, & Regmi, 1991) which argued that any definition of self-concept would involve both "within-construct

specifications" (what the features of the construct are and how they are linked together) and "between-construct specifications" (how these features of self-concept are related to other constructs). Shavelson, Huber, and Stanton (1976) isolated seven common features of the self-concept construct that they considered critical to its definition. Self-concept was described as structured, multifaceted, hierarchical, stable, developmental, differentiable, and evaluative (Watkins & Dhawan, 1989).

Aldridge (1990) states it differently. Self-esteem is dependent on many variables. There are at least four areas upon which individuals may choose to base their self-esteem. These include the physical, the social, the intellectual, and spiritual modalities. Furthermore, Aldridge (1990) postulates that individuals vary in their valuing of self-esteem. Many people place great value on all four areas of development in determining how they see (the cognitive aspect of self-esteem) themselves and how they feel (the affective aspect of self-esteem) about themselves. More specifically, from the results of their survey, 96 percent of the participants believe that self-esteem can be achieved through a combination of the four dimensions and 89 percent believe self-esteem can be enhanced through each of the four aspects on its own.

The multidimensional approach to self-esteem is confirmed by literature on psychologically optimal functioning (Branden, 1969, 1994; BarOn, 1998; Cilliers & Wissing, 1993; Möller, 1995; Seeman, 1989). The multifaceted and systemic, interdependent characteristics of the self are divided into the intrapersonal (personal) and interpersonal (social) aspects of the self. The intrapersonal characteristics are cognitive (objective and rational thought and reasoning); affective (openness, awareness and sensitivity to one's own emotions, feelings and needs); acceptance of full responsibility for one's own emotions and feelings; emotional independence; self-respect and self-acceptance; and cognitive (self-directive from an internal locus of control, conscious use of will and freedom of choice). The interpersonal or social aspect is characterised by an optimistic and unconditional acceptance of and respect for others; preference for more intimate, deeper relations characterised by responsible, spontaneous, open, authentic behaviour and an attitude of empathy and consideration toward others.

For the purpose of this research, the multidimensional approach to self-esteem is followed as it allows for the measurement of global self-esteem as well as other

specific aspects of the self, particularly the personal (intrapersonal) and social (interpersonal) aspects.

3.2.3   Battle's model of self-esteem

Battle's (1992) model of self-esteem is relevant to this research as its underlying principles allows the industrial and organisational psychologist to study the construct self-esteem in a socially embedded context such as the workplace. Battle (1982, 1990, 1992) supports the multidimensional theoretical approach to defining the construct self-esteem.

3.2.3.1   The dimensions of self-esteem

According to Battle (1992), the construct self-esteem comprises a number of facets or dimensions. He differentiates these self-esteem dimensions as general, social, academic, and parent-related self-esteem for children; and general, social, and personal self-esteem for adults. General self-esteem is the aspect of self-esteem that refers to individuals' overall perceptions of and feelings about their worth; social self-esteem is the aspect of self-esteem that refers to individuals' perceptions of and feelings about the quality of their relationships with peers; and personal self-esteem is the aspect of self-esteem that refers to individuals' most innate perceptions and feelings of self-worth. When combined, these three sub-components equal overall self-esteem. Furthermore, each of these components of global self-esteem consists of various factors. Battle (1992) emphasises particularly the cognitive (self-evaluations, sense of self-efficacy), affective (subjective feelings, mood) and interpersonal needs (social acceptance by others) related to self-esteem. Figure 3.2 gives an overview of these dimensions and their underlying principles.

3.2.3.2   The psychological roots of self-esteem

Battle's (1992) psychological understanding of self-esteem is rooted in four ideas, namely acceptance, evaluation, comparison, and efficacy. According to Battle (1992), the self emerges and takes shape as the child develops. The self is initially vague, poorly integrated, a somewhat fragmented phenomenon but becomes increasingly more differentiated as the youngster matures and interacts with significant others. The self, therefore, represents the culmination of one's inherent make-up and life experiences. Cognitive and affective self-evaluations of self-worth and self-efficacy

(competence), once established, tend to be fairly stable and resistant to change (Battle, 1990).

