



Chapter Outline and Learning Objectives

The Origins and Nature of the Self-Concept

LO 5.1 Describe the self-concept and how it develops.

Cultural Influences on the Self-Concept

Functions of the Self

Self-Knowledge

LO 5.2 Explain how people use introspection, observations of their

Self-Control: The Executive Function of the Self

LO 5.3 Compare when people are likely to succeed at self-control and when they are likely to fail.

Impression Management: All the World's a Stage

LO 5.4 Describe how people portray themselves so that others will see them as they want to be seen.

Over the years there have been fantastical reports of children raised by wild animals. Some are clearly fictional, such as Rudyard Kipling's Mowgli, a child raised by wolves in India (whose story is retold in Disney's *The Jungle Book*). But some accounts appear to be true—kids who, for one reason or another, were abandoned at an early age and adopted by animals. Oxana Malaya was neglected by her alcoholic parents in the Ukraine in the 1980s and was purportedly raised by dogs until she was 7 (Grice, 2006). Marie-Angélique Memmie Le Blanc, known as the “Wild Girl of Champagne,” purportedly lived alone in the forests of France for 10 years in the 18th century (Douthwaite, 2002). When John Ssebunya was 2 or 3 years old, he fled into the jungle of Uganda after witnessing his father murder his mother. He was apparently adopted by green vervet monkeys, who fed him nuts and roots and taught him how to survive in the jungle as they did. A year later a villager came across a pack of monkeys and was shocked to see a little boy among them. She alerted other villagers and they were able to rescue John (though not before his green vervet family put up a fight and tried to protect him).

How does being raised by animals shape a human being? Obviously the kids don't learn human language or social niceties. But what about their very sense of self—who they think they are and how they define themselves? Do they view themselves as the animals that protected and cared for them? Or as a human living with animals? As we will see in this chapter, even something as basic as our self-concept is profoundly influenced by interactions with other people. It is impossible to say what kind of self-concept feral children would have had if they were never rescued and continued to live with animals, but as we will see in this chapter, such an experience would likely have had a profound effect on who they believed themselves to be.

The Origins and Nature of the Self-Concept

LO 5.1 Describe the self-concept and how it develops.

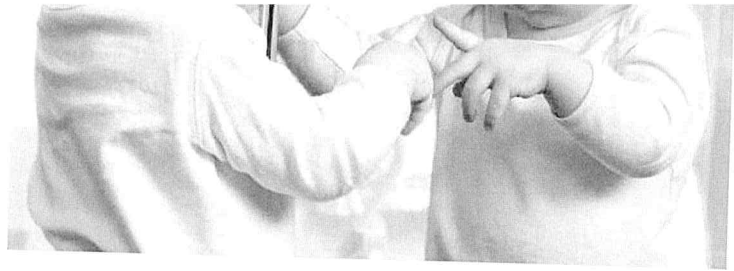
Who are you? How did you come to be this person you call “myself”? A good place to begin is with the question of whether we are the only ones who think of ourselves

self-recognition develops at around 18 to 24 months of age (Hart & Matsuba, 2012; Lewis & Ramsay, 2004; Stapel et al., 2016). Then, as we grow older, this rudimentary sense of self develops into a full-blown **self-concept**, defined as the overall set of beliefs that people have about their personal attributes. One way psychologists have studied how people's self-concept changes from childhood to adulthood is by asking people of different ages to answer the simple question "Who am I?" Typically, a child's self-concept is concrete, with references to clear-cut, easily observable characteristics like age, sex, neighborhood, and hobbies. A 9-year-old answered the question this way: "I have brown eyes. I have brown hair. I have brown eyebrows.... I'm a boy. I have an uncle that is almost 7 feet tall" (Montemayor & Eisen, 1977, p. 317).

As we mature, we place less emphasis on physical characteristics and more on psychological states (our thoughts and feelings) and on considerations of how other people judge us (Hart & Damon, 1986; Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Montemayor & Eisen, 1977). Consider this 12th-grade high school student's answer to the "Who am I?" question:

I am a human being.... I am a moody person. I am an indecisive person. I am an ambitious person. I am a very curious person. I am not an individual. I am a loner. I am an American (God help me). I am a Democrat. I am a liberal person. I am a radical. I am a conservative. I am a pseudoliberal. I am an atheist. I am not a classifiable person (i.e., I don't want to be). (Montemayor & Eisen, 1977, p. 318)

Clearly, this teenager has moved well beyond descriptions of her hobbies and appearance (Harter, 2003). What do we see as key attributes of "the self" when we are adults? To answer that question, imagine that you had a good friend when you were 20 but lost track of this person and didn't see him or her again until 40 years later. You notice that your friend has changed in cer-



Researchers have examined whether other species have a self-concept, by seeing whether individuals recognize that an image in a mirror is them and not another member of their species. The same procedure has been used with human infants.

Self-Concept

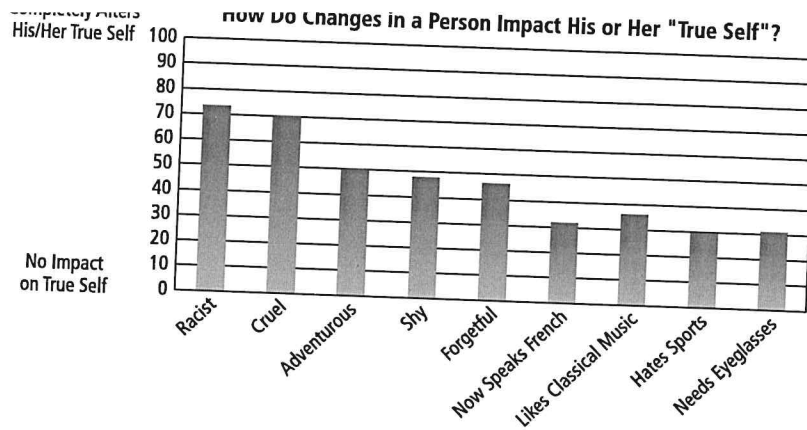
The overall set of beliefs that people have about their personal attributes

Watch

THE RED-DYE TEST WITH HUMAN TODDLERS

Independent View of the Self

A way of defining oneself in terms of one's own internal thoughts, feelings, and actions and not in terms of the thoughts, feelings, and actions of other people

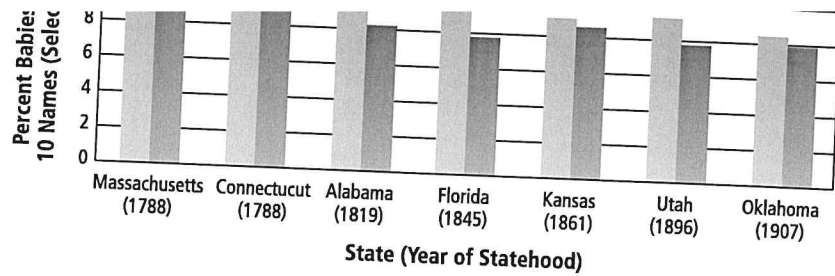


Based on Strohminger & Nichols (2014)

a moral transformation—for example, if Sahil shows signs of cruelty when he used to be kind or racist when he used to be egalitarian—we hardly recognize him as the same person (see Figure 5.1). In short, morality is viewed as central to the self-concept, more so than cognitive processes or desires (Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014; Strohminger & Nichols, 2014).

