

Self and Adaptation

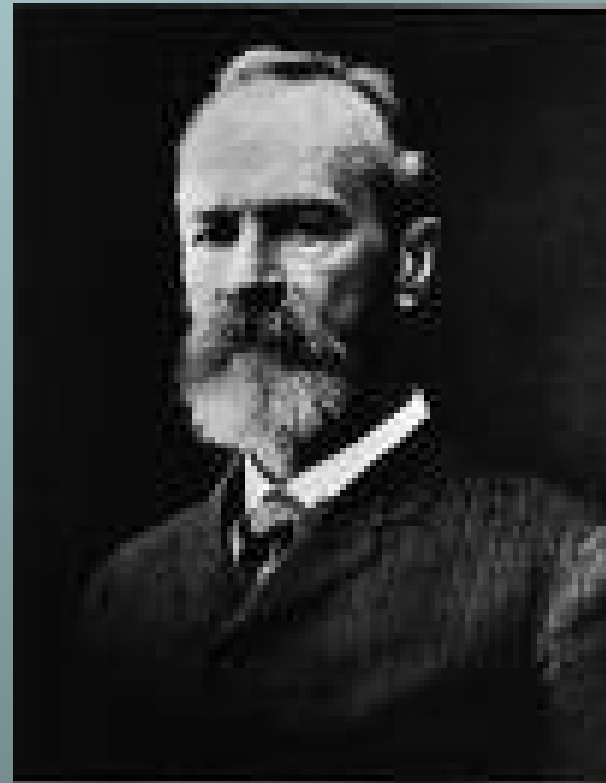
Defining the Healthy Self

Definition

- Self is a natural concept
- Self is achieved competing with other selves for scarce resources
 - Toys during infancy and childhood (e.g., “My” ball)
 - Love and respect (“I” am the Number 1 quarterback)
- The purpose of the self is to provide order, continuity, and determination
- It also regulates behavior (“self” regulation)

Structure of Self: William James (1842-1910)

- William James proposed the self has two dimensions
 - “I” self is the knower (subject)
 - “Me” self is the known self (object)
 - The “Me” self is self-concept



Structure of the Self

- Self-concept is composed of three parts
 - Spiritual self is the entirety of our psychic capacities, states of consciousness, and dispositions (e.g., intelligence)
 - Social self
 - “We are not only gregarious animals liking to be in sight of our fellows, but we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favorably by our kind.” (esteem)
 - Bodily self is the material possessions, including the physical body and its functions

Structure of the Self: George Herbert Meade (1863-1931)

- “Me” self, The *generalized other*
 - Only humans can reflect upon themselves and be the objects of their own observation
 - The *generalized other* is the incorporated perspective of others
 - The *generalized other* allows us to see ourselves as others would see us

