

- Interpersonal communication is a major influence in the development of social and personal identities.
- A. Social identity refers to our taking on social roles, group or cultural identities.
 - B. Personal identity refers to our individual sense of self.
 - C. Both social and personal identities are historical constructions, embedded in and growing out of the communication patterns of particular times, places and cultures.
 - A. The concept of a unique, individualized self is a relatively recent historical development, restricted primarily to Western cultures.
 - B. Different historical eras create their own "modal selves," idealized types of person whose images best fits that culture and are critical to perpetuating the culture.
 - a. Prior to the 19th century, the concept of a private self had little significance.
 - b. Economic and social changes after the industrial revolution resulted in the emergence of character as the ideal characteristic of self.
 - c. In the 20th century, emphasis sifted from character to personality.
 - d. Today the postmodern self is the ideal.
 - There are a number of ways that theorists and researchers conceptualize the self-concept and how it develops in interaction.
 - A. Some theorists see the self in terms of the narratives that arise in families, peer groups, and the culture at large.
 - A. One source for these narratives lies in early bonding experiences.
 - B. Cultural themes and images are incorporated into self-narratives.
 - C. The ideals and beliefs that emerge in adolescence contribute to narratives about the self.
 - B. Other theorists focus on the cognitive self, the way that information about the self is processed and organized in the brain.
 - A. People differ in the organizing principles they use to make sense of the world.
 - B. Sometimes life scripts, relatively fixed ways of thinking about the self, develop.
 - C. In attempting to understand the concept of self, others turn their attention to the behavioral self, the influence of actual behavior on self-image.
 - A. Self-perception theory suggests that we often behave without particular intentions and only later infer that we must have intended to behave that way.
 - B. A significant part of our self-identity is defined by the behaviors that we routinely engage in and reflect upon.
 - D. Some believe that we develop relatively unique senses of self (a relational self) for each of the major relationships in our lives.
 - A. In our ongoing efforts to develop and maintain relationships, we adjust and modify our individual self-identities.
 - B. Despite the fact that we differ from relationship to relationship, we compartmentalize these differences in order preserve a stable sense of self.
 - E. Finally, some researchers concentrate on the self as internal dialogue by examining the self-talk we use to forge relationships among our various selves so that they appear relatively stable.

- Personality theorists believe that people are relatively consistent in the way they communicate with others. They have identified the kinds of individual differences that influence communication.
- A. People whose personalities reflect different communicator styles show greater tendencies to communicate in specific ways.
 - A. One's style may be dominant, dramatic, contentious, animated, impression-leaving, relaxed, precise, attentive, open, or friendly.
 - B. People don't usually rely on a single communicator style, but instead develop what might be called a "style profile"—a combination of style variables.
 - B. Consistency vs. adaptability can explain differences in rhetorical sensitivity.
 - A. The person who has a self-schema that emphasizes consistency above all else is a Noble Self. The Noble Self will feel a strong obligation to say exactly what he thinks, no matter how it affects the other person.
 - B. The person who feels the need to tell others what they want to hear is a Rhetorical Reflector. The Rhetorical Reflector prefers to adapt to others rather than to be true to self.
 - C. Rhetorical Sensitives find a middle ground, taking the needs of others into account without losing their sense of self. They realize there are many ways to communicate a single idea.
 - C. People also vary in the degree to which they experience anxiety when communicating with others. Those who are highly apprehensive communicators tend to be quiet, less expressive, and generally avoid many types of interactions.
 - D. Early bonding experiences are also thought to affect self-concepts and communication styles throughout life.
 - A. If children develop images of self and others that are positive, a secure style of attachment emerges, one that fosters comfort with both intimacy and autonomy.
 - B. When images of self and others are negative a fearful style results, making the individual hypersensitive to social approval, fearful of attachment, and ambivalent around others.
 - C. A preoccupied style results when a person has a low opinion of self, but a generally positive view of others. This individual can become obsessively dependent on others.
 - D. Finally, a dismissing style results when a child develops a positive self-image coupled with a low opinion of other people. As an adult he or she rejects relationships and has trouble trusting others.
 - E. Another personality construct, need for intimacy, is conceptualized as a largely nonconscious preference or readiness to spend time interacting with others as an end in itself rather than a means to other ends.
- Self-disclosure is an important communication skill for presenting and managing self identities.
- A. Self-disclosure refers to information about the self that you reveal to others.
 - B. In developing self-disclosure skills, it is important to recognize when to conform to socially appropriate rules about when and how much to say about yourself and when to break those rules in creative ways.

- A. Disclosures should be appropriate to the topic of conversation.
- B. It is best to begin with safe, nonrisky disclosures.
- C. Disclosure in small doses generally works best. Avoid "flooding" the other with too much personal information.
- D. Reciprocity is key; one should match the level and amount of others' disclosures.
- E. Style of disclosure is just as important as the content. Nonverbal messages are part of the total message.
- F. Personal information should be reserved for close, significant relationships. What is revealed should be appropriate to the kind of relationship already established.
- G. Breaking the rules calls for the effective use of aligning actions.