



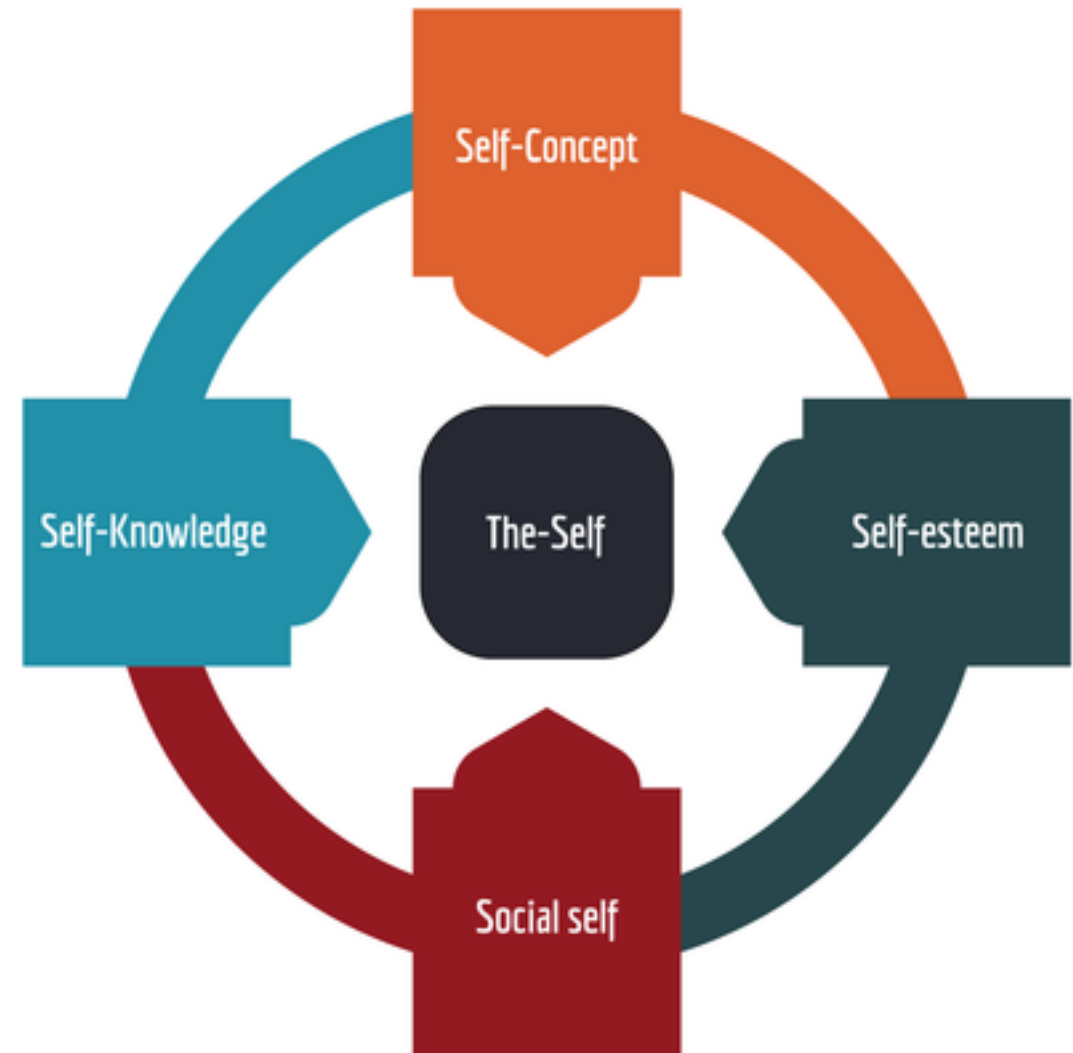
Self and Social Identity

Western social psychology and concepts relating to 'Identity'

Consider how Western concepts, study designs, findings and conclusions have been applied to 'identity' in other nations/cultures

Consider how people living in other cultures might experience 'identity/identities'

How might these be constructed, negotiated, managed and defended differently?