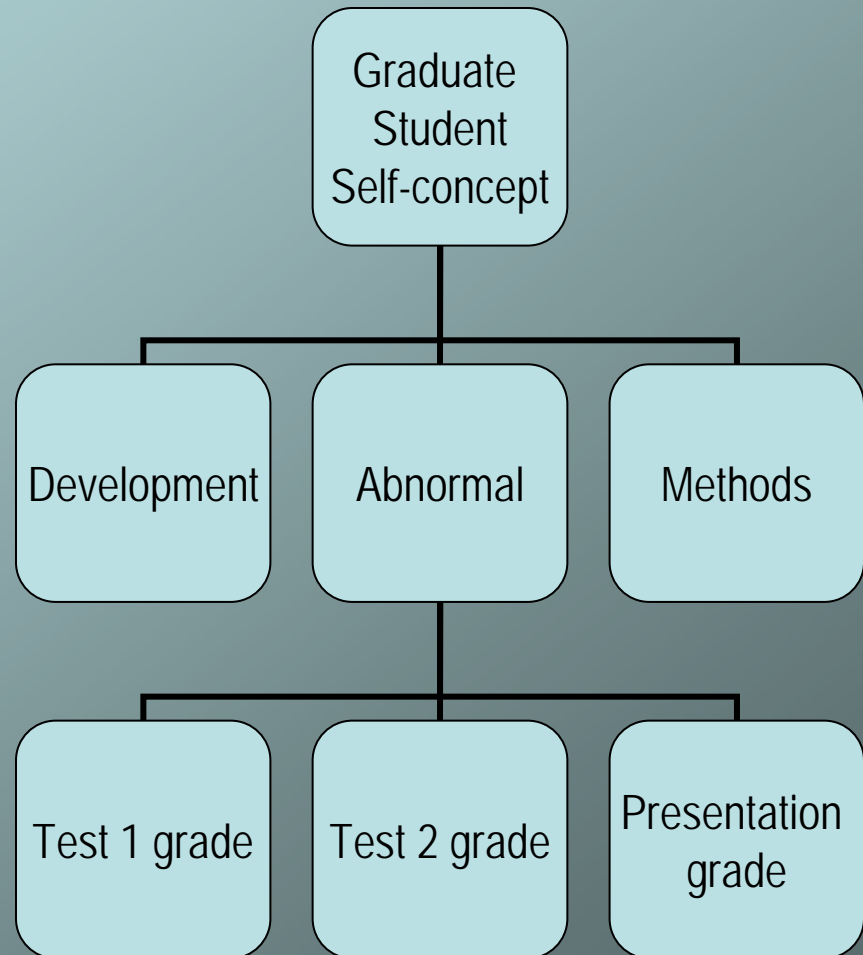


Structure of the Self: James Masterson

- Dimensions of the self
 - *Self-image* is the image a person has of the self at a given time in a given situation
 - *Self-representation* is the representation one has of the self based on the entirety of self-images, past and present, distorted or accurate
 - *Super-ordinate self-organization* is the unifying principle that organizes experience into a cohesive self

Self-concept: How many facets?

- Self is multifaceted with as many facets as there are experiences
- Self-concept is hierarchically organized
- Competence beliefs are a dimension of self-concept

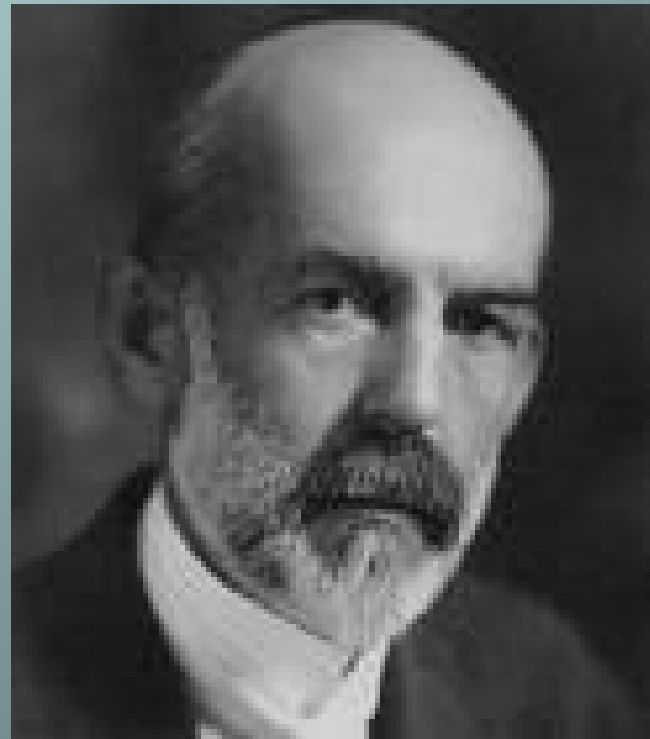


Functions of the self

- Masterson referred to the self as the *organizational arm of the ego*, the ego being the *executive arm of the self*
- William James proposed three functions responsible for action relative to the self
 - General feelings about self
 - Positive – complacency
 - Negative - despair
 - Self seeking (seeking verification from others)
 - We esteem ourselves if others esteem us
 - Self preservation

Functions of the Self: Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929)

- Cooley proposed the function of the self is to appropriate experience and objects
 - The more I can do or the more I have the better I am
- He labeled this proclivity "*self feeling*"



The Functions of the Self: Epstein

- Self-concept is a theory about the self
- The functions of self-concept are:
 - Assimilate experience
 - Maintain a positive pleasure to pain balance
 - Promote self-esteem
- So long as the self-concept succeeds at these functions, it works well
- Even a bad self theory is better than no self-theory at all!

