



# Personality

What makes us who we are?

## **Psych 305A, Personality: Lecture 4**

### **The Self and Self-Esteem Begin Trait Approach**

# What is the Self?

# Self-Awareness

"Imagine for a moment that you are gazing into a mirror and you make the following observation: I see myself, I see Me. There are two aspects of the self. There is the I, the active observer, and there is the Me in the mirror, the Me as observed."

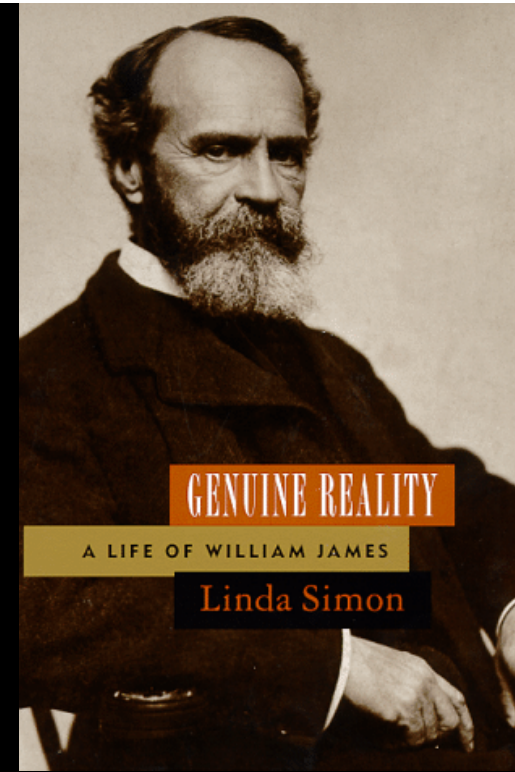
-- Susan Harter

# WILLIAM JAMES (1842--1910)

*"Principles of Psychology"*

## Duality of Self:

- The "Me"
  - Self as **object** that can be observed
  - "I have property X..."
- The "I"
  - Self as **agent** doing the observing
  - Self as the perceiver
  - Self-consciousness
    - Uniquely human?



# Definitions

- **Self-consciousness**

- The “I”
- Self-awareness

- **Self-concept**

- The “Me”
- Conception of one’s self as a physical, social, psychological, moral being

