The Self

WHO AM I?

- How would you describe yourself? Answer the question of “Who Am I?” by completing 20 statements as listed below.
- Work quickly, answer as if you were talking to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in the order they occur to you, and don’t worry if they aren’t logical or factual.

Important questions:

1. Who are you?
2. How do you know that you have a “self”?
3. How did you come to be this person you call “myself”?
1. Who are you?:

Not an easy definition!

- Nearly everyone has a basic understanding of what the self is, even if it is hard to put into words.
- Studied by many sub-disciplines of psychology

- From a social psychological point of view:
  - An individual’s consciousness of one’s own identity.
  - Short hand expressions for an ensemble of psychological experiences (thoughts, feelings, motives, etc) that reflect and contribute to a person’s understanding of his or her place in the world.

What is “the Self?”: 3 main parts

- Self Knowledge
  - Self Awareness
- Interpersonal Self
  - Public Self
- Agent Self
  - Executive Function

Stop for a moment and think about your mood...

- We know that we have a sense of self by turning attention back towards ourself!
- Self Awareness
  - has both private and public components.
    - Private self awareness: attending to inner states, private thoughts, feelings and attitudes
    - Public self awareness: attending to how others are perceiving you; your public image
2. How do we know that we have a self?

- Reflexive consciousness:
  - “Who am I?”
- Inter personality:
  - “He likes me”, “she has a pretty smile”
- Agency:
  - “Today I should get out of the bed early to do my work”

- We have one self & this allows us to perceive consistency in our lifehood

Self-Awareness:
Beaman et al. (1979) Halloween Study

- Self-evaluation and Self-regulation
  - Am I doing right? Should I do something else?
- Adopt to the perspective of other people
- Manage behavior in pursuit of goals
Self-awareness has consequences

External stimuli

Internal stimuli

Self-awareness

Sensitive to social norms/standards

Match between behavior & standards

Discomfort

NO

YES

Match standard

Continue behavior

Withdraw

3. How did you come to be this person you call “myself”?

- Self-recognition develops at around age 2.
- As we grow older, this rudimentary self-concept becomes more complex.
- Typically, a child’s self-concept is concrete, with references to clear-cut, easily observable characteristics like age, sex, neighborhood, and hobbies.
- As we mature, more emphasis is put on psychological states and on how others judge us.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJFo3tM

It begins

Important questions:

1. Who are you?
2. How do you know that you have a “self”?
3. How did you come to be this person you call “myself”?
4. What is so social about the self?
What is so social about the self?

- If you grew up on a deserted island, and never met any other human being; would you have a sense of “self” (in the usual sense)?
- If you did not have a long term memory - would you have a sense of self

What is so social about the self?

- Humans are social animals
- The self is constructed from social information
- Self is influenced by and influences social interactions

What is so social about the self?

- Do we have an inner “true” self?
  - Public (self as institution) vs. private face (self as impulse)
  - Which is the “real” one?
What is so social about the self?

- Selves are somewhat different across different cultures.
- The most studied difference:
  - Independence vs. interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).
  - Asians differ from North Americans and Europeans in how they think of themselves and how they seek to construct the self in relation to others (self-construal).
    - Independent self – emphasizes what makes the self different & sets it apart from others.
    - Interdependent self – emphasizes what connects the self to other people & groups.

Independent and Interdependent View of Self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991)

Cultural Differences in Defining the Self

- The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
  — American proverb
- The nail that stands out gets pounded down.
  — Japanese proverb
Autonomous Interdependent Self (Kağıtçıbaşı)

- Family pattern of emotional/psychological interdependence leads to the development of an autonomous – related self.
  - independence in material realm
  - interdependence in the psychological realm.
  
  - E.g. It is important to have both close relationships and also to be autonomous.
  - A person should be able to oppose the ideas of those who are close.
  - A person can feel both independent and connected to those who are close to him/her.

Caution

- There are always within culture variances
- With increased contact between cultures, differences between cultures may decrease

Gender differences in defining self

- Women have more relational interdependence, meaning that they focus more on their close relationships, such as how they feel about their spouse or their child.
- Men have more collective interdependence, meaning that they focus on their memberships in larger groups, such as the fact that they are Americans or that they belong to a fraternity.