Summary

- The self has two dimensions
 - “I” self is the conscious ego
 - “Me” self is the object of the “I” self, self-concept
- We see ourselves as the generalized other sees us
- The aim of self (“I” and “Me”) is to organize the data of experience
- The self increases in complexity with experience

Characteristics of a Healthy Self: Abraham Malsow's Self-actualized personality

- Actualized people:
 - Accept themselves, others, and human nature
 - Spontaneous
 - Problem centered
 - Need privacy, and feel comfortable alone
 - Autonomous self, independent of culture and the environment

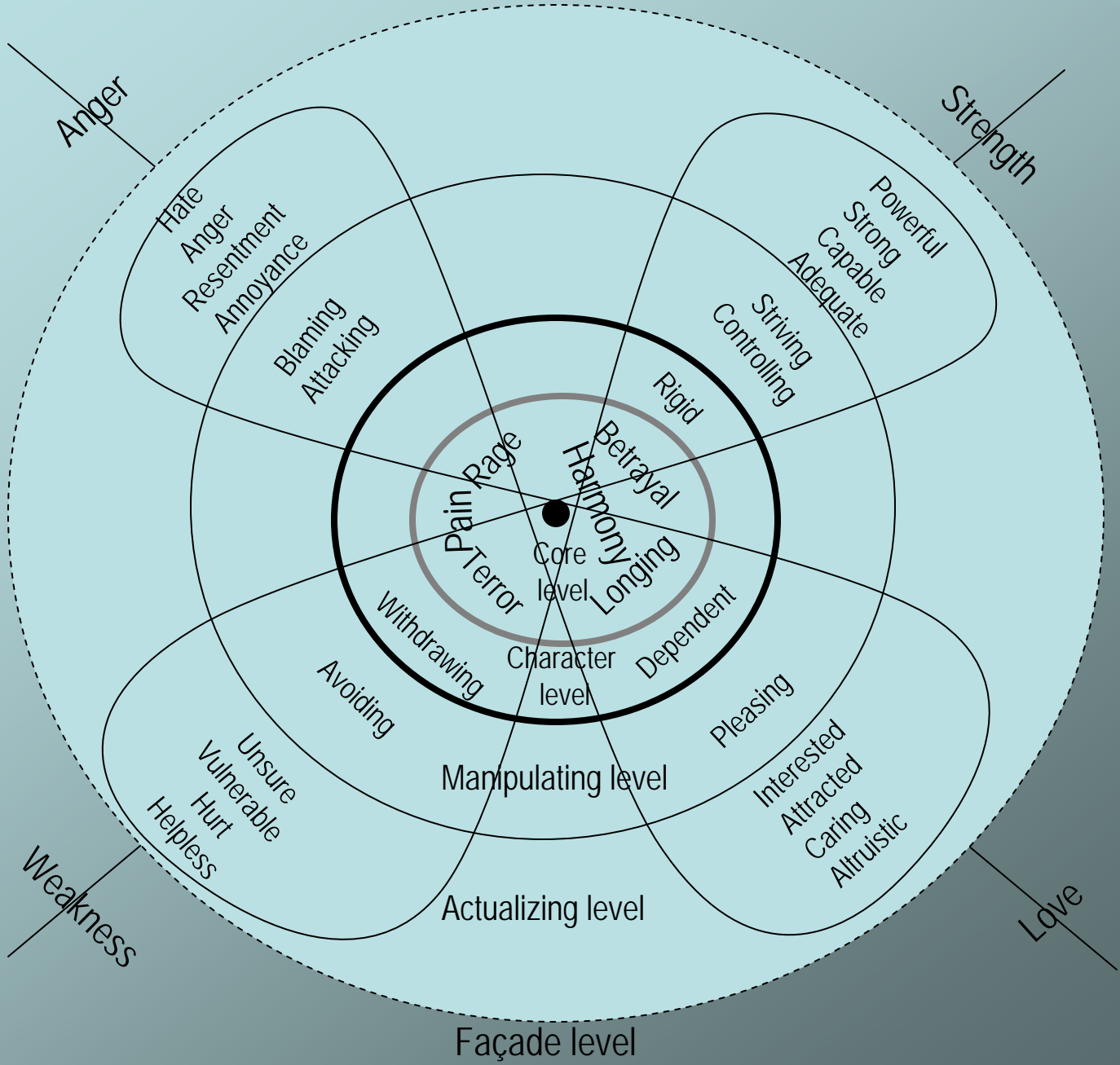


Characteristics of a Healthy Self: Malsow's Self-actualized personality

- Appreciation of even the most common event (e.g., sunset)
- Experiences "oceanic feeling"
- Genuine feeling of empathy and sympathy for others
- Deeper interpersonal relationships
- Very democratic in their relationships
- Strong sense of morality, though not conventional
- Philosophical , not hostile sense of humor
- Creative
- Resist enculturation, but are comfortable being one of the crowd

Characteristics of a Healthy Self: Brammer, Abrego, and Shostrom model

An Actualizing Model



Characteristics of a Healthy Self: Brammer, Abrego, and Shostrom model

- Façade level – Protects the vulnerable real self from rejection
- Actualizing level – First level of awareness
 - Helps one see the self as subject and object based on past experiences (Assimilation and accommodation)
 - Decision making (actions)
 - Emotional expression
- Manipulative level – Manipulate others, gain control of the environment (e.g., attacking, blaming)
- Character level – stylized behavior pattern, habits
 - The character level is often mistaken for the real self