Cultural Influences on the Self-Concept

An important influence on our self-concept is the culture in which we grew up. Consider Masako Owada, the crown princess of Japan. When she married Crown Prince Naruhito in June 1993, at age 29, she was a brilliant career diplomat in the Foreign Ministry, educated at Harvard and Oxford. She spoke five languages and was on the fast track to a prestigious job as a diplomat. Her decision to marry the prince surprised many observers because it meant she would have to give up her career. Indeed, she gave up any semblance of an independent life, becoming subservient to the prince and the rest of the royal family and spending much of her time participating in rigid royal ceremonies. Although some people believe that



to do that in states such as Oklahoma than they are in states such as Connecticut (see Figure 5.2). The same difference was found in recently settled versus older areas of Canada (Varnum & Kitayama, 2011).

Nonetheless, the difference between the Western and Eastern sense of self is real and has interesting consequences for communication between the cultures. Indeed, the differences in the sense of self are so fundamental that it is difficult for people with independent selves to appreciate what it is like to have an interdependent self and vice versa. After giving a lecture on the Western view of the self to a group of Japanese students, one psychologist reported that the students “sighed deeply and said at the end, ‘Could this really be true?’” (Kitayama & Markus, 1994, p. 18). To paraphrase William Shakespeare, in Western society the self is the measure of all things. But however natural we consider this conception of the self to be, it is important to remember that it is socially constructed and therefore may differ from culture to culture.

Functions of the Self

What exactly does the self do? There are four main functions: *self-knowledge* is the way we understand who we are and formulate and organize this information; *self-control* is the way we make plans and execute decisions, such as your decision to read this book right now instead of going out for ice cream; *impression management* is the way we present ourselves to other people and get them to see us the way we want to be seen; and *self-esteem* is the way in which we try to maintain positive views of ourselves. For

Self-Knowledge

LO 5.2 Explain how people use introspection, observations of their own behavior, or other people to know themselves.

We've seen that the culture in which people grow up helps shape their self-concept. But how exactly do we come to know who we are and why we do what we do? Social psychologists have uncovered some interesting sources of self-knowledge that may not be all that obvious. Other people, for example, are an important source of information about who we are. But we'll begin with what might seem like a more straightforward source of self-knowledge: introspection.

Knowing Ourselves Through Introspection

Have you ever stopped for a moment to think about how you really felt about something, such as what you want to major in? Or wondered why you do what you do, such as why you binge watched the latest *Netflix* drama instead of studying for your psychology test? If so, you were using **introspection**, which is looking inward to examine the "inside information" that we—and we alone—have about our thoughts, feelings, and motives. One of the most amazing things about the human mind is that we can use it to examine ourselves.

As useful as introspection can be, however, it is by no means perfect. For one thing, it is not always pleasant to be thinking about ourselves, and for another, the reasons for our feelings and behavior can be hidden from conscious awareness. Let's take a look at some of the consequences and limits of introspection.

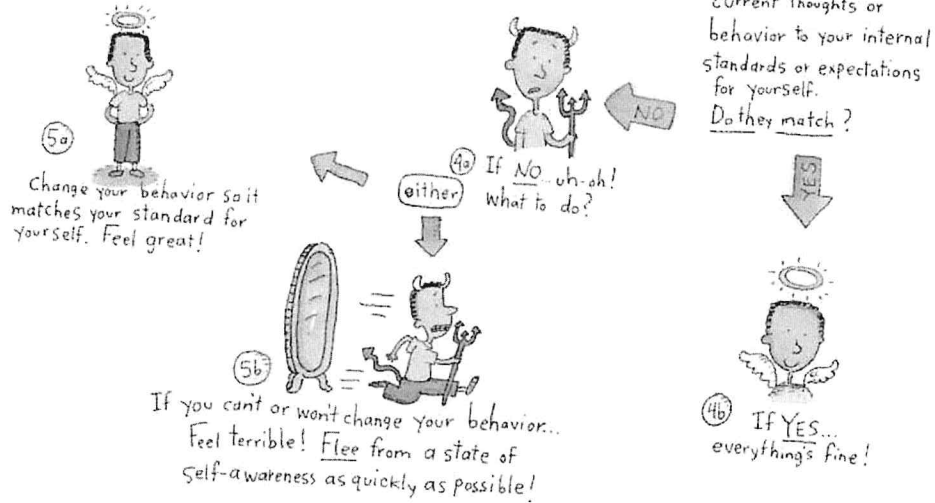
FOCUSING ON THE SELF: SELF-AWARENESS THEORY Sometimes our thoughts naturally turn inward, and we think about ourselves. At other times this happens because of external circumstances, such as seeing ourselves in a mirror or in a video that a friend just took of us on her phone. When this happens, we are in a state of self-awareness. According to **self-awareness theory**, when we are focused on ourselves, we evaluate and compare our current behavior to some internal standard.

Introspection

The process whereby people look inward and examine their own thoughts, feelings, and motives

Self-Awareness Theory

↳ You come across a self-focusing cue in the environment (eg. a mirror, a camera, or an audience).



more often people said they were thinking about themselves, the more likely they were to be in a bad mood (Mor et al., 2010). Figure 5.3 illustrates how self-awareness makes us conscious of our internal standards and directs our subsequent behavior.

When people are in a negative state of self-awareness, they often try to escape this state by, for example, avoiding looking at pictures of themselves on their friends' Facebook pages. Sometimes people go even further in their attempt to escape the self. Abusing alcohol, for example, temporarily diverts negative thoughts about oneself and even binge eating and sexual masochism can be effective, albeit dangerous, ways of turning off one's internal spotlight (Baumeister, 1991). The fact that people regularly engage in such dangerous behaviors, despite their risks, is an indication of how aversive self-focus

1. I'm always trying to figure myself out.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Generally, I'm not very aware of myself.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I reflect about myself a lot.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I'm often the subject of my own fantasies.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I never scrutinize myself.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I'm constantly examining my motives.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I sometimes have the feeling that I'm off somewhere watching myself.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I'm alert to changes in my mood.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I'm aware of the way my mind works when I work through a problem.	1	2	3	4	5

See below for scoring instructions. (Adapted from Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975)

Reverse your answers to questions 2 and 5. If you answered 1 to these questions, change it to a 5; if you answered 2, change it to a 4; and so on. Then add your ratings for all 10 questions. The higher your score, the more likely you are to focus your attention on yourself. Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss (1975) found that the average score was 26 in a sample of college students.

to avoid it. At other times, however—such as when that little devil is on your shoulder pushing you into temptation—a dose of self-awareness is not such a bad thing because it makes you more aware of your morals and ideals. How self-aware do you tend to be? Complete the Try It! given above to find out.

