

LESSON 6: THE PHYSICAL SELF

THE SELF AS IMPACTED BY THE BODY

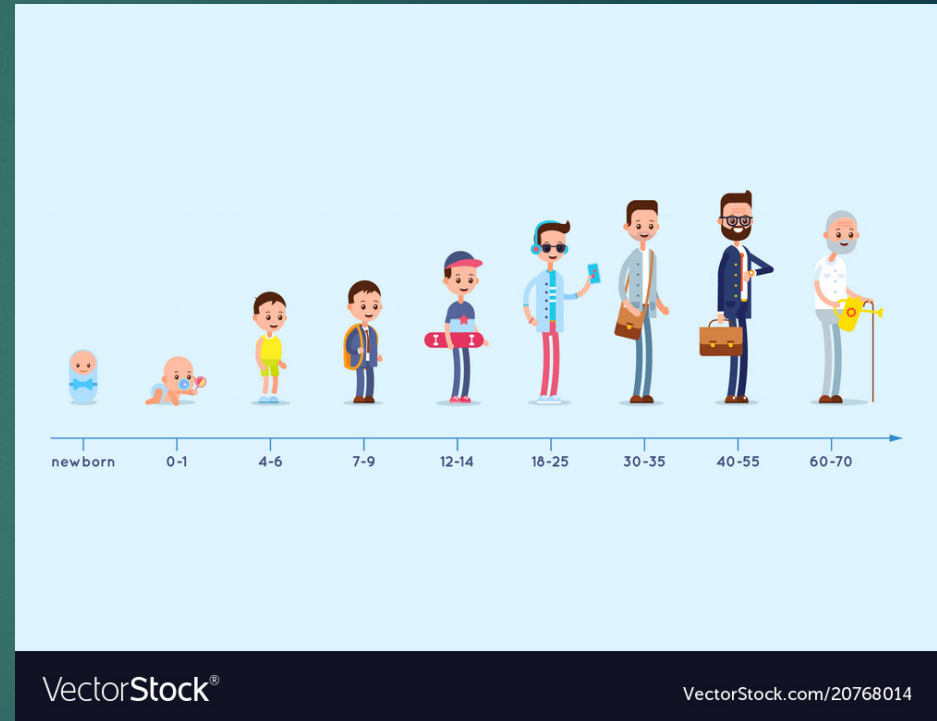
SELF-UNDERSTANDING



- ▶ is the individual's cognitive representation of the self which consists of the substance and the content of self-conceptions.
- ▶ The development of self-understanding in adolescence can be described from simple to perplex and involves a number of aspects of the self.
- ▶ It differs from the child's understanding of self which changes throughout the life span as the person grows older (Santrock, 2014).

GROWING UP

- ▶ as children advance in age, their interest change and with these come changes in their bodies.
- ▶ The changes are rapid and before parents notice it, they no longer have babies but unpredictable teenagers.
- ▶ It is at this stage that parents should respect their teenagers' privacy and allow them enough space to grow but at the same time let them know that their parents are always there ready to LISTEN and to provide SUPPORT.



Physical self



- ▶ refers to the concrete dimensions of the body, it is the tangible aspect of the person which can be directly observed and examined. Physical characteristics are the defining traits or features of the person's body.
- ▶ The first thing a person sees when he looks at another could be their facial features, hairstyle, clothes or figure. These physical characteristics can easily be distinguished with the naked eye.
- ▶ They encompass everything that one can describe about a person or group of people, by just looking.

PUBERTY: A PERIOD OF RAPID PHYSICAL CHANGES

- ▶ According to Santrock, puberty is the most essential marker of the beginning of adolescence.
- ▶ The changes that are experienced during puberty are different for girls and boys and experience *menarche* which is her first menstrual flow.
- ▶ Boys, 2-3 years later, experience *spermarche* or *semenarche* which is his first ejaculation or nocturnal emission.

The Changing Me...

What's Happening?



