Cognition

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Social Cognition
Representation of the Self

- The “self” for anyone represents a conglomerate of many dimensions.
- My past self
- My self of the future
- Self as the son/daughter of my parents
- Self as the father/mother of my kids
- Self as the partner of my spouse
- Self as the colleague of my co-workers
Self-Schemas

• Individual differences are found in terms of attribute people consider central & self-defining.

• “A self-schema is an integrated set of memories, beliefs, and generalizations about one’s behavior in a given domain.” - Kunda (1999)

• For example, friendly self-schemas may include traces of
  – Specific events
  – General belief about one’s typical reactions in different situations
  – Broad self-categorizations
Self-Schemas

• Self-schema implies a stable self.

• The behaviour of schematic or aschematic people can be predicted.

• The self-knowledge is carried even when the situation changes.
Self-Schemas & Information Processing

- Well-articulate, rich & independent self-schematic individuals process self-independence related information differently as compared to those who classify themselves as independent but lack similar elaborate self-knowledge.

- **Schematic**: If rates oneself extremely independent or extremely dependent & consider this important for self-description.

- **Aschematic**: It rates oneself low & do not deem it important to their self-description.
Self-Schemas & Processing Information About Self
Markus (1977) Classification

Schematic Individuals

Aschematic Individuals

With Independent Self-schemas

With Dependent Self-schemas
Self-Schemas & Processing Information About Others

• A self-schema in a given dimension ensures elaborate knowledge structure about that dimension.

• This elaborate knowledge structure plays an important role in processing information about others.

• For example, an individual having self-schema on politeness may have rich knowledge not only about owns’ politeness but also about the very nature of politeness.

• This provides a yard stick for assessing politeness.
Self-Schemas & Processing Information

• When a particular trait is central to our self-definition and we rate ourselves high on it there is a likelihood of having an elaborate & accessible self-schema containing detailed knowledge about that trait specific behaviour.

• This influences the way we process information about ourselves.

• This also exerts influence while we try to draw sense of others behaviour.
Self-Schemas & Domain Expertise

Is general knowledge about a domain a by-product of the interest induced by elaborate self-schema in a that domain?

As parents and teachers lay emphasis on a given domain, an individual develops expertise in it and then applies to themselves.

- People may also have elaborate & accessible expertise in domains where they lack self-schemas.
Self-Concept

• There may be consistency in our elaborate self-schemas.

• Circumstantial changes are observed only in the aschematic aspects.

• The self is not a unitary structure.

• Conflicting memories, attributes, beliefs, etc. can be the integral part of one’s self-concept.
Self-Concept

- Self-concept is dependent upon the current environment.

- The attributes of self-concept would change depending upon the people who are around us.

- A lonely lady working in a all-male environment may think of herself as a women.

- Generation, gender, ethnicity, etc. are dominantly realised by us when we are amidst the opposite majority.
Working Self-Concept

• It is the self at any given moment.

• It is a subset of diverse self-concepts.

• The contents of working self-concept varies from occasion to occasion.

• One may remember being friendly at one occasion and shy on another.

• The stability of the self reflects one’s enduring self-knowledge.
Working Self-Concept

- Different elements of self-knowledge are activated on different occasion making self malleable.

- Our working self-concepts emerge out of our enduring self-knowledge.

- The diversity of enduring self-knowledge is, hence, responsible for the malleability of working self-concept.
Working Self-Concept

• The variability of working self-concepts is determined by the variability, extremity, and salience of our lasting self-concepts.

• We have an enduring network of knowledge and associations.

• Different subsets of this knowledge base are selectively brought to the mind on different occasion.
• Self-concepts, beliefs, and affective reactions may get activated differently in different situations.

• This may lead to inconsistent self-concept and behaviour.
Self-Esteem

• “… A stable construct that has broad implications for the representation of self-knowledge for the cognitive strategies that people engage in when processing self-relevant information, and for their reactions to such information.”
  - Kunda (1999)

• People with high self-esteem are likely to have a clearer sense of who they are and what they are.
Organizing the Self-Knowledge

- People vary in terms of self-representation.
- One may have highly complex or less complex self-representation.
- Self-complexity determines whether a negative experience challenging one aspect of the self would spill over to other aspects of the self.
Organizing the Self-Knowledge

- Low self-complexity and interrelated aspects of the self can make one feel incompetent in all other areas if he/she fails in one area.

- High self-complexity and distinct aspects of the self restricts the failure in one area to that area itself.