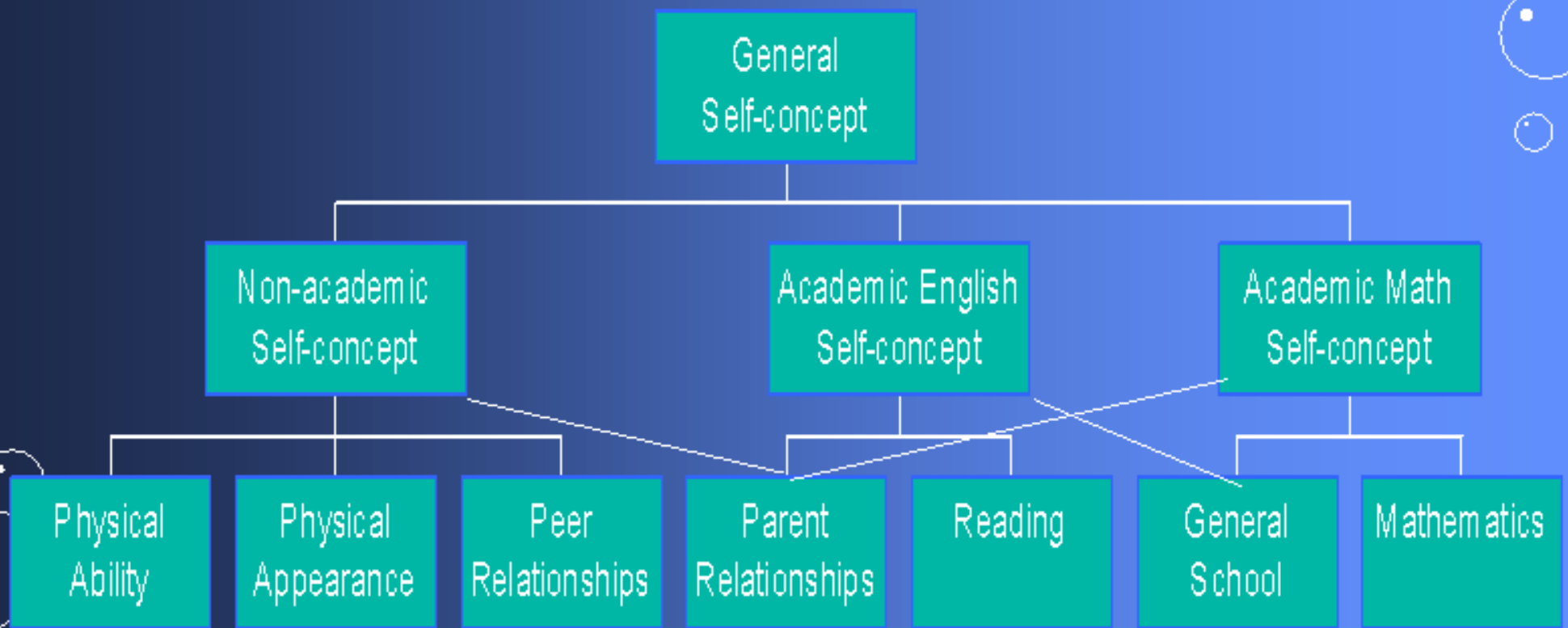
- **Self-esteem**

- Global evaluation (positive vs. negative) of one’s self
  - Feelings of competence
  - Feelings of liking and acceptance

# **The Self-Concept**

## **The “Me” Self**

# Sample Self-Concept Structure



# Assessing the Self-Concept

Imagine that you want someone to know what you are really like. You can tell this person 20 things about yourself...

- 1. I am \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. I am \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. I am \_\_\_\_\_
- .
- .
- 20. I am \_\_\_\_\_



# Twenty Statements: Classification Scheme

- Personal Characteristics (friendly, happy, ambitious)
- Ascribed Identities (age, sex, race, daughter)
- Social and Group Identities (student)
- Interests/Activities (painter, stamp fan)
- Material Possessions (owner of a VW)
- Abstract/Existential (me, a person)



# How do we know a child has a sense of self?

- **Linguistic markers (age 18 months)**
  - Self-referencing (“I” “Me” “Mine”)
  - Nonverbal recognition of self-accomplishment (VIDEO: puzzle completion)
  - Narrative language use
    - reference to personally significant events





# How do we know a child has a sense of self?

- Cognitive-behavioral markers (18-24 months)
  - Imitation and role-taking
  - Mirror self-recognition
  - Rouge test

# Video: Rouge Test



# Video: Monkey in the Mirror



# Other animals with self

- **Mirror self-recognition**
  - Chimps, orangutans, gorillas
    - But not monkeys
  - Elephants
  - Dolphins
  - Humans
  - Recent discovery: magpies!



**Do Dogs have a sense of self?**

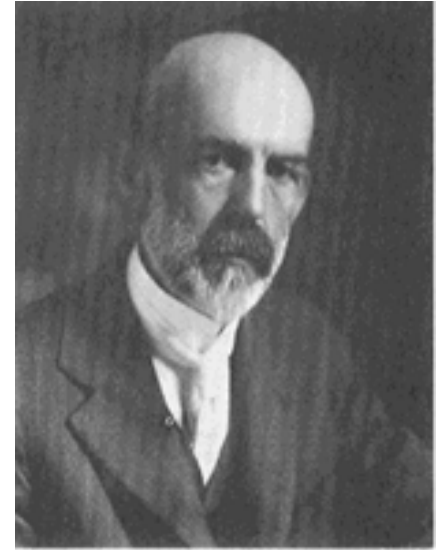




# How do we know a child has a sense of self?

- **Emotional markers (age 2.5-3)**
  - Self-conscious emotions
    - Shame
    - Guilt
    - Embarrassment
    - Pride
  - Require ability to evaluate the self (“I” self evaluates the “me” self)
  - Empathy