JUDGING WHY WE FEEL THE WAY WE DO: TELLING MORE THAN WE CAN KNOW Another function of introspection is trying to figure out *why* we feel the way we do. The problem is that knowing why is not so easy. Imagine trying to decide why you love someone. Being in love typically makes you feel giddy, euphoric, and preoccupied; in fact, the ancient Greeks thought love was a sickness. But what causes you to feel this way? We know it's not just the person we're in love with. It's also our hormones, our brain chemistry, and our environment. But what causes you to feel this way? We know it's not just the person we're in love with. It's also our hormones, our brain chemistry, and our environment.

estimated how much their moods were related to these other variables. An analysis of the data showed that in many cases people's estimates were wrong. For example, most people believed that the amount of sleep they got predicted how good a mood they were in the next day when in fact this wasn't true: The amount of sleep was unrelated to people's moods. People weren't clueless; most knew, for example, that how well they were getting along with their friends was a good predictor of their mood. But overall, people weren't all that accurate in knowing what predicted their moods (Johansson et al., 2005; Wegner, 2002; T. D. Wilson, 2002).

Why not? It turned out that participants were relying on their **causal theories** about mood. People have many theories about what influences their feelings and behavior (e.g., "My mood should be affected by how much sleep I got last night") and often use these theories to help them explain why they feel the way they do (e.g., "I'm in a bad mood; I'll bet the fact that I got only 6 hours of sleep last night has a lot to do with it"). We learn many of these theories from the culture in which we grow up—ideas such as "absence makes the heart grow fonder" and that people are "blue" on Mondays. The only problem is that, as discussed in Chapter 3, our schemas and theories are not always correct and thus can lead to incorrect judgments about the causes of our actions.

We do not mean to imply that people rely solely on their causal theories when introspecting about the reasons for their feelings and behaviors. In addition to culturally learned causal theories, people have a great deal of information about themselves, such as how they have responded in the past and what they happen to have been thinking about before making a choice (Andersen, 1984; T. D. Wilson, 2002). The fact remains, however, that introspecting about our past actions and current thoughts does not always yield the right answer about why we feel the way we do (Hassin, 2013; Wilson & Bar-Anan, 2008).

Knowing Ourselves by Observing Our Own Behavior

If introspection doesn't always reveal who we are or why we do what we do, how

Causal Theories

Theories about the causes of one's own feelings and behaviors; often we learn such theories from our culture (e.g., "absence makes the heart grow fonder")

partner and not you who turned to the station playing Beethoven, you are unlikely to conclude that you listen to classical music in your car because you like it.

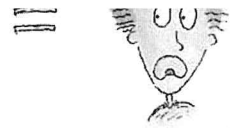
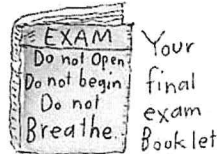
Sound familiar? In Chapter 4, we discussed attribution theory—the way in which people infer someone else’s attitudes and feelings by observing that person’s behavior. According to self-perception theory, people use the same attributional principles to infer their own attitudes and feelings. For example, if you were trying to decide whether a friend likes classical music, you would observe her behavior and explain why she behaved that way. You might notice, for example, that she is always listening to classical music in the absence of any situational pressures or constraints—no one makes her play Mozart on her smartphone. You would make an internal attribution for her behavior and conclude that she likes Mozart. Self-perception theory says that we infer our own feelings in the same way: We observe our behavior and explain it to ourselves; that is, we make an attribution about why we behaved that way (Aucouturier et al., 2016; Schrifft & Parker, 2014; Olson & Stone, 2005; T. D. Wilson, 2002). In fact, it is not only attitudes and preferences that we infer from our behavior—we also infer our emotions, as we will now see.

UNDERSTANDING OUR EMOTIONS: THE TWO-FACTOR THEORY OF EMOTION

How do you know which emotion you are experiencing at any given time? Is it fear or elation? This question probably sounds kind of silly: Don’t we know how we feel without having to think about it? Not necessarily. The way in which we experience emotions has a lot in common with the kinds of self-perception processes we just discussed.

Stanley Schachter (1964) proposed a theory of emotion that says we infer what our emotions are in the same way we infer what kind of person we are or what we like. In each case, we observe our behavior and then explain to ourselves why we are behaving that way. The only difference in these types of inferences is the kind of behavior we observe. Schachter says we observe our internal behaviors—how physiologically aroused we feel. If we feel aroused, we then try to figure out what is causing this arousal. For example, suppose you go for a 3-mile run one day and are walking back to your apartment. You go around a corner and nearly walk right into an extremely attractive person from your psychology class whom you are just getting to know. You

not sure why... what's going on?



been given some of the same vitamin compound. The experimenter gives each of you a questionnaire to fill out, saying he will return in a little while to give you the vision tests.

You look at the questionnaire and notice that it contains some highly personal and insulting questions. For example, one question asks, "With how many men (other than your father) has your mother had extramarital relationships?" (Schachter & Singer, 1962, p. 385). The other participant reacts angrily to these offensive questions, becoming more and more furious, until he finally tears up his questionnaire, throws it on the floor, and stomps out of the room. How do you think you would feel? Would you feel angry as well?

As you've probably guessed, the real purpose of this experiment was not to test

received epinephrine that the injection would increase their heart rate, make their face feel warm and flushed, and cause their hands to shake slightly. When people actually began to feel this way, they inferred that it was not because they were angry but because the drug was taking effect. As a result, these participants did not react angrily to the questionnaire.

Second, Schachter and Singer showed that they could make participants experience a very different emotion by changing the most plausible explanation for their arousal. In another condition, participants received the epinephrine but did not get the insulting questionnaire, and the accomplice did not respond angrily. Instead, the accomplice acted in a euphoric, devil-may-care fashion, playing basketball with rolled-up pieces of paper, making paper airplanes, and playing with a hula hoop he found in the corner. How did the participants respond? Now they inferred that they must be feeling happy and euphoric and often joined in on the fun.