Introduction

- People have strong concerns with how they are perceived by others
 - Serves survival and reproduction goals
- Concern with making a good impression after death
 - More and more people are requesting plastic surgery after death, to help them look their best for their funeral

The Self

The collection of beliefs that we hold about ourselves

What are our important characteristics?

What are we good at?

What are we poor at?

What situations do we prefer/avoid?

What do we want to be?

The Self – two key functions:

Organisational and Executive

Organizational

Self-schemas organize our knowledge about ourselves (e.g. Oyserman et al, 2003)

- Structure our memories which support our sense of self
- Influence how we notice and remember other people
- Underpin the ‘self-reference effect’ – we remember information better when we relate it to ourselves (e.g. Markus, 1977; Kihlstrom, Beer and Klein, 2003)

The Self – two key functions:

Organisational
and Executive

Executive

Regulates our behaviour, choices and plans for the future (e.g. Higgins, 1989, 2005; Leary, 2004)

Humans the only species to

- Imagine events that have not yet occurred
- Engage in long term planning

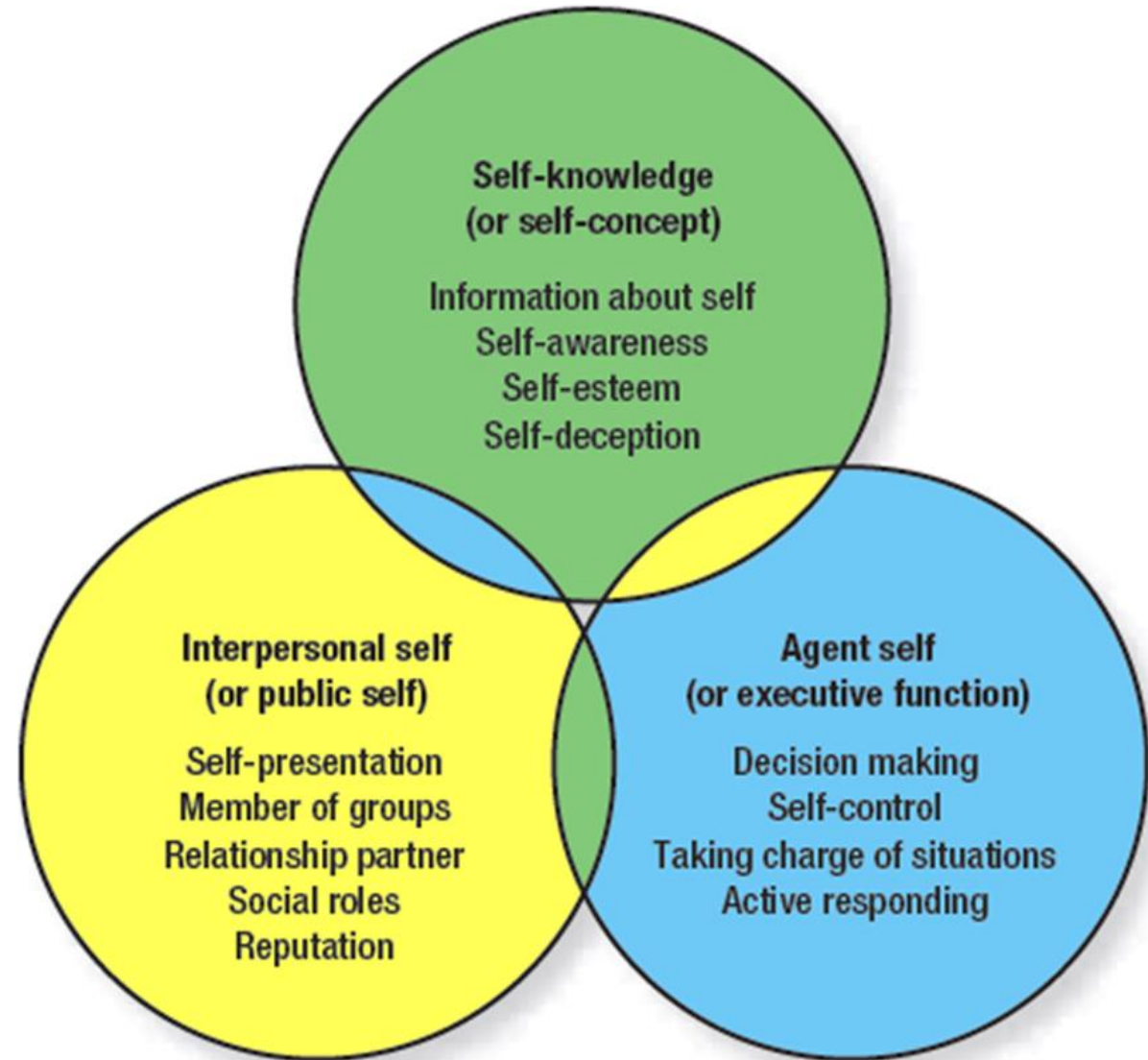
(Gilbert, 2006)

