2 PERFORMING THE SELF

Kara opened her eyes on a Saturday morning, happy to be back at home for the weekend. She had just turned in a major paper the day before. She worked very hard on it, as she hoped to get into her professor's selective senior seminar the following year. Today, she was looking forward to a lazy day at home, followed by her good friend Janna's birthday party. Kara spent the day having coffee with her mom and playing some competitive rounds of rummy with her little brother. Throughout the day, Kara sent some snaps to her best friend with possible outfits for the evening. After dinner, Kara started getting ready. After Kara did her makeup, she thought she looked pretty cute so she took a selfie and posted it on her Instagram story. Posting the picture reminded her that she needed to tweet a current event for her computer-mediated communication course. Kara found a New York Times article and posted it with her public account @KaraPWilliams. Then she switched to her private Twitter @KissesfromKara and tweeted, "It's gonna get lit 2night! #turnt #jannababy #21." As Kara left for the party, she stopped to scribble herself a note reminding her to pack her closed-toe shoes for her internship interview next week.

Kara's concerns and behaviors, as described above, all focus on how she understands herself and performs her understanding of self for others (identity). Our understanding of self is our **self-concept** and the way we perform that understanding of self is our **identity**. The questions "Who are we?" and "Who am I?" have been enduring and important philosophical inquiries for scholars. The answers to these questions are heavily intertwined with processes of communication. Perceptions of self-concept are grounded in communication. How others respond to us influences our sense of self. In addition, our identities are performances that are transmitted to our friends, family, and other social audience members through communication. As we learned in Chapter 1, a key characteristic of interpersonal communication is learning about others. Thus, understanding self-concept and identity performance is key to becoming a more competent interpersonal communicator.

SELF-CONCEPT

Self-concept is how people internally understand who they think they are (Oyserman & Markus, 1998). Self-concepts have multiple dimensions and are derived from the information we have about ourselves gleaned from experiences, relationships, social roles, beliefs, and abilities (Gore & Cross, 2014). Perhaps you volunteer for youth programs and have an award-winning cookie recipe. Or you might be a business student and have aspirations of playing professional golf. Perhaps you are all of these things. Your particular combination of traits and how you organize them internally is your self-concept. Your self-concept is your personal answer to the question: Who are you?

Interpersonal communication scholars generally believe that people build their self-concept through communication with others. Our relationships define us as a daughter, son, friend, employee, group member, or student. Our social roles emerge from the communication we have with others in our social networks. The social roles and categories we can and do enact are grounded in communication with other social network members (Pennington, 2000). Our abilities are even encouraged or hindered by the way that others around us communicate about those abilities. For example, your perception of your artistic abilities is likely based on the way people have responded to your artistic attempts.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a foundational concept for interpersonal communication scholarship on aspects of the self. Symbolic interactionists argue that people develop meaning for objects, messages, and others through social interaction (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1922). These meanings then influence how people act toward those objects, messages, and other people. For example, we learn to use a fork based on how other people around us use a fork. We might have learned to hold a fork differently if we lived in a different part of the world or we might have learned to use a completely different eating utensil, like chopsticks. In the Disney movie, *The Little Mermaid,* we see Ariel learning about human objects from a seagull who makes up his own interpretations. When Scuttle tells Ariel that a fork is a dinglehopper and for brushing hair, she believes him and acts toward the object—brushing her hair—based on that interaction. The point here is that the way we act toward forks is based on what we have learned from others about forks. The same goes for other objects, language, and people, including ourselves. Just as we learn how to use a fork based on how other people around us use that fork, we learn who we are through how the people around us communicate with us.

Our interactions with others give objects meaning. We see this fork as an eating utensil, not a dinglehopper as Ariel was led to believe it was.

Courtesy of Laura Guerrero

Cooley (1902), an early symbolic interactionist, argued that our internal sense of self derives from how we imagine others experience us. This reflection is the **looking-glass self**. The looking-glass self concept suggests that we come to know our self through how we think others perceive us, considering how others might think of our appearance, actions,

and place in the social world. These perceived mental perceptions serve as a mirror that allows us to perceive our self as a specific social entity.

Mead (1934) expanded on the looking-glass self by arguing that people create an internal representation of the presumed attitudes and perceptions of their social groups called the **generalized other**. The generalized other is our perception of how other members of our communities view the social world. Instead of trying to think of how our individual social connections might perceive us, we come up with a more general perception of how our social groups as a whole might perceive us. The concept is abstract in that there is no single person that we are imagining but rather the opinions that people in our social network might typically hold regarding who we are. People then consider these imagined general opinions in developing their own self-concept.

The ability to have separate conceptions of our self, others, and how others view our self and hold feelings and attitudes about our self is critical to the development of a social self. This process is also fundamental to the concept of **theory of mind** (Wellman, 1992). Individuals have a theory of mind when they are able to understand that

1. an individual or being has mental states,

2. others have mental states,

3. these mental states are different from each other, and

4. we can influence the mental states of others.

Our ability to have theory of mind allows us to understand that (a) others are separate individuals whom we hold representations of within our own mind and (b) other people have representations of us within *their* mind. Thus, your own self-concept is influenced by the communication of others, since their communication gives you insight into the representations people have of you. Theory of mind is essentially the idea that people understand that we have the ability to influence the minds of others through communication. Thus, theory of mind is an important concept for several interpersonal communication phenomena, including conflict management, persuasion, empathy, perspective-taking, and deception, all of which you will learn about in this book.
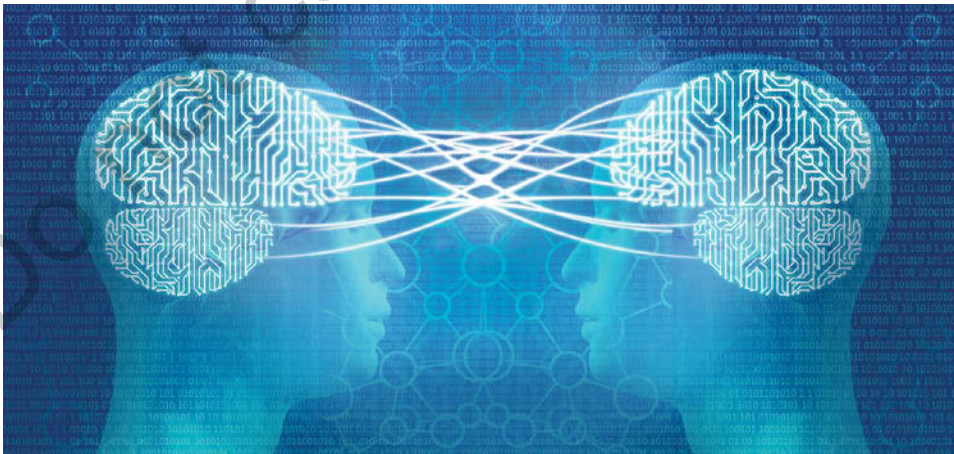
Having a theory of mind entails understanding that other people have different mental states than you do, and realizing that what you say and do affects other people's mental states.

