Conceptualizing the Self and Personality

• **Personality**
  – An organized combination of attributes, motives, values, and behaviors unique to each individual…that is relatively stable over a person’s lifespan!
Conceptualizing the Self and Personality

• Personality can be described in terms of a five-factor model – THE BIG FIVE
  – Openness to experience
  – Conscientiousness
  – Extraversion
  – Agreeableness
  – Neuroticism

Conceptualizing the Self and Personality

• Our self-perceptions
  – Self-concept (What I Am)
    • Our PERCEPTION of our unique traits as a person
    • We perceive ourselves as 4 (sometimes different) selves:
      – 1. body-image - how I perceive my body and feel about it
      – 2. real self - the self that I see myself to be
      – 3. ideal self - the self I'd like to be; possible self; ought self
      – 4. social self - the ways I feel others see me
Conceptualizing the Self and Personality

- Our self-perceptions (self-understanding)
  - Self-concept (What I Am)
    - Our PERCEPTION of our unique traits as a person
  - Self-esteem (How Good I Am)
    - Our overall EVALUATION (and feeling) of our worth as a person based upon our self-concept
Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (1965)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. express opinions readily</td>
<td>1. doesn’t express views even when asked</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. listen to what others say</td>
<td>2. criticize what others say</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. initiate friendliness</td>
<td>3. avoid initiating personal contacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. cooperate well with others</td>
<td>4. monitor others in groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. accept compliments graciously</td>
<td>5. reject / qualify compliments</td>
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  - **Identity** (The Whole “Me”)
    - Our overall stable FEELING/SENSE of who we are, where we’re going and how we fit into society

Erik Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development

*explains how variations in identity can occur thru development*

1. If basic needs are met, infant develops sense of **trust**
2. If toddler acquires age-appropriate independence, will develop sense of **autonomy**
3. If child learns to initiate tasks will develop sense of **initiative**
4. If child feels competent about his behavior, he will develop sense of **competence**
5. If adolescent engages in self-exploration and role testing easily, she will develop sense of **identity**
6. If young adult seeks to form close relationships & friendships easily, he will develop sense of **intimacy**
7. If adult strives to make contributions to her world, she will develop a sense of **generativity**
8. If aged adult can reflect on life and have feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction, he will develop a sense of **integrity**.
The Infant – The Emerging Self

• Infants develop an implicit sense of self through their senses and actions
  – In the first 2 or 3 months, infants discover they can cause things to happen
  – After 6 months, infants realize they and other people are separate beings with different perspectives, ones that can be shared
    • Illustrated by joint attention

The Infant – The Emerging Self

– Around 18 months, infants recognize themselves visually as distinct individuals
  • Lewis and Brooks-Gunn (1979)
The Infant – The Emerging Self

• Infants develop a *categorical self*
  – Classify themselves into social categories based on age, sex, and other characteristics
  – What is “like me” and what is “not like me”

The Infant – Temperament

The study of infant personality has centered on dimensions of temperament

• Categories of temperament
  – Easy temperament
    • even tempered
    • typically content or happy
    • open and adaptable to new experiences
    • regular feeding and sleeping habits
    • tolerant of frustrations and discomforts
The Infant – Temperament

• **Categories of temperament**
  – Easy temperament
  – **Difficult temperament**
    • Active
    • Irritable
    • irregular in their habits
    • often react negatively (and vigorously) to changes
    • slow to adapt to new people or situations,
    • cry frequently and loudly
    • often have tantrums

• *Slow-to-warm-up temperament*
  • relatively inactive
  • somewhat moody
  • moderately regular in their daily schedules
  • slow to adapt to new people and situations
  • typically respond in mildly, rather than intensely, negative ways.
The Infant – Temperament

- Jerome Kagan identified another aspect of early temperament – **behavioral inhibition**
  - Tendency to be shy, restrained, and distressed in response to unfamiliar people and situations
  - Behavioral inhibition is biologically rooted
    - Strong brain response and high heart rates in reaction to unfamiliar stimuli

The Child – Elaborating on the Sense of Self

- Toddlers give evidence of their emerging self-concepts
  - By age 2
    - Personal pronouns *I, me, my, and mine* …and *you*
  - Toddlers show their emerging categorical selves (especially age & sex)
Morgan's Categorical Self

The Child – Elaborating on the Sense of Self

• The preschool child’s self-concept is concrete and physical
  • Rarely mention their psychological traits or inner qualities
The Child – Elaborating on the Sense of Self

- Around age 8, psychological and social qualities become prominent in self-descriptions
  - Describe their enduring qualities using personality trait terms, such as *funny* or *smart*
  - Form social identities
    - “I’m a Kimberly, a second-grader at Brookside School, a Brownie Scout.”
  - More capable of social comparison and evaluation
    - “I’m the fastest runner in my class”

The Child – Self-Esteem

- By mid-elementary school, children differentiate among five aspects of self-worth
  - Scholastic competence
  - Social acceptance
  - Behavioral conduct
  - Athletic competence
  - Physical appearance.
### The Child – Influences on Self-Esteem

- The accuracy of children’s self-evaluations increases over the elementary school years.
- Children form a sense of what they “should” be like – an **ideal self**.
- Influences on self-esteem:
  - Heredity
  - Competence
  - Social feedback
  - Secure attachment to warm, democratic parents
- High self-esteem is positively correlated with good adjustment.

### The Adolescent – Self-Conceptions

- Compared to children’s self-descriptions, those of adolescents:
  - Become less physical and more psychological
  - Become less concrete and more abstract
  - Have a more differentiated self-concept
    - Includes acceptance by a larger peer group, by close friends, and by romantic partners
    - Are more integrated and coherent
    - Recognizes and integrates inconsistencies
  - Are more self-aware and reflective
The Adolescent – Self-Esteem

- Between childhood and early adolescence self-esteem tends to decrease
  - Transition to middle or junior high school
  - Physical changes of puberty
  - Social context and social comparisons
    - Big-fish – little-pond effect occurs when the social comparisons are changed

The Adolescent – Self-Esteem

- Adolescents who experienced a decrease in self-esteem in early adolescence typically emerge with higher self-esteem!
- Adolescents with low self-esteem tend to be adults who:
  - have poorer physical and mental health
  - poorer career and financial prospects
  - higher levels of criminal behavior
The Adolescent – Forging a Sense of Identity

• Eric Erikson proposed that adolescents experience the psychosocial conflict of identity versus role confusion
  – The search for identity involves important questions
    • What kind of career do I want?
    • What religious, moral, and political values can I really call my own?
    • Who am I as a man or woman and as a sexual being?
    • Where do I fit into the world?
    • What do I really want out of my life?

• Erikson believed that identity crisis is caused by us revising our self-concept due to:
  – Changing bodies (becoming sexual beings)
  – Changes in thinking
  – Social demand to grow up

• Erikson described adolescence as a *moratorium period (identity confusion)* where we experiment with different roles to find ourselves