

# Lecture Outline

## The Self

The Self

Functions of the Self

Self-Guides

Self-Guides and Memory

Self-Guides and Others

Role Models

Self-Regulation

# The Self

We know what it is....

People use the term all the  
time....

But how is it  
defined?....

# Three Components of the Self

1) Physical self: one's body

2) Social identity: one's self-schema

social roles

traits

future hopes/goals

past memories

3) Active agent: one's thoughts and actions

decisions

behavior

# Functions of the Self

Interpersonal tool

Decision Maker

Self-Regulation

# Self-Guides

The actual self      Who you are

The ideal self      Who you want to be

The ought self      Who you believe you  
should be

# Ideal vs.. Ought

Your ideal self can be similar to your ought self

e.g., you want to be a good student (ideal) and believe that you should be a good student (ought)

# Ideal vs. Ought

Your ideal self can be  
discrepant from your ought  
self

e.g., you want to be in a rock  
band (ideal), but believe that  
you should be a doctor  
(ought)

# Self-Discrepancy Theory

Higgins (1987)

Premise: People evaluate themselves by comparing.....

actual self to ideal self

actual self to ought self

A discrepancy causes people to experience negative emotions

# Self-Discrepancy Theory

The kind of negative emotions elicited by a discrepancy depends on one's goals

## 1. Promotional goals:

Striving for positive outcomes

I want to have a happy marriage

I want to have a successful career

# Self-Discrepancy Theory

## 2) Preventative goals:

Striving to avoid negative outcomes

I don't want to get divorced

I don't want to get a bad grade on the test

# Self-Discrepancy Theory

Failure to attain positive outcomes (promotional goals):

- mismatch between actual and ideal
- experience sadness and dejection

Failure to avoid negative outcomes (preventative goals):

- mismatch between actual and ought
- experience anxiety and agitation

# Self-Discrepancy Study 1

Higgins et al. (1986)

## Predictions:

1. Actual--Ideal discrepancy = sadness
2. Actual--Ought discrepancy = agitation

# Self-Discrepancy Study 1

Higgins et al. (1986)

## Step 1

Purpose: Identify participants with

- Large Actual--Ideal discrepancies
- Large Actual--Ought discrepancies

# Self-Discrepancy Study 1

Higgins et al. (1986)

## Step 2

Purpose: Test prediction

A-I discrepancy = sadness

A-O discrepancy = agitation

Procedure:

imagined an event

rated self in terms of sadness  
and agitation

# Self-Discrepancy Study 1

Higgins et al. (1986)

Manipulation: Valence of  
imagined event

- Negative event (e.g.,  
rejected)
- Positive event (e.g., spent  
time with admired other)

# Self-Discrepancy Study 1

Higgins et al. (1986)

	Negative Event		Positive Event	
	Sadness	Agitation	Sadness	Agitation
A-Ideal	.24	.00	.03	.03
A-Ought	.04	.11	.06	.09

Positive Event: Type of discrepancy did not matter

Negative Event: Type of discrepancy mattered:

- A-I discrepancy = more sadness
- A-O discrepancy = more agitation

# Unanswered Questions

- Does the size of the discrepancy influence how bad someone feels?
- Does the discrepancy have to be accessible (i.e., activated) to influence negative emotions?

# Self-Discrepancy Study 2

Higgins et al. (1997)

## Hypothesis:

Larger discrepancy = more  
negative emotion....

BUT...

only when discrepancy is  
accessible

# Self-Discrepancy Study 2

Higgins et al. (1997)

Step 1: Assessed SIZE of  
discrepancy

- Participants generated 3-5 attributes for:
  - ideal self
  - ought self
- Rated extent to which they:
  - actually had each attribute
  - wanted to have each attribute
  - ought to have each attribute

# Self-Discrepancy Study 2

Higgins et al. (1997)

Step 2: Assessed ACCESSIBILITY  
of discrepancy

- Time it took participants to respond to previous questions

Faster = discrepancy more accessible

# Self-Discrepancy Study 2

Higgins et al. (1997)

## Step 3:

- Participants rated how sad and agitated they felt

# Self-Discrepancy Study 2

Higgins et al. (1997)

## Step 4:

■ Researchers divided participants into two groups based on reaction time task:

1) Discrepancy highly accessible

» participants who made fast ratings

2) Discrepancy not highly accessible

» participants who made slow ratings

# Self-Discrepancy Study 2

Higgins et al. (1997)

## Analysis

Correlated size of discrepancy  
with:

- reported level of sadness
- reported level of agitation

# Self-Discrepancy Study 2

Higgins et al. (1997)

## Recap of Hypothesis

Larger discrepancy = more  
negative emotion....