The Schachter and Singer experiment has become one of the most famous studies in social psychology because it shows that emotions can be the result of a self-perception process: People look for the most plausible explanation for their arousal. Sometimes the most plausible explanation is not the right one, and so people end up experiencing a mistaken emotion. The people who became angry or euphoric in the Schachter and Singer (1962) study did so because they felt aroused and thought this arousal was due to the obnoxious questionnaire or to the infectious, happy-go-lucky behavior of the accomplice. The real cause of their arousal, the epinephrine, was hidden from them, so they relied on situational cues to explain their behavior.

FINDING THE WRONG CAUSE: MISATTRIBUTION OF AROUSAL Do people form mistaken emotions in their everyday lives in the same way as participants did in the Schachter and Singer (1962) study? In everyday life, one might argue, people usually know why they are aroused. If a mugger points a gun at us and says, "Give me your wallet!" we feel aroused and correctly identify this arousal as fear. If our heart is thumping while we walk on a deserted moonlit beach with the man or woman of our dreams, we correctly label this arousal as love or sexual attraction.

In many everyday situations, however, there is more than one plausible cause for our arousal, and it is difficult to identify how much of the arousal is due to one source or another. Imagine that you go to see a scary movie with an attractive person sitting



When people are aroused for one reason, such as occurs when they cross a scary bridge, they often attribute this arousal to the wrong source—such as attraction to the person they are with.

catch the bridge and make it wobble from side to side. This is a scary experience, and most people who cross the bridge become more than a little aroused—their heart pounds against their chest, they breathe rapidly, and they begin to perspire. It was at this point that the attractive woman approached a man on the bridge and asked him to fill out her questionnaire. How attracted do you think the men in this condition felt toward her?

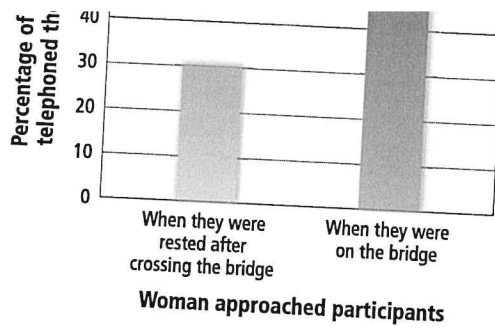
In another condition, the woman waited until men had crossed the bridge and rested for a while on a bench in the park before approaching them. They had a chance to calm down—their hearts were no longer pounding, and their breathing rate had returned to normal. They were peacefully admiring the scenery when the woman asked them to fill out her questionnaire. How attracted were these men to the woman?

Schachter's two-factor theory would predict that in comparison to those sit-

you think the men were to this woman? Would they telephone her and ask for a date?

This is a hard question to answer. Undoubtedly, it depends on whether the men were involved with someone else, how busy they were, and so on. It might also depend, however, on how they interpreted any bodily symptoms they were experiencing. If they were aroused for some extraneous reason, they might mistakenly think that some of the arousal was the result of attraction to the young woman. To test this idea, Dutton and Aron (1974) had the woman approach males in the park under two different circumstances.

In one condition, the men were walking across a 450-foot-long suspension bridge that spanned a deep canyon. The bridge was made of wooden planks attached to wire cables, and as they walked across, they had to stoop to hold on to the low handrail. A little way out over the canyon, the wind tended to

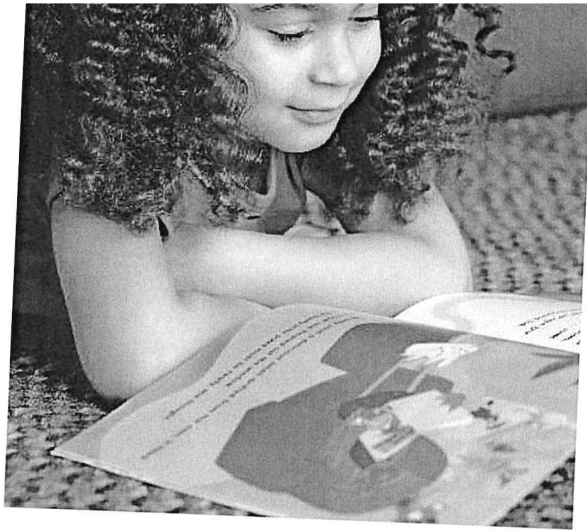


under which that behavior occurs. This includes observations of their outward behavior (e.g., whether they freely chose to listen to classical music on the radio) as well as their bodily responses (e.g., whether their heart is thumping when talking with a stranger). We turn now to another example of self-perception, namely inferring our motives.

INTRINSIC VERSUS EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION So far we've seen that people use their own behavior as an important source of information about their attitudes and emotions. We turn now to people's attributions about their motivation. Do people think they are performing an activity because they are intrinsically interested in it, for example, or because they stand to gain something (e.g. money) by doing it? And why does this matter?

Questions about what motivates people to do what they do are important in many domains, including education. Imagine, for example, that you are an elementary school teacher who wants your students to develop a love of reading. Not only do you want your students to read more, but you also want them to develop a love of books. How might you go about accomplishing this? It is not going to be easy because so many other things compete for your students' attention, such as television, video games, and social media.

If you are like me...



Many programs try to get children to read more by rewarding them. But do these programs increase or decrease a child's love of reading?

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 or pressures, not because we enjoy the task or find it interesting

Overjustification Effect

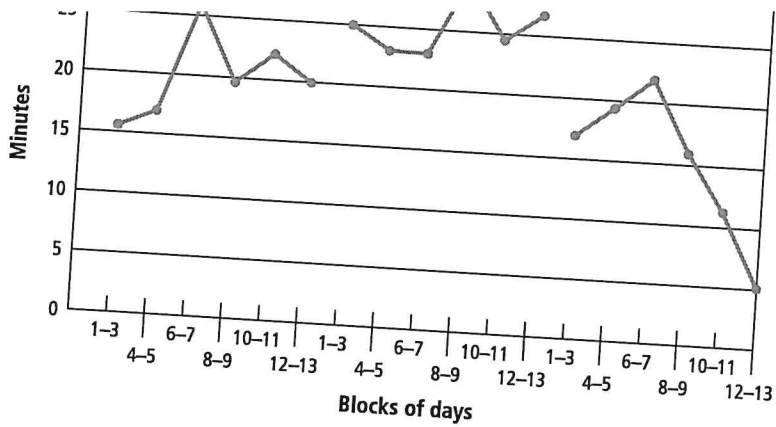
...ing the danger of reward programs such as Book It! is the very self-perception process we have discussed. Kids may infer that they are reading to earn something, not because they find reading to be an enjoyable activity in its own right. When the reward programs end and pizzas are no longer forthcoming, children may actually read less than they did before.