Self-esteem seems anchored in unqualified acceptance of the child early in life, the receipt of positive evaluations from relevant others, favourable comparisons with others and with ideal versions of the self, and the capacity for efficacious action. Self-esteem is in the first instance thought to be dependent upon the child's acceptance within the social fold without regard to particular performances. It is built early on a foundation of security, trust, and unconditional love. Later, whatever standards of evaluation are employed, positive evaluations will enhance self-esteem and negative evaluations will damage it, other things being equal. Whether standards emphasise the accomplishment of challenging tasks or appropriate displays of personality, positive is good, negative is bad. Likewise, self-esteem is enhanced when the person is able to make favourable comparisons with other people, or with an ideal self, and it is enhanced when the person acts effectively in his or her physical or social environment (Battle, 1990; Damon, 1995; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983; Hewitt, 2002; Owens, 1995; Rosenberg, 1979; Swann, 1996; Wills, 1981).

3.2.3.3   *Self-esteem as a socially constructed emotion*

Battle's (1992) description of the construct self-esteem and its sub-dimensions appears to be in line with Hewitt's (2002) conceptualisation of self-esteem as a socially constructed emotion. This approach allows the researcher to study the construct self-esteem within the organisational context. Organisations are social systems where expectations for appropriate behaviour are formed from the ongoing pattern of routines, norms, roles, and scripts for how people should behave (Worline, Wrzesniewski, & Rafaeli, 2002). Battle's (1992) measurement of self-esteem attempts to capture the reality of the experience of the self within a particular social context from the individual's standpoint. Self-esteem is described as a socially situated experience, which does not merely consist of constant or variable psychological states. The socially constructed emotions that give rise to high or low self-esteem arise at predictable times and places under the influence of role requirements embedded in a Western societal culture, with its particular notions about status relationships, success or failure in the attainment of socially prescribed goals, and the actual or imagined evaluative judgments of others (Hewitt, 2002). According to Hewitt (2002), this approach makes self-esteem more dependent upon the situation and its demands, which suggests that people manage self-esteem in the

same ways they manage other emotions. In other words it proposes, within limits, that people can lower or elevate self-esteem in response to role requirements, presenting a self with appropriate manifestations.

Affect is a central element of self-experience and people learn to interpret some feeling states as "self-esteem" (Hewitt, 2002:140). Emotions such as fear, anger, hatred, love, pride, satisfaction, anxiety, loathing, shame, guilt, embarrassment, and the like all figure in the experience of self in varying degrees and circumstances. These emotions may be aroused by one's thoughts and actions or by the world and deeds of others. However, not one of these forms of self-directed affect is on its own the core of self-esteem. Yet, the construct self-esteem is somehow tied to these emotional experiences. For example, people with high self-esteem are apt to speak pridefully about themselves, to express satisfaction, to label themselves as self-confident (Hewitt, 2002).

The core of feeling to which a variety of other emotions become alloyed in the constructed emotion of self-esteem is best termed mood (Hewitt, 2002). According to Hewitt (2002), the term mood carries considerable cultural baggage and describes the affective reality that lies at the core of the construct self-esteem, which is a higher order emotional construct. Mood is a generalised aroused or subdued disposition. At one extreme of mood lies euphoria (a pervasive good feeling that the individual might describe in a variety of culturally available terms such as happy, self-confident), and at the other extreme lies dysphoria (a similarly pervasive feeling described in culturally opposite terms such as sad, fearful, anxious, or depressed). Self-esteem is not the only higher order construct applied to the universal human experience of mood. People tending toward euphoria may report that they are happy, or self-confident, or that they feel good or are in a good mood. They may respond to self-esteem measures in ways that lead a social scientist to attribute high self-esteem to them. The interpretation of underlying affective states such as mood is shaped by the social processes, goals and values of particular cultures (Hewitt, 2002; Kanfer & Klimoski, 2002; Weiss, 2002).

Self-esteem has been constructed in a Western cultural context that enjoins the pursuit of happiness and success as culturally important goals. People respond affectively to their pursuit and attainment of these goals. Success and failure generate positive and negative affect and produce changes in expectations of future affect, that is, mood. A sense of membership in the social world and of proper

attainment of cultural ideals engenders elevated mood; failure in these respects engenders depressed mood. Western culture emphasises success as a result of individual achievement, happiness as a future state to be sought by individual effort, and equality of opportunity to seek success and happiness. The individual is a voluntary member of a social world and either succeeds or fails as an individual. Such cultural circumstances engender individual mood responses, for some will fail badly, others will succeed greatly, and most will fall somewhere in the middle (Hewitt, 2002; Kanfer & Klimoski, 2002).