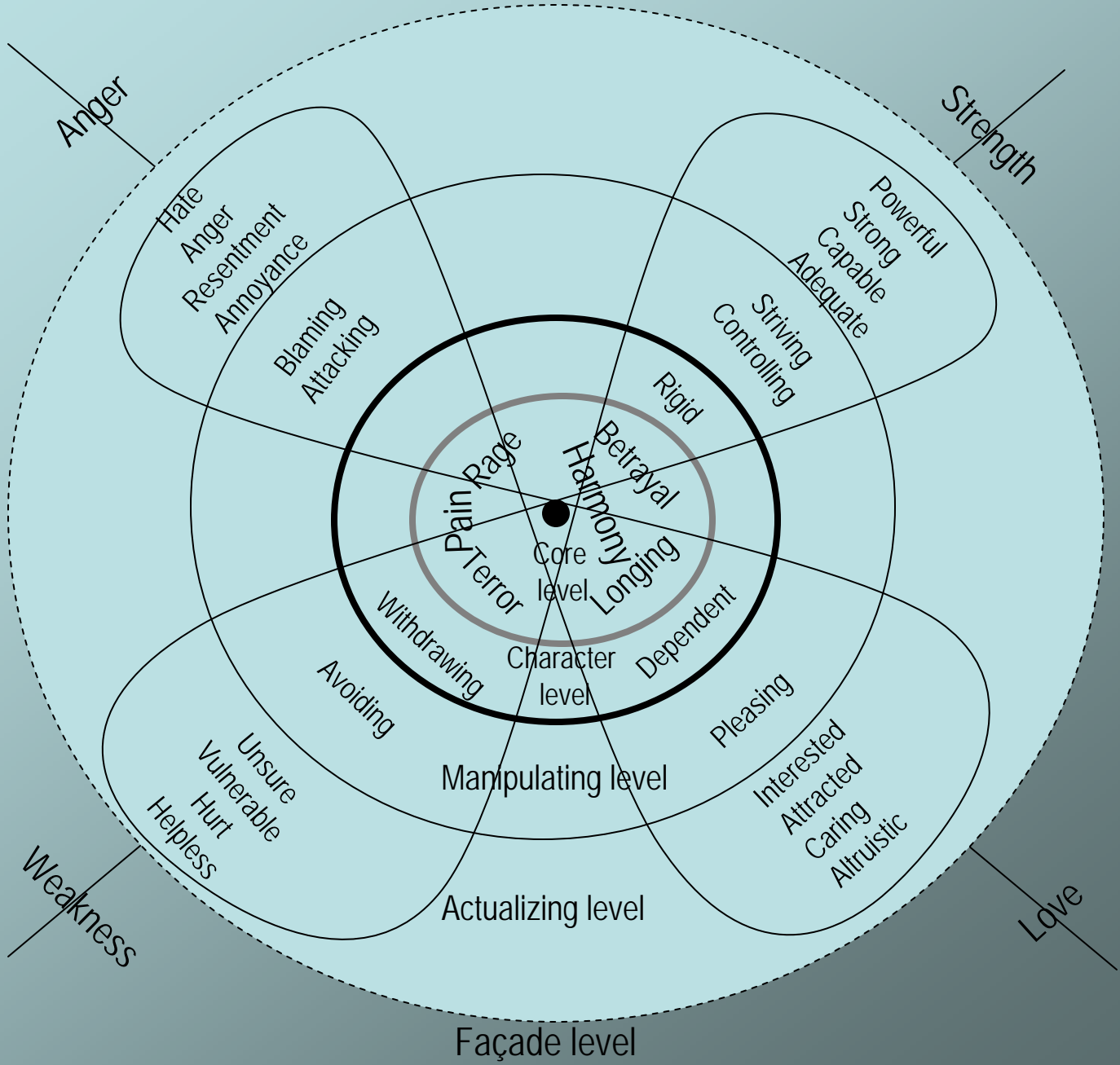
Character Level: Defensive False Self

- The character level develops from parental conditions of worth
- Conditions of worth refer to expectations parents have for children that if not met result in a perceived loss of love
- Therapists should help clients realize defensive false self is not the real self

False Self: D. Winnicott

- It sets up as the real self but fails in complex interpersonal relationships
- It exists to protect the real self
- It aims for conditions appropriate to express the real self
- The false self is built upon conditions of worth
- In healthy people, it's an integral part of self-adaptation, allowing for appropriate self expression





Psychological core

- This is the real self
- The real self experiences all emotions (ambivalence)
- At its deepest, the real self is the primitive human being
- The actualizing level helps the person actualize real self needs in a socially acceptable fashion

Masterson: The Real Self is Synonymous with Healthy Self

- Capacities of the real (healthy) self
 - Spontaneity and aliveness of affect
 - Self-entitlement to mastery experiences and pleasure
 - Self-activation, assertion, and support for one's individual wants and needs
 - Soothing painful affect autonomously
 - Commitment to people and goals
 - Creativity
 - Intimacy

Epstein's Self-theory

- A self-theory is like a scientific theory
- Self-theory is healthy if
 - It is extensive to help the individual cope with a wide range of contingencies