This is especially likely to happen to children who already liked to read. Such children have high **intrinsic motivation**: the desire to engage in an activity because they enjoy it or find it interesting, not because of external rewards or pressures (Deci, 2016; Harackiewicz & Elliot, 1993, 1998; Harackiewicz & Hulleman, 2010; Hirt et al., 1996; Hulleman et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Their reasons for engaging in the activity have to do with themselves—the enjoyment and pleasure they feel when reading a book. In other words, reading is play, not work.

What happens when the children start getting rewards for reading? Their reading, originally stemming from intrinsic motivation, is now also spurred by **extrinsic motivation**, which is people's desire to engage in an activity because of external rewards or pressures, not because they enjoy the task or find it interesting.

According to self-perception theory, in such situations people often assume that they are motivated by the rewards and not their intrinsic interest. That is, children who liked to read at the outset now assume that they are cracking open books only to get the reward. The unfortunate consequence is that rewards can make people lose interest in activities they initially enjoyed. This is called the **overjustification effect**, which results when people view their behavior as caused by compelling extrinsic reasons, such as a reward, making them underestimate the extent to which their behavior was caused by intrinsic reasons (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999a, 1999b; Harackiewicz, 1979; Lepper, 1995; Warneken & Tomasello, 2014).

In one study, for example, fourth- and fifth-grade teachers introduced four new math games to their students, and during a 13-day baseline period they noted how



destroyed the children's intrinsic interest in the games so that by the end of the study, they were hardly playing the games at all (Greene, Sternberg, & Lepper, 1976).

It's not just in schools where this undermining of intrinsic interest can play out. What about professional athletes who are rewarded for high performance with lucrative contracts? Mark White and Ken Sheldon (2014) compared the performance of NBA basketball players and major league baseball players the year before their contracts expired, the year their contracts was being renegotiated, and the year after they were awarded new contracts. During the year contracts were being renegotiated players did better than they had previously, perhaps because extrinsic rewards were quite salient to them—the better they did, the more money they could get. But the following year—after their new contract had been awarded—performance tended to fall below what it had been each of the previous two years. NBA players, for example, had a higher scoring average during the contract year than the previous year, but their lowest scoring average came the next year after they had gotten the big contract. We can't be sure from a correlational study such as this one, but the findings are consistent with the idea that rewards can undermine people's intrinsic motivation after those rewards are no longer available.

intelligence

effort

Claro, 2010). Thus, rather than giving kids a reward simply for playing math games—a task-contingent reward—it is better to give them a reward for doing *well* in math—a performance-contingent reward. Performance-contingent rewards

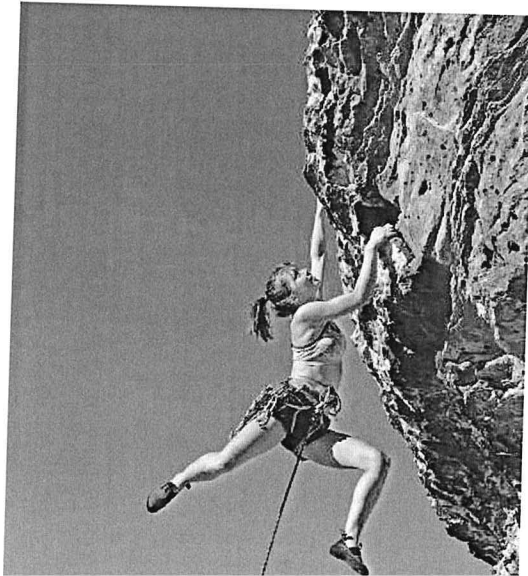
Fixed Mindset

The idea that we have a set amount of an ability that cannot change

Growth Mindset

The idea that achievement is the result of hard work, trying new strategies, and seeking input from others

must be used with care, however, because they too can backfire. Even though they convey positive feedback, these types of rewards can put pressure on people by making them feel evaluated, which makes it harder for them to do well and lowers their intrinsic interest in the activity (Harackiewicz, 1989; Harackiewicz, Manderlink, & Sansone, 1984). The trick is to convey positive feedback without putting extra pressure on people by making them feel nervous and apprehensive about being evaluated.



MINDSETS AND MOTIVATION There is another way in which people's self-perceptions influence their motivations, and that is the way in which they perceive their own abilities. Some people believe that their abilities are set in stone; they either have them or they do not. Psychologist Carol Dweck (2006) calls this a **fixed mindset**—the idea that we have a set amount of an ability that cannot change. According to this view, we have a fixed amount of intelligence, athletic ability, musical talent, and so on. Other people have a **growth mindset**, which is the belief that achievement is the result of hard work, trying new strategies, and seeking input from others. Research shows that the mindset people have is crucial to their success: People with the fixed mindset are more likely to give up after setbacks and are less likely to work on and hone their skills; after all, if they fail, it must be a sign that they simply don't have what it takes. People with the growth mindset view setbacks as opportunities to improve through hard work (Claro, Paunesku, & Dweck, 2016).

Mindsets are important not only to athletic performance but also to

...do they simply don't have what it takes to do well (a fixed mindset). But can a growth mindset be taught in a standardized way to large groups of students?

To find out, David Yeager and colleagues (2016) conducted an ambitious study in nine different middle schools with more than 3,000 ninth graders. Half of the students were randomly assigned to complete a growth mindset learning module in their computer classrooms on two different occasions a week apart. The module explained what a growth mindset was and emphasized the importance of effort, developing new strategies, and asking for help with academic material. This message was reinforced with stories about other students' experiences,

As the researchers predicted, the mindset intervention had no effect on high performing students, because they were already doing well in their classes. But as the researchers also predicted, the intervention helped low-achieving students. Compared to those in the control condition, low-achieving students who got the growth mindset modules showed a greater improvement in their grades. The difference was small; for example, the growth mindset module reduced the percentage of low-performing students who received Ds or Fs from 46% to 39%. But the fact that such an inexpensive and brief intervention—completing a computer learning module on two occasions—had any effect is encouraging.

Using Other People to Know Ourselves

The self-concept does not develop in a solitary context but is shaped by the people around us. If we never interacted with other people—like a feral child raised by animals—our own image would be a blur because we would not see ourselves as having selves distinct from those of others. Remember the mirror and red-dye test we discussed earlier, used to determine if animals have a self-concept? Variations of this test have been used to show that social contact is indeed crucial to the development of a self-concept. Gordon Gallup (1997) compared the behavior of chimpanzees raised in normal family groupings with that of chimps who were raised alone in complete social isolation. The socially experienced chimps “passed” the mirror test. However, the socially isolated chimps did not react to their reflections at all; they did not recognize themselves in the mirror, suggesting that they had not developed a sense of self.