BUT...

only when discrepancy is  
accessible

So, who should feel the worst?

# Self-Discrepancy Study 2

Higgins et al. (1997)

## Answer

Participants who have large discrepancies that are highly accessible (i.e., those who had fast reactions)

# Self-Discrepancy Study 2

Higgins et al. (1997)

Correlations between size of  
discrepancy and negative emotion

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A-I Discrepancy

A-O Discrepancy

High  
Accessibility

Low  
Accessibility

High  
Accessibility

Low  
Accessibility

$r = .28$

$r = -.13$

$r = .44$

$r = -.07$

## Previous studies:

- Accessibility of discrepancy assessed, not manipulated.

## Question:

- Would same result occur if accessibility of discrepancy was manipulated?

Yes. Manipulating  
accessibility via a reminder  
also produces.....

- More sadness for Actual-Ideal discrepancies
- More agitation for Actual-Ought discrepancies

# Self-Guides and Memory

## Previous studies:

- The kind of discrepancy one feels affects the negative emotions one experiences

## Question:

- Does the discrepancy one feels also affect one's memory for events?

# Discrepancy & Memory Study

Higgins & Tykocinski (1992)

Hypothesis: Memory depends on the kind of discrepancy one experiences

- Actual--Ideal discrepancy = Better memory for attainment of desired outcomes  
(i.e., promotional goals)
- Actual--Ought discrepancy = Better memory for attainment of avoided misfortune  
(i.e., preventative goals)

# Discrepancy & Memory Study

Higgins & Tykocinski (1992)

Step 1: Identified participants with A-I and A-O discrepancies

Step 2: Participants read essay about another in which 20 events occurred.

- 8 events = positive outcome present or absent
- 8 events = negative outcome present or absent
- 4 events = neutral fillers

# Example Events

## Positive Outcome

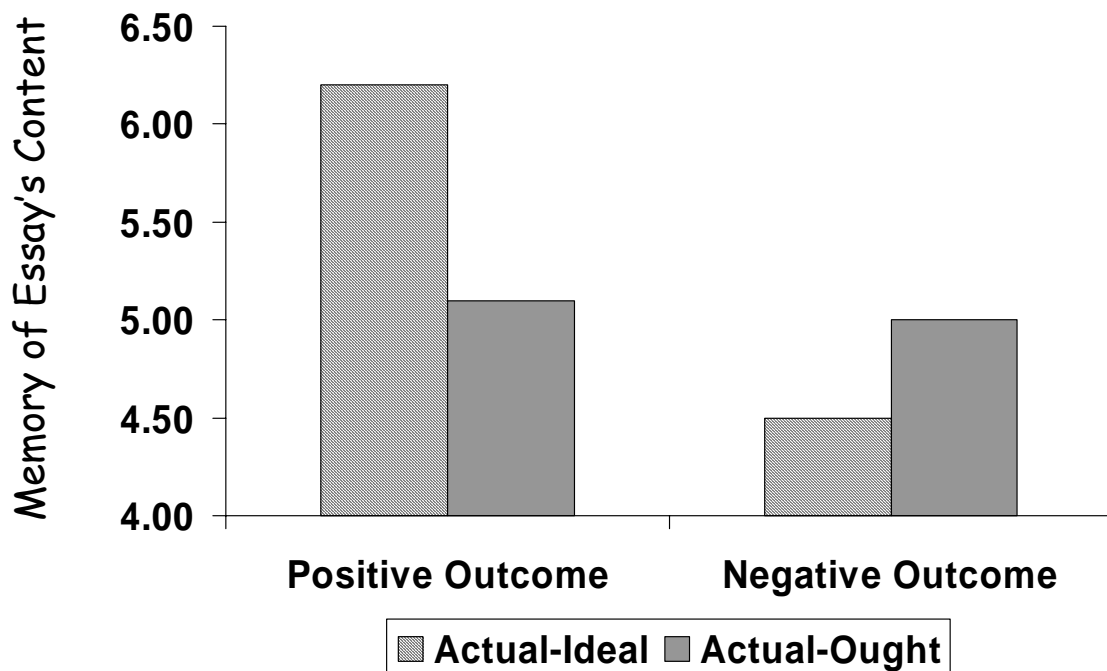
- *Present*: found \$20
- *Absent*: movie wanted to see no longer showing

## Negative Outcome

- *Present*: stuck in subway
- *Absent*: skipped unpleasant day at school

Step 3: Surprise memory test for essay's content

A-I remembered more positive events than A-O  
A-O remembered more negative events than A-I



# Self-Guides and Others

Sometimes others outperform us

Example:

- Your friend does better on the midterm than you
- Your co-worker gets promoted, but you don't

# Self-Guides and Others

When this happens, do you  
feel....

# Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model

According to the SEM, the answer depends on the domain's self-relevance

Premise of SEM: Being outperformed by a "close other" will make you feel:

- GOOD, if you don't care about the domain
- BAD, if you do care about the domain

# Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model

Close other = person similar  
to yourself

Examples:

- same status
- similar personality
- family members
- shared place of origin

# Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model

## Summary of SEM Premise:

Being outperformed by close  
other on self-irrelevant  
domain makes one feel good

Being outperformed by close  
other on self-relevant  
domain makes one feel bad

# Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model

## Assumptions of SEM Premise:

1. People want to maintain a positive self-view
2. Being outperformed by a close other threatens one's positive self-view
3. People try to reduce threats to their self-worth

Ways to reduce the threat  
others pose to your self-  
worth

Reduce your closeness to the  
other

The more distant you are to  
those who outperform you, the  
less threat their  
accomplishments pose  
to your self-worth

Ways to reduce the threat others  
pose to your self-worth

Reduce self-relevance of the  
domain

The less you care about the  
domains on which you are  
outperformed, the  
less threatening your poor  
performance is to your self-  
worth

Ways to reduce the threat  
others pose to your self-worth

Minimize others' accomplishment

**Explaining away other people's  
accomplishments makes their  
good performance less threatening  
to your self-worth**

Ways to reduce the threat  
others pose to your self-worth

Undermine others'  
future  
performance

Reducing the likelihood that  
others will perform highly in the  
future protects your own self-  
worth

# Friend Study

Tesser & Cornell (1991)

## Purpose:

Show that others will  
undermine the  
performance of a friend  
to protect own self-worth

# Friend Study

Tesser & Cornell (1991)

## Procedure:

Step 1: Two sets male friends at session

Step 2: Each participant sat alone in room

Step 3: Each completed verbal task

- IQ test (high self-relevance)
- Game (low self-relevance)

# Friend Study

Tesser & Cornell (1991)

## Procedure:

Step 4: Each told they had  
come out 3rd

—friend and one stranger did  
better

Step 5: Perform 2nd task  
for which they will give  
clues to others

# Friend Study

Tesser & Cornell (1991)

Some clues more helpful than others

## Important Question

Will participants give more helpful clues to their friend, or to the strangers?

# Friend Study

Tesser & Cornell (1991)

Low self-relevant group (Game)

- gave more helpful clues to friend

Why?

High self-relevant group (IQ test)

- gave more helpful clues to strangers

Why?

# Limitation of SEM

Being outperformed by close other does not always make people feel bad

- Role models are close others, and their good performance can inspire people

# Role Models

Attainability may be key

Role models achieve success in domains that are still attainable for oneself

# Role Model Study

Lockwood & Kunda (1989)

## Purpose:

Test if "attainability"  
influences one's emotional  
reaction to being  
outperformed

# Role Model Study

Lockwood & Kunda (1989)

Prediction: A close other's accomplishment will make one feel:

- good when accomplishment is still attainable by self
- bad when accomplishment is no longer attainable by self

# Role Model Study

Lockwood & Kunda (1989)

## Experimental Groups:

Step 1: 1st year and 4th year students read story about star student described as:

- 4th year accounting student
- award for academic excellence
- active in sports and community service

Step 2: rated self on adjectives related to career success (bright, skillful)

# Role Model Study

Lockwood & Kunda (1989)