As a socially constructed and experienced emotion, self-esteem is more a sign of well-being than a psychological trait. Self-esteem is a measure of the person's expectations of positive events and, accordingly, his or her willingness to approach objects and others. Good self-esteem is indicative of a positive and integral personal and social identity, that is, a sense that one is located securely in the social world, competent to meet its challenges, ready to participate in life with others, and able to balance social demands and personal desires (Battle, 1992; Hewitt, 1989; Scheff, 1990). A positive and integral sense of identity, of which self-esteem is a key measure, is crucially important because it is fundamental to the capacity for emphatic role taking, the capacity to see and to identify with the other's point of view. Positive and well-regulated mood, of which self-esteem is a key sign, is fundamental to the capacity to see virtue in others, good purposes in their action, and cooperative rather than competitive goals (Hewitt, 2002). The experience of self-esteem in the workplace is the living of the affective link between the self and others. Discourse about self-esteem in the workplace encourages people to explore the nature and importance of the social bond and affective link they have with others (Hewitt, 2002; Kanfer & Klimoski, 2002).

Figure 3.2 gives an overview of the core dimensions and underlying principles contained in Battle's (1992) model of self-esteem.

GENERAL	• Sense of psychological well-being • Self-efficacious functioning in terms of cultural criteria of success and happiness • Self-acceptance/self-expression
SOCIAL	• Acceptance/belongingness • Evaluation • Comparison • Efficacy
PERSONAL	• Emotional self-awareness • Mood/state (anxiety, depression, upset, hurt, worry) • Self-regard (physical)

Figure 3.2   The dimensions and principles underlying self-esteem (according to Battle's 1992 model of self-esteem)

3.3   VARIABLES INFLUENCING SELF-ESTEEM

The variables that influence self-esteem are predominantly related to the socialisation process. Socialisation is conceptualised in terms of the social identity approach (Schaefer, 1994). According to the social identity approach a group is defined as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category. The group contains individuals who define, describe, and evaluate themselves in terms of the group or category label, and apply the group's norms of conduct and behaviour to themselves (Hewitt, 2002; Hogg & Turner, 1987). This identification internalisation of a social category occurs through the socialisation process (Schaefer, 1994). The socialisation process in an organisational context is described by Kinicki and Kreitner (2003:31) as the process by which a person learns the values, norms, and required behaviours which permit him or her to participate as a member of the organisation. The major socialisation factors that influence individuals' experience of self-esteem are socio-cultural factors, ethnic and socio-economic factors, gender stereotyping, and lifespan developmental stages. Each of these factors will be discussed in turn.

3.3.1 Socio-cultural factors

Cultural factors are beliefs and attitudes commonly found among group members. These are often socialised by society, but after internalisation they serve as self-perpetuating barriers to the individual (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994). Membership in and acceptance by some group, the evaluation of persons along various dimensions, the propensity to make invidious comparisons, and the importance placed on individual action are deeply embedded in contemporary Western culture. According to Hewitt (2002), this culture fosters anxiety about the person's acceptance by others, emphasising the individual's responsibility to create a social world or to carve out a place in an existing one where he or she can be warmly embraced. Likewise, Western culture makes available numerous situations in which the individual is exposed to evaluation, imagines the evaluations others are making, or engages in self-evaluation. It provides numerous comparative occasions on which individuals reflect on how well or ill they fare in comparison with relevant others or with possible or desirable versions of themselves. Western culture emphasises the capacity and responsibility of the individual to act independently and effectively (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Hewitt, 1998). Social conditions that promote optimal human functioning also promote self-esteem, and these fundamental conditions are the ones worth pursuing: acceptance within a social fold, a sense of security, cultural competence, and the capacity to reconcile personal goals and social expectations (Hewitt, 2002).

However, Branden (1994) contends that the need for self-esteem is not cultural. Every human being, whatever the network of customs and values in which he or she grows up, is obliged to act to satisfy and fulfill basic needs. All human beings need an experience of competence (or self-efficacy) if they are to possess a fundamental sense of security and empowerment. Furthermore, all human beings need an experience of worth if they are to take proper care of themselves, gain some enjoyment from their efforts, and stand up against those who would harm or exploit them. Thus, the root of the need for self-esteem is biological: it pertains to survival and continued efficacious functioning.

Research makes it clear that different facets of self-esteem within any population are influenced by the cultural background of that population, and particularly the cultural background of the group within that population that is considered the majority (Hewitt, 2002; Watkins, Lam, & Regmi, 1991). According to Nagel and Jones (1992), societal

pressure to conform to the norm is reality. As such, an individual may self-stereotype him or herself in order to feel like a member of the majority group, but at the expense of reduced self-esteem or loss of self-esteem. Kowalski and Leary (1989:332) refer to this condition as a self-presentational dilemma, in which individuals within the group use both enhancing and depreciating self-presentations to increase their social attractiveness to others. Kowalski and Leary (1989) also believe the cognitive dissonance theory is connected to the self-presentation theory. Vickers (1987) explains self-stereotyping as the need for humans to hold their image of themselves as incorporating widely held beliefs and characteristics of the group to which membership is aspired.

