Chapter 2: Interpersonal Communication and Self

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

2.1 Define self-concept and identify the factors that shape the development of your self-concept.
2.2 Define self-esteem and compare and contrast self-esteem with self-concept.
2.3 Define facework and discuss how you project your face and protect others' face.
2.4 Identify and describe seven strategies for improving your self-concept.
2.5 Identify the effects of your self-concept and self-esteem on your relationships with others.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

> **In-Text Opportunity for Classroom Discussion**
> **Improving Your Communication Skills: Who Are You?**
> This box provides space for students to identify and write ten aspects of themselves. The responses provide a base for discussion about students' own self-concept and self-esteem.

I. Self-Concept: Who You Think You Are
Learning Objective 2.1: Define self-concept and identify the factors that shape the development of your self-concept.
  A. **Self** is defined as the sum total of who a person is, a person's central inner force. Your **self-concept** is your subjective self-description of who you think you are—it is filtered through your own perceptions.
    1. We can view self-concept as the labels we consistently use to describe ourselves to others.
    2. Labels may change because a healthy self-concept is flexible.
    3. Reflection is one of the most powerful tools we can use to enhance self-awareness.
  B. Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values Reflect Your Self-Concept
    1. An **attitude** is a learned predisposition to respond to a person, object, or idea in a favorable or unfavorable way.
    2. **Beliefs** are the way in which you structure your understanding of reality—what is true and what is false for you.
    3. **Values** are enduring concepts of good and bad, right and wrong.
  C. Mindfulness: Being Consciously Aware
    1. **Mindfulness** is the ability to think consciously about what you are doing and experiencing, rather than responding out of habit or intuition.
    2. Subjective Self-Awareness
      a. **Subjective self-awareness** is the ability that people have to differentiate themselves from their environment.
      b. You are a separate entity from all that is around you.
    3. Objective Self-Awareness
      a. **Objective self-awareness** is the ability to be the object of our own thoughts and attention.
      b. You have the ability to think about your own thoughts as you are thinking about them.

4. Symbolic Self-Awareness
   a. **Symbolic self-awareness,** unique to humans, is our ability not only to think about ourselves but to use language (symbols) to represent ourselves to others.
   b. Psychologist Abraham Maslow created a four-stage model of awareness.
      i. Stage 1: Unconscious incompetence
      ii. Stage 2: Conscious incompetence
      iii. Stage 3: Conscious competence
      iv. Stage 4: Unconscious competence
D. One or Many Selves?
   1. The Material Self
      a. The **material self** is the total of all the tangible things you own: your possessions, your home, and your body.
      b. One element of the material self gets considerable attention in this culture: the body.
   2. The Social Self
      a. The **social self** is the part of you that interacts with others.
      b. William James believed that a person has many social selves, depending on who that person is interacting with.
   3. The Spiritual Self
      a. The **spiritual self** consists of internal thoughts and introspection about your values, moral standards, and beliefs.
      b. It is the essence of who you think you are and your feelings about yourself.

In-Text Opportunity for Classroom Discussion
Relating to Diverse Others: The "Golden Rule": Is Being Other-Oriented a Universal Value?
This feature points out how the importance of being other-oriented rather than self-absorbed is not a new idea. It lists various world religions and how each emphasize this very principle. Use the information in this feature as a starting point for a class discussion on whether being other-oriented is a universal value or not.

E. How Your Self-Concept Develops
   1. Interaction with Individuals
      a. We form our self-concept by seeing ourselves in a figurative looking glass when we interact with others.
      b. The **looking-glass self** is the concept that suggests you learn who you are based on your interaction with others who reflect yourself back to you.
      c. We are likely to incorporate others' comments into our self-concept under three conditions.
         i. Frequent: We are more likely to believe another's statements if they repeat something we have heard several times.
         ii. Credible: We are more likely to value another's statements if we perceive them to be credible.
         iii. Consistent: We are more likely to incorporate another's comments into our own concept of self if the comments are consistent with other comments and our own experience.

