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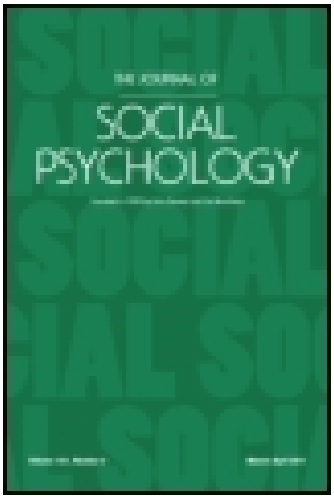

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When Membership Gives Strength to Act: Inclusion of the Group Into the Self and Feeling of Personal Agency

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ABSTRACT. Identity fusion theory suggests that merging groups into one's personal identity should result in heightened levels of group agency. Research on the self-expansion model complementarily indicates that including others into the self is linked to a greater feeling of self-efficacy. Across three correlational studies, we examined whether personal and group identity fusion is associated with stronger feelings of personal agency, and we propose that relatively stable feelings of clarity of self-concept would mediate this association. Individuals strongly fused with a country (Studies 1–3) and family (Study 2) exhibited greater feelings of agency and goal-adherence, and self-concept clarity emerged as a significant mediator of this association when controlling for group identification measures.

Keywords: agency, group membership, self-concept, self-expansion, identity fusion

INDIVIDUALS' SELF-CONCEPTS ARE MULTIFACETED and malleable (e.g., Linville, 1985; Markus & Wurf, 1987), and often are partially defined in terms of close relationships (e.g., Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000) and group memberships (e.g., Hogg, 2003). When individuals' self-concepts strongly overlap with social groups, these individuals are more willing to engage in actions on behalf of the group members (Bilewicz & Wójcik, 2010; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995; Klandermans, 2002). Moreover, as individuals have novel experiences, form new relationships, and/or perceive themselves as part of a larger collective unit, their self-concept grows (Mashek, Cannaday, & Tangney, 2007; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014a). Although, intuitively, defining oneself in terms of social relationships could run the risk of identity loss, studies show that this growing sense of collective or group identity can actually strengthen the personal and agentic self (e.g., Baray, Postmes, & Jetten, 2009; Sethi & Seligman, 1993, 1994). That is, the inclusion

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of the group in the self does not necessarily lead to a loss of the personal self, but rather the merging of multiple identities (e.g., personal identity with group identity) expands the self in a meaningful way. This expansion of the self in turn strengthens the more agentic aspects of the self and feelings of self-efficacy (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013a; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013b). As most evidence for the link between the inclusion of groups into the self and greater agentic-related attitudes is indirect, in the current research we examine whether the inclusion of social groups into the self-concept is associated with greater agentic self-beliefs. Furthermore, we propose a mechanism underlying this association; specifically, we suggest that self-concept clarity mediates the association between self-group fusion and personal agency.

THE AGENTIC SELF

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According to Bandura (2006), individuals possess the agentic ability "to influence intentionally one's functioning and circumstances" (p. 164). In this view, personal agency is characterized by perceiving oneself as able to construct appropriate courses of actions, and as an efficient, resourceful individual able to influence social and physical environments. This perceived self-efficacy is related to forethought (Bandura, 2006), and influences human behavior by its impact on goals, aspirations, and expectation (Bandura, 2000), such that individuals high in goal-adherence are future-directed, set themselves clear goals that motivate their efforts, and are more persistent in pursuing them. Agentic self-directed acts also influence people's perception of the person. For example, individuals who actively decided to act for a common cause are perceived as more heroic than passive ones (Cisłak & Szymków, 2013).

Perhaps due to the ubiquity of personal agency, different models for agency have been developed to frame individuals' perception of voluntary actions (Lachowicz-Tabaczek & Śniecińska, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Synofzik, Vosgerau, & Newen, 2008; Tsakiris & Haggard, 2005; Wegner, 2005). On the one hand, the need for autonomy is considered crucial for developing a sense of agency, as autonomous actions are guided by a strong sense of personal empowerment and autonomy is needed for self-determination (Little, Snyder, & Wehmeyer, 2006). On the other hand, a greater feeling of agency can be achieved by engaging in self-expansion with relational partners (e.g., Aron & Aron, 1996; Bandura, 1982; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014a). Moreover, self-identities (or "me" identifications that follow the incorporation of the meanings and expectations associated with a relevant categorization into the self) are indeed related to acting and engaging in various types of behaviors, and this association is mediated by behavioral intention (Rise, Sheeran, & Hukkelberg, 2010).