How easy is self-regulation?

Self-regulatory resource model (Baumeister and Hetherington, 1996)

- Limited resources for self-control
- Distraction, stress, tiredness etc.

Three Parts of the Self



Who/What Makes the Self: The Individual or Society?

- The self: interface between inner biological processes and a sociocultural network
 - A true or real self?
 - Public actions and inner feelings
 - Culture and interdependence
 - Selves differ across cultures
 - Social roles
 - Social systems create and define roles
 - Individuals seek and adopt them

Self-Construals

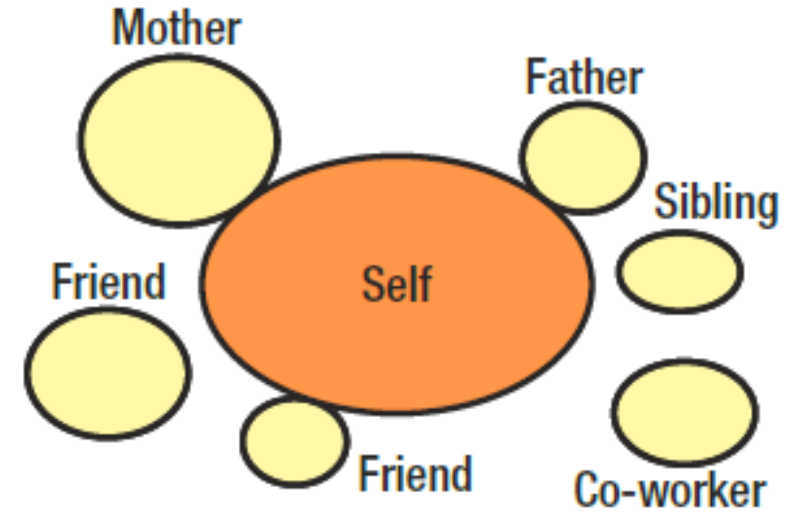
- Globalism and self-expression desires

- Critique of independent and collectivistic societies research

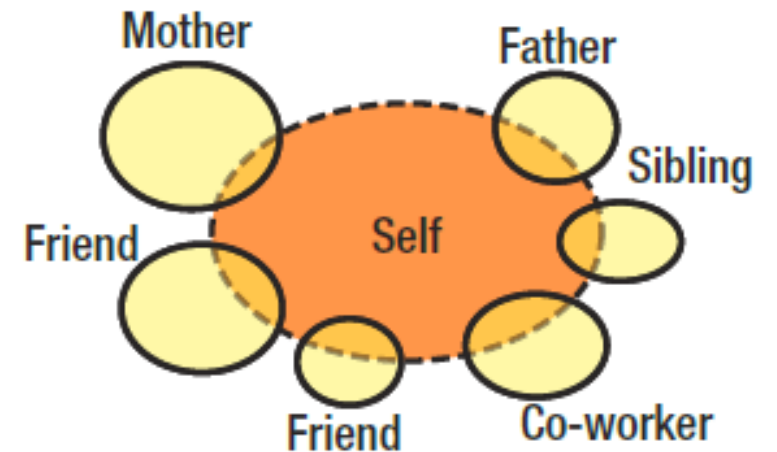
Includes...