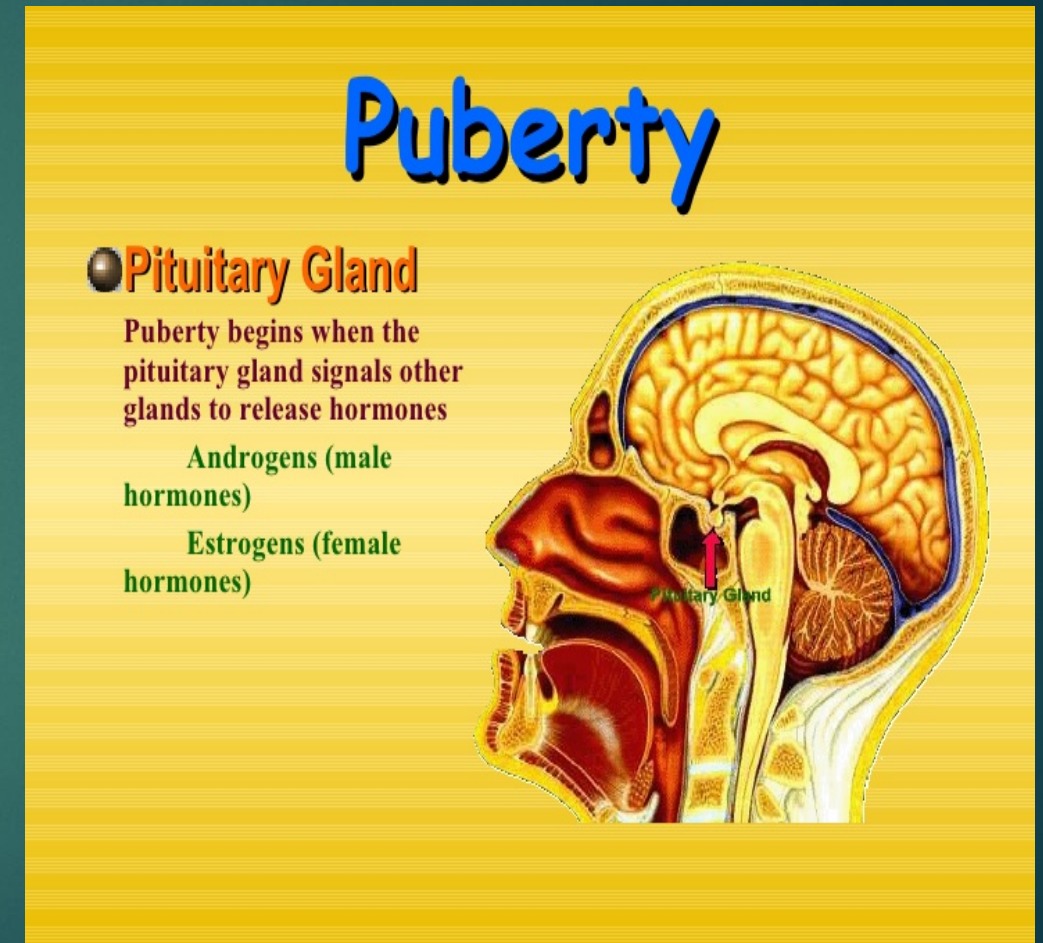
Girls

- 1. Ovaries increase production of estrogen and progesterone**
- 2. Uterus and vagina begin to grow larger**
- 3. Weight and height spurt**
- 4. Muscle and organ growth**
- 5. Menarche (the first menstrual period)**
- 6. First ovulation**
- 7. Breast growth**

Boys

- 1. Testes increase production of testosterone and androgen**
- 2. Increase of size of testes and penis**
- 3. Appearance of pubic hair**
- 4. Weight spurts begins**
- 5. Peak height spurts**
- 6. Peak muscle and organ growth**
- 7. Voice lowers**
- 8. Appearance of facial hair**

- ▶ The **pituitary gland** controls growth and regulates the functions of all other endocrine glands, including the gonads (ovaries for girls and testes for boys).
- ▶ Chemical substances (hormones) are secreted by the **gonads** (sex glands) are distributed by the blood stream throughout the body. These hormones (estrogen for girls, and testosterone and androgen for boys) promote physical changes in an individual's body.
- ▶ These rapid changes would either be classified as **primary sexual changes** (physical characteristics) or **secondary sexual changes** (reproductive organs).
- ▶ It is to be remembered that although human development is a progressive process, variations occur because of individual differences in such factors as health, nurture and heredity.



BODY IMAGE – refers to the way one sees himself/herself or the way he/she imagines how he/she looks. How they see themselves can either be positive or negative.