Nagel and Jones (1992) investigated sociological factors in the development of eating disorders and found the socio-cultural indoctrination of thinness, as espoused by the Western media, to be associated with favourable characteristics of beauty, friendliness, and intelligence. Obesity was associated with unfavourable characteristics (e.g. lazy, sloppy, dirty, and dumb). Schaefer (1994) views money and power as the major influencing factors in shaping societal attitudes and values – attitudes and values that are the foundation of stereotyping constructs, and associated behaviours of prejudice and discrimination (Ehrlich, 1973; Katz, 1981). Some of the more costly results to the individual that lives in a society that refuses to concentrate on a person as an individual and denies differences that exist among members of a group are loneliness, depression, mental illness, and negative self-esteem (Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Vickers, 1987).

Kinicki and Kreitner (2003) indicate that the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction was stronger in individualistic cultures than in collectivist cultures. Individualistic cultures emphasise personal freedom and choice, whereas collectivist cultures (or communitarianism) view personal goals as less important than community goals and interests. Individualistic cultures socialise people to focus more on themselves, while people in collectivist cultures are socialised to fit into the community and to do their duty. According to Kinicki and Kreitner (2003), self-esteem is de-emphasised in collectivist cultures, and emphasised in individualistic cultures. Wissing and Van Eeden (2002) mention that the social self may take precedence in a collectivist value system.

3.3.2 Socio-economic and ethnic factors

Schaefer (1994) indicates that research pertaining to ethnic and socio-economic factors influencing self-esteem development found that when race and self-esteem factors were controlled, a significant difference in self-esteem was not reported. However, additional research studies do document overrepresentation of certain disorders and behaviours related to self-esteem among particular races and self-esteem levels. Schaefer (1994) believes it important to explore ethnic and race factors because the relationship between ethnicity and self-esteem is still an unexplored area. In research comparing whites and blacks, blacks often have equal or higher self-esteem than whites, and a number of theories, including those related to self-protection and dis-identification, have been offered to explain these findings (Crocker, Voekl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Steele, 1992).

Leong (1992) indicates that when it comes to career development and the implementation of one's self-concept, individuals in some ethnic groups, choose occupations to preserve of the family and culture of origin rather than to implement their self-concept. Fitzgerald and Betz (1994) contend that racial stereotypes lead to prejudice and, often, to discrimination against others. Further, it leads to self-selection into or out of social and work roles based on beliefs of racial appropriateness.

3.3.3 Gender stereotyping

Borman and Guido-DiBrito (1986) contend that women, without being aware or intending to do so, tend to foster their own low self-esteem and dependence because of a different socialisation process than men. Women have a higher fear of failure than men, and more frequently attribute their success simply to luck (Schaefer, 1994). Even high-achieving women are guilty of self-sabotage, and these behavioural forms of self-sabotage are viewed as an expression of conflicts related to vulnerable self-esteem and to women's sex-role socialisation (Post, 1988). Society promulgates low female self-esteem by maintaining conditional acceptance of career women through salary discrepancies, gender-role stereotyping, family demands, and dual career conflicts (Schaefer, 1994). One result of gender stereotyping is that women view themselves as less socially desirable and lack a solid sense of gender-role orientation, and this role ambiguity leads to lowered self-esteem (Nagel & Jones, 1992). Kerr and Maresh (1992) discuss the extraordinary gap between aptitude and

achievement in gifted women, and describe the career development of young gifted women as the gentle downward spiral of self-esteem and career aspirations through adolescence and young adulthood. Richman, Clark, and Brown (1985) report that white females are significantly lower in general self-esteem than white males and black males and females.

Gilligan (1982) and Russo (1991) state that tasks of autonomy and separation that characterise male-oriented development are valued over female-oriented characteristics of connectedness and responsibility. Each sex is expected to behave in ways that are consistent with gender and sex-role stereotypes. Haw (1991) reports that underachievement and poor self-esteem is directly related to both gender and cultural stereotyping. Other consequences of socialisation practices which emphasise stereotyping of masculinity and femininity include the following: delayed adolescent identity development (Dusek, Carter, & Levy, 1989); social loneliness and damaged self-esteem that leads to personal loneliness (Vaux, 1988); and damaged self-esteem and depression in teens, young adults, as well as middle-aged and elderly adults (Block, Block, & Gjerde, 1991; Brewin, 1986; Robson, 1988). Gender stereotyping results in more women than men reporting depressive symptoms, self-consciousness, and stressful life events (Allgood-Merten, Lewinsohn, & Hops, 1990).

