

Social Psychology

Lesson 2: The Self in a Social World

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Expected Learning Outcomes:

- 1 Define self-concept and explain where it comes from.
- 2 Explain why we incorrectly estimate our behavior and our feelings.
- 3 Define what self-esteem really is, how it helps us bounce back from tough times, and what happens when we have way too much or way too little of it.
- 4 Compare and contrast self-efficacy, self-control, and self-esteem and explain how they uniquely influence human behavior.
- 5 Portray through role playing the different ways on how we present ourselves to others

In 2013, the word “self” appeared in 27,729 book and article summaries in PsycINFO are 25 times more than appeared in 1970 (Myers & Twenge, 2021).

Spotlight Effect

The belief that others are paying more attention to one's appearance and behavior than they really are.

- ***What causes this phenomenon?*** Egocentric Bias. Because we are the only people who live inside our own heads, we use our own internal feelings as a "starting point" for guessing what others think.
- ***Why is this just an illusion?*** In reality, most people are distracted, busy, or thinking about themselves.

Illusion of Transparency

The illusion that our concealed emotions leak out and can be easily read by others.

*“If you're happy and you know it
then your face will surely show it.”*

What does empirical evidence suggest?

Social Psychology tells us that we are actually much better at hiding our emotions than we think. Even when we are "happy and we know it," our faces often don't show it as clearly as we assume.

Complete the Sentence

I am _____.



A. SELF- CONCEPT

- A person's answer to the question "Who am I?"
- The sum total of an individual's beliefs about his or her own personal attributes.
- Elements of self-concept:
 1. **Self-schemas**
 2. **Possible selves**

1. Self-schemas

Belief about self that guide and organize the processing of self-relevant information.

- **Self-reference effect** – The tendency to process efficiently and remember well information related to oneself.
- **Cocktail party effect** – The tendency of people to pick a personally relevant stimulus out of a complex and noisy environment.

2. Possible selves

Images of what we dream of or dread becoming in the future.



Social Comparison

Evaluating one's abilities and opinions by comparing oneself with others.

B. SELF-KNOWLEDGE

*“There are three things extremely hard,
Steel, a Diamond, and to know one’s
self.”*

— Benjamin Franklin (1750)

PREDICTING OUR BEHAVIOR

- **Planning fallacy** – the tendency to underestimate how long it will take to complete a task.
- **Research on Planning Fallacy:** Canadian undergraduates predicted that they would spend \$94 over the next week but actually spent \$122. Considering that they had spent \$126 in the week before the study, their guess should have been more accurate. When they came back a week later, they still predicted they would spend only \$85 in the coming week (Peetz & Buehler, 2009).
- **How can you improve your self-predictions?** Be more realistic about how long tasks took in the past and estimate how long each step in the task/project will take.

PREDICTING OUR FEELINGS



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- **Affective forecasting** – the process of predicting how one would feel in response to future emotional events.
- Studies of “affective forecasting” reveal that people have greatest difficulty predicting the intensity and the duration of their future emotions (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003).
- **Research:** Asked how they would feel if asked sexually harassing questions on a job interview, most women said they would feel angry. When actually asked such questions, however, women more often experienced fear. (Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001).

PREDICTING OUR FEELINGS

- **Impact bias** – overestimating the enduring impact of emotion-causing events.
- **Immune neglect** – the human tendency to neglect the speed and the strength of the “psychological immune system” which enables emotional recovery and resilience after bad thing happen.

The correlation between predicted feelings and actual feelings was .28 (Mathieu & Gosling, 2012).

C. Self-esteem

A person's overall self-evaluation or sense of self-worth.

- People low in self-esteem are:
 - more vulnerable to anxiety, loneliness, and eating disorders.
 - When feeling bad or threatened, those low in self-esteem often take a negative view of everything.
 - experience more problems in life—they make less money, abuse drugs, and are more likely to be depressed
- High self-esteem fosters initiative, resilience, and pleasant feelings.



**What happens
when your
self-esteem is
threatened?**

- High self-esteem people usually react to a self-esteem threat by compensating for it (blaming someone else or trying harder next time).
- Low self-esteem people are more likely to blame themselves or give up.



The “Dark Side” of Self-Esteem

- Low self-esteem predicts increased risk of depression, drug abuse, and some forms of delinquency.
- A variety of societal offenders tend to have higher-than-average self-esteem. Someone with a big ego, which then is threatened and deflated by social rejection, is potentially aggressive.
- High self-esteem becomes especially problematic if it crosses over into *narcissism* – having an inflated sense of self.

D. Self-Control



- The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behavior in the face of temptations and impulses
- Effortful self-control depletes our limited willpower reserves.
- It operates similarly with muscular strength.
- Downside of self-control: Seen when athletes become so self-focused under pressure that they stiffen up and “choke”.

E. Self-Efficacy

- A sense that one is competent and effective.



Self-efficacy

- Self-efficacy predicts worker productivity (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).
- Self-efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of students' GPAs in college (Richardson et al., 2012).
- Children and adults with strong feelings of self-efficacy are more persistent, less anxious, and less depressed. They also live healthier lives and are more academically successful.

Self-efficacy

“You’re special!”

“You’re really smart”

→ intended to build *self-esteem*

“I know you can do it!”