According to the self-expansion model, individuals are motivated to increase their sense of personal agency by expanding their sense of self through the acquisition of new perspectives and identities (Aron, Lewandowski, Mashek, & Aron, 2013). One such way to achieve self-expansion is by forming social relationships that allow the individual to expand the self-concept by including others (Aron et al., 2004). By expanding the self, individuals feel more positively about the self and have more resources upon which to draw, thereby enhancing feelings of self-efficacy (Aron et al., 2013; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014a). For example, Aron and colleagues found that falling in love with a romantic partner increases self-concept size and self-efficacy (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995), although they did not directly examine whether the expansion of the self predicted self-efficacy. Recently this prediction has been tested directly in correlational and experimental

studies, and results suggest that self-expansion is positively linked to self-efficacy (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013a), likelihood of accomplishing goals (Xu, Floyd, Westmaas, & Aron, 2010), and multiple measures of approach motivation (Mattingly, McIntyre, & Lewandowski, 2012). Thus, preliminary evidence supports the possibility that including social groups in the self should increase personal agency and self-efficacy (cf. Aron & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2001; Wright, Aron, & Tropp, 2002).

IDENTITY FUSION AND AGENCY

Beyond a relational context, recent research has extended the self-expansion model to other social and parasocial entities. For example, more religious people report greater self–other overlap with God, and believers' relationships with God parallel close relationships with significant others (Hodgesa, Sharp, Gibson, & Tipsord, 2013). Individuals also report self–other overlap with and a greater sense of self-expansion from parasocial relationships with fictional characters such as television characters (Shedlosky-Shoemaker, Costabile, & Arkin, 2014). Outside of relationship domains, it has been established that self-expansion is related to novel and interesting activities (2014b; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013b).

Additionally, research on personal and group identity fusion further supports the possibility that including the group in the self should increase feelings of agency and self-efficacy. The theory of personal and social identity fusion is a fairly recent development, although theorizing about the union between oneself and others has intellectual predecessors at the relational and groups level (Swann, Gómez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009). The construct of personal and group identity fusion is related to the research on inclusion of social entities into the self, as identity fusion was initially measured (e.g., Besta, Kaźmierczak, & Błażek, 2013; Swann et al., 2009) by utilizing a modified version (Schubert & Otten, 2002) of the pictorial Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992; also see previous research on inclusion of groups into the self using pictorial measures in Mashek et al., 2007; and Tropp & Wright, 2001).

Identity fusion theory proposes that fusion is a state in which personal and social identities overlap and merge to create a synergistic self. Fused people have a powerful, visceral feeling of oneness with the group, and for them the self–other barrier is blurred and the group comes to be regarded as functionally equivalent with the personal self (Gómez et al., 2011). Researchers studying identity fusion highlight its distinctness from group identification that is based on the classic social identity theory. Swann and colleagues pointed out that "researchers typically understand identification to reflect people's feelings of allegiance to the collective" (Swann, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012, p. 442)., Although it relies on research on group identification, identity fusion theory integrates most of the revisions that were proposed to the classical social identity theory and self-categorization theory. That is, for example, identity fusion researchers discussed assumptions about the "functional antagonism principle" (that is a hydraulic link between the social and personal self), and about "depersonalization" when social-identity is salient (for a full discussion, see Swann et al., 2012).

Morover, based on distinctions proposed by Brewer and Gardner (1996) between collective and relational groups, researchers proposed that highly fused people have a relational orientation to the group, similar to that which occurs during self-expansion (Aron et al., 2013). That is, fused individuals' adherence to the group is based on personal connections and relationships

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with specific group members, and not on perception of similarity to the prototypical member of the group (as is the case in collective groups; see Gómez et al., 2011). Studies show that identity fusion is indeed related to perceiving the social group as family-like and instances of fusion are particularly common among members of relational groups, wherein group members have extremely close personal relationships with one another (e.g., family members, close friends). Nevertheless, people may also become fused with collective groups (e.g., country, political party; for an overview, see Swann et al., 2014). This was also recently supported by studies that show the tendency of fused people to project familial ties common in smaller groups onto the extended groups (i.e., country), and this treatment of the large group as family-like enhances willingness to fight and die for their members (Swann et al., 2014).

Empirical support for this distinction between fusion and identification comes also from results of the studies that show how measures of identity fusion are linked to the endorsement of radical behavior while controlling for group identification. Researchers have recently provided evidence that identity fusion (relative to group identification) is a stronger predictor of the tendency for people to protect in-group members and to endorse extreme pro-group behavior (Swann, Gómez, Dovidio, Hart, & Jetten, 2010; Swann, Gómez, Huici, Morales, & Hixon, 2010). Identity fusion is also associated with helping in-groups (Swann et al., 2010) and with perceived quality of life in a city (Jaśkiewicz & Besta, 2014).