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2. Attachment Style
   a. You develop an **attachment style** based on how secure, anxious, or uncomfortable you felt in relating to one or both of your parents.
   b. The emotional and relational bond you developed early on with your parents influences your concept of self and how you relate to others.
      i. **Secure attachment style** is the style of relating to others that is characteristic of those who are comfortable giving and receiving affection, experiencing intimacy, and trusting other people.
      ii. **Anxious attachment style** is the style of relating to others that is characteristic of those who experience anxiety in some intimate relationships and feel uncomfortable giving and receiving affection.
      iii. **Avoidant attachment style** is the style of relating to others that is characteristic of those who consistently experience discomfort and awkwardness in intimate relationships and who therefore avoid such relationships.
3. Associations with Groups
   a. A variety of groups, including religious, political, ethnic, social study, occupational, and professional groups, play important roles in determining your self-concept.
   b. Groups provide important support for people who are marginal to the dominant culture.
4. Roles You Assume
   a. Father, sister, uncle, manager, salesperson, teacher, and student are labels that imply certain expectations for behavior, and which shape self-concept.
   b. Gender groups exert a powerful influence on role selection.
   c. **Androgynous roles** encompass a greater repertoire of actions and behaviors because they are both masculine and feminine.

In-Text Opportunity for Classroom Discussion
#communicationandtechnology: Comparing Your "Cyber Self" and Your "Realspace Self"
This feature discusses the differences between presentation of self online (**electronically medicated communication,** or **EMC**) and offline. The four questions in this feature can be used to engage students in small group or class discussion about the key differences between the online and offline self, honesty, relationships, and influence in cyberspace.

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5. Self-Labels
   a. We form our self-concept based our own attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions.
   b. Our **self-reflexiveness** is the human ability that allows us to think about what we are doing while we are doing it.
6. Your Personality and Biology
   a. Your **personality**—the set of enduring internal predispositions and behavioral characteristics that describe how people react to their environment—is central to **psychology**, the study of how your thinking and emotional responses influence the way you behave.
   b. Understanding the forces that shape your personality is central to increasing your awareness of your self-concept and how you relate to others.

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c. There are primary personality traits, which are known as the **Big Five Personality Traits**.
   i. **Extraversion** is outgoing, talkative, positive emotions, and sociable.
   ii. **Agreeableness** is being friendly, compassionate, trusting, and cooperative.
   iii. **Conscientiousness** is being efficient, organized, self-disciplined, dutiful, and methodical.
   iv. **Neuroticism** is seen as nervous, insecure, emotionally distressed, and anxious.
   v. **Openness** is noted as curious, imaginative, creative, adventurous, and inventive.
d. The **communibiological approach** suggests that genetic and biological influences play a major role in influencing communication behavior.
e. **Social learning theory** suggests that we can learn how to adapt and adjust our behavior toward others.
f. **Shyness** is the behavioral tendency not to talk or interact with other people.
g. **Communication apprehension** is the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with other people.
h. **Willingness to communicate** summarizes the likelihood that a person will communicate with others in a variety of situations.

In-Text Opportunity for Classroom Discussion
Communication and Emotion: Self and Emotion: How We Influence How We Feel
This feature explores the question "are we in control of our emotions or do our emotions control us?" As described in the feature, three theories provide explanations about how we experience emotions: the Commonsense Theory of Emotion, the James-Lange Theory of Emotion, and the Appraisal Theory of Emotion. Divide the class into three groups and assign each group a theory. Have each group present to the class an overview of its assigned theory and why group members would support or not support the theory.

II. Self-Esteem: Your Self-Worth
Learning Objective 2.2: Define self-esteem and compare and contrast self-esteem with self-concept.
   A. Your **self-worth (self-esteem)** is your evaluation of your worth or value based on your perception of such things as your skills, abilities, talents, and appearance.
   B. Being prosocial means your behaviors benefit others.
   C. Albert Bandura suggests that **self-efficacy** is your own belief in your ability to perform a specific task in a particular situation.
   D. People derive their sense of self-worth through **social comparison**: the process of comparing yourself to others who are similar to you to measure your worth and value.
   E. Berne (1964) developed the concept of a **life position** that describes your feelings of regard for yourself and others as reflected in your sense of self-worth and self-esteem.
      1. "I'm OK, you're OK" indicates positive regard for self and others.
      2. "I'm OK, you're not OK" indicates positive regard for self and low regard for others.
      3. "I'm not OK, you're OK" indicates low regard for self and positive regard for others.
      4. "I'm not OK, you're not OK" indicates low regard for both self and others.

