Self and Self-views[11]

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While temperament and personality are important aspects of an individual (Rothbart, Ahadi, & Evans, 2000), the concepts of self and self-views are more relevant to education and schooling as they are more likely impacted through directed experiences (Swann, Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007). A major challenge when considering the concept of self and self-views is that everyone has a subjective experience of one's self that can produce conflict when attempting to objectively investigate the topic. A second challenge is that one's mental representation of the world and one's initial starting point can have a substantial impact on one's conclusions (Huitt, Chapter 4, this volume). For example, a person adopting a secular/materialistic worldview would likely start with a scientific investigation and attempt to reconcile any subjective experiences with material written by others from that perspective. A person adopting a cosmic-spiritual worldview, on the other hand, might be more likely to turn inward, investigating the self through contemplative practice and then connecting with others who might have done similar inward-looking investigations. Finally, a person adopting a God-centered worldview might first look to scripture or the teachings of elders, connecting subjective experiences to those teachings. The major orientation of this chapter is a secular/materialistic worldview as that is in keeping with other chapters in the book. For those interested in investigating the cosmic-spiritual worldview and the reality of human beings from that perspective, McIntosh (2015) and Phipps (2012) both provide a good starting point. For those wishing to investigate the topic from a God-centered perspective, a compilation of quotations from major religions is available at http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/brilstar/quotes.html#Religious.

In a secular/materialistic investigation, the term self is generally used in reference to the conscious reflection of one's own being or identity, as an object separate from other or from the environment. There are a variety of ways to think about the self with self-concept and self-esteem as two of the most widely used. Self-concept is often considered as the cognitive or thinking aspect of self (related to one's self-image) and generally refers to

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"the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence" (Purkey, 1988).

Self-esteem more often is used to refer to the affective or emotional aspect of self and generally alludes to how one feels about or how one values him- or herself. This is sometimes used as a synonym for self-worth, although some authors suggest self-worth is a more central concept (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Self-concept can also refer to the general idea we have of ourselves and self-esteem can refer to particular measures about components of self-concept.

Franken (1997) stated the importance of one's self-concept:

"[T]here is a great deal of research which shows that the self-concept is, perhaps, the basis for all motivated behavior. It is the self-concept that gives rise to possible selves, and it is possible selves that create the motivation for behavior" (p. 443).

Additionally, Franken (1997) suggested that self-concept is related to self-esteem in that

"people who have good self-esteem have a clearly differentiated self-concept.... When people know themselves they can maximize outcomes because they know what they can and cannot do" (p. 439).

It would seem, then, that one way to increase one's affective evaluation of one's self is to obey the somewhat outworn cliche of "Know thyself." One the other hand, Hansford and Hattie (1982) found that measures of self-views such as self-concept and self-esteem were only weakly correlated with each other ($r = 0.20$). [Note: r is a measure of the strength of relationship among two factors; an $r = 0.20$ signals a relatively week relationship.]

People develop and maintain their self-concepts through the process of taking action and then reflecting on what they have done and what others tell them about what they have done (Brigham, 1986). That is, self-views are not innate, but are constructed and developed by the individual through interaction with the environment and reflecting on that interaction. This reflection is based on actual and possible actions in comparison to one's own expectations and the expectations of others and to the characteristics and accomplishments of others.

James' (1890) developed the following formula for how self-esteem is constructed:

Self-esteem = Success / Pretensions.

Simply stated, the formula proposed that self-esteem will be created by the individual as he or she reflects on behavior as related to one's own and other's expectations. An important point is that two people can have exactly the same success but develop different levels of self-esteem because they or important people in their environments have different levels of expectations.

This dynamic aspect of self-concept (and, by corollary, self-esteem) is important because it indicates that it can be modified or changed. Franken (1997) stated

> "there is a growing body of research which indicates that it is possible to change the self-concept. Self-change is not something that people can will but rather it depends on the process of self-reflection. Through self-reflection, people often come to view themselves in a new, more powerful way, and it is through this new, more powerful way of viewing the self that people can develop possible selves" (p. 443).

There are several different components of self-concept for which measures have been developed: physical, academic, social, and transpersonal. The physical aspect of self-concept relates to that which is concrete: how one looks, his or her sex, gender, height, weight, etc.; what kind of clothes one wears; what kind of car one drives; what kind of home one lives in; and so forth. One's academic self-concept relates to how well the individual does in school or how well one demonstrates an ability to learn academic content. There are at least two levels: a general academic self-concept of how good one is overall and a set of specific content-related self-concepts that describe how good one is in math, science, language arts, social science, etc. The social self-concept describes how one relates to other people and the transpersonal self-concept describes how one relates to the supernatural or unknowns of the universe.