Identity fusion theory also differs from other models regarding the motivation driving radical actions. As Swann and colleagues (2012) stated, previous approaches highlight the compensatory nature of radicalization of pro-group behaviors and their relation to uncertainty reduction (Hogg, 2000, 2009; McGregor, Nash, Mann, & Phills, 2010), death anxiety (Cohen, Ogilvie, Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2005), or restoration of meaning (Heine, Proulx, & Vohs, 2006), whereas fusion researchers provided evidence that the feeling of group agency is related to overlapping identities and mediates the fusion–attitude extremity relationship. That is, radicalization of attitudes in this view is not merely a reaction to threats to self but reflects certainty and feeling of group-control (Swann et al., 2012). Exploring the relationship between identity fusion and group agency, Swann and colleagues activated feelings of agency via physical exercise and found that physiological arousal is related to pro-group activities for fused (vs. non-fused) individuals, and feeling of group agency mediated this relationship (Swann, Gómez, Huici, et al., 2010, Study 3 & 4). Moreover, studies showed that including one's group into the self indeed is positively associated with a stronger feeling of group agency and group control (Gómez et al., 2011; Swann et al., 2010). In this sense, the overlap between personal and social identities among highly fused people creates synergy that could be an additional motivational force that influences agentic action.

SELF-CONCEPT CLARITY

Alongside the self-expansion motivation, there is a motivation to integrate acquired experiences and to build a coherent and clear self-concept (Aron & Aron, 1996). In this context, we define self-concept clarity as the extent to which the contents of one's self-beliefs are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable (Campbell, 1990). Striving for self-concept clarity is beneficial, because individuals who have clear self-concepts tend to report greater self-esteem (Campbell et al., 1996), more meaning in life (Błażek & Besta, 2012), greater

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psychological well-being (e.g. Bigler, Neimeyer, & Brown, 2001), greater satisfaction with life (Pilarska, 2014), less negative affect (Lee-Flynn, Pomaki, DeLongis, Biesanz, & Puterman, 2011; Pilarska, 2014), and less anxiety and depression (Bigler et al., 2001). From different theoretical perspectives, studies show that certainty of the self-concept (which positively relates to self-concept clarity) is a predictor of the self-verification motivation, that is, people engage in verification of their self-view especially when it is held with high certainty (Swann & Schroeder, 1995). Additionally, and particularly relevant to the current studies, having clear knowledge about oneself is important in developing a sense of agency (Little et al., 2006).

As self-concept clarity is associated with many adaptive traits such as goal-adherence, self-esteem, and lower anxiety level, we further predict that self-concept clarity will mediate the association between identity fusion and feelings of personal agency. We base this prediction on research showing that when social phenomena (e.g., one's social group) are incorporated and integrated into the self, group and self construals become cognitively interconnected and potentially interchangeable. For example, previous studies on self-anchoring (Otten, 2002) and on the association between self- and group-schema (Smith, 2002) show that characteristics descriptive of both oneself and in-group members are easily accessible and vivid, and are interconnected in memory networks. When cognitive representations of the group and the self are interconnected, activation of one of the concepts primes the activation of the other. Therefore, individuals' self-views after self-expansion should be especially clear and vivid when the personal self is integrated and overlaps with other people or groups included in the self. This could result in easier access to and more certainty of the knowledge structure, which is composed of one's self-beliefs and characteristics.

This proposed positive association between fusion and self-concept clarity is also consistent with the theoretical assumptions underlying the fusion approach (Swann et al., 2012). Overlap between personal-related and group-related characteristics should, theoretically, result in a more coherent, clear, and lucid picture of oneself. That is, clarity about one's traits and characteristics born from strict integration of one's group into the self-perception, as well as overlap between self-construals and group norms and values, might be responsible for the possibility that fused people have an elevated sense of agency and control. Hence, individuals do not merely passively follow the action of others but they are disposed to initiate pro-group actions (as the agentic self coexists with a strong attachment to the group).

Recent studies support this possibility. For example, in the area of close relationships, the inclusion of a romantic partner into the self is related to the clarity of the characteristics within the self-concept (Lewandowski, Nardone, & Raines, 2010). Additionally, the dissolution of a self-expanding relationship (e.g., one with high levels of self–other overlap) impairs the content and clarity of the self-concept (Lewandowski, Aron, Bassis, & Kunak, 2006; Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2010). Furthermore, research beyond the relationship domain (specifically, in the workplace) reveals that losing a self-expanding job results in reduced self-concept clarity (McIntyre, Mattingly, Lewandowski, & Simpson, 2014).