- Morris, M. W., Chiu, C. Y., & Liu, Z. (2015). Polycultural psychology. *Annual review of psychology*, 66, 631-659.

Independent
self-construal



Interdependent
self-construal



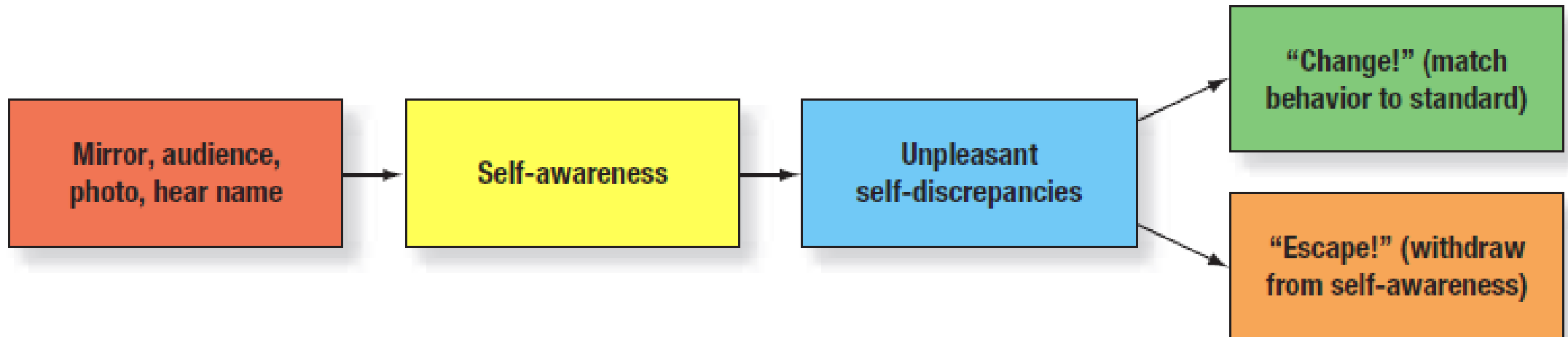
Self-Awareness

- What is self-awareness?
 - Attention directed at the self
- Private self-awareness
 - Looking inward at private aspects of the self
- Public self-awareness
 - Looking outward at public aspects of the self

Baumeister:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8rOZeMWY2M>

Self Awareness Theory



Self awareness theory: some situations, such as looking in a mirror, lead to self-awareness.

Self-aware people feel badly when they notice discrepancies between who they are and a social standard.

They can either “change” by matching the behaviour to the standard, or “escape” by trying to escape the self-aware state (Duval & Wicklund, 1972).

Looking Outside: The Looking-Glass Self

The looking-glass self (Cooley, 1902)

- Imagine how you appear to others
- Imagine how others will judge you
- Develop an emotional response as a result of imagining how others will judge you

The generalized other

- Combination of others' views informs us

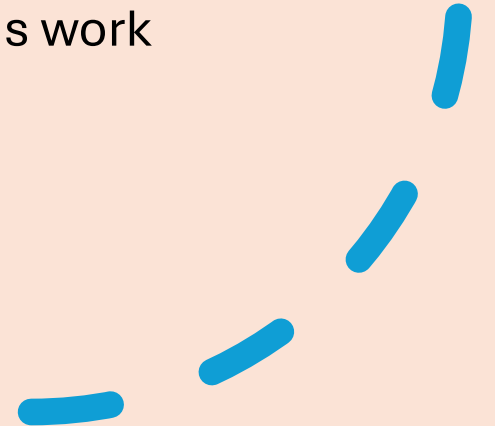
People respond to feedback from others

- Discrepancies exist between the view of self and others' views
 - People are very selective in how they process incoming information about themselves



Looking Inside: Introspection

- Introspection: examining your thoughts and feelings
 - Privileged access to our inner processes
- Limitations of introspection
 - Development and children's views of themselves
 - People often don't realize how their minds work



Looking at Others: Social Comparison

- Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954)

