



**2024-25 FALL**

**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Faculty of Arts & Sciences

**WEEK 3**

# **THE SELF in a SOCIAL WORLD**

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

Benjamin Franklin

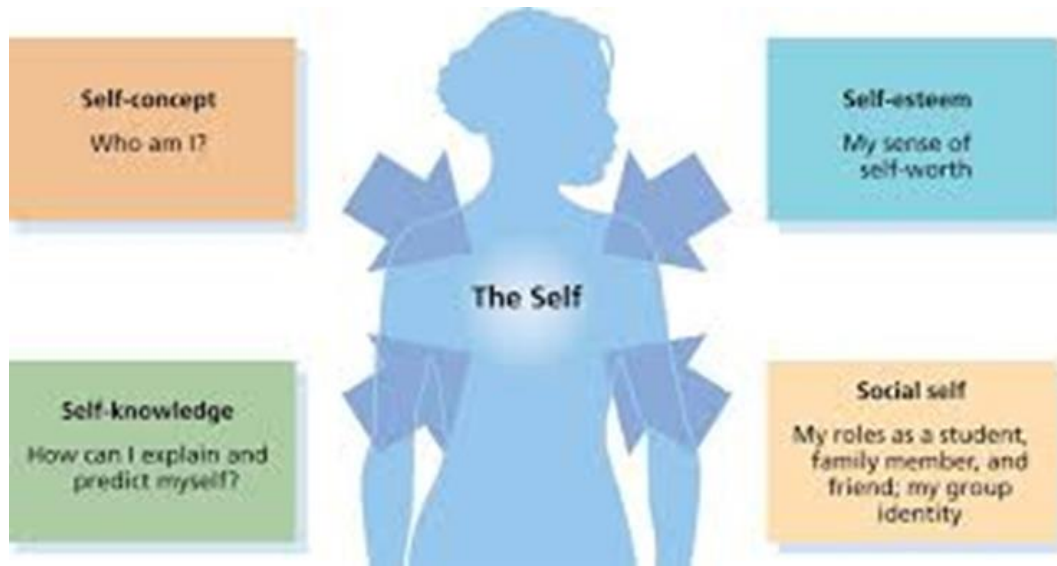
# Self-Concept: Who am I?

- Some neuroscientists suggest an important role for the **right hemisphere**.
- One patient with **right hemisphere damage** failed to **recognize** that he owned and was controlling his left hand (Decety & Sommerville, 2003).
- The “**medial prefrontal cortex**,” a neuron path located in the cleft between your brain hemispheres just behind your eyes, seemingly helps **stitch together your sense of self**. It becomes more active when you think about yourself (Zimmer, 2005).

# Self-Concept: Who am I?

- The elements of your **self-concept**, the **specific beliefs** by which you define yourself, are your ***self-schemas*** (Markus & Wurf, 1987).
- Schemas are **mental templates** by which we **organize our worlds**.
- **Our self-schemas**—our perceiving ourselves as athletic, overweight, smart, or whatever—**powerfully affect how we perceive, remember, and evaluate other people and ourselves.**

# POSSIBLE SELVES



*Possible selves :  
Images of what  
we dream of or  
dread becoming  
in the future.*

- Our self-concepts include not only our self-schemas about who we currently are but also **who we might become—our possible selves**.
- Our possible selves include our visions of the self **we dream of becoming**—the rich self, the thin self, the passionately loved and loving self.
- They also include the self **we fear becoming**—the underemployed self, the unloved self, the academically failed self.
- Such **possible selves motivate us with a vision of the life we long for**.

# Development of the Social Self

- The **self-concept** has become a **major social-psychological focus** because it helps **organize our thinking** and **guide our social behavior**.
- Studies of twins point to **genetic influences** on **personality** and **self-concept**, but **social experience** also plays a part.
- These influences are:
  - the **roles** we play
  - the **social identities** we form
  - the **comparisons** we make with **others**
  - our **successes** and **failures**
  - how other **people judge us**
  - the **surrounding culture**

# THE ROLES WE PLAY

- As **we enact a new role**—college student, parent, salesperson—we **initially feel self-conscious**.
- **Gradually**, however, what begins as **playacting** in the theater of life is **absorbed into our sense of self**.
- While playing our roles we may **support something we haven't really thought** much about.

# SOCIAL COMPARISONS

- **Social comparison:** Evaluating one's abilities and opinions by comparing oneself with others.
- **Others** around us help to define the standard by which we **define ourselves** as rich or poor, smart or dumb, tall or short: **We compare ourselves** with them and **consider how we differ**.