3.3.4   Lifespan development stages

Various findings suggest that the family psychological aspects are the major influencing contributors to self-esteem and personality development. Searcy (1988) states that the relationship between parent and child lays the foundation for self-regard and begins in their early interaction during infancy. Searcy (1988) identifies early adolescence, in general, as the time when a child's self-esteem is at its lowest due to self recognition of his or her own imperfections. However, it is modifiable (Schaefer, 1994). Adolescent self-esteem increases with parental support, parental reflected appraisal, parent-adolescent communication, parental interest in the child's activities, and the importance and quality of the parental relationship with the adolescent (Richards, Gitelson, Petersen & Hurtig, 1991). Dusek, Carter, & Levy (1989) state that it is not just the developmental stage but the manner in which the infant, child, adolescent, and adult resolve the developmental crisis at each stage that determine self-esteem development. They suggest that differences between male and female self-esteem scores are due to males and females resolving the developmental crisis differentially.

Considerably less attention appears to have been paid to the self-esteem relationship among adults. The extent to which self-esteem can be raised and the overall malleability or changeability of self-esteem, particularly in adults, are still unresolved issues (Schaefer, 1994). Little attempt has been made to understand systematically the determinants of self-esteem and which of these determinants might be altered to yield the greatest change in adult self-esteem and which change strategies should be used. Much of the research on changing self-esteem of adults has been conducted in clinical or educational settings (Schaefer, 1994). According to Branden (1969, 1994; Reasoner, 1994), the focus of change in terms of self-esteem enhancement should not be directly focused on the construct self-esteem. An enhanced self-esteem is the consequence, a product of internally generated practices and attitudes which are the source of healthy self-esteem (Battle, 1992; Branden, 1994; Reasoner, 1994). Rothmann and Sieberhagen (1997) indicate that various forms of skills training and particularly methods directed at facilitating self-actualisation are instrumental in stimulating an internal locus of control, autonomy, and self-regard. If skills in self-reflection (such as meditation and self-analysis), problem solving, conflict management, communication and emotionally intelligent and assertive behaviour are learned, the individual's sense of self-regard is enhanced as the individual experiences more autonomy and internal control in situations.

According to Maslow (1970), people who have had their love, acceptance and belonging needs gratified from childhood, gain a feeling of self-esteem, and they may even become self-actualising adults who are no longer dependent on the continual love and acceptance of other people. As self-actualising adults, they maintain their feelings of self-esteem even when scorned, rejected, and dismissed by others.

3.4   THEORETICAL INTEGRATION

A multi-dimensional approach to the study of the construct self-esteem is proposed. According to the multi-dimensional theory of the construct self-esteem, one's total self-esteem is a composite sum of separate self-evaluations in many specific areas of performance (Sullivan & Guglielmo, 1985). Although many definitions of the construct self-esteem exist, a common thread seems to run through the conventional definitions, namely that self-esteem is generally regarded as the evaluative dimension of the self-concept and includes an evaluation of the cognitive, affective and social aspects of the self.

Based on the aforegoing literature review, self-esteem is defined for the purpose of this research as a socially constructed emotion rooted in the four ideas of acceptance, evaluation, comparison, and efficacy (Hewitt, 2002; Battle, 1992). The self is a pervasive, socially embedded cognitive-affective system. People's perception of the social world and their experiences of cultural circumstances engender individual mood responses which involve self-esteem. The need to belong is fundamental to human motivation and real, potential, or imagined changes in one's belongingness status will produce emotional responses, with positive affect linked to increases in belongingness and negative affect linked to decreases in it. Self-esteem is a measure of the individual's psychological functioning as a member of a particular social group and the sense of belongingness or acceptance plays an important role in self-evaluations and feelings about oneself (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hewitt, 2002).