In absence of an objective criterion, people turn to social comparison for evaluative standards - to gain social consensus

Need for an accurate self-evaluation

We seem to prefer objective feedback - test scores etc. – seen as less biased

- Shrauger and Schoeneman (1979) - meta-analysis of 62 studies

People do not rate/see themselves as others see them

They rate/see themselves according to how they **think** others see them

Self-Perception

- Self-perception theory
 - People observe their own behaviour to infer what they are thinking and how they are feeling
- The over-justification effect (Lepper et al, 1973)
 - Tendency for intrinsic motivation to diminish for activities that have become associated with rewards
 - Study: Two groups of children drew pictures - one group for a reward, the other group for no reward
 - Later - children who drew pictures for no reward spent twice as much time drawing as the rewarded group
 - Drawing had become part of their self-concept?

Fluctuating Image(s) of Self

- 'Phenomenal self' (working self-concept)
 - Image of self that is currently active
- Different situations call up different parts of self-knowledge into the phenomenal self
 - Heightened awareness of aspects of yourself that are associated with differences in the group around you

Self-discrepancy theory

- Higgins (1987)
 - Actual self - how we are currently
 - Ideal self - how we would like to be
 - 'Ought' self - how we think we should be

Large discrepancies, particularly between actual and ought self, can be damaging

Why People Seek Self-Knowledge

- Thirst for self-knowledge
 - Evolutionary origins
- Appraisal motive
 - Looking for the truth about oneself
- Self-enhancement motive
 - Looking for flattering aspects of oneself
- Consistency motive
 - Looking for confirmation about current beliefs about oneself

When Motives Compete

- **Appraisal** motive – the desire to learn about oneself
 - Weakest motive
- **Self-enhancement** motive - the desire to learn favourable things about ourselves
 - Strongest motive
- **Consistency** motive - the desire for our behaviours to provide us with information that is consistent with our self-belief
 - Second preference

Why wouldn't people want to know the truth?

Self-Handicapping

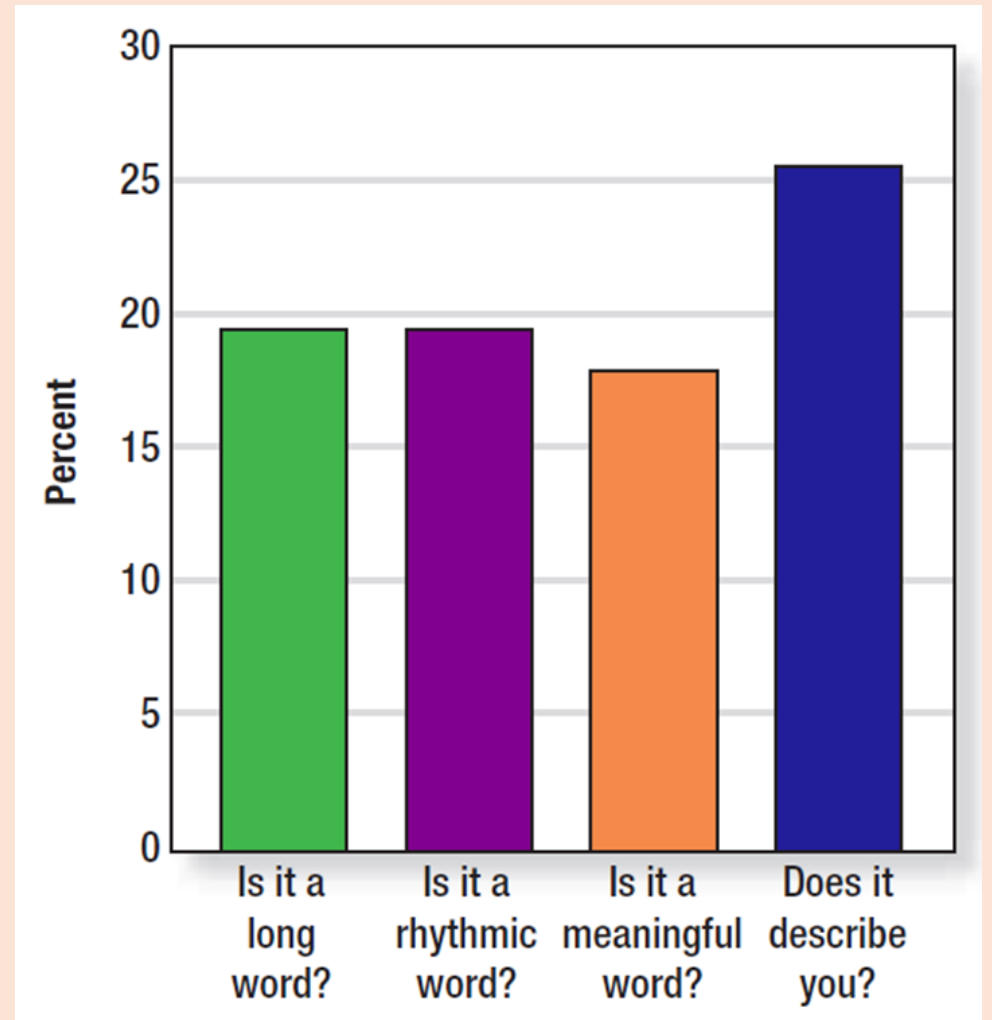
- Our desire for information should be processed in a logical, unbiased way for us to gain as much truthful information as possible
 - But we fall prey to biases
- We also use information and behave in a biased way to protect our self esteem
- Self-handicapping: e.g. drinking alcohol or doing some other activity that will inhibit performance
 - Failure can be blamed on the obstacle
 - Example: drunk people do not perform as well as sober ones
 - Success assumes higher competence
 - Extra credit for success

