

The Self

**Psy 240; Fall 2006
Purdue University
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Why study the self in social psychology?

- Recall that social psychology is the study of how people
 - Think about
 - Influence, and
 - Relate to one another (or interact within situations)
- The self influences all of these

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The Center of Our World: Ourselves

- **Spotlight Effect:**
 - We over-estimate how much others are attending to us.
 - Barry Manilow t-shirt study (Gilovich et al, 2000)
 - Guess 50%; actually 23%
- **Illusion of Transparency**
 - We think our emotions are easily detected by others, when they are not.
- **Cocktail Party Effect**
 - In a noisy room, we can still hear our names being said.

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Self Concept

- Self-concept – “Who am I?”
 - Self-schemas: beliefs about ourselves that help us process and organize our world
 - Affects what you pay attention to, how quickly you process information, and what you remember
 - Social self – We have multiple selves
 - Roles
 - Social identities
 - Self-knowledge – “How can I explain and predict myself?”

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Development of Self-Concept

- Social experience
 - Self-perceptions
 - Roles
 - Social identities
 - Social Comparison
 - Who am I? Depends on who I'm comparing myself with.
 - Our successes and failures
 - How others judge us
 - “looking glass self”
 - Surrounding culture
 - Our culture affects how we view ourselves
 - Collectivistic / Individualistic

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How Well Do We Know Ourselves?

- Explaining and predicting our behavior
 - How likely are you to vote in the upcoming election?__
 - If 180 Purdue students were asked, what percentage of these people do you think would vote in the upcoming election?__
 - Our guesses of others' behaviors are often better predictors of our own behaviors.
- Also: obedience, bystander responsiveness, suicide baiting

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How Well Do We Know Ourselves?

- Predicting our feelings

- In general, how happy are you now?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Extremely*

- Imagine that you were involved in an accident and were paralyzed below the waist due to injuries you suffered. How happy would you be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Extremely*

- How happy do you think you would be a year after the accident?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Extremely*

This issue is called “affective forecasting”

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The Self and Influence

- Self Awareness Theory

- Public self-awareness

- More likely to follow external expectations

- Private self-awareness

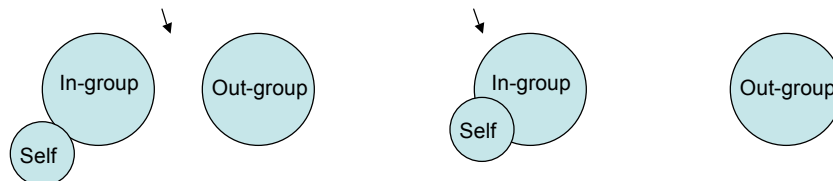
- More likely to follow internalized norms and beliefs

- What can trigger self-awareness?

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The Self and How We Relate to One Another

- Independent vs. Interdependent self



- Content of interactions (e.g., praise)
- Ingroup vs. outgroup relations
- Explaining successes

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The Self and How We Interact With Situations

- Self Complexity Theory (Linville)
 - People have multiple selves and these selves may overlap to varying degrees
 - Low = overlapping
 - High = nonoverlapping
 - How people respond to success and failure
 - Lows respond more extremely to both success and failure.
 - The extent to which the selves overlap influences our mental health
 - But, it depends on how much control we feel we have over our multiple selves

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