Swann et al. (2007) provided a review of the research on the relationship of a variety of self-measures. They showed that the relationships of self-concept to various measures of school achievement are very specific. They found that measures of non-academic aspects of self-concept are not related to measures of academic work. However, measures of general self-concept are related to general measures of academic achievement (eg, overall grade-point average), but only moderately. In fact, using linear discriminate analysis, Byrne (1990) found that academic self-concept was more effective than was academic achievement in differentiating between low-track and high-track students. Hamachek's (1995) review of research also demonstrated the complex relationships between self-concept and school achievement, especially that the relationship is reciprocal, with each influencing the other. On the other hand, specific measures of subject-

related achievement are highly related to success in that content area. Bandura (1997) used the term self-efficacy for these specific measures. He provided evidence that self-efficacy or one's belief that he or she can perform a specific task is the best predictor for success on that task.

The major issue is, therefore, the strength and the direction of the relationship: does general or academic or subject-specific self-concept produce achievement or does achievement produce these various measures of self-concept. Gage and Berliner (1992) stated

"the evidence is accumulating, however, to indicate that level of school success, particularly over many years, predicts level of regard of self and one's own ability (Bridgeman & Shipman, 1978; Kifer, 1975); whereas level of self-esteem does not predict level of school achievement. The implication is that teachers need to concentrate on the academic successes and failures of their students. It is the student's history of success and failure that gives them the information with which to assess themselves" (p. 159).

That is, increasing general measures of self-esteem does not impact future levels of school achievement; however, when academic achievement results in improvements relative to expectations and those expectations are considered via reflections, it is possible to further impact school achievement. From this perspective, Bandura's (1997) research on the importance of self-efficacy could be thought of as reflecting the importance of pretensions or expectations as he stated that one's mastery experiences related to success are the major influence on one's self-efficacy. Bandura showed that modeling and social persuasion (giving encouragement) can also be helpful, but not as much as being successful previously on the same or a similar task.

By rearranging the components of the equation created by James (1890), an interesting corollary can be produced stating that success is limited by pretentions or expectations and self-esteem:

Success = Pretensions * Self-esteem.

This equation states that success, especially the limits of one's success, can be improved by increasing expectations and/or self-esteem. However, as noted by Gage and Berliner (1992), the research on the relationship between self-esteem/self-concept and school achievement suggested that measures of general or even academic self-concept are not significantly related to school achievement. It is at the level of very specific subjects (eg, reading, mathematics, science) that there begins to be more than a moderate relationship between self-concept/self-esteem measures and academic success. The correlations are even stronger for self-efficacy as it relates to

specific academic tasks (Parjares, 1996). Given the above formula, one could conclude that success in a particular subject area is not really changing one's self-concept (knowledge of one's self) or even self-esteem (one's subjective evaluation of one's value or worth), but rather is impacting one's expectations about future success based on one's past experience and reflections on that experience.

Summary and Conclusions

As self-efficacy and self-esteem are both constructed during one's conscious reflections, it is recommended that educators and parents provide experiences that allow learners to master relatively specific content and skills and have learners consciously reflect on those successes. Attempting to boost self-esteem directly through other means does not appear to have any impact (Swann et al., 2007). However, self-views should not be dismissed lightly, either. Hattie (as cited in Huitt, Huitt, Monetti, & Hummel, 2009) found that students' self-report of their previous grades, which can be thought of as a correlate of student self-efficacy, was the most powerful predictor of academic achievement (with an effect size of d = 1.44) when compared to the other 137 variables. [Note: A normal cutoff effect size to determine the practical importance of a relationship between two variables is d = 0.40 (Hattie, 2009) and only 66 of the 138 variables that Hattie highlighted in his investigation of 800 meta-analyses met this relatively stringent criteria.]

Seligman (1996) added to this body of work with his investigations of explanatory style; he proposed that the intervening variable connecting self-esteem and achievement is the student's level of "optimism" or the tendency to see the world as benevolent (good things will probably happen) or malevolent (bad things will probably happen).

Some additional "self" terms are self-direction (Smith, 1996) and self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000)--the extent to which one's aspirations, dreams, and goals are self-selected; self-regulation (Bandura, 1997; Behncke, 2002)--one's guidance of one's goal-directed thinking, attitudes, and behavior); and self-transcendence (Polanyi, 1970; Frankl, 1998)--going beyond or above the limitations of one's ego or creating meaningful connections to others, nature, universe, Creator, etc.). It is important that parents and educators address all of these constructions in a holistic manner in order to prepare children and youth for successful adulthood.