KNOWING OURSELVES BY COMPARING OURSELVES TO OTHERS How do we use others to define ourselves? One way is to measure our own abilities and attitudes by seeing how we stack up against other people. Suppose you work in an office that subscribes to a charity fund. You can deduct from your payroll

... to motivate why these goals matter, suppose that it is the first day of your college Spanish class and you are wondering about your abilities and how well you will do in the class. With whom should you compare yourself: a student who mentions that she lived in Spain for 2 years, a student who has never studied Spanish before, or a student who has a similar background to yours? If your goal is to get the most accurate assessment of your abilities, then it makes sense to compare yourself to the one with the most similar background (Goethals & Darley, 1977; C. T. Miller, 1982; Suls, Martin, & Wheeler, 2000). If the student with a similar background in Spanish is doing well in the class, you probably will too (Thornton & Arrowood, 1966; Wheeler, Koestner, & Driver, 1982).

Upward Social Comparison

Comparing ourselves to people who are better than we are with regard to a particular trait or ability

Downward Social Comparison

Comparing ourselves to people who are worse than we are with regard to a particular trait or ability

If your goal is to know what excellence is—the top level to which you can aspire—you are likely to engage in **upward social comparison**, which is comparing yourself to people who are better than you are with regard to a particular trait or ability—namely, the student who lived in Spain for 2 years (C. Johnson, 2012). A problem with upward social comparison, however, is that it can be dispiriting, making us feel inferior. We'll never learn the language like that student who studied in Spain! (Beer, Chester, & Hughes, 2013; Normand & Croizet, 2013; Ratliff & Oishi, 2013). If our goal is to feel good about ourselves and boost our egos, then we are better off engaging in **downward social comparison**—comparing ourselves to people who are worse than we are with regard to a particular trait or ability (Arigo, Suls, & Smyth, 2014; Aspinwall & Taylor, 1993; Wehrens et al., 2010). That is, if you compare your performance in the class to that of the student who is taking Spanish for the first time, you will likely feel good about your own abilities. As another example, when interviewed by researchers, the vast majority of patients with cancer spontaneously compared themselves to other patients who were more ill than they were, presumably as a way of making themselves feel more optimistic about the course of their own disease (Wood, Taylor, & Lichtman, 1985).

Another way we can feel better about ourselves is to compare our current performance with our own past performance. In a sense, people use downward social comparison here as well, though the point of comparison is a “past self,” not someone else. In one study, people made themselves feel better by comparing their current self with a past self who was worse off. One student, for example, said that her “college self” was more outgoing and sociable than her “high school self.”

at least under certain conditions. Charles Cooley (1902) called this the “looking glass self,” by which he meant that we see ourselves and the social world through the eyes of other people and often adopt those views. According to recent research, this is especially true when two people want to get along with each other (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Huntsinger & Sinclair, 2010; Shteynberg, 2010; Skorinko & Sinclair, 2013). If a close friend thinks that *Game of Thrones* is the best television show ever made, you will probably like it as well.

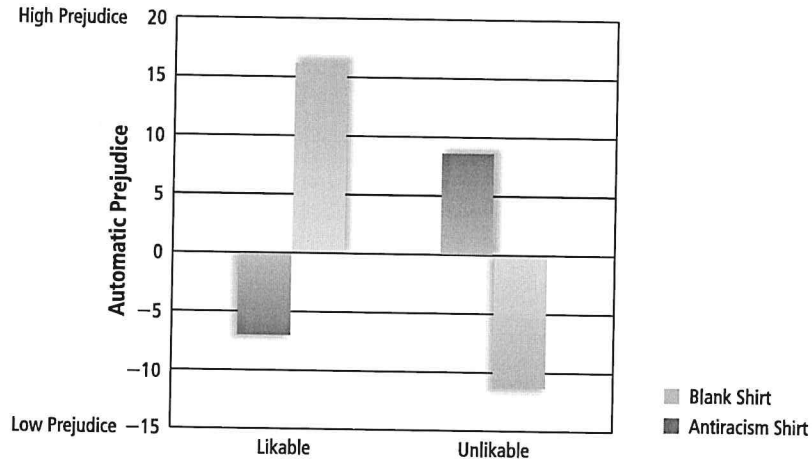
Perhaps it seems obvious that friends influence what each other thinks. What is surprising, however, is that such **social tuning**—the process whereby people adopt another person’s attitudes—can happen even when we meet someone for the first time, if we want to get along with that person. And, social tuning can happen unconsciously. Consider, for example, a study by Stacey Sinclair and her colleagues (Sinclair et al., 2005). College students took part individually, and half of the time the experimenter wore a T-shirt that expressed antiracism views (“eracism”) and half of the time she did not. The question was, did the participants unconsciously “tune” their views to the experimenter, such that they adopted her anti-racist views when she was wearing the “eracism” T-shirt?

The researchers hypothesized that this would only occur when participants liked the experimenter and wanted to get along with her. To find out, they varied how likeable the experimenter was. In the likable condition she thanked students for participating and offered them some candy from a bowl, whereas in the unlikable condition she pushed the bowl of candy to the side and exclaimed, “Just ignore this; some of the experimenters in my lab like to give subjects candy for their participation, but I think you are lucky just to get credit” (Sinclair et al., 2005, p. 588). Thus, to reiterate, half of the time the experimenter wore the “eracism” T-shirt and half the time she did not. And, in each of those conditions, she was likeable half of the time and unlikeable the other half.

The next step was to measure whether participants unconsciously adopted the experimenters’ anti-racist views when she wore the eracism T-shirt. To do so, the researchers administered a test of automatic prejudice on a computer. The details of this test need not concern us here; we will discuss such tests in Chapters 7 and 13.

Social Tuning

The process whereby people adopt another person’s attitudes



Review Questions

- When people focus attention on themselves, they
 - evaluate and compare their behavior to their internal standards and values.
 - are less likely to drink alcohol or engage in binge eating.
 - are less likely to follow their moral standards.
 - almost always like what they see about themselves.
- Suppose that your friend Meghan says, "If I get less than 8 hours of sleep, I'm in a terrible mood the next day." Based on research in social psychology, what is the best conclusion about her statement?
 - She is probably right because people generally know why they feel the way they do.
 - She is probably wrong because people rarely know
- Suppose you are a parent and want your children to do well in school. Which of the following is likely to work the best?
 - Tell them that they were born with a lot of academic talent.
 - Tell them that academic ability is something that they can cultivate and grow if they work hard.
 - When they are young, give them money for every book they read.
 - Tell them that intelligence is inherited and that there is a lot of it in your family.
- Under which of the following conditions is Khalid most likely to feel the romantic attraction toward Heather?
 - Khalid isn't sure whether he wants to

Self-Control: The Executive Function of the Self

LO 5.3 Compare when people are likely to succeed at self-control and when they are likely to fail.