- Why is there such a gender difference?
  - socialization
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Count the number of times you made a:

- Independent (unique) vs. interdependent self (connection to others)
- Physical self-description: physical qualities that do not imply social interactions. E.g: I am male, I am slim, I am tall
- Social self-description: social roles, institutional membership, other socially defined status. E.g: I am a student, I am a daughter
- Attributive self-description: identifies yourself in terms of psychological and physiological states or traits: E.g. I am intelligent, I am tired.
- Global self-descriptions: comprehensive / vague identification. E.g. I am a human being, I am alive...

Studying “the self”

- Aspects
  - Intrapersonal (self-awareness, concept, schemas, perception)
  - Interpersonal (self-presentation, concept change)
- Functions:
  - Interpersonal tool
    - “inner processes serve interpersonal functions”.
  - Adapt to the social environment
  - Make choices
  - Manage itself (self-control, self-regulation)
The ABCs of the Self

- **Affect**: How do we evaluate ourselves, enhance our self-images, and defend against threats to our self-esteem?
- **Behavior**: How do we regulate our actions and present ourselves according to interpersonal demands?
- **Cognition**: How do we come to know ourselves, develop a self-concept, and maintain a stable sense of identity?

Core classic self themes: Self as an open system

An overarching theoretical framework that integrates all self-related concepts into a single coherent whole has yet to be developed.

What is the Self?: 3 main parts
**Self-knowledge**

- Sometimes called as self-concept or self-construal
- The sum total of beliefs that people have about themselves—our knowledge of who we are
  - A mental representation or overall sense of "you"
  - Includes the various beliefs you hold about yourself
  - Is a large part of how you'd describe yourself

**Where does self knowledge come from? Sources of self – knowledge**

- **Looking inside: Introspection**
  - Self-knowledge through looking inward at one’s own thoughts and feelings
    - People usually make mistakes, give plausible & socially desirable answers (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977)
- **Looking outside: The looking glass self** (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934)
  - Self-knowledge through imagining how people appear to others
    - Mostly there is not much agreement!
- **Looking at others: Social comparison** (Festinger, 1954)
  - Self-knowledge through examining the difference between oneself and another person
    - Can be upward or downward

**Actually people spend little time thinking about themselves**

- participants wore beepers for a week
- asked to record what they were currently thinking
- only 8% of recorded thoughts dealt with the self

(Csikszentmihalyi & Figurski, 1982)
Sources of self – knowledge (Cont’d)

- Self-perception (D. Bem, 1972)
  - Contrary to introspection – see what you do and draw conclusions (just like you do for others)
  - Esp. When internal cues are difficult to interpret,
    - “If I’m smiling, I must be happy.”

- Autobiographical Memories
  - Essential for a coherent self-concept.
- Culture

Self-perception

- Also has important implications for motivation
  - Rewards can hurt intrinsic motivation
  - Intrinsic motivation: the desire to engage in an activity because we enjoy it or find it interesting, not because of external rewards or pressures
  - Extrinsic motivation: the desire to engage in an activity because of external rewards, not because we enjoy the task or find it interesting.
  - Overjustification effect: when extrinsic rewards are given our behavior is perceived as resulting from them rather than from intrinsic motivation

Even our emotions can result from self-perceptions

Two-factor theory of emotion (Schachter & Singer, 1962)
The nature of self-concept: How is self-knowledge organized in the mind?

- **Self schemas** are cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experiences, that organize and guide processing of self-related information (Markus, 1977).
- **Working (phenomenal) self-concept**: The aspect of the self-concept that is salient and activated in a particular setting.
Nature of self: Complexity

- **Self-complexity:** People differ in the number of independent components / self-aspects /dimensions that make up their self-concepts and are used for processing self-related information.
- **Self-concept clarity:** People differ in the extent to which the contents of an individual's self-concept are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable.

Why People Seek Self-Knowledge

- **Appraisal Motive**
  - Looking for the truth about oneself
- **Self-Enhancement Motive**
  - Looking for flattering things about self
- **Consistency Motive**
  - Looking for confirmation about current belief about self

Can the self concept change?
Self esteem

- Alphabet test

Fact or fiction?

- 1. F  11. T
- 2. T  12. F
- 3. F  13. T
- 4. T  14. F
- 5. T  15. F
- 6. T  16. T
- 7. F  17. T
- 8. T  18. T
- 10. T  20. T