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Although these foundational theories of self-concept were developed early in the twentieth century, there is more modern evidence that highlights the way these perceptions of self develop. Over time, children incorporate an understanding of how other people see them into their self-concept. Research suggests that as children develop, their sense of self is increasingly connected to how they are viewed by others around them (Cole et al., 2001; Wigfield et al., 1997). When children play, which often involves taking on the roles of others through fantasy play or imitating parents when playing with dolls or action figures, they are in the beginning stage of differentiating others and the self (Mead, 1922). Later, social games allow for further practice at socialization as children not only consider how others will behave but also learn to accept, play by, and discard various subjective, social-rule systems.

In line with Mead's theories, research has found that in the prekindergarten years of childhood, most children have highly positive and optimistic self-perceptions (Eccles et al., 1984). Upon questioning, young children are likely to tell you that they are the best in their class. This overestimation of self is unsurprising, given that up to this point most small children have experienced a social world primarily consisting of family and close family friends who constantly reiterate positive messages ("You're so smart! You can do it!") to young children. Over time, children begin to experience a wider audience of peers and schoolteachers. The assessments presented by peers and teachers are quite likely less adoring than those of children's parents. By the third grade, children usually develop a more realistic sense of self.

Research on racial identity has also shown that people are influenced both by how they see themselves as well as how they believe others see them. **Racial identity** is "the part of a person's self-concept that is related to their racial membership, including the significance someone puts on race in defining their self" as well their interpretation of what it means to be a member of their race (Minniear & Soliz, 2019, p. 329). Racial identities can be connected to a kind of *double consciousness*, where people are aware of who they really are versus who other people stereotype them to be. In one study, college students who identified themselves as Black discussed how they struggled with being proud of their race, not wanting race to define everything about them, and being aware that they could be discriminated against or stereotyped because of their race. Two women in the study gave an example of this type of struggle by explaining a situation where they had "wanted to express their opinions and beliefs about racism and discrimination, but they also did not want to be seen as 'angry Black women'" (Minniear & Soliz, 2019, p. 329). These types of identity struggles extend to other groups as well. The key point is that our identities and communication are shaped not only by how we see ourselves but also by how we believe other people see us.

Personality and Communication

Another way to consider the internal self is the idea of personality. Although there are many definitions of personality, it can be thought of as the way the self organizes its view of its characteristics and presents those characteristics to others (Eysenck, 1947).

One common way that personality is measured is by using the Big Five inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999). The Big Five consists of five different factors: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and intellectual openness. **Extraversion** refers to how talkative, assertive, and energetic a person is. **Agreeableness** is being good-natured, cooperative, and trustworthy. **Conscientiousness** is shown through being orderly, responsible, and dependable. People who score high on **neuroticism** are nervous, worry, and are easily upset. Intellectual **openness** is being intellectual, imaginative, and open-minded.

Although psychologists often classify these as internal traits, a close examination suggests that at least three of the five are communication styles (extroversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness). In addition, personality constructs change over time due to feedback and communication within our social world. A recent longitudinal study compared people's personality constructs measured in their adolescence (when they were 14 years old) and then 63 years later. The researchers found that there was very little correlation between the participants' personality traits in their adolescence and their golden years (Harris et al., 2016). These and other findings on personality constructs suggest support for the symbolic interactionism perspective, in that personality appears to be malleable over time and might largely depend on the communication that we have with others. For example, people who marry similar others find that their personality constructs change less over time than those who marry dissimilar others. The dissimilar partners find that their personality traits converge over time (Caspi & Herbener, 1990).

Individuals who have been happily married for a long time have often become more similar to each other.

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Nevertheless, the Big Five has been shown to correlate with a variety of communication variables (Correa et al., 2010; Hazel et al., 2014; Heisel et al., 2003; Hostetter & Potthoff, 2012; Itzchakov et al., 2014). For example, extraversion is negatively correlated with communication behaviors such as reticence (a hesitation to speak out) and verbal aggressiveness but positively correlated with social internet use. All Big Five characteristics except for neuroticism are correlated with preferring to communicate with people who have constructive listening styles. Extroverts and neurotics both produce more representational gestures (gestures that reinforce the verbal content of the message), but those with neurotic tendencies have difficulty getting others to like them and want to spend time with them, whereas extroversion is positively associated with this type of affinity seeking.

IDENTITY

While our self-concept is our internal consideration of who we are, our identities are the external communication of aspects of that self for a variety of social audiences. Jackson (2002) called identities codes of personhood with our identities constructed through interactions with others. The **dramaturgical perspective** proposes that our performance of aspects of ourselves is a key component of how other people learn who we are (Goffman, 1959). We represent ourselves through performative behaviors that influence others' opinions of ourselves. Throughout his explanation of the dramaturgical perspective, Goffman relies on explanatory metaphors of actors, performances, and theaters. The identity performances we give in social encounters are the "lines" or roles that people take, much like actors performing their lines in a play. We perform our self through verbal and nonverbal behaviors while taking into consideration the appropriate performance for a particular social audience and context.

Identity Performances

Two different types of social performances occur in everyday life—performances *given* and performances *given off* (Goffman, 1967). **Performances given** refers to the ways that people use verbal and nonverbal cues to portray their identity to others. **Performances given off** are the way that others receive our identity performances. Consider Kara at the beginning of this chapter. As Kara carefully chooses her outfit for the party, she is likely trying to show people particular aspects of herself. Perhaps Kara thinks her outfit shows that she is fun, on trend, and fits in with her particular group. Her outfit helps her give a specific type of performance. However, when Kara gets to the party, her outfit might not be perceived in the manner she intends—a bold choice in shoes is seen by her former classmates as trying too hard, or her makeup might be considered too heavy for a casual get-together. The other partygoers' reactions to her appearance are the *performances given off* by Kara. At times, performances *given* and *given off* may match. For example, if Kara wears sensible shoes and a suit to her job interview to appear professional and polished and is, in fact, seen as polished and professional by her interviewer, her performance *given* and *given off* match. At other times, such as in our party example, the reception of our identity performance may not match the way that we intended to be perceived. In other words, the performance given is not actually the one given off.

In addition, social performances are often tailored for a specific audience (Altheide, 2000). Kara from our opening story, for example, is likely to consider a very different outfit for the audience at her friend's birthday party than she did for her internship interview that required formal closed-toe shoes. To follow Goffman's metaphor of the theater, different audiences and stages require different performances.