 - Parsimonious, hierarchically organized around central integrative postulates
 - Must have empirical validity
 - Thus, a good self-theory is self-correcting
 - Internally consistent
 - It must be testable, becoming more valid with experience
 - The self theory must be useful (positive pleasure to pain balance, protect self-esteem, and assimilate experience)

My 15 Characteristics of a Healthy Self

1. A strong sense of personal autonomy
2. Spontaneous in expression of feelings
 - Able to experience feelings deeply and with aliveness
3. Creative
4. Self-activation
 - Identifies unique wants and defends them if necessary
5. Self-awareness – No shadow
6. Self-perceptions are congruent with reality
7. Able to maintain a positive pleasure to pain balance
8. Entitled to mastery experiences and pleasure
9. Able to be alone

My 15 Characteristics of a Healthy Self

10. Capable of commitment to goals and others
11. Has social support
12. Capable of role playing, displaying false selves as needed
13. Problem focused
14. Frequently experiences the "Oceanic Feeling"
15. Accepts others and him/herself without unnecessary judgment

Summary quote

- No one can exist socially without achieving self, as life without self in a world of selves would be sheer chaos."
(Me, 2000)

Reference

- Rodriguez, D. (2001). Self and adaptation: Defining the healthy self through a creative synthesis. Self-concept theory, research, & practice: Advances for the new millennium, Sydney, Australia, Self Research Centre.