CURRENT STUDIES

In the current studies, we extended previous research on the association between identity fusion and group agency and tested the prediction that including one's group in the self should increase

feelings of personal agency (Wright et al., 2002) by directly exploring if identity fusion is related not only to group agency but to feelings of personal agency and goal-adherence as well. Because only indirect indicators of agency (i.e., physiological arousal) and group agency scales were used in previous research (e.g., Swann et al., 2010), in the current studies we used more direct measures of personal agency (i.e., self-report measures). That is, rather than focus on the perceived control of the group behavior, as has been done in previous research (e.g., Swann et al., 2010; item from group agency scale: "I feel responsible for what happens to the group"), we concentrated solely on the personal agency related to the individual's actions. Additionally, as Bandura (2006) noted that agency is multidimensional (e.g., contains perceptions of one's ability to construct courses of action, exert forethought, and plan and execute goals), in current studies we intentionally chose a multi-measure approach for assessing agency, using different scales of agency and goal-adherence. In doing so, we more thoroughly examined the associations between identity fusion and personal agency.

Moreover, we propose the mechanism by which inclusion of the group into the self (e.g., high identity fusion) influences personal agency. The main tenet of identity fusion theory is that identity of highly fused people is not derived from and defined wholly at the group level, leaving little room for personal autonomy, but rather that personal and social identities combine synergistically, giving additional motivational strength in pursuing one's goals (Swann et al., 2012).

Based on studies demonstrating a link between self- and group-schema (Otten, 2002; Smith, 2002), we also posited that personal and group identity fusion would be related to relatively stable self-concept (i.e., to higher self-concept clarity); that is, individuals whose self-views overlap with their group identities would be more clear and confident when it comes to knowing who they are and what they want to do in life.

STUDY 1
METHOD

Participants

Psychology undergraduates in Poland participated in this study in exchange for course credits and they were asked to invite another opposite sex student from a different field of study. Overall, 365 individuals (197 women) with an average age of 21.81 years ($SD = 4.46$) responded to all of the questionnaires.

Materials and Procedure

Study 1 was conducted over the Internet, as a part of bigger survey. After a short introduction, participants were asked to answer a set of questionnaires including:

Identity fusion. A Polish adaptation of the seven-item verbal identity fusion scale by Gomez and colleagues (Besta, Gómez, & Vázquez, 2014; Gómez et al., 2011) was used with items referring to country as an in-group (0 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). Sample items include:

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"I feel immersed in my country," "My country is me," and "I am strong because of my country" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$).

Group identification. Participants then completed a modified version of Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item group identification scale with one's country as a reference group (0 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). Sample items include: "I am very interested in what citizens of others countries think about my country," and "If a story in the media criticized my country, I would feel embarrassed" ($\alpha = .88$).

Self-concept clarity. Next, participants completed a Polish 20-item Self-Concept Clarity Scale based on a measure by Campbell et al. (1996). Responses were made on a 7-point scale (0 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). A sample item is "In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am" ($\alpha = .91$).

Personal agency. Finally, as a measure of agentic self-description, participants completed 10 items based on Bem's (1974) stereotypical masculinity scale. Participants made their responses on a 5-point scale (1 = *definitely not me*, 5 = *definitely me*) the degree to which they are described by various adjectives (e.g., assertive, efficient, courageous, competing) ($\alpha = .81$). We were especially interested in using this modified version of the masculinity scale as a proxy for agency because it contained items and characteristics related to action-orientation and self-efficacy. Thus, although the scale was originally designed to measure stereotypical gender roles proscribed to men, the selected items describe core elements of agency, per Bandura's (2001, 2006) definition (e.g., the ability to give shape to appropriate courses of action, being future-directed).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As hypothesized, identity fusion was significantly positively related to feelings of personal agency and self-concept clarity, and these correlations remained significant when controlling for group identification (Table 1). Group identification, on the other hand, was only marginally negatively related to agency, when controlling for identity fusion (Table 1). Identity fusion and group identification were significantly correlated, $r = .69$, $p < .001$.

To test whether the association between identity fusion and personal agency was mediated by self-concept clarity, we conducted a mediational analysis where identity fusion was the predictor,

TABLE 1
Pearson and Partial Correlations in Study 1; $n = 365$

	Identity fusion (in parentheses controlling for identification)	*Group identification (in parentheses controlling for identity fusion)*
Self-concept clarity	.14** (.19***)	−.01 (−.14*)
Agency	.15** (.18***)	.03 (−.10^{t})

$^{t}p < .10$. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$. Correlation between self-concept clarity and agency $r(363) = .47$; $p < .001$.

