

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

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

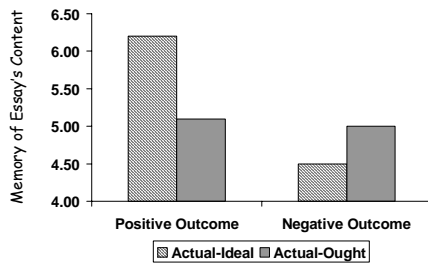
- *Present:* found \$20
- *Absent:* movie wanted to see no longer showing

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

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

And, sometimes people
don't do either.
Accuracy motives: when people
have *unclear* self-views