# Where does the Self-Concept come from?



Charles Horton Cooley

- **“Looking Glass Self”**
- **Charles Cooley (1864-1929)**
  - *“Human Nature and the Social Order”*
- **“Each to each a looking glass, reflects the other that doth pass”**
  - Self is **socially constructed**
    - Our sense of self is built upon the life-long experience of seeing ourselves through the eyes of others (i.e., through the “looking glass”)

# Looking Glass Self: How Many Different Mirrors?

- **During a one week period, the typical university student interacts with 50 different people and has 146 different interactions**
- **Of the 50 different people:**
  - 5% are complete strangers
  - 6% are strangers linked by mutual acquaintance
  - 6% are immediate family members
  - 7% are formal relations (e.g., service workers)
  - 14% are close friends
  - 34% are other friends
  - 28% are casual acquaintances
- **Do we have a different self for each of these interactions?**

# Unitary vs. Multiple Selves

- **Multiple selves correspond to multiple roles--we see ourselves differently in each social role**
- **Think about how you see yourself as:**
  - Son/daughter
  - Friend
  - Student
  - Romantic partner
  - Worker
- **Do you have a different self for each relationship?**

# Is it Adaptive to Have Multiple Selves?

- **Study:** Compared people who saw themselves similarly across social roles (unitary selves) with those who saw themselves very differently across their social roles (multiple selves)

- **Assessment:**

**How do you see yourself in the following roles?**

	Daughter/ Son	Friend	Student	Relationship Partner	Worker
Assertive	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Try to be helpful	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Punctual	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Worry a lot	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Clever, witty	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

# Is it Adaptive to Have Multiple Selves?

- **Findings:**
  - Multiple selves → lower well-being and self-esteem
    - During university years
    - 20 years later during mid-life
  - Low well-being and self-esteem in university → multiple selves 20 years later
  - Frequent relationship and career changes → multiple selves
- **Conclusion: A highly differentiated self-concept reflects psychological fragmentation and lack of an integrated core self**

# **Self-Esteem**

## **Evaluations of the Self-Concept**

# Definition of Self-Esteem

- ***Evaluation* (positive vs. negative) of one's self as a physical, social, psychological, and moral being**
  - Affective component
    - Feelings about the self; self-liking
  - Cognitive component
    - Thoughts about one's competencies, abilities



# Measuring Self-Esteem

- **Self-report scales**
- **Similarity between actual and ideal self**
- **Observer report**
  - Parent and teacher ratings for kids
  - Can someone else know your self-esteem?
- **Pictorial measures for children**

# Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

- **Strongly disagree** **Strongly agree**  
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
- **I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.**
- **I feel that I have a number of good qualities.**
- **On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.**
- **I am able to do things as well as most other people.**
- **I take a positive attitude toward myself.**
- **All in all, I am inclined to feel that I'm a failure. (R)**
- **I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (R)**
- **I wish I could have more respect for myself. (R)**
- **I certainly feel useless at times. (R)**
- **At times I think I am no good at all. (R)**