Like Shakespeare's idea that life is a stage, Goffman likened self-presentation to performing various roles based on what is appropriate for a particular audience and context.

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Face

Our **face** is a combination of the person who we believe ourselves to be and the identity performances that we believe would be supported and approved by social groups that are important to us (Goffman, 1967). Face depends on three intertwined streams of information related to our self:

1. Our understanding of our internal self;

2. Our perception of how the audience we are presenting our self to sees us; and

3. Any external information, such as having a college degree that is relevant to the particular face one is trying to portray.

If we again consider Kara's interview, the impression that she can make depends in part on her outfit, presentation, and answers to the interviewer's questions. Her "face" also depends on what the interviewer thinks she knows about Kara. The interviewer's perception could come from a previous interaction at a career fair or her general impression of the college-aged interns hired by the company. In addition, external evidence supports the image Kara is able to present. If the interviewer has Kara's transcripts showing low grades in political science classes, Kara will not be able to take the line that she's a whiz at understanding and implementing political theory. These external representations of self through the perceptions of others and evidence are particularly important to how Kara's *face* is perceived. Goffman argues that who we are is not lodged within our body but rather is a product of the events of interpersonal encounters and how the events of these encounters are experienced and perceived.

There are times when we may find ourselves *out of face*—acting in a way that is inconsistent with the image we generally portray to the world. When we are *out of face* due to our own behavior, this is **shameless**. Imagine Kara shows up for her interview smelling of alcohol or wearing an outfit that is more appropriate for a nightclub than a professional setting. This performance would be a shameless one because Kara herself has made performative choices that are not in line with the face she would like to take (being a desirable internship candidate). On the other hand, there are times when others may communicate in a way that does not support our chosen line. These others may "call us out," so to speak. Imagine again that Kara shows up at her interview and finds that a friend of hers is the receptionist. If her receptionist friend tells Kara's interviewer that Kara is irresponsible, then she is not supporting Kara's interview persona in a way that is **heartless**. In both cases, Kara finds herself in wrong-face. To be heartless in this manner is sometimes necessary; one can imagine issues of being a witness to a crime, needing to speak up regarding racism or sexism, or wanting to prevent a boss from hiring a truly irresponsible candidate. Often, we fall back on politeness norms to construct these interactions. At other times, society as a whole has constructed laws to protect whistleblowers and witnesses or developed a different set of norms for settings such as a courtroom. These processes allow one's face to be breached and yet at the same time reinforce the idea that to be heartless is not normative behavior.

Politeness and Face

Other scholars have argued that there may be specific ways that people communicate to protect each other's face. There are two types of face: positive and negative (Brown & Levinson, 1987). **Positive face** is the socially appropriate self-image people wish to present to others. Although negative face seems like it might include when you want to make a negative impression, that is not the definition. Rather **negative face** is the idea that we all would like to make autonomous

decisions regarding how we behave in the world. Of course, we are interdependent with others and cannot be fully autonomous.

Sometimes we make certain communication choices, called **politeness strategies**, to recognize the face needs of others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Politeness strategies are used when people need to communicate some act or intention that is face threatening. **Face threats** are communicative actions that might harm someone's positive or negative face. Positive face threats include actions such as needing to critique someone, perhaps a formal critique in reviewing someone's work, or something more casual such as telling a friend that a shade of lipstick doesn't quite work for her or the cologne he splashes on before a big date doesn't smell as good as he thinks it does. Positive face threats may also include engaging in disagreements, bringing up divisive or emotional topics, or blatant noncooperation in communicative interactions such as interrupting or ignoring someone. These are all face threatening because they are actions (or inactions) that do not support the positive line that the co-interactant is attempting to take.

Negative face threats are threatening because they request that someone behave how the speaker wishes them to behave rather than allowing full autonomy on the part of the hearer. However, to get along in our social world, we all have to navigate receiving and sending negative face threats. An order given by a superior may be face threatening, as might a request from a friend. You might feel some level of irritation when reminded by a roommate to put your dishes away, not necessarily because the roommate is wrong about the dishes but because the request is a face-threatening act in that the roommate is asking you to complete the task on their schedule rather than your own. Other types of negative face threats include communication behaviors such as offering advice or making an offer. Although these may be viewed as cooperative types of communication, advice can be face threatening if it suggests the advice receiver is not fully capable of making the best decision. An offer to help may be intended positively, but it also indicates that the receiver needs help and that they may feel obligated to return the help at some future date. (See Chapter 11 for suggestions on offering more effective social support.)

Not all face-threatening actions are equally severe. How a message is perceived is likely dependent on the power difference between the person communicating the face threat and the message recipient as well as the relationship between them. Your boss can tell you to perform some task in a way that would be inappropriate if you tried to tell your boss what to do. A close friend is likely to be viewed as more appropriate when telling you that your outfit isn't flattering than the same message delivered by a rival. In this way, the relationship frames our own and others' identity performances to affect how a message is perceived. Politeness strategies are the communication choices people make to minimize face threats and make messages more socially palatable.

In these cases, we can see how politeness strategies are useful for taking the edge off of the potential negative effects of face-threatening acts. Politeness strategies include a wide array of linguistic choices. Brown and Levinson (1987) called these choices redressive actions. **Redressive actions** are communicative choices that people use to form messages that are viewed as more appropriate or polite. Using politeness markers such as "please," "thank you," and "I'm sorry" helps people realize that you know your request may be face threatening and that you recognize that they are autonomous individuals who can say yes or no. A face-threatening action that does not include any redressive action is considered bald-on-record. **Bald-on-record** strategies typically involve simply stating something critical or making a demand. A bald-on-record, positive face threat might be "That cologne really stinks" or "You have way too much makeup on." Redressive actions for these statements might include attending to the hearer's desires. For example, instead of saying "that cologne really stinks," you might say, "I think you have another

cologne that smells better than that." Examples of bald-on-record negative face threats might include a sibling saying "Give me that!" or a roommate telling you "Do the dishes." These strategies can be considered quite rude for both positive and negative face threats. A redressive action for a negative face threat can be as simple as saying "please." Other negative politeness strategies include noting that you are incurring a debt ("It would really help me out if you'd do the dishes") or giving deference ("I know you're really busy, but could you handle the dishes tonight?").

Pointing out a role relationship such as supervisor-subordinate or professor-student may also make a negative face threat such as a critique or request feel less threatening. Other linguistic choices include hedging ("I know you're busy but…"), attending to the hearer's other face needs ("You should wear less makeup. You are so naturally pretty."), or joking around ("Formal denim! Are you trying to bring back the 90s?"). Redressive action can also be communicated through nonverbal cues such as trying to appear friendly rather than threatening when making a request or using vocal tone to sound unsure while hedging (Trees & Manusov, 1998).