Self and Information Processing

- Anything that touches the self...
 - More important than things that do not touch it
- Self-reference effect
 - Information relating to self is processed more deeply and remembered better
 - Psychology class
- Endowment effect
 - Items gain in value to person who owns them

The Self-Reference Effect

Information related to the self (e.g. does it describe you?) is more memorable than information related to something besides the self (e.g. Is it a long word?)



Can the Self-Concept Change?

- Identity slowly changes over time
 - Children add new knowledge and skills
 - Adults take up new hobbies or break bad habits
 - Our body changes throughout our life
- Revising self-knowledge
 - Change how you think of yourself or change your behaviour and a change in self-concept will follow

Can the Self-Concept Change? (cont'd)

- Changing the looking glass
 - What goes on inside the person is mainly there to serve interpersonal processes
- Promoting change
 - Best to enlist support
- New self, new story
 - People tend to revise their stories once the self-concept has changed

Self-Esteem

- How favourably someone evaluates himself or herself
 - High self-esteem: competent, likable, attractive, and morally good
 - Low self-esteem: incompetent, ugly, unlikable, and morally wicked

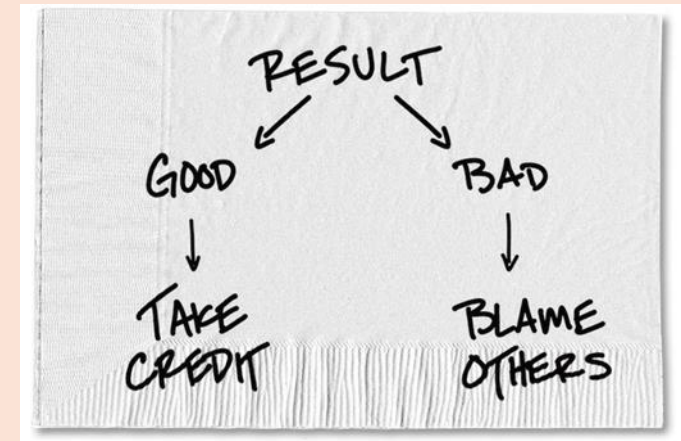
http://www.salon.com/2000/06/02/black_self_esteem/

Reality and Illusion

- “Positive illusions” of normal people
 - Overestimating good qualities
 - Overestimating one’s control over events
 - Being unrealistically optimistic
- It is not necessarily the case that those who are low in self-esteem view events more negatively than they are
 - Most likely to view events more accurately than those who are high in self esteem.

