Why study the self in social psychology?

• Recall that social psychology is the study of how people
  – Think about
  – Influence, and
  – Relate to one another (or interact within situations)

• The self influences all of these
The Center of Our World: Ourselves

- **Spotlight Effect:**
  - We over-estimate how much others are attending to us.
    - Barry Manilow t-shirt study (Gilovich et al, 2000)
      - Guess 50%; actually 23%

- **Illusion of Transparency**
  - We think our emotions are easily detected by others, when they are not.

- **Cocktail Party Effect**
  - In a noisy room, we can still hear our names being said.

Self Concept

- **Self-concept – “Who am I?”**
  - Self-schemas: beliefs about ourselves that help us process and organize our world
    - Affects what you pay attention to, how quickly you process information, and what you remember
  - Social self – We have multiple selves
    - Roles
    - Social identities
  - Self-knowledge – “How can I explain and predict myself?”
Development of Self-Concept

• Social experience
  – Self-perceptions
    • Roles
    • Social identities
  – Social Comparison
    • Who am I? Depends on who I’m comparing myself with.
  – Our successes and failures
  – How others judge us
    • “looking glass self”
  – Surrounding culture
    • Our culture affects how we view ourselves
      – Collectivistic / Individualistic

How Well Do We Know Ourselves?

• Explaining and predicting our behavior
  – How likely are you to vote in the upcoming election? __
  – If 180 Purdue students were asked, what percentage of these people do you think would vote in the upcoming election? __
    • Our guesses of others’ behaviors are often better predictors of our own behaviors.
• Also: obedience, bystander responsiveness, suicide baiting
How Well Do We Know Ourselves?

• Predicting our feelings
  – In general, how happy are you now?
    Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely
  – Imagine that you were involved in an accident and were paralyzed below the waist due to injuries you suffered. How happy would you be?
    Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely
  How happy do you think you would be a year after the accident?
    Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely

This issue is called “affective forecasting”

The Self and Influence

• Self Awareness Theory
  – Public self-awareness
    • More likely to follow external expectations
  – Private self-awareness
    • More likely to follow internalized norms and beliefs
• What can trigger self-awareness?
The Self and How We Relate to One Another

- Independent vs. Interdependent self

- Content of interactions (e.g., praise)
- Ingroup vs. outgroup relations
- Explaining successes

The Self and How We Interact With Situations

- Self Complexity Theory (Linville)
  - People have multiple selves and these selves may overlap to varying degrees
    - Low = overlapping
    - High = nonoverlapping
  - How people respond to success and failure
    - Lows respond more extremely to both success and failure.
  - The extent to which the selves overlap influences our mental health
    - But, it depends on how much control we feel we have over our multiple selves