Another fairly sophisticated strategy to soften the blow of potentially face-threatening communication is to go off-record. **Off-record** strategies are messages formed in such a way that the face threat cannot be directly attributed to the speaker. Let's think about what this strategy might sound like. Perhaps you would like a ride home from class and instead of demanding a ride (a bald-on-record strategy) from your classmate ("Give me a ride") or using redressive action ("Please give me a ride"), you say to your friend, "It's so cold outside. I'm really not looking forward to waiting for the bus." Your friend might then choose to offer you a ride, but if they do not, you both have a face-saving out—you weren't really asking, and they did not really have to say no. Of course, linguistic choices related to politeness are embedded within a particular culture. Different cultures may view different communication choices as more or less appropriate for performing politeness (Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2013).

Saying "please" can be a simple yet effective way to soften a request that might otherwise threaten someone's negative face.

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Off-record strategies are common in the interpersonal phenomena of flirting. Stating bald-on-record utterances such as "I like you," "I want to spend time with you," and "I want to have sex with you" can all be face-threatening acts. Using off-record strategies allows potential partners to keep things lighthearted and fun while avoiding threatening the face of either party. Of course, as you may have noticed, this also makes it more difficult to decode the true intentions of a flirting partner ("Are they just being fun? Do they really like you?"). Research has found that both flirtatious communication and the rejecting of flirtation involve indirect, nonverbal, and off-record strategies (Goodboy & Brann, 2010; Hall et al., 2010).

People rarely choose to engage in bald-on-record strategies, and when they do, these strategies are often viewed negatively or as aggressive by their communication partners (Dillard et al., 1997; Trees & Manusov, 1998). At times, people may state that they value the bluntness or authenticity of bald-on-record statements and, in some cases, bald-on-record strategies are seen as more effective (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000). However, in actual interactions, politeness strategies are often seen as a more appropriate way to achieve communication goals (Blum-Kulka, 1989). Indeed, the choice to use or not use politeness strategies serves as a specific type of identity choice.

At other times, people's reaction to a face threat involves reassessing how they consider the social audience. For example, Bell and Hastings (2011) found that while members of interracial couples who experienced excessive staring or negative comments would sometimes respond by smiling or staring back, they also used noninteractive strategies to minimize their perception of the face threat. For example, partners reported ignoring the face threat, rationalizing the threat by telling themselves that the opinions of people other than their partner do not matter, or reframing the face threat by articulating that people who might view their relationship negatively did not matter to their perception of self and their relationship.

SKILL BUILDER
POLITENESS

For many of us, our parents first teach us how to be polite. Parents dutifully train their toddlers to say "please" and "thank you," they caution their teenagers to watch their tone, and they remind a 9-year-old to ask rather than demand. However, when asked the inevitable question *why* (Why should one be polite?), the answer is so ingrained in our language and culture that many parents may fall back on the old stand-by—"Because I said so!"

The idea of *face* helps explain why people use certain language markers. It can also help us better understand politeness and perhaps be more skilled communicators. In many cases, the less polite version of a request is the shorter, seemingly more effective version. Why say something like "Is that the salt?" when what you really mean is "Hand me the salt"? Why hedge a request to a co-worker by saying, "If you're not busy, would you mind filling out this report?" when we mean "You have to fill out this report." In these cases, people are trying to manage multiple face goals. Although we need the report, our co-worker is more likely to provide it if we recognize in our message that our co-worker is a busy person who likely has better things to do. Indirect questions, hedges, and other politeness markers indicate the respect we have for the other person's autonomy and identity. In addition, people can react badly to others not treating them with the respect they feel they deserve. Your parents told you to ask rather than demand because it is irritating to be told what to do by a 9-year-old. Your co-workers react badly to demands because they signal you think of yourself as superior rather than equal.

We can also run into problems when we do not understand indirect requests and negations for what they really mean. If we are asking someone on a date or trying to get a job

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interview and we are repeatedly told "maybe later" or they use some other way of indirectly saying no, we may not get the "hint." Consider the following scenarios: What different ways might you phrase your message to appear polite? Do your strategies make your message less effective? What redressive actions do your messages employ?

1. After the end of the semester, you receive a text from a classmate that you suspected had a crush on you asking if you would like to see a movie. You are not really interested in dating this person but know that you will likely see them again in future classes.

2. You receive an unexpected parking ticket and realize that if you pay the parking ticket, you will be short on rent money. You decide to ask your sister if she might loan you some money. How do you frame your request? Do your strategies change if you are asking your parents for money? What about a friend?

3. Recently you were promoted to assistant manager of the retail store you work for. The promotion comes with more responsibility and more money. However, you have made friends with many of your co-workers and now you are in charge of assigning tasks to them. You come into work today and the back stockroom is a disaster. You need to ask two of your friend-colleagues to fix it and you know that no one likes this task.

THE MANY FACETS OF IDENTITY

Thus far we have been speaking of the self as if it were a single coherent entity that is in some way performed for others. However, careful consideration of the dramaturgical perspective illuminates that different identities and faces are likely performed for various audiences in different social contexts. Many scholars have considered the idea that the self might contain many facets. As far back as 1890, James argued that "Properly speaking, *a man has as many social selves as there are individuals to recognize him* and carry an image of him in their mind" (James, 1890, p. 294). (And, of course, we would argue the same is true regardless of one's gender.) However, James also noticed that these image-carrying individuals can be considered as more coherent groups or audiences such as "friends," "teachers," or "employers." Freud (1949) famously argued that people have an id, an ego, and a superego. Others have considered that we may perform particular selves for particular audiences (Altheide, 2000).

The Crystallized Self

More recently, some scholars (Altheide, 2000; Tracy & Trethewey, 2005) have considered the self as not just containing different facets but also as selves growing and creating different facets in response to the social environment—much in the way that a crystal grows. This metaphor of the

Like a crystal, our identities are composed of many everchanging layers, facets, and dimensions, all of which look different depending on the angle from which they are viewed.

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crystallized self allows people to think of the different performances, or lines that we take, as different facets of self. In this view, the self does not have some authentic core and no one facet of self is more or less authentic than any other facet. For example, in some contexts, a person may perform the role of mother; in another context, that person takes a professional role; in yet another, perhaps they are a marathoner. None of these particular selves are more or less real than any of the others; they are all simply different performances. We are all made up of these collections of performances, but we are no less real or authentic when performing our job, spending time with family, or maintaining our friendships.

The metaphor of the crystallized self also helps us consider how different facets of self are privileged by different audiences. For example, in the US, people often put great weight on the importance of the corporate labor market and may be especially concerned with their identity performances as they relate to how they are viewed in the workplace. An example of privileging the workplace in regard to identity performances is messaging and campaigns devoted to persuading teenagers to be careful with what they communicate on social media. Often at the heart of these campaigns is a concern that performances that seem appropriate to youth based on their peer audiences will be seen as inappropriate to future employers.