Is there something you would rather be doing right now than reading this book? Go ahead, admit it: you would just as soon be hanging out with your friends, watching something on *Netflix*, or taking a nap. Still there? If so, then you are exerting **self-control**, which is the ability to subdue immediate desires (e.g., to take a nap) to achieve long-term goals (e.g., finish this chapter and do well in your class).

An important function of the self is to be the chief executive who sets goals and makes choices about what to do in the present and in the future (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Kotabe & Hoffmann, 2015; Mischel, Zeiss, & Ebbesen, 1972; Vohs & Baumeister, 2011). We appear to be the only species, for example, that can imagine events that have not yet occurred and engage in long-term planning, and it is the self that does this planning and exerts control over our actions (Gilbert, 2006; Gilbert & Wilson, 2007). Sometimes this is easy because the path to our goal is clear and easy to achieve. But more often it's hard, because to get what we want (e.g., a good grade in a class) we need to avoid short-term pleasures that would get in the way (e.g., those *Netflix* videos). Regulating our behavior and choices in optimal ways is often easier said than done, as anyone who has been on a diet or quit a bad habit knows. But take heart, social psychologists have identified some strategies that can improve self-control.

Let's first take a look at what *doesn't* work. It is not helpful to avoid temptations simply by trying not to think about them. In fact, the more we try not to think about something, such as an ex-boyfriend or the ice cream beckoning from the freezer, the more those very thoughts keep coming to mind (Baird et al., 2013; Wegner, 1992, 1994). Second, it doesn't work well simply to focus on the long-term goal and how important it is to us (Webb & Sherran, 2006). Well, then, what does work?

First, it helps to form specific **implementation intentions** in advance of a situation

Self-Control

The ability to subdue immediate desires to achieve long-term goals

Implementation Intentions

...on a second task (try not to laugh while watching a comedy film) as compared to people who did not first have to suppress their thoughts (Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998). Although the tasks were quite different, the researchers suggest that the first one depleted the resource that people use to control their behaviors and feelings, making it difficult to engage in a subsequent act of self-control.

Although several studies have demonstrated this “depletion effect,” researchers recently failed to replicate one of them and a lively controversy has ensued over whether spending energy on one self-control task really does make it harder to engage in a subsequent self-control task (Baumeister & Vohs, 2016; Carter et al., 2015; Cunningham & Baumeister, 2016; Dang, 2016; Hagger et al., 2016). Undoubtedly more replication projects will be done to resolve this controversy.

Meanwhile, we can say with more certainty that it matters how much people *believe* that willpower is a limited resource that is easily depleted (Egan, Hirt, & Karpen, 2012). People who believe that willpower is an unlimited resource are better able to keep going and avoid being depleted by a difficult task, as long as the task is not too demanding (Clarkson et al., 2016; Job et al., 2015; Job, Dweck, & Walton, 2010; Vohs, Baumeister, & Schmeichel, 2012). So, if your goal is to finish this chapter and do well on your next psychology test, despite other temptations, try to adopt the belief that you have all the energy you need to do so.

Review Questions

1. One afternoon at work Rachel has a meeting with her boss, who is wearing the silliest-looking outfit Rachel has ever seen. Rachel is tempted to laugh and make fun of her boss, but she knows this would be a bad idea. Under which of the following conditions would Rachel be most likely to resist the temptation to make fun of her boss?
 - a. Rachel spent all morning writing a difficult report and believes that willpower is a limited resource.
 - b. Rachel spent all morning writing a difficult report and believes that willpower is an unlimited resource.
 - c. It's the afternoon, and Eduardo has had a busy morning.
 - d. Eduardo believes that willpower is a fixed resource and that people have a limited amount of it.
 - e. Eduardo went to the gym that morning and had a good workout.
 - f. Eduardo went to the gym that morning and had a good workout, but he believes that willpower is a limited resource.

... , similarity of us as us by posing untruthful pictures of ourselves on Instagram or Facebook, or drawing attention to ourselves with clever Tweets. But few go to the extremes that some politicians have. In 1991, for example, David Duke decided to run for governor of Louisiana as a mainstream conservative Republican. He had some obstacles to overcome in convincing people to vote for him because for most of his adult life he had been a White supremacist and an anti-Semite who in 1989 had sold Nazi literature from his office (Applebome, 1991). To improve his appeal, he claimed that he no longer supported Nazi ideology or the Ku Klux Klan, of which he had been a leader (or "grand wizard") in the 1970s. He also tried to improve his appearance by undergoing facial cosmetic surgery. Duke's campaign rhetoric didn't fool too many Louisiana voters. They perceived the same racist message disguised in new clothes, and he was defeated by the Democratic candidate Edwin Edwards. In 2003, he was sentenced to 15 months in federal prison for allegedly using funds raised from supporters for personal investments and gambling (Murr & Smalley, 2003).

Though few politicians attempt as extreme a makeover as David Duke did, managing public opinion is hardly a new concept in politics, or, for that matter, among celebrities of all stripes. Selena Gomez and Miley Cyrus, for example, transformed themselves from child actor on kids' television shows to mature pop stars. And, as noted previously, all of us attempt to put the best possible spin on our actions and manage the impressions others have of us, both on social media and in our everyday lives. As Erving Goffman (1959) pointed out, we are all like stage actors who are trying our best to convince the "audience" (the people around us) that we are a certain way, even if we really are not.





Ingratiation

The process whereby people flatter, praise, and generally try to make themselves likable to another person, often of higher status

Self-Handicapping

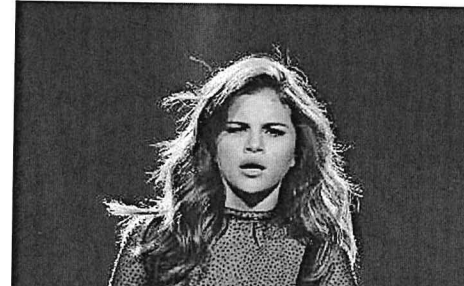
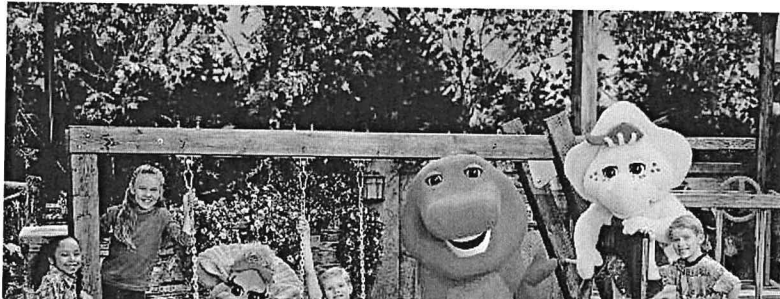
The strategy whereby people create obstacles and excuses for themselves so that if they do poorly on a task, they can avoid blaming themselves

ideas, by commiserating and offering sympathy, and so on. If your boss drones on at a staff meeting, nearly putting the entire office to sleep, and you say, "Great job today, Sue. Loved your presentation," you are probably ingratiating. Ingratiation

is a powerful technique because we all enjoy having someone be nice to us—which is what the ingratiator is good at. However, such a ploy can backfire if the recipient of your ingratiation senses that you're being insincere (Jones, 1964; Kauffman & Steiner, 1968).

