

## 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

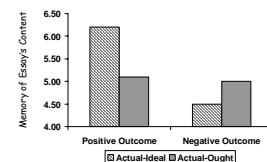
- *Present:* found \$20
- *Absent:* movie wanted to see no longer showing

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

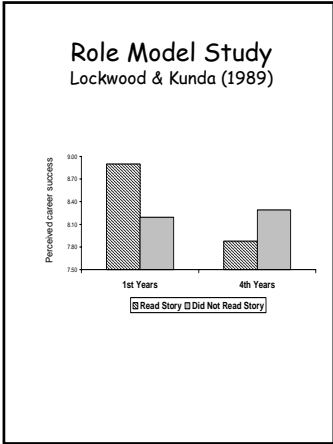
Step 2: rated self on adjectives related to career success (bright, skillful)

**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



### 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