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III. Facework: Presenting Your Self-Image to Others
Learning Objective 2.3: Define facework and discuss how you project your face and protect others' face.
    A. **Face** is an image of yourself you present to others for acceptance and confirmation. **Facework** involves using communication to maintain your own positive self-perception or to support, reinforce, or challenge someone else's self-perception.
    B. Projecting Your Face
        1. Like most people, you probably spend effort projecting a **positive face**—a positive image of yourself—to others.
        2. **Preventative facework** includes efforts to maintain and enhance one's positive self-perceptions.
        3. **Corrective facework** describes efforts to correct what one perceives as a negative perception of oneself on the part of others to "save face."
    C. Protecting Others' Face
        1. There are several things we can do to actively help others maintain a positive face.
        2. We engage in **face-threatening acts** when we communicate in a way that undermines or challenges someone's positive face.
        3. **Politeness theory** suggests not only that people have a tendency to promote a positive image of themselves (a positive face), but also that people will have a positive perception of others who treat them politely and respectfully.
        4. Accordingly, when we have a negative message to communicate, we make a choice regarding how much we threaten someone else's face.
        5. Dominici and Littlejohn suggest that being silent can mean one of three things.
            a. I'm thinking about what you said.
            b. I'm ignoring what you said because it's not worth my time or effort.
            c. I'm simply not going to respond in kind to the way you've treated me.

IV. How to Improve Your Self-Esteem
Learning Objective 2.4: Identify and describe seven strategies for improving your self-concept.
    A. Engage in Self-Talk
        1. Realistic, positive self-talk can have a reassuring effect on your level of self-worth and your interaction with others.
        2. **Intrapersonal communication** describes this communication with yourself: self-talk.
        3. Conversely, repeating negative messages about your lack of skill and ability can keep you from trying and achieving.
    B. Visualize a Positive Image of Yourself
        1. **Visualization** is the technique of imagining that you are performing a particular task in a certain way.
        2. Positive visualization can enhance your self-worth.
    C. Avoid Comparing Yourself with Others
        1. Rather than finding others who seemingly are better off, focus on the unique attributes that make you who you are.
        2. Comparisons such as "He has more money than I have" or "She looks better than I look" are likely to deflate our self-worth.

D. Reframe Appropriately
   1. **Reframing** is the process of redefining events and experiences from a different point of view.
   2. Learn and profit from your mistakes.
E. Develop Honest Relationships
   1. Having at least one other person who can help you objectively and honestly reflect on your virtues and vices can be extremely beneficial in fostering a healthy, positive self-image.
   2. The more credible the source of information, the more likely you are to believe it.
F. Let Go of the Past
   1. Individuals with low self-esteem may be locking onto events and experiences that happened years ago and tenaciously refusing to let go of them.
   2. Becoming aware of the changes that have or may occur in your life can help you develop a more realistic assessment of your value.
G. Seek Support
   1. Some of your self-image may be so ingrained that you need professional **social support** to make big changes.
   2. **Talk therapy** is a technique in which a person describes his or her problems and concerns to a skilled listener to better understand the emotions and issues that are creating the problems.

V. Self and Interpersonal Relationships
Learning Objective 2.5: Identify the effects of your self-concept and self-esteem on your relationships with others.
   A. Self and Interaction with Others
      1. Your image of yourself and your sense of self-worth directly affect how you interact with others.
      2. **Symbolic interaction theory** is based on the assumption that we make sense of the world based on our interactions with others through the medium of symbols; our communication with others influences our very sense of who we are.
      3. George Herbert Mead suggests that we develop an "I" that is based on our own perspective of ourselves and a "Me" that is an image of ourselves based on the collective responses we receive and interpret from others.
   B. Self and Your Future
      1. Your predictions about your future actions are likely to come true because you believe they will come true; these are **self-fulfilling prophesies**.
      2. There is evidence that a person's attitudes and expectations have positive effects on physical healing; patients who believe they will improve are more likely to improve.
   C. Self and Interpretation of Messages
      1. Perhaps you know someone whose low self-esteem colors how he or she interprets messages and interacts with others.
      2. Such people are more likely to be more sensitive to criticism and negative feedback and overly responsive to praise and compliments.