# SOCIAL COMPARISONS

- We may privately take some pleasure in a peer's failure, especially when it happens to someone we envy.
- Social comparisons can also diminish our satisfaction. When climbing the ladder of success, we tend to look up, not down; we compare ourselves with others doing even better.
- There are two major types of social comparison: **upward comparison**, when people compare themselves to people who are better than they are, and **downward comparison**, when people compare themselves to those who are less proficient than they are.

# OTHER PEOPLE'S JUDGMENTS

- When people think **well of us**, it helps us think **well of ourselves**.
- **The looking-glass self** was how sociologist Charles H. Cooley (1902) described our use of **how we think others perceive** us as a mirror for **perceiving ourselves**.
- Our ancestors' fate depended on what others thought of them. Their survival was enhanced when protected by their group.

# Self-Perception Theory

- **Behaviors Tell Us Who We Are**
- We get help answering the question, “**Who am I?**” by making inferences about ourselves based on **observing our own behaviors**.
- As the **self-concept** is **abstract and subjective**, one of the most straightforward ways to decide who we are is by simply observing what we do.
- We don’t really have special, privileged access to our inner thoughts and choices all the time—and we thus try to infer our own motivations, attitudes, values, and core traits based on observing our own behaviors.
- If you regularly volunteer at a local dog shelter, then you must be someone who cares about animals.
- If you love to travel and eat exotic food, then you must be open to new experiences.
- If other people seem to think you’re funny, you will likely incorporate “good sense of humor” into your self-concept.

# Self-Discrepancy Theory:

## Are We Trying to Juggle Three Selves?

- Higgins (1987, 2002) suggested that in reality, we all have three simultaneous selves. He refers to the **mismatch** between our three selves as **self-discrepancy**.
- **The Actual Self:** is simply who we think we are, **right now**. It includes both our good and bad qualities, as well as the qualities we think other people see in us.
- **The Ideal Self:** is the person we would like to become **in the future**. Our ideal self is our dreams and goals, the person we strive to become.
- **The ought self:** is based on our perception of what our **social world hopes for us**, perhaps what our parents want us to do or be, what our friends believe would be good for us, or even what our culture tells us is proper and correct.

# Self and Culture

- For some people, especially those in industrialized **Western cultures**, **individualism** prevails. **Identity is self-contained.**
- Most cultures native to **Asia, Africa, and Central and South America** place a greater value on **collectivism**. In these cultures, people are more **self-critical** and have **less need for positive self-regard.**

# GROWING INDIVIDUALISM

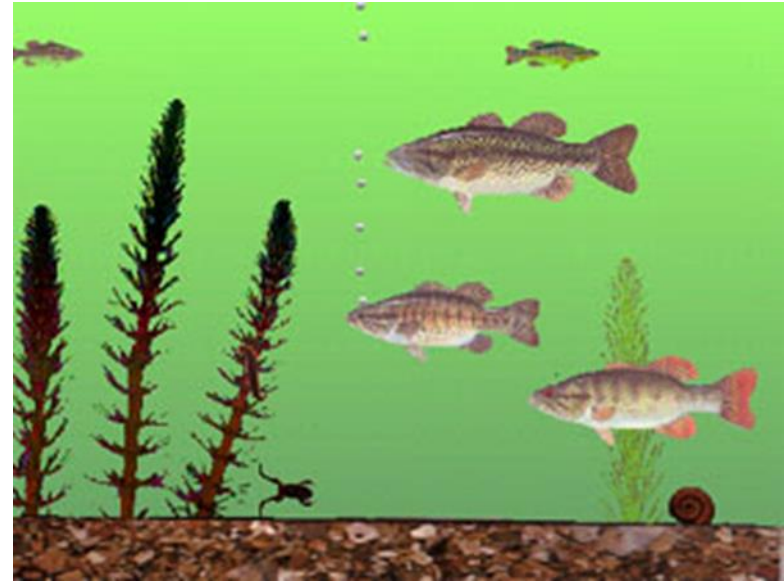
- **Cultures can also change over time, and many seem to be growing more individualistic.**
- China's young people have acquired the label **"The Me Generation,"** and new economic opportunities have **challenged traditional collectivistic** ways.
- American parents are now **less likely to give their children common names** and more likely to help them stand out with an unusual name.

# Cognition

- Cognition is "the **mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses**".
- It encompasses many aspects of **intellectual functions and processes** such as **attention**, the **formation of knowledge, memory** and working memory, **judgment and evaluation, reasoning** and "**computation**", **problem solving** and **decision making, comprehension and production of language**.

# CULTURE AND COGNITION

- When shown an underwater scene, **Asians often describe the environment and the relationships among the fish. Americans attend more to a single big fish** (Nisbett, 2003).