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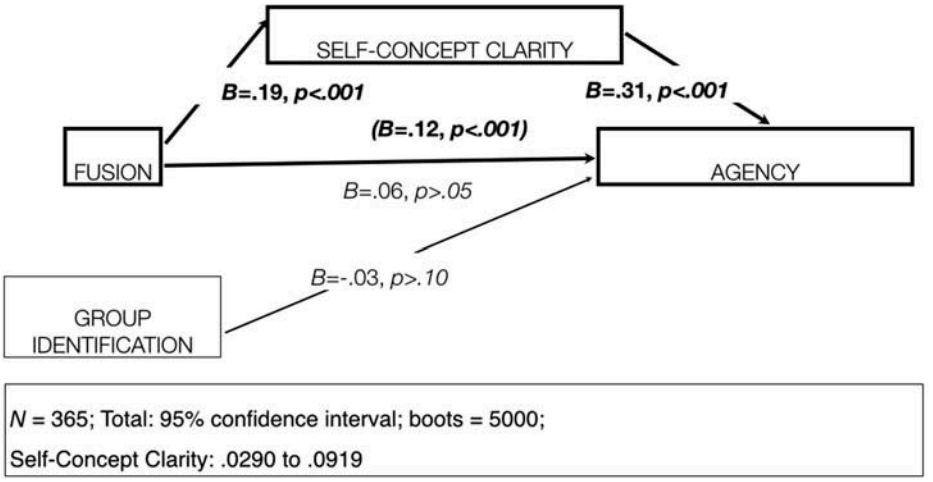

FIGURE 1 Mediation analyses based on bootstrapping procedure identity fusion as the predictor and self-concept clarity as the mediator in Study 1.

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agentic masculinity was the dependent variable, and self-concept clarity was the mediating variable, controlling for group identification. We followed Preacher and Hayes' (2008) bootstrapping procedure. As shown in Figure 1, the mediation was significant, as the confidence interval for the indirect effect did not contain zero. That is, self-concept clarity was a significant mediator of the relationship between identity fusion and agentic masculinity. Similar mediation analyses conducted with group identification as the predictor rather than identity fusion were nonsignificant, providing further support for our hypothesized model (and providing further empirical evidence for the distinction between identity fusion and group identification).

Study 1 provides preliminary evidence confirming our postulate that inclusion of the social group into the self is associated with personal agency. Specifically, these results show that identity fusion in the context of one's country is related to personal agency, and self-concept clarity mediates this relationship.

One limitation of Study 1 is the use of the modified masculinity scale to assess agentic self-descriptions. It is possible that these items, though related to agency, did not adequately assess agentic beliefs. Additionally, it is possible that this single measure of agency correlates with identity fusion in a unique way that other measures of agency would not. Therefore, in Study 2, we included a different measure of agentic characteristics that was intentionally designed to more directly measure personal agency. Study 1 was additionally limited in that it explored only one group context (i.e., self-expansion with national group/inclusion of one's country into the self). Thus, in Study 2, we explored whether the relationship between identity fusion and personal agency, as well as the mediating effect of self-concept clarity, would also be significant in the case of different social groups to which individuals tend to demonstrate strong adherence, namely family and religious community. As in Study 1, we predicted that identity fusion (but not group identification) would be associated with personal agency, and this association would be mediated by self-concept clarity.

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STUDY 2
METHOD

Participants

Polish psychology students were asked to invite their adult family members to answer a set of questionnaires for course credits. A total of 138 participants were involved in this study (69 women) with a mean age of 26.88 ($SD = 4.76$).

Materials and Procedure

Identity fusion and group identification. The main purpose of this study was to replicate previous results in a different group context. Thus, we used the same identity fusion and group identification scales as in Study 1, but instead with three reference groups: country ($\alpha = .93$ for fusion and .91 for identification), family ($\alpha = .92$ for fusion and .84 for identification), and religious group ($\alpha = .96$ for fusion and .93 for identification).

Self-concept clarity. Participants completed the 12-item measure of self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996) ($\alpha = .91$).

Personal agency. To measure personal agency, we employed a 15-item scale by Wojciszke and Szlendak (2010). This scale is based on two dimensions of interpersonal attitudes: agency and communion (Wojciszke, Abele, & Baryla, 2009; see also Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008, for corresponding research on warmth and competence). For assessing personal agency we only used the agency subscale of this measure. Participants decide to what degree they are described by the listed adjectives (e.g., self-confident, efficient, resourceful) using a 7-point scale (1 = *definitely do not describe me*, 7 = *definitely describe me*; $\alpha = .93$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As predicted, identity fusion was significantly positively related to feelings of personal agency and self-concept clarity when controlling for group identification (Table 2). Identity fusion and group identification were intercorrelated in all contexts: country ($r = .71$, $p < .001$), family ($r = .66$, $p < .001$), and religious group ($r = .88$, $p < .001$).

As shown in Figure 2, self-concept clarity significantly mediated the association between fusion with country and personal agency, when controlling for group identification, thus replicating Study 1. As shown in Figure 3, self-concept clarity also significantly mediated the association between fusion with family and personal agency, again controlling for group identification. As in Study 1, alternate mediation analyses conducted with group identification as the predictor, while controlling for identity fusion, were nonsignificant.

