The Self

- **The self**: symbol-using social being who reflects on own behavior:

- Two aspects to the self:
  - The “I”: the active agent
  - The “Me”: the object of attention of “I”

- How can you relate these 2 aspects to the objective and subjective selves?
The Self

• **self-concept**: the set of beliefs, thoughts, and feelings we hold about who we are.
• also includes **evaluations** about the self-concept → **self-esteem**
• self-esteem can be **implicit** or **explicit**
• **self-awareness**: the psychological state in which self becomes the object of attention
  – develops around 18 months
  – frontal lobe – anterior cingular cortex
The Self

• **private self-awareness**: temporary state of being aware of **private** aspects of self:
  – personal attitudes, current mood, beliefs
  – adherence to personal standards

• **public self-awareness**: temporary state of being aware of **public** aspects of self:
  – physical appearance, the way we talk, behave in public
  – adherence to social standards
• **self-consciousness**: habitual tendency to engage in self-awareness
  – public self-consciousness
  – private self-consciousness
  – distinct tendencies – either or both
Self-Regulation

• the most important function of self
• the ways in which we control and direct our own actions
• ability to delay immediate gratification small rewards to attain larger future ones
• e.g., turning down a party offer to study for your upcoming exam
• **working self-concept**: aspect of self-concept active at a given situation
Self-Regulation

cybernetic theory of self-regulation:

• core idea – feedback loop
  – self awareness → assess how we are doing in meeting our goals & ideals
  – adjust behavior until it meets the standard or give up the goal

• self-efficacy: specific expectations about our abilities to accomplish certain tasks
  – highly specific, control-related perceptions
Self-Regulation

• self-discrepancies:
  • actual self versus ideal self – dejection related emotions
    – disappointment, frustration, depression
  • actual self versus ought self – agitation related emotions
    – anxiety, guilt
    – ought self: what we feel we ought to possess
Self-Knowledge

Sources of self-knowledge:

• Socialization – acquire the rules, standards, values of family, group, culture
• feedback from others
• Reflected appraisals – self evaluation based on perceptions and evaluations of others
Self-knowledge

• self-perception and labeling arousal states
  – **self-perception theory:** infer attitudes from overt behavior (rather than from internal)

• environmental distinctiveness

• comparison of self and others

• **social identity:** part of self-concept that comes from membership in a social group
Self-Knowledge

**self-schema**: the cognitive structure that represents your knowledge about yourself in a particular domain

– organize your experiences in that domain
– aid memory & guide behavior in relevant situations
– influence decisions, judgments, & inferences
– schematic vs. aschematic individuals
– **possible selves** also part of self-schema
self-Knowledge

**self-complexity**: the number of dimensions that people use to think about themselves

- simple: I am a college student
- complex: I am a student, daughter, girlfriend, member of DKSK, a math tutor
- simple self-conceptions vulnerable to failure
Self and culture

• Self-conceptions vary according to culture!
• Individualist (Western) cultures:
  – self-sufficiency, self-discipline, autonomy, uniqueness
  – closely linked to socioeconomic development
  – personal goals prior to group goals
  – identity selected by you rather than given by group
  – fosters the development of independent selves
Self and culture

• Collectivistic (Eastern) cultures:
  – a more social self-description
  – similarity, conformity, cooperation, knowing one’s place (rather than uniqueness and independence)
  – personal goals sacrificed for collective good
  – identity given by group rather than selected by you
  – fosters the development of interdependent selves
Self and culture

• Independent self:
  – A way of conceiving of the self in terms of unique, personal attributes and as a being that is separate and autonomous from the group.

• Interdependent self:
  – A way of conceiving of the self in terms of social roles and as a being that is embedded in and dependent on the group.
Self and culture
Self and culture

Western (individualist)
• independent self
• emphasize uniqueness
• separate from others
• stable across situations
• autonomous from the group
• ego-focused emotions: pride or frustration

Eastern (collectivist)
• interdependent self
• emphasize shared attributes
• embedded in social rel.s
• changing across situations
• dependent on the group
• other-focused emotions: amae
Motivation and self

• need an **accurate self-concept**:  
  – seek most “diagnostic” information about own abilities

• need a **consistent self-concept**:  
  – **self-verification**: seek out / interpret information that confirm one’s self-concept  
  – resist information that disconfirm  
  – question: might culture play a role?
Motivation and self

• the desire and motivation to improve ourselves: **self-improvement**
  – often motivated by criticism

• the need to feel good about ourselves: **self-enhancement**:
  – seek out /interpret situations to feel good about one’s self
  – especially after threat, failure, blows to self-esteem
Motivation and self

- Self-enhancing strategies
  - **positive illusions** are false, mildly positive perceptions about actual abilities, talents, skills
    - see yourself more positively than true,
    - feel more control than you actually have,
    - unrealistically optimistic about future
  - **self-affirmation** helps coping with specific threats by affirming unrelated aspects
Motivation and self

• **Self-evaluation maintenance model**: other people’s performance reflects on our feelings about ourselves as a function of:
  – our own relative performance,
  – our closeness to the other,
  – the personal relevance of the domain

• someone **close** to us, performs **better** than us, in a domain that is **important** and **relevant** to us > 😞

• domain **not** relevant > we **Bask In the Reflected Glory of others** (BIRG)
Motivation and self

• **Question:** Which do we prefer: self-enhancement or self-verification?

• When are we more realistic rather than self-enhancing?
  – about to receive feedback from others
  – making decisions about goals
  – depressed or have low self-esteem

• **Question:** how about the role of culture in self-verification or self-enhancement motives?
Social comparison

• Festinger (1954): Social Comparison Theory
  – drive to evaluate abilities and opinions accurately;
  – without objective standards, mainly by comparisons with others;
  – in general, prefer similar others to compare
Social comparison

Goals of social comparison:
• accurate self-evaluation
• self-enhancement
  – leads to **downward comparisons**
• self-improvement
  – leads to **upward comparisons**
• sense of communion
  – contrast effects and **assimilation** effects
Social comparison

• affects self-evaluations, moods, and responses to others

• unsolicited comparisons?
  – e.g., Mr. Clean and Mr. Dirty

• similar others – how much?
  – related-attributes similarity
  – when dimension unknown, compare to both worst and best
Self-presentation:

self-presentation:
attempt to control the impressions we convey to others in order to obtain desired outcomes

• public s-p can influence private s-c
• could be **automatic** or **deliberate**
• need to take the role of the other to be successful
Self-presentation

• conform to the norms of the situation
• match behavior of other people
• self-promotion
• ingratiation (flattery)
• Modesty
• Independent s-c: self-promotion more likely, to reduce actual-ideal
• Interdependent s-c: preventive self-presentations, to reduce actual-ought
Self-presentation

- **self-handicapping**: creating obstacles to own performance
  - create excuse for prospective failure or enhance success

1. **verbal** (self-reported) handicapping

- complaining about illness or stress-induced ailments prior to engaging in a task.
  - an excuse for failure without hampering performance
  - can increase performance by lowering expectations, thus reducing anxiety
Self-presentation

2. **behavioral** self-handicapping
   - not adequately preparing for a task or using drugs or alcohol to inhibit performance.
     - more by men than women
     - possible due to competitiveness
     - dangerous: being perceived as lazy and unmotivated
Subject choose distracting music as an excuse for failure.

- Self-handicapping