Battle's (1992) model of self-esteem will apply to this research as the principles underlying the measurement of self-esteem allows the study of the construct self-esteem within the workplace context. Self-esteem is regarded as a culturally relevant measure of well-being as it is a sign of a positive and integral sense of self, of a healthy personal and social identity. In a Western society that so often sets individual and community against one another and that provides conflicting criteria for success and happiness, self-esteem measures the success of individual efforts to come to grips with these cultural exigencies. Good self-esteem is indicative of a positive and integral personal and social identity, that is, a sense that one is located securely in the social world, competent to meet its challenges, ready to participate in life with others, and able to balance social demands and personal desires (Hewitt, 1989; Scheff, 1990). Figure 3.3 provides an overview of the basic principles underlying the dimensions of the construct self-esteem that will be studied in the context of this research.
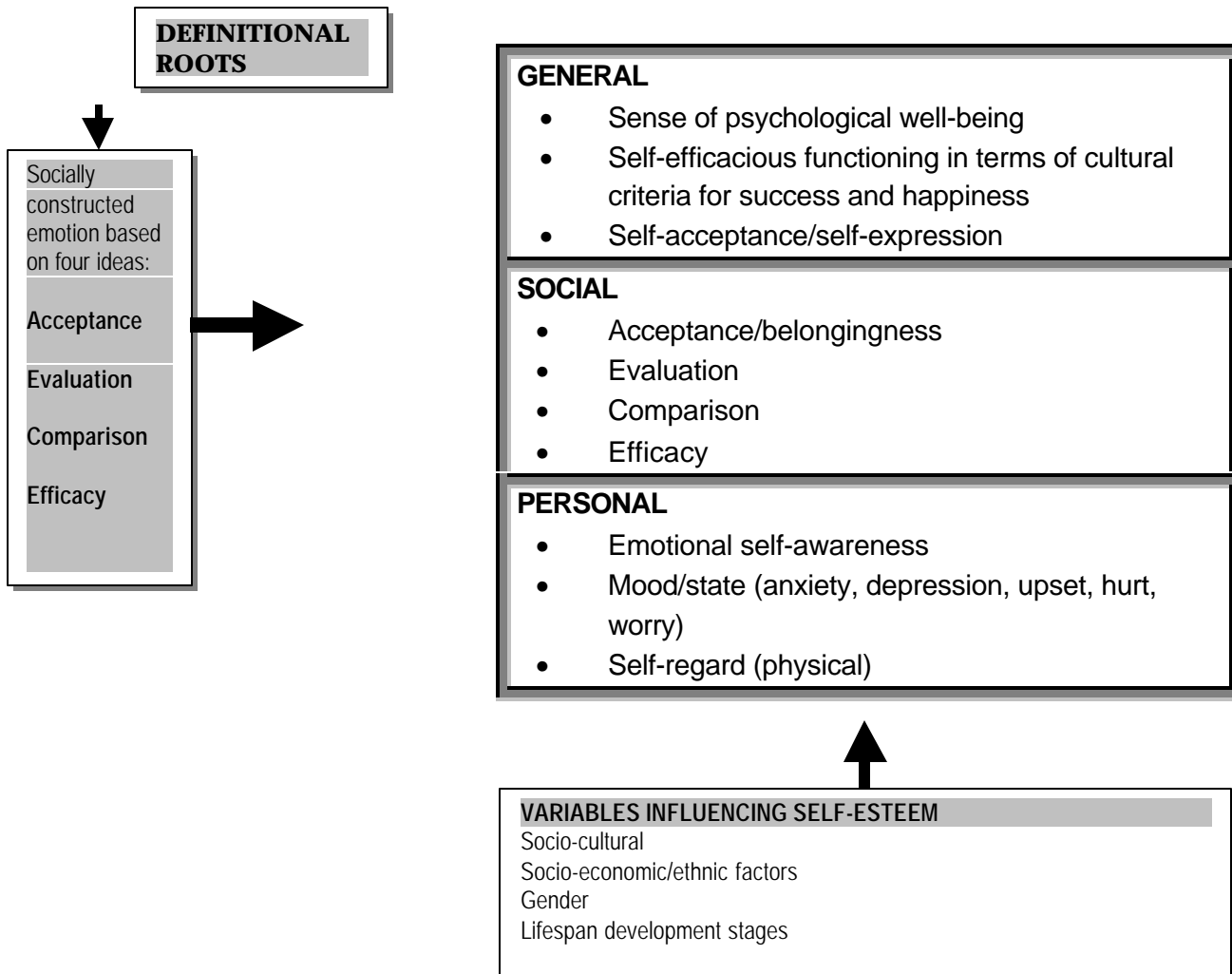
DIMENSIONS OF SELF-ESTEEM

DEFINITIONAL ROOTS

Socially constructed emotion based on four ideas:

Acceptance

Evaluation

Comparison

Efficacy

GENERAL
- Sense of psychological well-being
- Self-efficacious functioning in terms of cultural criteria for success and happiness
- Self-acceptance/self-expression

SOCIAL
- Acceptance/belongingness
- Evaluation
- Comparison
- Efficacy

PERSONAL
- Emotional self-awareness
- Mood/state (anxiety, depression, upset, hurt, worry)
- Self-regard (physical)

VARIABLES INFLUENCING SELF-ESTEEM
Socio-cultural
Socio-economic/ethnic factors
Gender
Lifespan development stages

Figure 3.3   An integrated model of self-esteem (based on Battle, 1992 and Hewitt, 2002)

3.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADER DEVELOPMENT

Branden (1997) and Sethi (1997) describe self-esteem as an attribute that is imperative for adaptiveness to an increasingly complex, challenging, and competitive world. According to them, we have reached a moment in history when self-esteem, which has always been a supremely important psychological need, has become an urgent economic need.