Notably, for the religious group context, the association between identity fusion and personal agency was not mediated by self-concept clarity. In fact, a zero-order correlation revealed that the link between fusion with religious group and personal agency was virtually nonexistent ($r = .02$, $p = .81$). The lack of association between fusion with religious group and personal agency is potentially attributed to low scores on identity fusion ($M = 1.71$). That is, the very small amount of overlap between religious group and personal identity suggests that religious identification

TABLE 2
Pearson and Partial Correlations in Study 2; $n = 138$

	Family context		*Country context*	
	Identity fusion (in parentheses controlling for Identification)	*Group identification (in parentheses controlling for identity fusion)*	*Identity fusion (in parentheses controlling for identification)*	*Group identification (in parentheses controlling for identity fusion)*
Self-concept clarity	$.14^{t}$ ($.22^{**}$)	$-.04$ ($-.17^{*}$)	.13 ($.19^{*}$)	$-.01$ ($-.14^{t}$)
Agency	$.22^{**}$ ($.24^{**}$)	.07 ($-.11$)	.14 ($.17^{t}$)	.03 ($-.10$)

$^{t}p < .10$. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$. Correlation between self-concept clarity and agency $r(136) = .39$; $p < .001$.

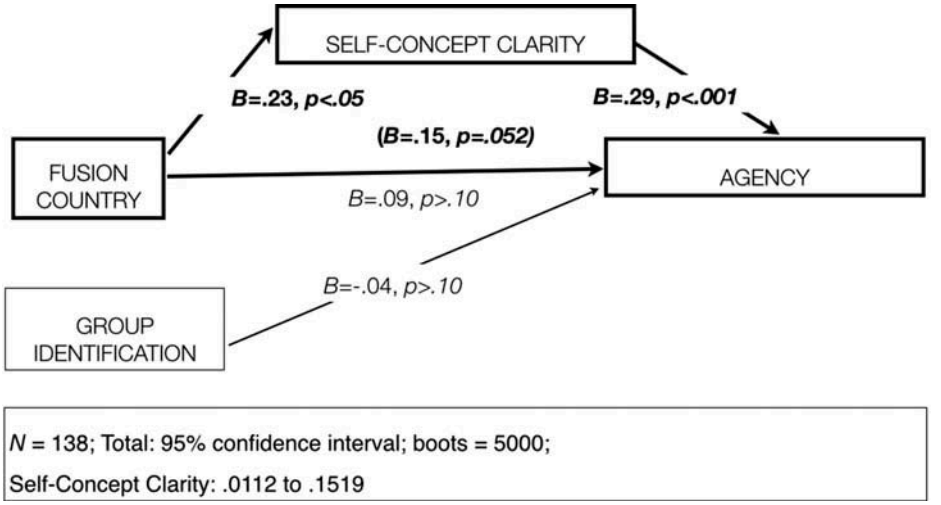

FIGURE 2 Mediation analyses based on bootstrapping procedure identity fusion as the predictor and self-concept clarity as the mediator in country context in Study 2.

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was not an important self-schema among study participants, and furthermore, personal agency was not contingent on identification with a religious group.

Study 2 extended previous findings to the inclusion of other groups to the self. However, in the first two studies, we controlled for only one measure of group identification. It is possible that group identification is associated with personal agency, but this specific measure does not adequately assess these overlapping aspects of group identification and agency. Thus, in Study 3, we included three separate scales of group identification to explore whether the relationships and mediations observed in Studies 1 and 2 are specific to identity fusion and whether these associations would remain when controlling for other measures of group identification. Lastly, in Study 3, we included a measure of goal-adherence to determine whether the observed results would extend beyond these specific measures of personal agency. Previous research indicates that personal agency is positively correlated with goal-adherence (Bandura, 2001), and thus the influence of identity fusion may operate similarly.