*The Geography of Thought (2003)*



# Self-Presentation

- As social animals, we **adjust our words and actions to suit our audiences**. To varying degrees, we **note our performance and adjust it to create the impressions we desire**.
- Such tactics explain examples of **false modesty**, in which people **put themselves down, extol future competitors**, or publicly credit others while **privately crediting themselves**.

# Self-Presentation

- **Self-presentation** refers to our **wanting to present a favorable image both to an external audience (other people) and to an internal audience (ourselves).**
- With regard to an external audience, those who **score high on a scale of self-monitoring adjust their behavior to each situation**, whereas those **low in self-monitoring may do so little social adjusting that they seem insensitive.**

# Self-Presentation



self-worth OR self-image ?  
What matters most is how  
you see yourself.

**Self-worth** is often how we perceive ourselves compared to others, for example in terms of skills, wealth, attractiveness and so on. Many of us feel worthy if we achieve, live a certain lifestyle, or even if we are "good people" who contribute and help.

Your **self-image** is what you think about yourself and what you tell yourself about what and who you are. It's also severely affected by what you think other people think of you – your weight, attractiveness, intelligence etc.

# the most famous hero of neuroscience



<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Phineas-Gage>

- Phineas Gage influenced debates in the mid-19th century regarding the brain, particularly the cerebral divisions, and was the first to demonstrate that **damage to certain parts of the brain can affect personality and behavior.**

Heinzen & Goodfriend (2018), Social Psychology

# the most famous hero of neuroscience

- Perhaps the most famous brain injury in history was a penetrating wound suffered by a railroad worker named Phineas Gage on September 13, 1848. Twelve years after his injury, on the 21st of May, 1860 Phineas Gage died of an epileptic seizure.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXbAMHzYGJ0>

# The Change

- Although Gage's abilities such as attention, perception, memory, language and intelligence were not impaired after the accident, **problems** began to occur in his **personality and social life**.
- Dr. Harlow published his findings in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal's Letters to the Editor as follows:

# The Change

“... as if the balance between human characteristics and animal characteristics has disappeared. **Irregular, disrespectful, disobedient, swearing a lot** in between (a situation never seen before the accident), **incompatible** with other workers, **impatient** with restrictions or suggestions when contrary to their wishes, sometimes insistent on **stubbornness**, but **capricious, acting arbitrarily**, someone who is **undecided, forgetting** about what he can do instead of preparing for what he wants to do. ***Given the mental capacity and manifestations, it is at the level of a child, but at the adult level of animal feelings.***”

# Brain Damage Can Limit Self-Presentation Ability

- Gage seemed to have **minimal self-insight**, the ability to self-observe and evaluate his own behavior.
- **Self-insight** is essential to be aware of how we're presenting ourselves in public situations and especially if we want to use **impression management** to get other people to like us.
- Gage was probably less able to **notice and adjust his behavior** across different social situations.



# Self-Monitoring

- Self-monitoring suggests **an awareness** that we have a complicated self that needs monitoring.
- After his brain damage, Phineas Gage seemed to **lose his ability to self-monitor**, or change **how he acted in different social situations** in an attempt to **fit in**.



<https://uygulamaincele.com/en-keyifli-renk-oyunu-chameleo/>

## Social Chameleons

Some people excel at being “social chameleons” that can blend into almost any environment.

Others just don’t seem to care. There are benefits and drawbacks to both approaches.

# Self-Monitoring

- **Low Self-Monitors:** Some people act the same way no matter where they are or who is around them. They have little change in their personality or self-presentation across time and situations. They **pay little attention** to how they “come across” to other people and act consistently **no matter where they are**.
- **High Self-Monitors:** They **change how they act** all the time, depending on the situation. In a cooperative environment, they cooperate; in a competitive environment, they compete. They **look around and assess their environment**, then **adapt their self-presentation** to get whatever they want out of that particular situation.

# Adaptability Versus Authenticity: Which Way Is Best?

- There are advantages and disadvantages to being high in self-monitoring. Certain careers such as sales, politics, and acting require people who can change how they act and appear on cue.
- It also seems reasonable that people who can easily and comfortably fit in with anyone will be more popular and may advance more quickly in their workplaces.
- However, sometimes people who are high in self-monitoring can seem inauthentic to others. If they are always changing how they act, others will wonder who is the “real” person?

# Self-presentation (impression management)

- Phineas Gage's famous accident revealed a **connection between the self and the brain**. After Gage suffered **brain damage**, his personality changed, but his ability to change his **self-presentation** also went away.