- Self-complexity buffer the negative impact of stressful events.
Organizing Self-Knowledge: Self-Guides

- **Actual Self**: Self attributes, actions & accomplishments.
- **Ideal Self**: The kind of person one aspire to be.
- **Ought Self**: The kind of person one feels he/she should be.

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**Promotion Goals**: To promote one’s well-being & achieve desired rewards.

**Preventive Goals**: To avoid negative states & prevent feared outcomes.

- There are individual differences in the extent to which actual self fall short of ideal & ought self.
Focus on the ideals self makes one concentrate on the achievements and accomplishments one aspires to attain, i.e., one focuses on positive outcomes.

Awareness about short fall of ideal self leads to negative outcomes- sadness & dejection.

One tends to focus on the presence and absence of positive outcomes while trying to evaluate other’s life and planning own interpersonal tactics.
Organizing Self-Knowledge: Self-Discrepancies (Ideal Self)

- This helps evaluate, identify and remember whether other people have achieved or failed to achieve their desired outcomes.

- This, in turn, help choose interpersonal strategies that would maximize positive outcomes and minimize negative outcomes.
Organizing Self-Knowledge: Self-Discrepancies (Ought Self)

• Focus on the ought self makes one concentrate on the punishment and guilt one wishes to avoid, i.e., negative outcomes.

• Awareness about short fall of ought self leads to negative outcomes- anxiety and agitation.

• One may display a tendency to focus on the presence and absence of negative outcomes while evaluating others and identify and remember whether others have experienced or avoided misfortunes.
Organizing Self-Knowledge: Self-Discrepancies (Ought Self)

- This help choose interpersonal strategies that would minimize negative outcomes rather than choosing strategies that would maximize positive outcomes.

- Salient self-discrepancies helps determine strategies important to achieve significant interpersonal goals.
Self in Relation to Others:
Using Self to Judge Others

• While assessing others' accomplishments, one may use one's own performance as a yardstick.

• An extraordinary performance by others may have implication on one's own self-image.

• The higher one's own performance level, the lower is the evaluation of the other person.
Self in Relation to Others: Using Self to Judge Others

- Social judgment making expedites self judgment also as we spontaneously think about ourselves and our own behaviour while judging others.

- Judgments of others are based on own performance more after experiencing failure than success.
  
  - Beauregard & Dunning (1998)

- One relies on self performance while evaluating others also because such judgments can bolster the self.
Self in Relation to Others: Using Others to Judge the Self

- An outstanding performance by others who are closer can make one feel incompetent.

- One may question one’s ability and worthiness and feel demoralized and deflated.

- At times the extraordinary performance by a closer other can inspire.
Self in Relation to Others: Using Self to Judge Others

Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model

- Closeness plays an important role in comparative self-evaluation.
- Self-relevance of the domain of performance is important in self-evaluation.
- Closeness is a function of shared psychological unit.
- Similarity, family ties, shared place of origin, and factors reflecting bond between the self and the other person increase the feeling of closeness.
**Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model**

- If the domain of performance is irrelevant to self-definition, one feels good about the superior performance by others.

- This sense of goodness also comes because one doesn’t feel personally threatened from the reflected glory of others.

- E.g., If one defines oneself in terms of sports, outstanding performances of other close ones would make him/her proud of the stellar achievements in non-sports domain.
Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model

• A domain relevant to self-definition makes one question one’s own self-worth after looking at superior performance by others.

• Irrelevant domain exerts positive impact while relevant domain exerts negative impact.

• Human beings are motivated to maintain a positive self-view.

• There is a natural tendency to dispel threat.
Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model

Combating threat

Reduction in psychological closeness to the other.

Reduction in Self-relevance of the dimension.

Minimize other’s performance.
Influence of Role Models on Self

• Impact of a self-relevant outstanding performance by other is depends on whether one considers it as attainable or not.

• If the achievements of the role model seems unattainable one’s lesser achievements may discourage and elicit inferiority.

• If the achievements of the role model seems attainable one gets inspired and is motivated to work hard to achieve it.
• Different aspects of the self is involved when one derives pleasure out of achievements of others and the pleasure derived from the hope of securing comparable achievements.
Influence of Role Models on Self

- ‘I enjoy another person’s triumphs when I think of myself as part of a broader social group….; I feel good because my fellow group member made my group look good.

In contrast, I enjoy the prospect of my future triumphs when I think of myself as a unique & distinct individual; I feel good because I expect that I personally will look good.

In short, reflection boosts one’s social, collective self whereas inspiration boosts one’s personal, individualistic self.’