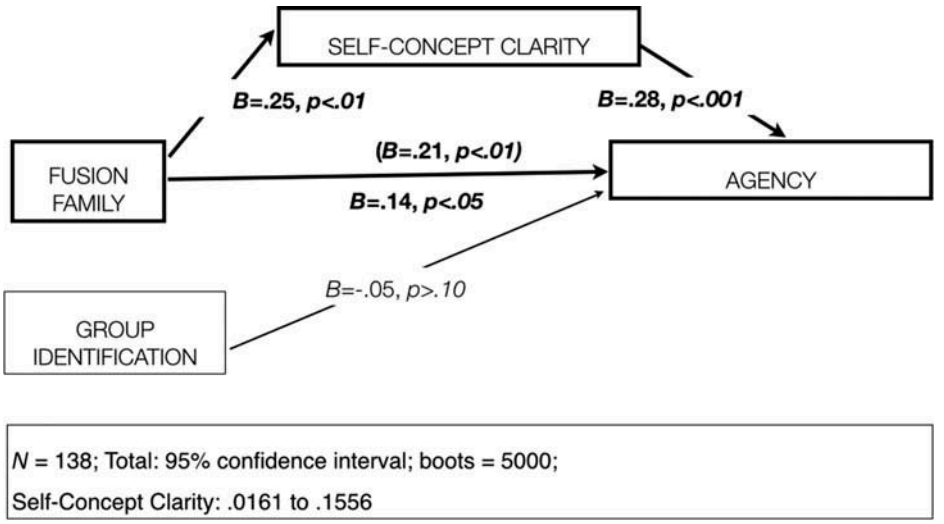

FIGURE 3 Mediation analyses based on bootstrapping procedure identity fusion as the predictor and self-concept clarity as the mediator in family context in Study 2.

STUDY 3
METHOD

Participants

We recruited participants from courses and schools for adult education, as well as graduate students from different areas of expertise. A total of 174 Polish participants were involved in this study (144 women), ranging in age from 20 to 60 years old ($M = 28.85$, $SD = 9.54$).

Measures and Procedures

Participants completed all measures on a 7-point Likert-type scale (0 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*).

Identity fusion. Participants completed the same identity fusion scale as in Study 1 with country as a reference group ($\alpha = .90$).

Group identification. Participants completed three separate measures of group identification. As in Studies 1 and 2, participants completed Meal and Ashforth's scale ($\alpha = .86$). In addition, participants completed Leach and colleagues' (Leach et al., 2008) 14-item measure ($\alpha = .91$; e.g. "I have a lot in common with the average Pole"), as well as Cameron's (2004; also see Obst & White, 2005) 12-item measure ($\alpha = .80$; e.g., I often think about being a member of my country") of group identification.

Self-concept clarity. Participants also completed the same measure of self-concept clarity as in Study 2 ($\alpha = .89$).

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Personal agency. Participants then described themselves using five adjectives from the original personal agency scale by Wojciszke and Szlendak (2010) that is based on the research on basic dimensions of social perception ($\alpha = .80$) (i.e., efficient, self-confident, strong-willed, ambitious, effective).

Goal-adherence. Finally, participants completed three items measuring goal-adherence, which we added to explore if the observed results from Studies 1 and 2 would generalize to other measures related to personal agency (i.e., "I know what I want to achieve in life," "I do not give up once I established my goal," and "When I plan something I pursue it with persistence") ($\alpha = .86$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 presents the correlations between all measures of identify fusion, group identification, self-concept clarity, personal agency, and goal-adherence. Identity fusion and group identification scales were positively correlated, but when controlling for all measures of group identification used in the study, only the identity fusion scale was positively related to self-concept clarity, personal agency, and goal-adherence. Thus, Study 3 provides further support that this measure is a good tool for assessing the component of group identification that is saturated with strong agentic, proactive beliefs.

In line with Studies 1 and 2, and to test whether the relationship between identity fusion and personal agency was mediated by self-concept clarity, we conducted a mediational analysis with identity fusion scale as the predictor, self-concept clarity as the mediator, personal agency as the dependent variable, and the three group identification scales as covariates. Next, we repeated these analyses three times, replacing identity fusion with each measure of group identity as the predictor and adding identity fusion to the set of controlled variables. Confirming the importance

TABLE 3
Correlations Between Measures of Group Adherence, Self-Concept Clarity and Individual Agency in Study 3

	Identity fusion	*ID (Meal & Ashford)*	*ID (Leach et al.)*	*ID (Cameron)*	*SCC*	*Agency*	*Goal-adherence*
Identity fusion		.54***	.83**	.62***	.10	.23**	.12
ID (Meal & Ashford)	.13		.57***	.60***	−.06	.06	.08
ID (Leach et al.)	.68***	.11		.71**	−.05	.11	.02
ID (Cameron)	.03	.32***	.40***		.03	.09	−.01
SCC	.26***	−.12	−.24**	.12		.41***	.43***
Agency	.25***	−.04	−.12	.01	.38***		.58***
Goal-adherence	.18*	.08	−.12	−.07	.43***	.56***	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. SCC—self-concept clarity; ID—group identification scales; authors of the scale in parentheses. Zero-order correlations above diagonal, below diagonal relationships between self-concept clarity, agency, identity fusion, and group identity scales when controlling for every other group adherence measures (e.g., relation between fusion and agency when controlling for all group identification scales).

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TABLE 4
Mediation Analyses Based on Bootstrapping Procedure With Identity Fusion as the Predictor, Self-Concept Clarity as the Mediator and Three Measures of Group Identification as Controlled Variables in Study 3

Dependent variable	*β for path c and c'*	*β for path a and b*	*Lower and upper CI*
Agency	c.43**	a.45***	.0495—.3306
	c′.26*	b.38***	
Goal-adherence	c.34*	a.45***	.0646—.3897
	c′.13	b.46***	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

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of identity fusion over group identification, the mediation was only significant with identity fusion as a predictor (Table 4). Similar results were obtained for mediation analyses with our second dependent variable—goal-adherence. Yet again, only analyses with identity fusion as a predictor revealed significant mediation effect by self-concept clarity.