The strategy that has attracted the most research attention is **self-handicapping**. In this case, people create obstacles and excuses for themselves so that if they do poorly on a task, they can avoid blaming themselves. Doing poorly or failing at a task is damaging to your self-esteem. In fact, just doing less well than you expected or than you have in the past can be upsetting, even if it is a good performance. How can you prevent this disappointment? Self-handicapping is a rather surprising solution: You can set up excuses before the fact, just in case you do poorly (Schwinger et al., 2014; Snyder et al., 2014; Wusik & Axsom, 2016).

Let's say it's the night before the final exam in one of your courses. It's a difficult course, required for your major, and one in which you'd really like to do well. A sensible strategy would be to eat a good dinner, study intensively, and then go to bed early and get a good night's sleep. The self-handicapping strategy would be to blow off



include drugs, alcohol, reduced effort on a task, and failure to prepare for an important event (Deppe & Harackiewicz, 1996; Lupien, Seery, & Almonte, 2010). Interestingly, research shows that men are more likely to engage in behavioral self-handicapping than are women (Hirt & McCrea, 2009; McCrea, Hirt, & Milner, 2008).

The second type, called *reported self-handicapping*, is less extreme. Rather than creating obstacles to success, people devise ready-made excuses in case they fail (Eyink, Hirt, Hendrix, & Galante, 2017; Hendrix & Hirt, 2009). We might not go out partying before an important exam, but we might complain that we are not feeling well. People can arm themselves with all kinds of excuses: They blame their shyness, test anxiety, bad moods, physical symptoms, and adverse events from their past.

A problem with preparing ourselves with excuses in advance, however, is that we may come to believe these excuses and hence exert less effort on the task. Why work hard at something if you are going to do poorly anyway? Self-handicapping may prevent unflattering attributions for our failures, but it often has the perverse effect of causing the poor performance we feared to begin with. Further, even if self-handicappers avoid unflattering attributions about their performance (e.g., people thinking they aren't smart), they risk being disliked by their peers. People do not like others whom they perceive as engaging in self-handicapping strategies (Hirt, McCrea, & Boris, 2003; Rhodewalt et al., 1995). Women are particularly critical of other people who self-handicap. Thus, as we saw earlier, women are less likely to engage in the kind of self-handicapping in which they put obstacles in their own way, and they are more critical of others who do so (Hirt & McCrea, 2009; McCrea, Hirt, & Milner 2008). Why? Research shows that women place more value on trying hard to achieve something than men do and thus are more critical of people who seem not to try hard and then make up excuses for doing poorly.

Culture, Impression Management, and Self-Enhancement

People in all cultures are concerned with the impression they make on others, but the nature of this concern and the impression management strategies people use differ considerably from culture to culture (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009). We have seen, for example,

... Amanda tells the 10-year-old brother of one her teammates that she likes his sneakers, which she thinks look great.

- d. The coach tells Amanda that she is a good player but should keep practicing to improve her skills.
2. Ben is worried that he will do poorly on his psychology test. Which of the following is the best example of *behavioral self-handicapping*?
- a. He spends a couple of extra hours studying, and right before the test, he tells his friends that he studied really hard.
- b. Instead of studying the night before, he stays up late watching movies on his computer. Right before the test, he tells his friends that he saw some great movies instead of studying.

self-handicapping?

- a. He spends a couple of extra hours studying, and right before the test, he tells his friends that he studied really hard.
- b. Instead of studying the night before, he stays up late watching movies on his computer. Right before the test, he tells his friends that he saw some great movies instead of studying.
- c. He spends a couple of extra hours studying. Then, right before the test, he tells his friends that he isn't feeling very well.
- d. Right before the test, Ben tells the professor that her class is the best one he's ever taken.

Summary

LO 5.1 Describe the self-concept and how it develops.

- **The Origins and Nature of the Self-Concept** Studies show that great apes such as chimpanzees and orangutans have a rudimentary sense of self because they pass the mirror self-recognition test, whereas lesser apes do not. In humans, self-recognition develops at around 18 to 24 months of age, and by adolescence the self-concept becomes much more complex. As people grow older, their sense of self develops into a full-blown *self-concept*, defined as the overall set of beliefs that people have about their personal attributes. In adulthood, people view morality as central to the self-concept, more so than in childhood.

people; and *self-esteem*, the way we feel about ourselves.

LO 5.2 Explain how people use introspection, observations of their own behavior, or other people to know themselves.

- **Self-Knowledge** How do people come to know who they are and why they do what they do?
- **Knowing Ourselves Through Introspection** One way we attempt to learn about our own feelings, motives, and emotions is with introspection, which is looking inward to examine the “inside information” that we—and we alone—have about our

intrinsic reasons. Further, some people have a *fixed mindset* about their abilities, which is the idea that they have a set amount of the ability that cannot change. Others have a *growth mindset*, the idea that their abilities are malleable qualities that they can cultivate and grow. People with a fixed mindset are more likely to give up after setbacks and are less likely to work on and hone their skills, whereas people with a growth mindset view setbacks as opportunities to improve through hard work.

- **Using Other People to Know Ourselves** Our self-concepts are shaped by the people around us. According to *social comparison theory*, we learn about our own abilities and attitudes by comparing ourselves to other people. In addition, according to research on *social tuning*, people automatically adopt the attitudes of those they like and want to interact with.

LO 5.4 Describe how people portray themselves so that others will see them as they want to be seen.

- **Impression Management: All the World's a Stage** People try to get others to see them as they want to be seen.
- **Ingratiation and Self-Handicapping** People have many different *impression management* strategies. One is *ingratiation*—using flattery or praise to make yourself likable to another, often a person of higher status. Another is *self-handicapping*, whereby people create obstacles and excuses for themselves so that if they do poorly on a task, they can avoid blaming themselves.
- **Culture, Impression Management, and Self-Enhancement** The desire to manage the image we present to others is strong in all cultures, although the kinds of images we want to present depend on the culture in which we live.

Revel Interactive

Shared Writing What Do You Think?

Based on the research you have read in this chapter, why do you think most people consider themselves to be above-average drivers?