

Measuring self-concept

After reading about the multiple dimensions of self-concept, you might be wondering how researchers measure or assess the self-concept. A well-known instrument for measuring self-concept is the Self-Description Questionnaire (SDQ) (Marsh, 1990). The SDQI is for primary school students, the SDQII for secondary school students, and the SDQIII for young adults. Figure 3.1 contains a sample of some of the items from the brief version of the SDQII instrument. The response scale ranges from a score of '1 = False' to '6 = True' (Ellis, Marsh & Richards, 2002). In the examples provided below, some of the dimensions of self-concept are highlighted in the items on the scale. For example, "I am hopeless in English classes" would reflect a dimension measuring our English self-concept. An item like "I am good at most school subjects" reflects our general academic self-concept.

	<i>False</i>					<i>True</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have a nice looking face						
Overall, I have a lot to be proud of						
I am honest						
I enjoy things like sports, gym, and dance						
I am hopeless in ENGLISH classes						
I worry more than I need to						
I get along well with my parents						
I get bad marks in most SCHOOL SUBJECTS						
I am not very popular with members of the opposite sex						
It is difficult to make friends with members of my own sex						
I get good marks in MATHEMATICS						
I am good looking						
Most things I do, I do well						

	<i>False</i>					<i>True</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I often tell lies						
I am good at things like sports, gym, and dance						
Work in ENGLISH classes is easy for me						
I am a nervous person						
My parents treat me fairly						
I learn things quickly in most SCHOOL SUBJECTS						
I make friends easily with boys						
I make friends easily with girls						
I have always done well in MATHEMATICS						
Other people think I am good looking						
Overall, most things I do turn out well						
I sometimes cheat						
I am awkward at things like sports, gym, and dance						
ENGLISH is one of my best subjects						
I often feel confused and mixed up						
My parents understand me						
I do things as well as most people						
I am better than most of my friends at things like sports, gym, and dance						
I get good marks in ENGLISH						
I get upset easily						
I do not like my parents very much						

	<i>False</i>					<i>True</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I am good at most SCHOOL SUBJECTS						
I do not get along very well with boys						
If I really try I can do almost everything I want to do						
I sometimes take things that belong to other people						
I learn things quickly in ENGLISH classes						
I worry about a lot of things						
I make friends easily with members of my own sex						
Overall I am a failure						
I sometimes tell lies to stay out of trouble						

Source: Ellis, Marsh & Richards (2002).

Activities

- Although you may no longer be studying English or Mathematics specifically, have a go at scoring your self-concept using these sample items.
- Do you notice any variations in your judgements about yourself across the different items?
- Can you detect any other dimensions of self-concept that these items might be assessing?
- What do results on a measurement like this predict about student behaviour?

References

Ellis, L. A., Marsh, H. W., & Richards, G. E. (2002, August). *A brief version of the Self-Description Questionnaire II*. Paper presented at the SELF Research Centre International Conference, Sydney, Australia. Retrieved 14 February 2003, from <http://edweb.uws.edu.au/self/>