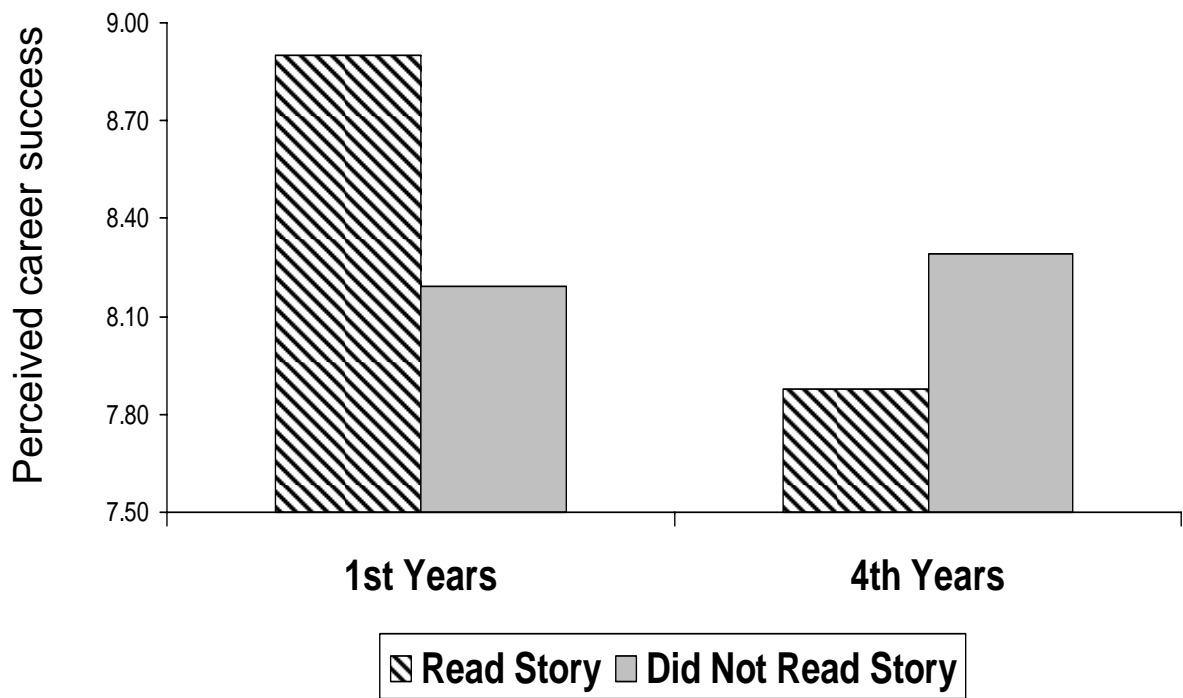
## Control Group:

Step 1: 1st year and 4th year students rated self on adjectives related to career success

DID NOT READ STORY

# Role Model Study

Lockwood & Kunda (1989)



# Free Responses of those who read story

## 1st years

- 82% were inspired

## 4th years

- only 6% were inspired
- 50% reduced closeness to star student

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Conclusion: Whether a close other's performance makes you feel good or bad about yourself may depend on how attainable the accomplishment seems for you

# Self-Regulation

Definition: The managing of oneself

- personal care
- behaviors
- choices
- interpersonal relationships
- work activities

The way that people manage themselves depends on their motives

# Self-enhancement theory

Premise: People are motivated to think well of themselves

People engage in self-regulatory behaviors that cause them and others to view them favorably

# Ways to Self-Enhance

Make others view you favorably

- conform to situational norms
- flatter other people

Make yourself view you favorably

- self-serving attributions
- reduce cognitive dissonance
- downward social comparison

Function: Raise one's self-worth

# Self-Consistency theory

Premise: People are motivated to confirm their pre-existing self-views (to self-verify)

People engage in self-regulatory behaviors that cause others to view them as they view themselves

Function: ward off failure & consistency is comforting

# Self-enhancement v.s. Self-consistency

Imagine that you want to test whether people typically self-enhance or self-verify

Would you examine people's self-regulation for positive or negative attributes?

Why?

# Self-enhancement v.s. Self-consistency

Answer: examine people's self-regulation for negative attributes

Why? theories only generate different predictions for negative attributes

**Specifically.....**

## Self-enhancement theory

- Seek positive information about positive attributes to maintain positive self-view

## Self-consistency theory

- Seek positive information about positive attributes to maintain consistency

Cannot distinguish between the two theories on positive attributes

## Self-enhancement theory

- Seek positive information about negative attributes to raise one's self-view

## Self-consistency theory

- Seek negative information about negative attributes to maintain consistency

Can distinguish between the two theories on negative attributes

When do people self-enhance?  
Few objective standards for  
evaluation

When do people self-verify?  
Clear self-view

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And, sometimes people  
don't do either.

Accuracy motives: when people  
have *unclear* self-views