# **Undergraduates' mean self-esteem**

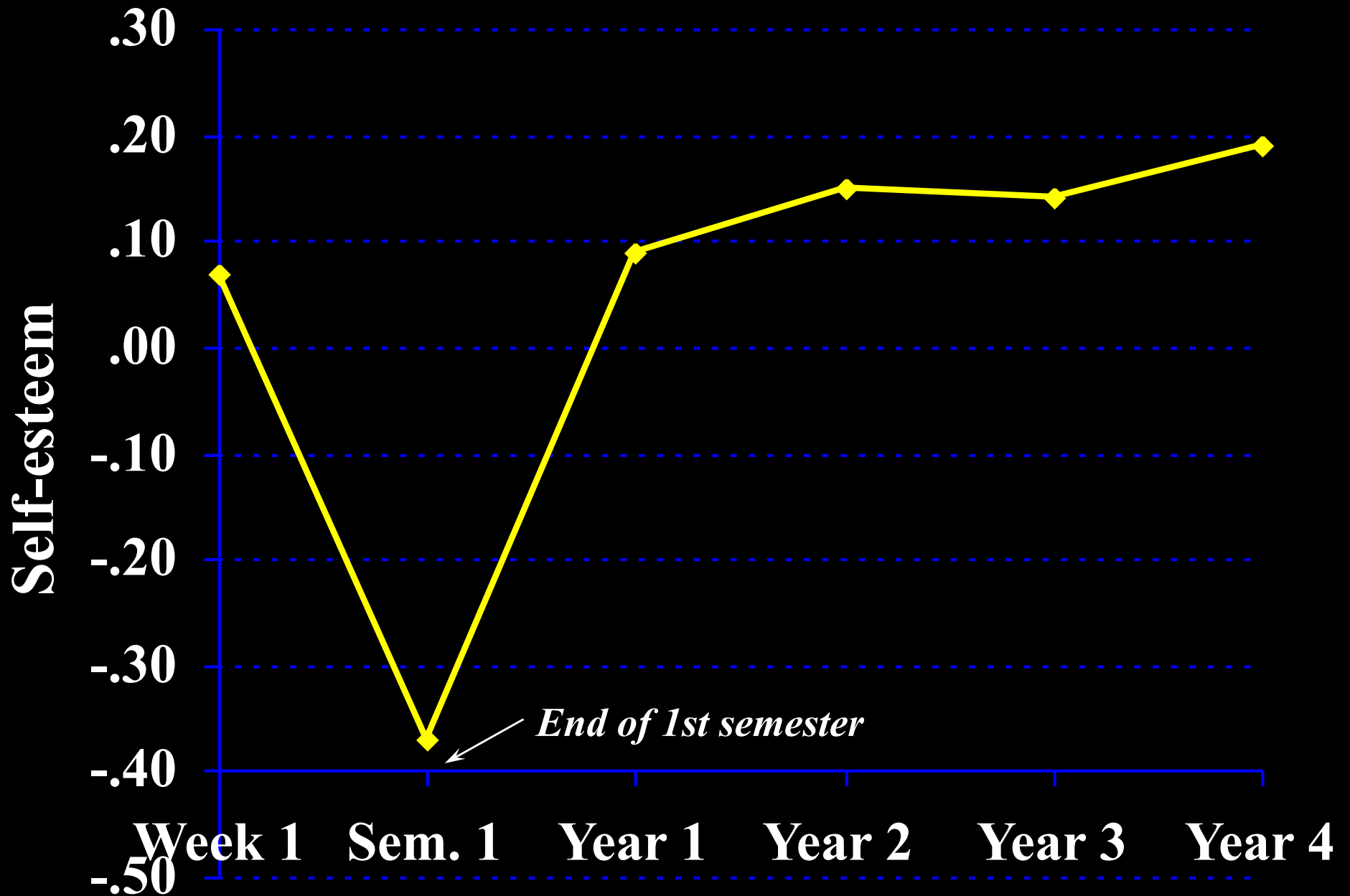
- **3.85**
- **Based on 1,643 psych students**

# Development of Self-Esteem

# Longitudinal Study

- **Assessed undergrads' self-esteem**
  - Used Rosenberg scale
- (1) Beginning of Year 1**
- (2) End of first semester**
- (3) End of Year 1, Year 2, Year3, Year 4**

# SELF-ESTEEM CHANGE DURING UNIVERSITY



## Quotes from Participants in Longitudinal Study

- **Self-Esteem Went Down**: “I used to think I was the best or one of the best students in school. College shattered that bubble which helped me get through things. There are so many people here who are much better than I am. I’m scared. I wish I were more confident in myself.”
- “I feel upset and ashamed at my failure, even a little depressed...Basically, I think my GPA sucks, ergo I suck. I value grades over education, which is wrong”
- **Self-Esteem Went Up**: “I am proud of my work and what I accomplish. My GPA is the only thing that is really mine here.
- I feel I can do better in school. It is hard for me to accept the fact that I have a C on my transcript. But I look at my grades and I am inspired to do well. And, despite my grades, I feel like I have learned a lot in college.