The idea of the crystalized self encourages us to play with both the language that surrounds our sense of self as well as the actual experiences in which we engage. By exploring new avenues of self, people may be able to develop meaningfully and grow new facets of their crystallized self, allowing for a richer and deeper experience of one's self and society. Selves are able to reflect on their construction, accept or resist societal narratives related to the self, and choose particular performances of identity. The ability to seek out new experiences and audiences is ultimately a fairly privileged position—not everyone will have the resources to pursue self-growth in this way. For example, one's ability to engage in meaningful work may be enabled by people working in low-paid childcare positions (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005, p. 180). Thus, it is important to keep in mind the way that our own performances of self may restrict or be enabled by systems that restrict the performances of others.

The ability to claim particular identity performances or not be questioned regarding identity performances is also privileged. Drummond and Orbe (2009) found that Black and Hispanic focus groups discussed negotiating identity gaps in a way that white participants did not. The identity gaps were centered on questions that challenged people's perceptions of their personal identity and their identity in relation to others. For example, these participants reported experiencing the question "Where are you from?" This question highlights an identity gap where people perceived themselves as locals, but others assumed a foreign identity erroneously based on their physical appearance. White participants did not experience this type of identity gap.

Monitoring Identity Performances

Although all of us have multifaceted selves, people may be better or worse at creating identity performances that are seen as appropriate for different contexts. People may need to **self-monitor** or adapt the communication and emotional expressions to particular contexts. Self-monitoring may lead people to change their behavior in one of the following ways (Snyder, 1974):

1. Intensify their true emotions. For example, you might try to look more upset when a parent informs you of the passing of a distant relative because you know your parent is more deeply distraught.

2. Communicate emotions that an individual may not be actually feeling. An example of this might be the child who learns to appear contrite when caught with their hand in the cookie jar regardless of their actual feelings.

3. Conceal inappropriate emotional states. Perhaps you have been pleased when your partner's favorite (but very old and tattered) t-shirt is destroyed in the laundry but offered condolences and made overtures to empathize with their sadness.

Each of these examples illustrates attempts to monitor and adjust our emotional displays and show an appropriate face to a particular audience. (See Chapter 6 for more on ways that people manage emotions.)

Self-monitoring goes beyond just emotional displays. The concept has two additional factors. First, self-monitoring requires an ability and willingness to be other-directed in considering the production of interpersonal messages. The communication choices of high self-monitors reflect their concerns for behaving in a socially appropriate manner and addressing the face needs of others. The second factor is related to the idea of extraversion. High self-monitors tend to have an aptitude for crafting public performances of communication (Gangestead & Snyder, 2000). The influence of these two factors—an appreciation of the social audience and the ability to perform appropriately—leads high self-monitors to perform better on a variety of communication tasks. High self-monitors are very responsive to the opinions of others and the norms of particular social situations (Gangestead & Snyder, 2000). High self-monitors tend to be better conversationalists than low self-monitors. They are more active, more focused on their conversational partner, more likely to reciprocate self-disclosures, and more adept at pacing conversations (Dabbs et al., 1980; Ickes & Barnes, 1977; Schaffer et al., 1982). High self-monitors are also better at using humor (Turner, 1980).

The ability to self-monitor also influences performance in the workplace. High self-monitors are more likely than low self-monitors to be promoted to management (Kilduff & Day, 1994). High self-monitors are better able to build and actively leverage their professional social networks (Mehra et al., 2001). High self-monitors become more important in their work networks over time. In contrast, low self-monitors were found to have weaker connections to others in their workplace even after a lengthy period of employment.

Low self-monitors may also have difficulty adapting to different situational contexts. Their communication is driven primarily by their internal states rather than contextual norms or requirements (Gangestead & Snyder, 2000). However, low self-monitors may engage in more intimacy and authenticity in their relationships (Rowatt, et al., 1998). Low self-monitors are less concerned with social comparison information. Thus, they are less likely than high self-monitors to focus on superficial aspects of relationships such as peer status or external attractiveness (Oyamot et al., 2010).

Identity Performances Online

Today, we do a considerable amount of our identity work online. Although many of the same principles of self and identity apply, mediation changes identity performances in ways that James, Goffman, and Mead likely never dreamed of. Online performances of self may be less like the stage performances that Goffman described and more like an exhibition of artifacts in our personal museum of the self (Hogan, 2010). People find themselves in the role of a curator, picking and choosing different identity artifacts to place online in order to showcase particular identity performances. Moreover, people often tailor their identity performances for various

social media. For example, the selfie Kara posted on Instagram might have to pass a different test (for example, be especially cute) than would something funny she would post on her Finsta (fake Instagram), just as the professional identity she projects on LinkedIn is likely to be very different than the side of herself she shows in videos with friends on TikTok.

Furthermore, different types of online spaces facilitate different processes related to identity development. Online spaces may be more fixed or flexible in relation to how identity performances and social audiences are structured in online channels (McEwan, 2015). The idea of fixed and flexible refers directly to how identity performances are structured in different online spaces.

This type of picture is more likely to appear on an Instagram or Snapchat story than on an Instagram feed. How might these women change the way they take photos throughout the day to present different identities on various social media platforms?

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Fixed Network Spaces

Identity performances that occur in **fixed network spaces** recognize a single consistent entity behind the identity performance. Often this performance is tied to an embodied, physical self. Sites such as Facebook or LinkedIn are examples of fixed identity spaces because people have to perform a self that is coherent and consistent. These identity performances have to be coherent in that all of the facets of self that are performed in this space make sense with each other. Identity performances have to be consistent in that they make sense to the various audiences that will see them. Otherwise, users may experience **context collapse**. Context collapse is what happens when social audience members that exist in different spaces offline and thus would receive different identity performances are lumped together in a single audience due to the structure of the social media platform (Marwick & boyd, 2011). For example, if you have friended co-workers on Facebook, you might need to be careful about not complaining about work on Facebook.

Many times, young people turn to fairly sophisticated communication strategies to manage context collapse (boyd, 2014). They might engage in **social steganography** by choosing

words and phrases that are intentionally vague to people (such as parents or teachers) who lack the shared knowledge and context to fully understand the meaning of the messages (boyd & Marwick, 2011). Youth often tend to fragment their audiences, using Facebook more sparingly as a catch-all type of site and then saving more social messages for platforms where they have connected only with close friends such as Snapchat or Tumblr. In the opening vignette, notice that Kara had two Twitter accounts—a public account, @KaraPWilliams, and a private account, @KissesfromKara. She can present different facets of her identity on each of these accounts as a way to manage context collapse.