- ▶ In general, girls are less happy with their body images than boys throughout puberty.
- ▶ Moving towards the end of puberty, however, both girls and boys feel positive about their body images.
Adolescents with poor body images have negative thoughts and feelings about their appearance which can either be true or not.
- ▶ A healthy boy image is made up of positive thoughts, feelings, and acceptance of one's body and overall physical appearance.
- ▶ Young adolescents usually experience an *imaginary audience* which refers to an egocentric state where the individual imagines and believes that many people **are actively listening or watching him or her**.
- ▶ In social psychology, this phenomenon is called **spotlight effect** which refers to the belief that others are paying more attention to the person's appearance and behaviour than they really are.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT PERCEPTION OF THE PHYSICAL SELF


1. Personal Factors

- a. **Introspection and Self-reflection.** Looking inward is one of the simplest way to achieve self-knowledge. Introspection is the process by **which one observes and examines one's internal state (mental and emotional) after behaving in a certain way.** Studies, however, show that introspection is limited because people are commonly motivated to keep unwanted thoughts and experiences out of memory and consciousness. This means that people have a low self-insight on aspects about the self where they wish were not true and many people tend to overestimate their positive aspects.
- b. **Self-Perception Theory.** Explains that since one's internal state is difficult to interpret, people can infer **their inner states by observing their own behaviour – as if they are an outside observer.** Physical perception includes all aspects of a person's perception of his physical self.
- c. **Self-concept.** A cognitive representation of self-knowledge which includes the sum total of all beliefs that people have about themselves. **It is a collection of all individual experiences involving one's characteristics, social roles, values, goals and fears. Thus, it pertains to all characteristics the person enumerates when asked to describe who he is.**
- d. **Personal Identity.** This is the concept a person has about himself that develops over the years. This includes **aspects of his life that he was born into like family, nationality, gender, physical traits as well as the choices he makes, such as what he does for a living, who his friends are and what he believes in.**

2. Social Factors

- a. **Attachment Process and Social Appraisal.** According to Bowlby, people learn about their **value and lovability when they experience how their mothers or caregivers care for them and respond to their needs.** These earliest interactions are important in developing who they are.
 - b. **Maintaining, Regulating and Expanding the Self in Interpersonal Relationships.** The sense of self is continuously shaped through ongoing interaction **with others or with significant relationship partners.** They act as “private audiences” with whom people carry an internal dialogue. Oftentimes, however, people are not aware that they are being influenced by these private audiences.
 - c. **The Looking-glass Self Theory.** Charles Horton Cooley stated that a person’s self grows out of society’s interpersonal interactions and the perceptions of others. The view of oneself comes from a compilation of personal qualities and impressions of how others perceive the individual.
 - d. **Social Comparison.** Leon Festinger (1954) introduced another way of understanding the self by comparing one’s traits, abilities, or opinions to that of others. *Social comparison* is a process of comparing oneself with others in order to evaluate one’s own abilities and opinions. There are two types:
 - i. **Upward social comparison** happens when an individual compares himself to others who are better than him. He may experience inferiority and frustration.
 - ii. **Downward social comparison** happens when an individual compares himself to someone who is in a worse situation than he is especially when he is feeling so low. Superiority and ignorance.
- *For a person to have a healthy self-image, it is important to never compare oneself to others. Rather one should set realistic standards for himself.*
- a. **Social Identity Theory.** Formulated by Tajfel and Turner in 1979 which provides a framework about how people achieve understanding about themselves by being a member of their group. People have a need for a positive social identity that is why they connect to a wider social network. This idea assumes that as a member of the group they will not be discriminated by an out-group.

SELF	IDENTITY
The person that someone truly is or the entire person of the individual.	Is who a person believes he or she is, representing a synthesis and integration of self-understanding.
The total characteristics or qualities of a person both known and unknown to others but known to oneself.	The traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is.
	A way of making sense of some aspect or part of self-concept.



The self belongs to an individual level of analysis which includes self-esteem, self-efficacy and the like. Identity is based on societal or cultural level analysis such as cultural concept of oneself and cultural make up which makes a person who he is.

THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON BODY IMAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEAUTY

Culture is defined as a social system that is characterized by the shared meanings that are attributed to people and events by its members.