How People Fool Themselves

- People use self-deception strategies to maintain a positive outlook
 - Applying **self-serving bias**
 - Being more skeptical of bad feedback
 - Remembering good things more
 - Making comparisons with those slightly worse
 - Skewing impressions of others to highlight own good traits as unusual
 - Choosing definitions wisely



Benefits of Self-Esteem

- High self-esteem often amounts to nothing more than a false belief that one is superior
 - Students with high self-esteem do have slightly higher grades, but high self-esteem does not lead to good grades
- Two main benefits of high self-esteem
 - Having initiative and feeling good

Why Do We Care About Self-Esteem?

- Sociometer theory
 - View of self-esteem as linked to social acceptance
 - Sociometer: measure of how desirable one would be to other people
 - Your level of social acceptance
- Terror management theory
 - Having high self-esteem helps shield people from fear of death
 - People seek out self-esteem as a way of avoiding a recognition that they are going to die

Terror management theory

(Greenberg, Solomon and Pyszczynski, 1986)

- Human self-awareness magnifies the tendency for anxiety
- The inevitability of death is terrifying
- To defend against this threat, we need strong self-esteem and a strong self-concept
- Increased self-esteem leads to lower physiological arousal to threat and lower anxiety (Greenberg et al, 1992)
- Research supports correlation between higher self-esteem and reductions in death anxiety (e.g. Greenberg et al, 1993; Schmeichel and Martens, 2005)

Is High Self-Esteem Always Good?

- Negative aspects of high self-esteem
 - Narcissism: excessive self-love and a selfish orientation
 - Not the same as high self-esteem, but related
 - Higher levels of prejudice
 - Poorer relationship partners
 - Antisocial actions
 - Persistence in the face of failure

Pursuing Self-Esteem

- Behaviours that convey an image to others
- Include a wide range of actions
 - Explicit statements about the self (e.g., “I forgive but I don’t forget”)
 - How you dress or what car you drive
 - Making excuses or threats
 - Trying to hide your fear or anger so others think you are cool, calm, and collected

Self-Presentation

- Behaviours that convey an image to others
- Include a wide range of actions
 - Explicit statements about the self (e.g., “I forgive but I don’t forget”)
 - How you dress or what car you drive
 - Making excuses or threats
 - Trying to hide your fear or anger so others think you are cool, calm, and collected

Who's Looking?

- Focus on self-esteem
 - Behaviour remains the same when someone else is watching
- Focus on what others think
 - Behaviour changes when someone else is watching
- Self-monitoring (Snyder, 1974) – the extent to which people alter their behaviour according to different social contexts
 - High self-monitors – shape behaviour/self to the environment
 - Low self-monitors – more consistency across situations
 - High self-monitors – more extroverted
 - Low self-monitors – more introverted

Making an Impression

- Claiming identity
 - People aspire to many identities
 - Claims require social validation
 - People use self-presentation to advance their claims to identity
 - People will change their behaviour to claim an identity

Making an Impression (cont'd.)

- Trade-off: favourability versus plausibility
 - People present themselves in the best possible light
 - Within plausible range (acknowledge boundaries)
- What about modesty?
 - More natural and common among friends
 - Helps people get along better
 - May be the default or automatic response
 - Friends are familiar with faults and failures

Self-Presentation and Risky Behaviour

- Self-presentation is very important
 - Sometimes people risk illness, injury, or even death in order to make a good impression
 - Gaining social acceptance is felt as an even stronger and more urgent motive than the motivation to stay alive and healthy
- Self-presentation can be stronger than self-preservation
 - Another sign that the human psyche is designed to gain and keep a place in a social group

Summary

- All humans have a self-concept that distinguishes them from others
 - Humans also crave social acceptance
- Self-esteem and self-presentation play an important role in establishing and preserving the self
 - High self-esteem is not always good
- Culture constructs diverse concepts of 'identity', and offer very different opportunities for lived identities