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D. Self and Interpersonal Needs
  1. Our concept of who we are coupled with our need to interact with others profoundly influences how we communicate with others.
  2. <mark>Schutz identifies three primary social needs that affect our degree of communication with others: inclusion, control, and affection.</mark>
  3. Inclusion
     a. The interpersonal need to be included and to include others in social activities is known as the **need for inclusion**.
     b. Not only do we need to include; we need to include others.
  4. Control
     a. We have a **need for control** in our relationships as well as the need to be controlled.
     b. We need some degree of influence over the relationships we establish with others.
  5. Affection
     a. We have a **need for affection,** a need to give and receive love, support, warmth, and intimacy.
     b. We also have a need to express affection toward others.
  6. The greater a person's interpersonal needs for inclusion, control, and affection, the more actively interpersonal relationships will be pursued.
E. Self and Disclosure to Others
  1. <mark>**Self-disclosure** occurs when we purposefully provide information to others that they would not learn if we did not tell them. To disclose personal information to others, you must first have **self-awareness**, an understanding of who you are.</mark> The **Johari Window model** reflects the movement of information about yourself from *blind* and *unknown* quadrants to *hidden* and *open* ones.
     a. <mark>Open: Known to Self and Known to Others</mark>
     b. <mark>Blind: Not Known to Self but Known to Others</mark>
     c. <mark>Hidden: Known to Self but Not Known to Others</mark>
     d. <mark>Unknown: Not Known to Self or Others</mark>
  2. <mark>We can draw a Johari Window to represent each of our relationships.</mark>
F. Self and Communication Social Style
  1. Each of us has a unique <mark>**communication social style** </mark>that is identifiable by the habitual way we communicate with others.
  2. Jung described people according to four types: thinkers, feelers, intuiters, and sensors.
  3. <mark>Our communication social style helps others interpret our messages and predict how we will behave.</mark>
  4. <mark>Two primary dimensions underlie how we interact with others.</mark>
     a. <mark>**Assertiveness** is the tendency to make requests, ask for information, and generally pursue our own rights and best interests and is considered to be a masculine style.</mark>
     b. <mark>**Responsiveness** is the tendency to be sensitive to the needs of others, including being sympathetic to others' feelings and placing the feelings of others above your own feelings, and is considered to be a feminine style.</mark>

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5. Identify your communication social style by asking friends, family members, and colleagues who know you best to help you assess your behavior that contributes to their perceptions of you as assertive or nonassertive, responsive or nonresponsive.
6. At the heart of interpersonal communication is relating to others.
7. To adapt your style to enhance communication quality, communicate in ways that more closely match the style of the other person.

In-Text Opportunity for Classroom Discussion
Improving Your Communication Skills: What's Your Communication Social Style?
Each student can complete a twenty-item questionnaire of different personality traits to determine his or her communication social style.

In-Text Opportunity for Classroom Discussion
Applying an Other-Orientation to Self and Interpersonal Communication
Students are asked to consider their personal credo or set of beliefs and to draft that credo.

KEY TERMS

self, LO 2.1
self-concept, LO 2.1
attitude, LO 2.1
belief, LO 2.1
value, LO 2.1
mindfulness, LO 2.1
subjective self-awareness, LO 2.1
objective self-awareness, LO 2.1
symbolic self-awareness, LO 2.1
material self, LO 2.1
social self, LO 2.1
spiritual self, LO 2.1
looking-glass self, LO 2.1
attachment style, LO 2.1
secure attachment style, LO 2.1
anxious attachment style, LO 2.1
avoidant attachment style, LO 2.1
electronically mediated communication (EMC) , LO 2.1
androgynous role, LO 2.1
self-reflexiveness, LO 2.1

psychology, LO 2.1
personality, LO 2.1
Big Five Personality Traits, LO 2.1
extraversion, LO 2.1
agreeableness, LO 2.1
conscientiousness, LO 2.1
neuroticism, LO 2.1
openness, LO 2.1
communibiological approach, LO 2.1
social learning theory, LO 2.1
shyness, LO 2.1
communication apprehension, LO 2.1
willingness to communicate, LO 2.1
self-worth (self-esteem), LO 2.2
self-efficacy, LO 2.2
social comparison, LO 2.2
life position, LO 2.2
face, LO 2.3
facework, LO 2.3
positive face, LO 2.3
preventative facework, LO 2.3

corrective facework, LO 2.3
face-threatening acts, LO 2.3
politeness theory, LO 2.3
intrapersonal communication, LO 2.4
visualization, LO 2.4
reframing, LO 2.4
social support, LO 2.4
talk therapy, LO 2.4
symbolic interaction theory, LO 2.5
self-fulfilling prophecy, LO 2.5
need for inclusion, LO 2.5
need for control, LO 2.5
need for affection, LO 2.5
self-disclosure, LO 2.5
self-awareness, LO 2.5
Johari Window model, LO 2.5
communication social style, LO 2.5
assertiveness, LO 2.5
responsiveness, LO 2.5

LECTURE TOPICS

1. What is self-concept and why is it important to communication?
2. What is face? More specifically, what type of "face" do you desire to portray to others? What facework do you complete to maintain that desired face? What happens when face-threatening acts occur that challenge this desired face?
3. What is your primary social need? Reflecting on your close relationships with other people, what are some of their primary social needs? In thinking about the importance of being other-oriented, how do you maintain another person's social need?