In a global economy that is characterised by rapid change, accelerating scientific and technological breakthroughs and an unprecedented level of competitiveness, a

demand for higher levels of education and training is created. These new developments also create new demands on our psychological resources. Specifically, these developments demand a greater capacity for innovation, self-management, personal responsibility and self-direction at all levels of a business enterprise (Branden, 1997; Sethi, 1997).

In addition, as Branden (1997) states, just as a higher level of knowledge and skill among all those who participate is required, organisations and their leaders also need a higher level of independence, self-reliance, self-trust, and the capacity to exercise initiative, thus, healthy self-esteem. In this regard, Branden (1997) views healthy self-esteem as an important leadership trait. The personality style and traits, consciousness (state of self-awareness), self-efficacy and self-esteem affect virtually every aspect of their organisation. Because leaders (or managers) are in positions of being looked up to as role models, their smallest bits of behaviour are noted and absorbed by those around them, though not necessarily consciously, and are reflected throughout the entire organisation by those they influence.

The higher the self-esteem of a leader, the more likely it is that he or she can inspire the best in others. A mind that does not trust itself cannot inspire greatness in the minds of colleagues and followers. Neither can leaders inspire others if their primary need is to prove themselves right and others wrong. According to Branden (1997) and Sethi (1997), the first step for leaders who wish to create high self-esteem, high-performance organisations is to work on themselves: on raising their own level of self-efficacy, consciousness, self-responsibility, self-acceptance, self-assertiveness, personal integrity, and purposefulness.

A study conducted by Marcic, Aiuppa, and Watson (1989) indicates self-esteem as an important self-actualising characteristic and attitude of managers and supervisors. Brockner and Guare (1983) describe self-esteem as a particularly important personality variable in terms of job satisfaction. Research conducted by Greenhaus and Badin (1974), Inkson (1978) and Korman (1967) suggests that people with low self-esteem are less apt to choose jobs that suit their needs and abilities than employees with high self-esteem. Those low in self-esteem do not regularly exhibit the intuitively expected positive correlation between work performance and satisfaction, whereas persons with high self-esteem do. Peer interaction may have affected job performance and job strain for individuals low in self-esteem. A study conducted by Gecas and Seff (1990) reports that when work is a central aspect of

men's self-concept, occupational variables (occupational prestige, control at work) are more strongly related to self-esteem than when they are not.

Based on the suggestions of Kinicki and Kreitner (2003), the following implications for leader development are proposed:

- Leaders should be encouraged to nurture self-esteem, both in themselves and others. The potentially beneficial consequences of leader positive self-esteem is increased leader effectiveness. Leaders who experience low self-esteem may have a difficult time building good relationships with followers and winning their trust.

- Self-esteem is related to positive or negative mood/emotion states, which may potentially influence the mood/emotion capabilities inherent in emotional intelligence. Self-esteem includes internal, private feelings and self-consciousness that influence emotionally healthy functioning in the social context (George, 2000). Emotional intelligence describes the ability to effectively join emotions and reasoning, using positive emotions to facilitate reasoning and reasoning intelligently about emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Leaders experiencing low self-esteem should be encouraged and taught to accurately and appropriately express their emotions to help them form a realistic self-concept and self-image.

- Multi-rater assessments should take into consideration the influence of self-esteem in self-evaluations and the effect of others' feedback on the affective state of the individual. Counseling and coaching should accompany such endeavours to ensure a realistic interpretation self-other evaluations. Leaders with low self-esteem need an abundance of constructive pointers and balanced, positive feedback.

- Leaders should be provided with challenging opportunities to prove themselves in order to increase their sense of efficacious functioning in their leadership roles. Small successes should be rewarded as stepping stones to a stronger self-image and greater mastery of leader competencies.

- Systematic self-management and emotional competency training should involve enhancement of self-efficacy expectations and the identification of self-esteem issues that inhibit effective emotional functioning. Training and development should provide for guided experiences, mentoring, multi-rater feedback, counseling and role modeling.

