Theories of Personality Final Reflection Paper

The concept of priming is a cognitive mechanism utilized in establishing perception, or the way a person views the world. Priming occurs when concepts that are consistently activated come to mind quickly. When concepts are primed and re-primed as a result of their chronic accessibility, or their constant ability to come to mind quickly, those concepts become part of the personality. On the other hand, perceptual defense acts against chronic accessibility by "screening out" (55) unpleasant information that could cause an individual anxiety. So, the mind not only has the ability to selectively focus on readily available stimuli, but it can also screen stimuli that could be too upsetting to the individual in an effort to protect the mind. Concepts that are continually screened work their way into the personality of the individual, the same way concepts with chronic accessibility do.

For describing my development of perception in a specific area of my personality, I've chose to discuss my love of working with children. I had always believed that I liked children, but I never thought that I would want to work with such a young age group. Flash forward to having worked for a youth ABA provider for almost eight months, and I know that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. In this example, I would identify my love of children as being consistently primed by my proximity to and involvement with the kids I work with to quickly come to mind. This sentiment was reaffirmed by its chronic accessibility. Now, my love of working with children has become an integral part of my personality.

On the flip side, I believe my general nervousness of spiders to have worked its way into my personality by means of perceptual defense of the undesirable stimuli, spiders. I had a

traumatic experience leading to a petrifying fear of spiders for several months. However, over time, my mind stopped acknowledging the undesirable stimuli and it became less of a threat to me and more of a source of vague anxiety. Though they are opposite, both concepts, positive and negative, have worked their ways into my personality.

Self-discrepancy theory states that individuals have two kinds of desired selves. Additionally, the differences between the two desired selves and the actual self determine how the individual feels. The first of the two desired selves is the ideal self. The ideal self is your best ideal self, for example, I would like to think that I am always kind and never judgemental or unfair. However, I know that realistically this is not an absolute truth.. The second desired self, on the other hand, is the ought self; the idea of what you should be rather than what you want to be. If I really wanted to be a recording artist, but I knew that I should go to college for a more realistic career, that would factor into my ought self (596).

It's these differences between the desired selves and actual selves that guide how we feel about ourselves. Desired selves are not always realistic; I don't know anyone who is kind and polite 100% of the time, nor do I know anyone who does what they think they should do rather than what they want to do 100% of the time. However, when we consistently fail to reach the goals set by our desired selves and our actual selves are very different than our desired selves, it can lead to depression and lower life satisfaction. Life can be described by goals and rewards and the balance of these goals and outcomes is important in the care of the self.

Looking at myself, I acknowledge that my desired and actual selves do not always align. As I mentioned previously, my ideal self would be someone who is always kind and caring. I do my best, but I know that there are times where I am also quick to judge and may incorrectly jump

to conclusions. In this, I know that there is a discrepancy between my ideal self and my actual self. However, I feel as though the discrepancy is rather slight because I typically make a conscious effort to be kind, and I feel that I usually do. Because of the small degree of discrepancy, this difference does not cause me personal distress. When I notice myself acting in a way that I don't believe is ideal, I mentally note it and chide myself to make a better effort next time.

My ought self is a little more difficult to identify, because I feel as though my ideal self is similar to many others' ought self. After some thought, I believe my ought self would be someone who is more studious and always commits apt time to out of class work and reading assignments. Realistically, I am a good student. I perform well in my classes because I do work very hard, however I know that with a bit more effort, I could be a great student who displays outstanding performance. In high school, I was an outstanding student with very little effort. Academically, I do have a good work ethic, but I know that it could be better, and this is how I would identify my ought self. Fortunately, there is not a large discrepancy between this ought self and actual self either, so I am not suffering any great personal distress for failing to obtain my goals. However, I strive for excellent performance and when I know that I have not succeeded in excellence because of my own lack of effort, I am very upset with myself.

I am fortunate in that my desired selves are not too far out of line with my actual selves; it allows me to avoid more unnecessary internal stressors. However, I would ascertain that, of the two desired selves, my ought self is more out of line with my actual self than my ideal self is. My ideal self, to be kind, patient, and compassionate, may never be 100% realistic, but by making strides to be as kind, patient, and compassionate as I can, I am not left unsatisfied or with an

overwhelming sense of failure. Likewise, my ought self is not marked by a significant discrepancy, rather a fairly slight one. However, the goals set by my ought self, to be more studious and dedicated, are not unrealistic goals. While this discrepancy does cause me more grief than that of my ideal self, it is an obtainable goal that I believe I can achieve with only slight adjustments to my current academic work ethic.

William James identifies two separate senses of self, the I (ontological self) and the me (epistemological self). The epistemological self is made of identifying factors you can use to describe yourself such as your appearance and various personality traits like friendly, extroverted, patient, etc. The ontological self, on the other hand, is your internal reason for personality: why you're friendly, why you're extroverted, why you're patient. The ontological self is the part of you that makes decisions based on your experiences of the world. I believe Ernest Hilgard put it best in his observation that the aspect of the self that is doing the looking is the ontological self, and the aspect of the self that is being looked at is the epistemological self (586).

I find that the notion of an ontological self is most comprehendible to me when thinking about the number of selves that exist. However, the idea of the epistemological self does not bode as well with me. I feel as though it is too inclusive observable features, behaviors, and personality traits. If I were to design my own theory of existing selves, I would identify three. Firstly, I would identify one of the selves as being specific, observable behaviors, which are more aptly defined as traits than personality. The second existing self would be internal thought processes and reasoning, much like the ontological self. This internal self is also representative of the consciousness, and is an idea favored by cognitive psychologists. Finally, and most out of

line with James' theory, would be the emotional self, deep desires and emotions that guide the

actions of the unified self. While not unique, as I read through Funder's text the past dozen

weeks, these are the selves that I identify in myself and that I feel are the identifiable selves that

make up the whole person.

Funder, David C. (2016). *The Personality Puzzle* (seventh ed.). New York, NY: W.W.

Norton & Company. Print.