Flexible Network Spaces

Another way people may attempt to avoid context collapse is to choose **flexible network spaces**—online platforms that allow for anonymity or pseudonymity. People may interact with each other either anonymously or using a pseudonym or user handle. Flexible identities can be created, performed, and discarded easily. Online message boards or massive multiplayer online games are examples of spaces where people perform flexible identities. The flexibleness allows people to interact with others using identity performances that are not tied to offline selves or the perception of others within a fixed social network. The infamous image chat boards of 4chan and its successor 8chan might be the most "pure" example of flexible network space. On these boards, everyone goes by the user handle "Anonymous" and thus each of their identity performances lasts no longer than a single post. More popular flexible networks would include spaces like reddit.com where users can choose one or several pseudonymous handles.

One concern for flexible identity spaces is that people might experience **online disinhibition**. The feeling of anonymity may encourage people to behave in ways that they would refrain from in offline communication contexts (Suler, 2004). Online disinhibition can be benign or toxic (Suler, 2004). A benign form of online disinhibition would be a space where people might feel more comfortable expressing emotions or engaging in self-disclosure online than offline. Teenagers might reach out in online communities to express or experiment with new identities (Valkenberg et al., 2005). People with serious illness might disclose in online support groups in order to not burden their families with their worries. Toxic online disinhibition occurs when people consider anonymity as a license to be rude, overly critical, or threatening. Toxic inhibition can lead to online spaces that close down online debate and relationship building.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
JOB SEEKERS (AND TRAVELERS) ASKED FOR SOCIAL MEDIA PASSWORDS

In 2011, the Associated Press (AP) ran a story about employers asking for Facebook passwords. Previously, employers may have performed Google searches or browsed the public portions of social media accounts. In this case, the Department of Corrections (DoC) for the State of Maryland asked correctional officer, Robert Collins, specifically for his password. The password allowed the DoC to search through all of Collins's postings and his friendship network. Although it was unclear how many employers were engaging in the practice, the AP article was taken fairly seriously. By 2014, 30 state laws had been passed prohibiting employers from requesting access to social media passwords.

Reactions to password requests were mixed. A set of over 4,000 Yahoo! News comments provides some insight into public reaction (see McEwan & Flood, 2018). Some people argued that asking for social media passwords is fair game for employers. After all, they argued, if you've got nothing to hide, then why should you be worried? Some took this argument further,

saying that they felt asking for passwords was fair because they would hate if someone who was on drugs or engaging in illicit behavior got a job instead of them. Others worried that handing over social media passwords gives employers too much power. There were concerns about private information but also that certain network connections (for example, someone who grew up in a bad neighborhood) might cause them problems. Some suggested resistance strategies, including walking out of an interview, trying to publicize companies who engaged in the strategy, and trying to get legislation passed against the practice.

Social media is a place where multiple facets of identity are performed. Should employers be able to access all aspects of a potential employee's identity? Would you feel comfortable working for a company that asked for Facebook passwords? How might you react in an inter-view if you were asked for your social media passwords? Would you engage in a resistance strategy? Would you be upset if someone with an unsavory social media profile was hired for a job over you?

PERCEPTION AND BIASES

As should be clear by now, the self and its identities are negotiations between our internal cogni-tions and our external social networks. Despite the multifaceted nature of our identity perfor-mances, there is evidence that people strive toward **cognitive consistency** in how they view the world around them. People generally want the world to make sense and for the people around them to behave in a predictable manner.

The human brain is structured to use heuristics to make sense of the world. Heuristics are simple decision rules that allow us to make decisions quickly (Chaiken, 1987). For example, you have internal decision rules that helped you decide what was appropriate to wear today. We develop heuristics for a diverse array of interpersonal processes, including deciding what to wear, but also how to greet someone, or what we think we like in a potential romantic partner. Once heuristics are developed, they are resistant to change (Van Overwalle & Siebler, 2005). Quickly changing heuristics would be maladaptive in an evolutionary sense. Consider an ancient ances-tor who had determined that tigers are likely to eat people; it would be unwise to quickly change their mind that tigers are not likely to eat people on the basis of encountering one full and lazy tiger. Similarly, we may become uncomfortable when someone in our social circle acts in unpre-dictable ways. Many of the heuristics we use to understand both our self and others' selves are based on this concept of cognitive consistency.

Cognitive Dissonance

We also strive for cognitive consistency in the way that we view both our self and others. The concept of **cognitive dissonance** suggests that people are uncomfortable holding two opinions or ideas that are in contrast to each other (Festinger, 1957). To overcome this discomfort, when confronted with oppositional ideas, we strive to reconcile these discrepancies—often in self-serving ways. To explain cognitive dissonance, Wicklund and Brehm (1976) use an example of purchasing a house (i.e., making a commitment to the house and then later finding out that sev-eral things were wrong with the house). This creates dissonance between the idea that the house was worth purchasing and the idea that the house has problems. For many people, to resolve this dissonance, they would begin to convince themselves that they truly loved something about the house or the neighborhood to justify their commitment to the house despite the problems. We can apply the elements of this example to interpersonal relationships as well. Imagine that you have spent several years with your romantic partner and consider yourself committed to the rela-tionship. Then you find out some troubling information about your romantic partner. Perhaps

your partner lied about something important or even committed an act of infidelity. Certainly, some people break up in such circumstances. For those who choose to stay together though, partners often convince themselves that there is something particularly amazing and unique about their partner and their relationship to justify staying. Essentially, partners mentally adjust for the dissonance between the idea that they have invested in the relationship and that the relationship has problems.

Self-Serving Bias

The **self-serving bias** considers the valence or direction of the information behaviors provide about the self. Due to the self-serving bias, people attribute their own failures and negative behaviors to situational factors (Malle, 2006; Zuckerman, 1979). A review of hundreds of studies on this effect found that people avoid attributing their own negative behaviors (such as relapses in drinking, being aggressive, or problems in school) to their internal selves (Malle, 2006). For example, if Kara (from the opening scenario in this chapter) fails to get the internship, she might attribute this to her school not properly preparing her or perhaps the interviewer was rushed. However, when considering successes, the self-serving bias leads us to consider those to be the result of internal traits. If Kara lands the internship, she may congratulate herself on her hard work and polished interview performance.

On the other hand, people tend to either not be concerned enough with the behavior of others to make an attribution about their behavior or they may find other's negative attributions to be the result of personal characteristics. In Kara's case, if the interviewer was late to the meeting, Kara might simply evaluate the interviewer as an unreliable person rather than considering that another interview might have run late or that the interviewer was held up in a meeting with a superior. (Read more about the fundamental attribution bias in Chapter 3.)

According to the self-serving bias, if you land a job you want, you are likely to attribute your success to personal characteristics such as being intelligent and personable. If you fail to land a job, you are likely to attribute it to external factors, such as the interview being rushed or the company not hiring the best people.

