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Understanding our self

- Sense of self
 - Related to cognitive & emotional development
- Self-understanding
 - Related to relationships w/ others
- We often compare ourselves to friends or classmates
 - As we grow up
- Sense of self influenced by social & moral contexts
 - Eg. Friendships w/ people who have similar habits or 'likes' as themselves
- As our emotional understanding develops,
 - We become better at using emotional language
 - To talk about our moods, personality & other people
- **Self** –
 - Who we are
 - What makes us unique
 - Who we believe ourselves to be
- 'The construction of the self is inevitable...our species...create *theories* about our world, including the construction of a theory of self...to make meaning our our experiences'
 - – [Susan Harter \(2012\)](#)
- The self is not a single entity;
 - We are made up of many 'selves' & dimensions
 - – [Barrett & Fogel](#)
 - These dimensions of self, become more complex
 - As we develop & interact w/ our enviro



Dimensions of the developing self

- 2 dimensions of self;
 - Self-concept
 - Self-esteem
 - Self-efficacy
 - ALL linked to making choices about;
 - Behaviour
 - Our emotional state
 - Academic performance

Self-concept

- Collection of knowledge, ideas, attitudes & beliefs
 - About ourselves
- Formed through interaction w/ our enviro & people in it
- Influenced by feedback & evaluation from significant others
 - – Marsh
- influenced by social comparison
 - Eg. Comparing grades w/ classmates
- Is a cognitive evaluation
 - Plays important part in understanding ourselves
- It is **multidimensional & differentiated**
 - Eg. Sarah has a self-concept of her ability in Maths & Science
 - It is very positive
 - On the other hand, her ability in English reports embarrassment about her marks
 - Her self-concept is lower
 - She has positive self-concept about her relationships w/ others
 - Sarah's self-concept is multidimensional
 - Because it has dimensions of academic & social self-beliefs
 - Her self-concept is differentiated
 - Because academic self-concept is separated into at least 3 different components;
 - Maths, Science&English
- Academic self-concept made up of differentiated beliefs
 - In different domains of learning
 - Eg. Maths, science, English
- Similarly, non-academic sense of self broken up into any no. of domains
 - Eg. Social or physical self-concept
- **'Academic self-concept'**
 - Derived from views of personal achievements
 - In curriculum areas
 - Eg. Maths & reading
- A link between our academic self-concept & academic achievement
 - Eg. Level of self-concept can predict later performance in school
 - However, level of self-concept can be affected by prior academic achievement
 - Thus, relationship between academic self-concept & achievement is mutual
- Students develop their academic self-concept in 2 ways;



- Through **social comparison**
 - To **external** sources of info
 - Eg. Peers
- By **comparison**
 - To **internal** sources of info
 - Eg. Ability in 1 subject vs another
 - – Marsh
- In schools where **academic streaming** occurs,
 - Social comparison plays significant role in students' perceptions of their academic abilities
 - As students make comparisons w/ others in upward or downward directions
 - Upward comparisons –
 - To students better than themselves
 - Results in feelings of inferiority & low self-concept
 - Downwards –
 - Comparing one's self to someone of lower ability
 - Is protective of the self-concept
 - & does not lead to lower self-views
 - **Academic streaming –**
 - Students grouped in separate classes according to their abilities
 - This is known as '**big-fish-little-pond effect**'
 - Which their self-concept decline
 - Once they are no longer the biggest & 'brightest' fish
 - In the school pond

Self-esteem

- **Self-concept&self-esteem**
 - **Different ways** of **evaluating** the **self**
 - In **self-concept evaluations**–
 - We make a cognitive (thoughtful) judgement about our competence
 - In different domains
 - That are relevant in our lives
 - **Self-esteem**
 - Reflects a higher-order cognitive evaluation of our self
 - That describes our integrated sense of our worth
 - As a person
 - A higher-order integration of many different aspects
 - & views of the self
 - – Harter

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