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Ashley Stoltenberg Short Analysis Paper Influence of Self-Concept in Communication

The self-concept is a major influence in communication for many reasons. When two people are communicating, they are doing so by first sending out a message that is composed and shaped entirely by their inner self-concept. The way that a person sees themselves from the inside thus shapes the external messages they will send out into the world.

Regardless of a person's external circumstances or characteristics — say, their height, age, sex, and so on — their internal self-concept may be significantly different and thus affect their communication. This type of self-concept ties into the area of self-esteem. According to researcher Chris Mruk, there are five dimensions to self-esteem: competence (your beliefs about your ability to be effective), worthiness (your beliefs about the degree to which others value you), cognition (your beliefs about your character and personality), affect (how you evaluate yourself and the feelings generated by your evaluation), and stability or change (Mruk, 1995). Our self-esteem is shaped by a number of factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic to us. Our experiences shape our self-esteem as much as our inborn characteristics, and experiences we have as young children can be especially impactful on our self-esteem, with effects that can last for decades or even a lifetime. Our self-concept is also heavily influenced by the people around us, especially those most important to us. This is known as the Pygmalion Effect, and is described in an experiment by psychologists Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson. In the experiment, teachers were told that certain of their students were gifted, with high IQs. In reality, they were of average intelligence. However, at the end of the year, the average students had improved their

grades and IQ scores. This was a result of the high expectations of the teachers, who communicated these high expectations to the students by providing them extra positive reinforcement, and non-verbally communicating the fact that they viewed the students as high-achievers. The results of the study clearly demonstrated that the expectations and communications of the teachers influenced the self-concepts of the students (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). The concept of the self plays an enormous role in communications because it is crucial for how a person places themselves and the person they are communicating with in the world. How we view ourselves and others is a fundamental component of the communications process. Self-concept provides the foundation which all communication rests on, because in a very real sense these perceptions determine "whom" is communicating "what" to "whom else".