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The internal and external attributions made under the self-serving bias are *both* likely based on seeking consistency in the world around us (Malle, 2006). For example, if Kara has been generally successful in the past, earned good grades in school, was accepted into the university of her choice, and was hired for previous jobs, then an unsuccessful interview would contradict information Kara already has about herself. Thus, in Kara's mind, the external attributions for failure are the most consistent. However, when it comes to considering the behavior of other people, we have much less information on which to base our attributions. Thus, when we see someone fail or behave badly, it makes sense to attribute that to the most salient cue we have—that person. This attribution leads us to consider something inherent to that person, an internal attribution, to be the most likely cause of their behavior. For example, if we see a woman in the supermarket snap at her son, we might automatically assume she is impatient—and worse yet, a bad mother—instead of considering that she is tired and her son may have been testing her patience all day.

The self-serving bias can make it difficult for us to empathize with people who experience difficulty. If we consider their failures to be related to some internal shortcoming, it can be challenging to consider systemic problems that create problems in others' lives. Our heuristics may also give rise to false attributions and stereotypes. Stereotypes are mental models we hold about what we think the "typical" member of a social group is like (Allport, 1954; Lippmann, 1922; see Chapter 3 for more on stereotypes). Stereotypes often contain a substantial number of attributes, including perceptions of typical social roles, shared qualities, and anticipated behaviors (Dovidio et al., 2010). Competent and empathetic communication in interpersonal contexts often involves making a concerted mental effort to attempt to override these processes.

Competence Biases

Two other cognitive errors that affect our self-concept, albeit in different ways, are imposter syndrome and the Dunning-Kruger effect. People with **imposter syndrome** have objective evidence that they are talented, such as admissions to quality universities, high grades, or jobs in a highly skilled career field, yet still believe that they do not belong and will soon be discovered as an inept fraud (Clance, 1985; French et al., 2008). People with imposter syndrome may be more anxious and expect to perform poorly on tasks (Cozzarelli & Major, 1990; Kolligian & Sternberg, 1991). They may also self-handicap, for example, by studying less for an exam, as a mechanism of providing themselves with external reasons for failure. Imposters may be more likely to feel they have failed when they have actually been reasonably successful (Cozzarelli & Major, 1990). Women have been found to have slightly higher scores on imposter syndrome scales than men (Cozzarelli & Major, 1990). Some scholars worry that young people raised in high-pressure scholastic environments with an emphasis on grades and test scores may also experience higher levels of imposter syndrome. Although these students may be academically qualified, they may also experience anxiety in regard to academic risk-taking to avoid any hint of failure (McAllum, 2016; Pedler, 2011).

Whereas those with imposter syndrome are qualified yet perceive they are inadequate, those who experience the **Dunning-Kruger effect** are inadequate in regard to some skill or cognitive ability yet think of themselves as quite highly qualified (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). For example, people who experience the Dunning-Kruger effect might perceive themselves as highly analytical yet have difficulties with a test of higher-level reasoning (Pennycook et al., 2017), or they may consider themselves a grammar expert and yet fail to recognize grammatical errors (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). Simply having difficulty in these areas might be frustrating for an individual but wouldn't bias their sense of self. However, the twist with the Dunning-Kruger effect is that the lack of competence in a particular area makes it difficult for that person to understand that

they actually lack competence. These individuals are incredibly confident in a particular ability yet are lacking both in the area and their ability to recognize their deficiency. Essentially, they don't know what they don't know.

Anecdotally, we sometimes specifically encounter the Dunning-Kruger effect in the field of interpersonal communication when someone tells us that they are an excellent communicator, yet they have little understanding of mindfulness, tact, self-monitoring, or a myriad of other elements of communication that increase perceptions of being an appropriate communicator. Yet these individuals are not aware that these are elements of competent communication, so they are also unaware that there are better ways to encode their messages (also anecdotally, we find these communicators often mean that they are blunt, which is sometimes but not often the best communicative strategy).

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT
IS FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION A FUNDAMENTAL ERROR?

Even if you are not familiar with the cognitive bias known as fundamental attribution error (FAE; also called the actor-observer hypothesis), you've probably heard the premise that we attribute our own behavior to external causes and others' behavior to internal causes. For example, if an acquaintance says something hurtful to you, you may assume that they are simply a mean or uncaring person. Yet if you say something hurtful to someone else, well, you may feel that you were misunderstood or that you were affected by having a bad day or being hungry. However, some research suggests that this cognitive bias may not be as strong as scholars once thought—and in some cases, it may not exist at all.

The fundamental attribution bias is rooted in the idea that "actors tend to attribute the causes of their behavior to stimuli inherent in the situation, while observers tend to attribute behavior to stable dispositions of the actor" (Jones & Nisbett, 1971, p. 93) This statement means that when considering our own behavior, we often think of contextual reasons for why we behave a certain way. For example, you get up early because you have an early class. You missed that traffic signal because you were tired after having to get up for that early class. You remembered your friend's birthday because you got a notification from Facebook. You went to your friend's party because other people you knew were going to be there. However, we often attribute other people's behavior to internal causes. They get up early because they are early risers. They missed the traffic signal because they are a bad driver. They remember their friend's birthday because they are conscientious. They go to parties because they are an extrovert.

Many scholars assert the existence of fundamental attribution error (e.g., Robins, Spranca & Mendelsohn, 1996; Watson, 1982) and many authors of communication textbooks assert that fundamental attribution error is an important perceptual bias that influences interaction. However, a 2006 meta-analysis found that fundamental attribution error may not be as prevalent as scholars thought. A meta-analysis is a statistical review of studies. Meta-analysts look at the results of many studies to determine the existence of effects across all of these studies. Malle (2006) examined 173 studies that had tested actor-observer hypotheses to see what the results were across all of these studies. Given how *fundamental* the fundamental attribution error has been to the way we understand cognitive biases, Malle was surprised to find that across all of the studies the effect of fundamental attribution error seems to be very small. Sixty-eight of the studies he included found no effect at all for fundamental attribution error. As Malle argued, "The actor-observer hypothesis appears to be a widely held yet false belief" (p. 907). People come up with internal and external attributions for both their own and others' behaviors.

Why would it take so long to realize this psychological effect is not nearly as fundamental as first thought? One explanation is that many of the studies have participants think about hypothetical scenarios. The effect seems to appear when people are thinking about

hypotheticals but not when they are trying to explain actual events. Another explanation is that studies that asked people for their explanations were more likely to find the effect than those that used rating scales. It may be that these attribution errors are part of a system of perceptions that people use to explain their own and others' behavior but do not appear when internal or external attributions are presented as the only choice of explanation for behavior.