“You tried really hard”

→ intended to build *self-efficacy*

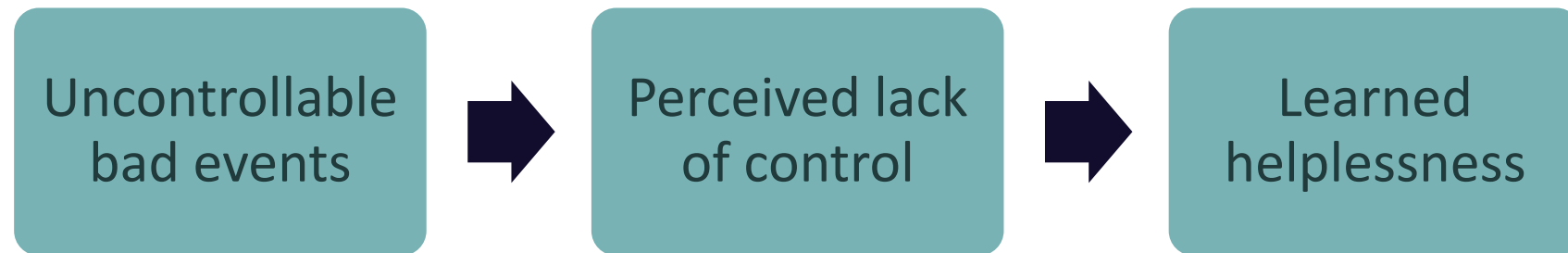
Self-efficacy feedback led to better performance than self-esteem feedback.

F. Locus of Control

- The extent to which people perceive outcomes as internally controlled by their own efforts and actions or as externally controlled by chance or outside forces.
- Types:
 1. **Internal locus of control** – the belief that one controls one's own destiny.
 2. **External locus of control** – the belief that chance or outside forces determines one's fate.

Learned Helplessness vs. Self-Determination

- **Learned helplessness** – the hopelessness and resignation learned when a human or an animal perceives no control over repeated bad events.



- **Self-determination** – bolstered by experiences of successfully exercising control and improving one's situation.

Self- serving Bias

- Any cognitive or perceptual process that is distorted by the need to maintain and enhance self-esteem.
- The tendency to perceive oneself favorably.
- Can take the form of:
 - a. Self-serving attribution
 - b. False consensus effect
 - c. False uniqueness effect
 - d. Self-congratulatory comparisons
 - e. Illusory optimism

A. Self-Serving Attributions

- the tendency to attribute positive outcomes to oneself and negative outcomes to other factors.
- “I got the A in history because I studied hard. I got the D in sociology because the exams were unfair.”

B. False consensus effect

- the tendency to overestimate the commonality of one's opinions and one's undesirable or unsuccessful behaviors.
- "I know most people agree with me that global warming threatens our future."

C.
False
uniqueness
effect

- the tendency to underestimate the commonality of one's abilities and one's desirable or successful behaviors.
- "I'm the best in this sport."

D.
Self-
congratulatory
comparisons

- Comparing oneself favorably to others.
- “I do more for my parents than my sister does.”

E. Illusory optimism

- an unrealistic optimism about future life events.
- increases our vulnerability because we believe ourselves immune to misfortune, thus not taking sensible precautions.
- “Even though 50% of marriages fail, I know mine will be enduring joy.”

- Self-serving bias occurs because of errors in how we process and remember information about ourselves.
- Self-serving bias can be adaptive in that it allows us to savor the good things that happen in our lives.
- When bad things happen, however, self-serving bias can have the maladaptive effect of causing us to blame others or feel cheated out of something we “deserved.”



**Why people
engage in self-
serving bias?**

H. COMPARISON TO OTHERS

- We compare ourselves to others in different situations because there is no given standard against which to measure our abilities and opinions.
- However, while other people can serve as a useful frame of reference, we are not always objective in our comparisons.

Downward Social Comparison

- The process of comparing yourself to someone who is less capable or worse than you are.

BIRGing **(Basking In** **Reflected** **Glory)**

- A strategy by which we reinforce our positive self-concepts by identifying ourselves with successful others.

CORFing (Cutting Off Reflective Failure)

- A strategy by which we try to disassociate ourselves from others who have failed or behaved poorly.

Self- Handicapping

- Protecting one's self-image with behaviors that create a handy excuse for later failure.
- A process that involves setting up an obstacle before engaging in a task as a way to give ourselves a ready-made excuse in case we don't perform well.

SELF PRESENTATION

- Commonly known as “Impression Management”.
- **Impression Management** refer to behavior designed to control what others think of us.

**Consider
yourself as an
attorney in
these various
circumstances:**

1. As prosecuting attorney in a court hearing.
2. As a buyer who is convincing a house owner to sell his property to him.
3. As a parent.

Self-promotion

- attempts to convey positive information about self either through one's behavior or by telling others about positive assets and accomplishments.
- People who use it want to be respected for their intelligence and competence.

Exemplification

- designed to elicit perceptions of integrity and moral worthiness at the same time it arouses guilt and emulation in others.
- People who use it want others to perceive them as really devoted in doing their social role.

Modesty

- to underrepresent one's positive traits, contributions or accomplishments.
- This can be extremely effective in increasing one's likability, even while it preserves high levels of perceived competence and honesty.

Intimidation

- uses tactic of arousing fear and gaining power by convincing others that they are dangerous.
- Intimidator attempts to appear powerful and often uses threats of punishment. They subject people into doing something they normally wouldn't do.

Supplication

- people advertise their weakness or their dependence upon others in order to elicit help or sympathy.
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Ingratiation

- saying positive things to someone in order to get them to like you.
- Aside from the desire to be liked, other motives are concealed on the part of the self-presenter.

SUMMARY:

- The “Self” is not a static or final product, but a continuous work in progress.
- It is a dynamic construct, constantly being shaped and refined by the diverse social and environmental forces we encounter throughout our lives.
- To master the self is to understand that while we cannot control every social force, we are the final authorities on what those forces mean to us.

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