

Identity / The self:

Perceiving oneself

Week 3

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The self

- 1) The self-concept
- 2) Understanding self-esteem
- 3) Impression management: From self-concept to behaviour

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The self-concept

EXERCISE

Find 4 important characteristics that can describe yourself.

Questions:

- how much time was needed to find them (accessibility) ?

- can you justify/prove their relevance as "self-descriptors" (events, intentions,...) ?

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The self-concept

What defines myself? What do I know about myself?

- my history?
- my values?
- my accomplishments?
- my goals?
- my choices?
- my opinions?
- my memories?
- my behaviour?

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The self-concept

Impression formation and oneself

The impact of self-esteem and of the self-enhancing biases.

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The self-concept

What is the self? What are YOU?

The self: A construction or a discovery?

- Notion of cognitive representation
- The developmental aspect of the self: differentiation and socialisation
- The existential point of view : existence precedes essence. (e.g. Sartre and De Beauvoir)

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The self-concept

Qualities of an efficient identity:

- Continuity
- Stability (temporal and situational)
- Explanatory value
- Internal coherence

Why?

- Self-esteem, social usefulness,...

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The self-concept

Qualities of an efficient identity:

- Continuity
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Major problem

- We are more complex than the others!

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The self-concept

Potential solutions

1) External attributions

- Warning: Frequent use of this solution might affect your perception of control!

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The self-concept

Potential solutions

2) Multiple selves

- Relationship with attentional resources
(Conway & White-Dysart, 1999)
- Self-concept and social role
- Boundaries between the different self-aspects

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The self-concept

Potential solutions

3) Selective recall

- Autobiographical reconstruction and consequences
(parent/child relationship)
- Automatisation of frequently selected recalls

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The self-concept

Potential solutions

4) Memory distortion

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The self-concept

Potential solutions

- 5) Construction of a self-schema
(main elements of the self-concept)
 - Increased efficiency to manage the evidences for the schema.

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The self-concept

Self-schemas: the bricks of the self

Self-schemas as highly accessible mental representations of oneself.

- present self: to explain current behaviours/ experiences
- past self: to compare and explain present self
- possible selves (ideal, expected and dreaded future selves): to motivate oneself and define goals

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Understanding self-esteem

Self-esteem as one's overall self-evaluation

Low self-esteem: depression, drug abuse.

High self-esteem: pleasant feelings, initiative, resilience and also linked to aggressive behaviours, gang leaders, terrorists.

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Understanding self-esteem

Evaluating oneself: a constant conflict of interests!

Precision (to adequately react)

vs

Enhancement (to feel well)

Consequence:

We developed self-serving biases to protect our self-esteem

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Understanding self-esteem

Self-serving biases

Self-serving attributions

Self-serving evaluations (especially for ambiguous notions and events)

We overrate the uniqueness of our qualities (false uniqueness) and the commonness of our faults (false consensus)

Impact of these biases on in-group and out-group!

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Impression management: From self-concept to behaviour

Self-handicapping: Protecting self-esteem and public image by proposing an externally attributed justification for failure.

Self-presentation vs self-expression

- Relation to attitudes and to self-awareness

Self-monitoring

When presentation becomes expression

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