3.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR INDUSTRIAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Self-esteem, being a socially constructed emotion grounded in mood, may be particularly difficult for leaders to manage explicitly because it reflects self-views and self-evaluations embedded in cultural norms. However, the potential for leaders with high interpersonal sensitivity to systematically influence employees' identity levels and aspects of self-identities in employees does exist (Lord et al., 1999). Although self-esteem is a desirable state because of what it signifies about personal well-being, it is not clear that the most effective way to achieve good self-esteem is through specific programmes to promote it. The fundamental mistake of industrial and organisational psychologists is not to emphasise the importance of self-esteem, but to imagine that self-esteem is itself the goal to be pursued. Conditions that promote optimal human functioning also promote self-esteem, and these fundamental conditions are the ones worth pursuing: acceptance within a social fold, a sense of security, cultural competence, and the capacity to reconcile personal goals and social expectations (Hewitt, 2002).

Brockner and Guare (1983) describe self-esteem as a particularly important personality variable in terms of job satisfaction. Research conducted by Greenhaus and Badin (1974), Inkson (1978) and Korman (1966, 1967) suggests that people with low self-esteem are less apt to choose jobs that suit their needs and abilities than do employees with high self-esteem. Those low in self-esteem do not regularly exhibit the intuitively expected positive correlation between work performance and satisfaction, whereas persons high in self-esteem do. Peer interaction may have affected job performance and caused job strain for individuals low in self-esteem.

Industrial and organisational psychologists can encourage discourse about the experience of self-esteem within the workplace. Hewitt (2002) views this practice as positive as it may help foster happier, more fully competent, creative human beings. Talk about self-esteem is itself to some degree healthful and restorative, given the particular burdens that Western organisational cultures impose on individuals. Discourse and practices that encourage people to explore the nature and importance of the social bond and affective link they have with others in the workplace advance the quest for a better social world. People in the workplace may learn how to start articulating a cultural vision of a satisfying personal life that runs explicitly counter to the dominant competitive individualism. A vision that proposes an alternative world in

which the individual has a right to an assured place, evaluations are not the sole basis of positive self-feeling, social comparison is subdued, and all have the capacity for efficacious action and the right to positive self-regard.

3.7 EVALUATION

An increased interest in the identification, measurement, enhancement and sustainment of positive levels of self-esteem in the workplace is indicated by the literature (Branden, 1994, 1997; Khalsa, 1990). It appears that an increase in positive beliefs, attributes, thoughts, attitudes, self-regulation and emotional response behaviour may lead to an enhanced self-esteem (Battle, 1992; Branden, 1994; Gist, 1989; Gist & Mitchel, 1992).

Although the various definitions of self-esteem provided by the literature did not provide a single definition of self-esteem, a common thread seems to be the emphasis on the cognitive, affective and social aspects of self-esteem. The research of Battle (1992), Reasoner (1994) and Schaefer (1994) indicates that a multi-dimensional approach to the measurement of self-esteem should ideally be followed. The multi-dimensional approach to self-esteem indicates that global self-esteem includes several functioning subsystems of the self as a whole (that is, affective, cognitive and social/interpersonal aspects of efficacious functioning) within the socio-cultural domain in which it manifests itself.

Considerably less attention appears to have been paid to the self-esteem relationship among adults, particularly in organisational context. The extent to which self-esteem can be raised and the overall malleability or changeability of self-esteem, particularly in adults, are still unresolved issues (Schaefer, 1994). Little attempt has been made to understand systematically the determinants of self-esteem and which of these determinants might be altered to yield the greatest change in adult self-esteem and which change strategies should be used. Much of the research on changing the self-esteem of adults has been conducted in clinical or educational settings (Schaefer, 1994). In conclusion, the proposed definition of self-esteem attempts to make a contribution to the study of self-esteem as a socially constructed emotion and a measure of individuals' psychological functioning as members of a particular social group. This approach allows for the study of self-esteem in an organisational context.

3.8   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has explored the construct self-esteem and the related theoretical models. The variables influencing the development of self-esteem and the implications for leader development and Industrial and Organisational Psychology have been discussed. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the theoretical foundations of the construct self-esteem, highlighting the contributions and limitations as relevant to this research.

Part of the first research aim has now been attained, namely to conceptualise the construct self-esteem from a theoretical perspective and to explain the construct by means of a theoretical model.

Chapter 4 discusses the construct emotional competence with the aim of addressing the first research question regarding the construct emotional competence, namely how the construct emotional competence is conceptualised and explained by theoretical models in the literature.