GROUP IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

`"Wednesday"`

1. **Who Are You?** Understanding who they are requires students to know their values, beliefs, and attitudes. Have students complete a short list of statements regarding three things that they value, three things that they believe, and three things that they like. Choose two male volunteers and two female volunteers and write their responses on the board. Engage the class in a discussion about whether there are discernable differences between the male responses and the female responses (males have a greater tendency to define themselves structurally—in terms of their position in society; women have a greater tendency to define themselves relationally). This should lead to a discussion about the extent to which our selves are socially constructed. Finally, ask students to think about how their statements reflected William James's material, social, and spiritual dimensions of self.
2. **How to Improve Your Self-Esteem.** In small groups have students briefly describe one situation that made a positive impact on his or her self-concept and one situation that made a negative impact on his or her self-concept. After sharing these events, have students discuss how visualization might help with maintaining or improving self-esteem across these two situations.
3. **Attachment Style.** Have students individually reflect on their attachment style. Ask students to write about 3 significant moments in their childhood that they think significantly contributed to their current attachment style. Last, have students write about how their attachment style has influenced their current friendships with people in college.
4. **Self and Your Future.** In pairs, have students describe a self-fulfilling prophecy that they experienced. Have students share how their expectations and attitudes likely influenced the final outcome.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Close Relationship Between Self-Concept and Self-Esteem.** Explore the National Association for Self Esteem, whose purpose is "to fully integrate self-esteem into the fabric of American society so that every individual, no matter what their age or background, experiences personal worth and happiness." Their website can be found at http://www.self-esteem-nase.org/. Have students take a self-esteem quiz like that found at http://psychologytoday.tests.psychtests.com/take_test.php?idRegTest=3207. In class, ask students to discuss the benefits of awareness of self-concept and self-esteem to relationships.
2. **Interpersonal Needs and Communication.** Have students write a journal reflection about their interpersonal needs for inclusion, control, and affection. Which of Schutz's social needs

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is their primary need? What are some ways that other people have met this need? What are some ways that other people have not met this need? Last, how does their primary social need influence their interactions with other people?

3. **The Johari Window Model.** Ask students to complete the interactive Johari Window found at http://kevan.org/johari over the course of a week. Ask them to create a diagram of the results they got from the exercise and to be prepared to discuss those results (should any panes be larger than others, etc.?) in class after everyone has had the opportunity to have others visit their window on the site.

4. **Online Self versus Face-to-Face Self.** Until the next class period keep a journal log where you reflect on your online social media profiles and the type of self that you portray on these websites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram). Next, consider your face-to-face self and how you have interacted with other people in person. Answer the following question within your reflection: *Are there any similarities or differences between these two selves?*

REVEL WRITING EXERCISES

Journal Writing

2.1 Journal: Self-Concept. Make a list of all the groups, clubs, and organizations to which you belong. Rank them from the most important to you to the least important. What does your ranking tell you about these groups in reference to your self-concept? For example, which groups have you joined more from a desire to belong or for the prestige of the group than from an interest in or passion for the group's cause?

2.2 Journal: Social Comparisons. Do you find that you make social comparisons with others that affect your self-esteem? If so, what qualities of others most influence your own view of yourself: appearance, material possessions, skills/talent, or something else? Explain.

2.3 Journal: Saving Face. Describe an incident when you used preventative facework. Now describe another time when you used corrective facework. What were the circumstances in both cases? Did you find preventative or corrective facework more effective in "saving face"? Why?

2.4 Journal: Self-Help. Many self-help books claim to provide sure-fire techniques for enhancing self-esteem and thus enrich your social life. Do you think these claims are ethical? Why or why not?

2.5 Journal: Expectations. Describe a situation in which your expectations of the outcome became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Was the outcome positive or negative? Did your self-esteem have an impact? Explain.

Shared Writing: Public Face
Work with a group of your classmates to list the ways that people use Facebook and other social media sites to craft and maintain their public face to others. Now evaluate your Facebook page (if you have one). Do you follow any of these practices? If so, how?

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Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC)
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