Malle (2006) did, however, find some evidence of the self-serving bias. When people are explaining behavior that they view negatively, they seem more likely to attribute this to situational influences. You were short with your friend because you are hungry. You can't find your textbook because your roommates are messy. In contrast, people are more likely to attribute others' negative behavior to internal causes. They are snappy because they are impatient. They can't find their textbook because they don't take care of their things.

Malle's meta-analysis provides an important summary of studies examining fundamental attribution error. More research is likely needed to understand the way that people make attributions about their own and others' behavior. However, it seems that fundamental attribution error may not be as fundamental as we once assumed.

THE SELF IN RELATIONSHIPS

In keeping with the symbolic interactionist perspective, neither the self nor our identity performances occur in a social vacuum. Our selves and identities are intertwined with a network of others, including parents, siblings, friends, co-workers, and romantic partners. One way of considering how people view their self as overlapping with various network ties is **self-expansion theory**. Self-expansion theory is the idea that as we build relationships with others, we come to see these others as becoming an interdependent part of our own self (Aron & Aron, 1996; Aron et al., 2013). Furthermore, we are motivated to expand our selves in order to increase our available resources and opportunities (Aron & Aron, 1996). Being in relationships also exposes us to new

Going new places and trying new things with someone are two of many ways that relationships can promote self-expansion.

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experiences that can lead us to grow and change, similar to the idea of the crystalized self that was presented earlier in this chapter.

As our relationships develop, we take on similar interests, common friends, and even some of the characteristics of our relational partner (Agnew et al., 2004). People might also be willing to put more work into maintaining relationships with partners that they see as included in the self, although this finding holds more strongly for men than women (Ledbetter et al., 2013). Self-expansion occurs in different types of relationships, including romantic relationships and friendships (Ledbetter et al., 2011; McEwan & Guerrero, 2012).

Self-expansion theory may also help explain some nuances in how people conduct social comparisons. When you view a relational partner or a close friend as an extension of yourself, you are more likely to gain esteem when they outperform you (whereas generally, we might lose esteem when someone outperforms us). This likely occurs because we take on the successes and failures of those with whom we are interdependent as if they are our own. In the case of close friendships, we may even avoid engaging in the self-serving bias and come to view our friends' failures as due to external causes and help shoulder responsibility for both their successes and failures (Campbell et al., 2000). This effect may be because self-expansion allows us to feel that our friend is a greater part of our self. In addition, the knowledge we gain through the self-expansion process allows us to have a greater amount of information regarding potential external causes for our friend's behavior.

PRINCIPLES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE SELF AND IDENTITY

Understanding how you see yourself and how others see you is important for many reasons, including personal growth and self-expansion. Knowing yourself and being self-reflective also help you be a better communicator in your personal and professional relationships. Next, we present four principles that tie together some of the main ideas from this chapter in ways that we hope will give you further insight into the many facets that make up the unique person you are.

Principle 1. The self and communicative processes are tightly intertwined.
The self is formed, reified, and reproduced through communicative processes. In many ways, you are who you surround yourself with. At least, you take on a role for that particular group. For this reason, it is important to consider the social groups that you join and the relationships that you form. Positive, affirming relationships will have a positive effect on your sense of self. People who provide invalidating messages, lead you into difficult situations, or pigeonhole you into negative roles can lead you to become a very different person.

Principle 2. The self changes.
"Be yourself" and "Be true to yourself" are common sentiments. Yet the self can change and is constantly changing. It can be helpful to understand that the self is a complex set of beliefs regarding who you think you are and who you wish to be. Furthermore, these beliefs are constantly changing. You may have an aspirational self that you hope to become someday. If you have just recently started college, you may feel you are a very different person than you were just months ago due to the new array of social and intellectual choices and experiences you have recently had. Even just finding yourself in a new social group can make you feel as though you have changed. While this may feel confusing, it is also normal. Such changes are related to the concepts of the crystallized self and self-expansion. Take time to remember what is important to you but also enjoy seeking out new opportunities for growth and personal development.

Principle 3. Different contexts require different faces.

When choosing how we are going to communicate, it's important to remember the context of the communicative situation (office, social event, family gathering) as well as the people who will be the audience of our identity performances. Considering the situation, audience, and social norms helps us choose which facets of our self will be viewed as the most competent to perform in that moment. It is also important to remember that those around us may choose different communication strategies based on the different contexts they operate in. You might consider carefully whether to share a message with a friend privately or post something to their public social media account.

Principle 4. Be mindful of your biases.

Self-serving bias makes it easy to think that our successes are due to our innate abilities and our failures are due to factors out of our control. In reality, neither of these are true all the time. It is important to remember that we all have support and a bit of luck on our side when we succeed and that we should take responsibility for our failures. We are not just a collection of successes and failures but considering these mindfully can help us have a better understanding of our strengths, weaknesses, and how to accomplish goals. It is also important to remember that although we know our self better than others, other people also experience success and failure partially due to internal traits and partially due to external causes. Keeping this in mind can help us have the compassion and empathy needed to form strong interpersonal and societal bonds.

CONCLUSION

Our internal self-concept and identity performances rely on a variety of communication processes that help us understand our self and others. Building this understanding is a key skill for developing interpersonal relationships, as truly interpersonal communication relies on building knowledge regarding each other. Like Kara in the opening vignette, we constantly move through different social contexts and adjust our identity performances accordingly. Our ability to do so in ways that are seen as consistent and coherent to our various social audiences helps us to be viewed as more appropriate communicators, which can lead to a variety of positive outcomes in our personal and professional lives.

CHAPTER 2 STUDY GUIDE

KEY TERMS

Identify and explain the meaning of each of the following key terms.

agreeableness	extraversion
bald-on-record	face
cognitive consistency	face threats
cognitive dissonance	fixed network space
conscientiousness	flexible network space
context collapse	generalized other
crystallized self	heartless
dramaturgical perspective	identity
Dunning-Kruger effect	imposter syndrome

looking-glass self

negative face

neuroticism

off-record

online disinhibition

openness

performances given

performances given off

politeness strategies

positive face

racial identity

redressive action

self-concept

self-expansion theory

self-monitor

self-serving bias

shameless

social steganography

symbolic interactionism

theory of mind

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are the facets of your identity? How do you know that these facets are a part of you? How do you perform these facets for different audiences? What facets do you share with other members of the class? Do you perform these in the same way or different ways?

2. In the age of social media, where people can edit and carefully consider the identity artifacts they place online, what does it mean to be "authentic"? Is authentic a useful term given what you now know about identity presentation? Can someone be more or less authentic? What types of identity presentation would you consider to be authentic or inauthentic?

3. It can be difficult to recognize our own cognitive biases; however, knowing that you have these biases, can you think of a time when the inclination for cognitive consistency may have clouded your perception of someone else? What was the context of that situation? What was the outcome? What might you try to do differently in the future?