Results of Study 3 confirmed that the inclusion and fusion of group identities into the self is related to perceived personal agency, even when controlling for the strength of group identification. Feelings of self-certainty mediated the link between inclusion of the country into the self and personal agency, but this pattern of results did not emerge for group identification.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In all three studies, inclusion of social groups into the self as measured by identity fusion was positively associated with personal agentic self-description and goal-adherence, even when controlling for group identification. These results are consistent with other approaches to interpersonal relationships emphasizing the role of control and self-efficacy in the formation of strong links with the group. For example, the self-expansion model (e.g., Aron, Aron, & Norman, 2001; Aron et al., 2013) indicates that people incorporate close others and their own social groups into their self-concepts as a way of developing greater feelings of self-efficacy and agency through the development of social resources, perspectives, and different patterns of identity. Our studies provide robust empirical support for these predictions: the more group identity is interconnected to and fused with a sense of personal identity, the greater the sense of personal agency. These findings also help in differentiating the construct of identity fusion from other group-related concepts. For example, as Swann and others stated, if personal agency is related to fusion, then fusion is clearly distinct from forms of group identification that results in the abdication of personal agency to external agents such as group leaders (Swann et al., 2012).

Additionally, the positive association between inclusion of the group into the self, represented by identity fusion, and self-concept clarity is consistent with the assumptions regarding the overlapping of personal-related and group-related characteristics. It should result in a more coherent, clear, and lucid picture of oneself. In our studies, the clarity of self-concept consistently mediated the relationship between identity fusion and personal agency. That is, self-concept clarity may be responsible for the fact that fused people have an elevated sense of agency and control, and hence,

they do not passively follow the action of others but instead are predisposed to initiate pro-group actions. Our results also supplement previous results on the association between self- and group-schema that show that characteristics that describe both oneself and in-group members are more cognitively accessible (Smith, 2002). That is, if most of the self and group characteristics overlap and are easily accessible, it could create feelings of self-certainty and result in a more coherent and clear self-view.

It should be highlighted that our studies are correlational and we cannot infer causality from the results. Experimental studies (e.g., in which the presence or accessibility of identity fusion is manipulated) are needed to determine causality. Other exploratory studies might examine the associations among members of naturally occurring groups who are strongly fused with their beloved community (e.g., football fans, devoted religious churchgoers, political activists). This may be particularly fruitful to explore, as most fusion scores in our studies were below the scale midpoint and research on very strongly fused people could shed light on whether identity fusion is associated with self-concept clarity and personal agency in a linear or non-linear manner. It should be noted as well that intercorrelations between different measures of group adherence (i.e., identity fusion and group identification) were relatively large. Although those correlations in Study 3 were especially high, correlations between identity fusion and group identification have been found in other studies utilizing various samples (e.g. Gómez et al., 2011). This raises questions regarding the similarity of the psychometric tools and constructs they are measuring. Nevertheless, when controlling for other measures of group identification, the mediation analyses in all three studies only showed significant associations when identity fusion was the predictor (and alternate models that used group identification as the predictor and identity fusion as the covariate were nonsignificant), suggesting that the fusion scale is able to uniquely predict agentic aspects of group adherence that group identification cannot. Thus, it seems that identity fusion theory is valuable—above and beyond group identification—for describing and understanding specific relations to the group, specifically as they relate to group and personal agency. Strong positive correlations between the identity fusion scale and various scales of group identification could generally undermine efforts to disentangle different consequences of group membership, yet identity fusion consistently predicted agency in a manner that group identification could not. Nevertheless, future research should further examine the distinction between group identification and identity fusion. A possible solution to those intercorrelations could be a construction of the identity fusion scale based more on the definitional aspect of visceral feeling of oneness with a group.

These limitations notwithstanding, we believe that our results contribute to the literature in three novel and important ways. First, our findings complement and extend previous research on the link between inclusion of social entities in the self and agency, both measured by the identity fusion scale (Swann et al., 2010) and other scales related to self-expansion (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013a, 2013b). Our findings also provide cross-cultural validation of these aforementioned effects, because these were conducted in a different cultural context. Finally, we present novel mediation analyses that suggest that the clarity of the self-concept mediates the fusion—agency relationship. Overall, the results of these three studies should contribute to a richer understanding of the motivational bases of inclusion of social entities into the self, and of the consequences and mechanisms underlying agentic efforts from individuals fused with a group.

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