

Aspects Of Social Identity, Self Concept, Self Esteem, Self Functioning And Gender Aspects (Part 6)

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3.2 The characteristics of self concept

Following are the characteristics that have attributed to the self-concept.

1. It is a subsystem of internally consistent, hierarchically organized concepts contained within a broader conceptual system.
2. It contains different empirical selves, such as a body self, a spiritual self and social self.
3. It is a dynamic organization that changes with experience. It appears to seek out change and exhibits a tendency to assimilate increasing amounts of information.
4. It develops out of experience, particularly out of social interaction with significant people.
5. It is essential for the functioning of the individual that the organization of the self-concept be maintained. When the organization of the self-concept is threatened, the individual experiences anxiety and attempts to defend himself against the threat. If the defense is unsuccessful, stress increases.

3.3 Functions of Self Concept

The self-concept has at least two basic functions. First it organizes the data of experience involving social interaction, into predictable sequences of action and reaction. Second, the self-concept facilitates attempts to fulfill needs while avoiding disapproval and anxiety.

Thus, self concept is a person's self-understanding-their story of themselves. The self-concept has its in infancy, when the child first makes a distinction between its body and everything else. This glimmer of self-concept goes on to develop, through repeated experiences of self-awareness, into a collection of characteristics that the child uses for self-definition, such as gender, age and membership in a particular family. Children acquire skills and talents and

start comparing themselves with others and refining their self-concept, so they begin to develop a private self-concept, things they know about themselves that no one else knows.

Cognitive schemata then develop around aspects of the self: these knowledge structures are collections of characteristics associated with the self-concept. People also develop views of themselves in the future, their possible selves, which include both desirable (ideal self) and undesirable features.

Thus we can conclude that self-concept is the person's answer to the questions "who have I been, what am I like now, and who do I want to be in the future?"

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