- ▶ A significant aspect of culture that strongly influences adolescents who are in a face-to-face encounter with their physical selves is how their culture conceptualizes beauty.
- ▶ Young adolescents are forced to adhere to society's definition of beauty lest they be labelled ugly. In this age of plastic surgery or 'retoke', water-proof and oil-proof make-up, hair color and highlights, colored contact lenses and Photoshop, NOBODY is ugly.
- ▶ Beauty is defined as the quality of being physically attractive or the qualities in a person or a thing that give pleasure to the senses or the mind.
- ▶ It should be noted that in every culture and in every individual, the standards of beauty may vary a lot. *Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder.*
- ▶ The bottom line is, for a young adolescent who is awkwardly experiencing physical changes, who is inexperienced and innocent of the complexities of the world, BEAUTY is what social media dictates, what fashion models look like, and how his/her favorite celebrity dresses and behaves.
- ▶ The body image created by the adolescent which includes perception and feelings about oneself could either be positive or negative.
- ▶ This is based on how the adolescent measures up to the cultural standards of an ideal body image.



THE FILIPINO CONCEPT OF BEAUTY



- ▶ Filipinos have a mixed heritage that can be traced back to Malay, Korean, Chinese, and Spaniard origins, but the original inhabitants of the Philippines, called 'Aetas', were dark skinned and had tight, curly hair and flat noses. The Spaniards referred to these people as Negritos because they resembled small native Africans.
- ▶ Euro centrism is defined as “a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences”. Filipinos with Eurocentric features are seen everywhere in media. With their fair skin and tall noses, they grace the spotlight and sweep Filipinos with flat noses and dark complexions under the rug.
- ▶ Dark-skinned Filipinos tend to have a negative body image. They feel ashamed and embarrassed of their bodies because they think they are valued less compared to those with lighter skin. This proves the importance of visibility and representation in mass media.
- ▶ The message that the society gives is that flat noses and dark complexions do not define beauty. This foreign standard strongly impacts the Filipino youth resulting in a fixed mind-set that what they physically are will not be enough until they meet the Western standards of physical attractiveness. They will be seen as lacking in beauty simply because of the structure of noses and the color of their skin.

SELF-ESTEEM AND THE IDEAL BODY IMAGE

- ▶ *Self-esteem* is defined as the overall evaluation that a person has of himself which can be positive or negative, high or low. It is the measure of the person's self-worth based on some personal or social standard.
- ▶ According to research, the level of self-esteem fluctuates across the life span and may not always match with reality.
- ▶ There are several factors that may affect a person's self-esteem and physical appearance is one of them. It was discussed that as children advance to the stage of adolescence, they form a body image. Adolescent's body image includes the following:
 1. Perception of their physical self when they look in the mirror.
 2. Feelings of like and dislike about the physical self that they see.
 3. Their thoughts and how they relate to their physical self.
 4. Perception of how other people view them physically.



A person with a positive body image will have a high self-esteem and will often spend more time taking care of their appearance. Also, the attention that he gets for his physical beauty elevates the level of his self-esteem. On the other hand, when the person is not satisfied with what he sees which affects how he perceives himself and feels that he does not measure up to how his culture defines beauty then he will have a negative body image and a low self-esteem. Unfortunately, some adolescents resort to extreme negative behaviors in order to meet the so-called status quo.

The following are some aspects in culture that may have led to the aforementioned misconceptions:

1. Society's ideals of the perfect physical form which are: for women: white perfect skin, small waistline, big breast and behind, long straight hair, long manicured nails, slender and tall; and for men: tall, tanned perfect skin, muscled physique, with 6-pack abs.
2. Images of perfection adolescents see in all types of media i.e. print, television, film and internet. Mass media is a powerful tool that reinforces cultural beliefs and values. Though young people may initially disagree with the set ideals of beauty, repeated exposure via media lead them to believe in the misconceptions.
3. Since a standard has been set by society and reinforced by media, any characteristic that does not conform to the standard is labelled as ugly. Body diversity in size and structure due to genetic heritability is not tolerated. **Being pretty and white skinned or tanned and muscular had become associated with the intelligent, successful, popular, healthy, and the disciplined. Opposite characteristics are associated with the dull, lazy, ugly, and the weak.**
 - ▶ These misconceptions strongly affect how the young form their body image and its influence on their self-esteem. Knowing that adolescence is the period where self-identity is formed, it is important for adults in the environment to listen to this young people and provide proper guidance and support.
 - ▶ *Yes, beauty is important, but being beautiful still depends on how a person defines beauty and the standards he sets to meet his definition.*