**What happens to self-esteem  
across the lifespan?**



# Cross-Sectional Internet Study

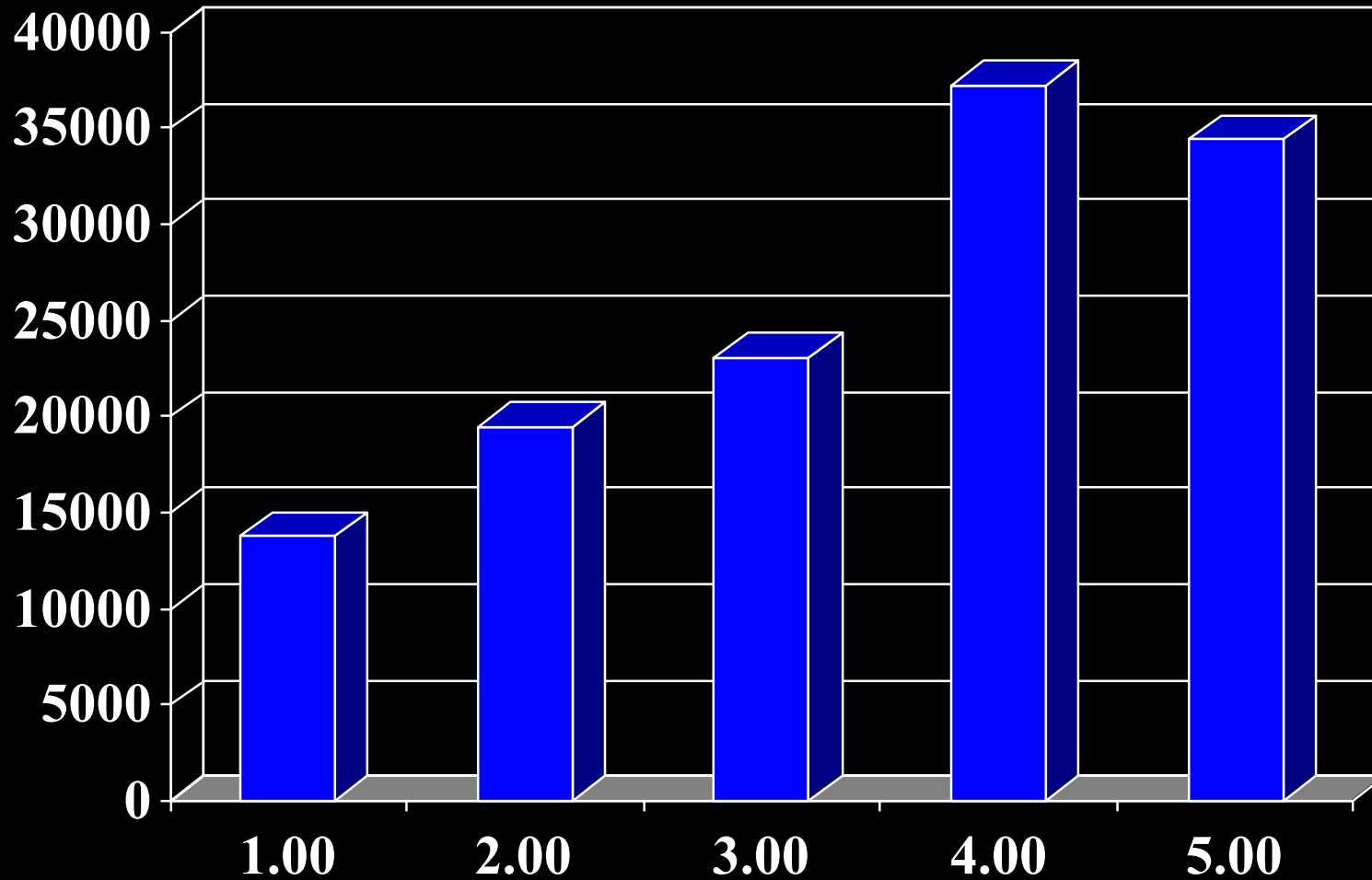
- **On-line questionnaire**
- **Many links to other sites; ratings used to generate personality feedback to user**
- **Self-Esteem assessed with item:**
  - Rate the extent to which you agree vs. disagree with this statement: “I have high self-esteem”

Strongly disagree Strongly agree  
1-----2-----3-----4-----5

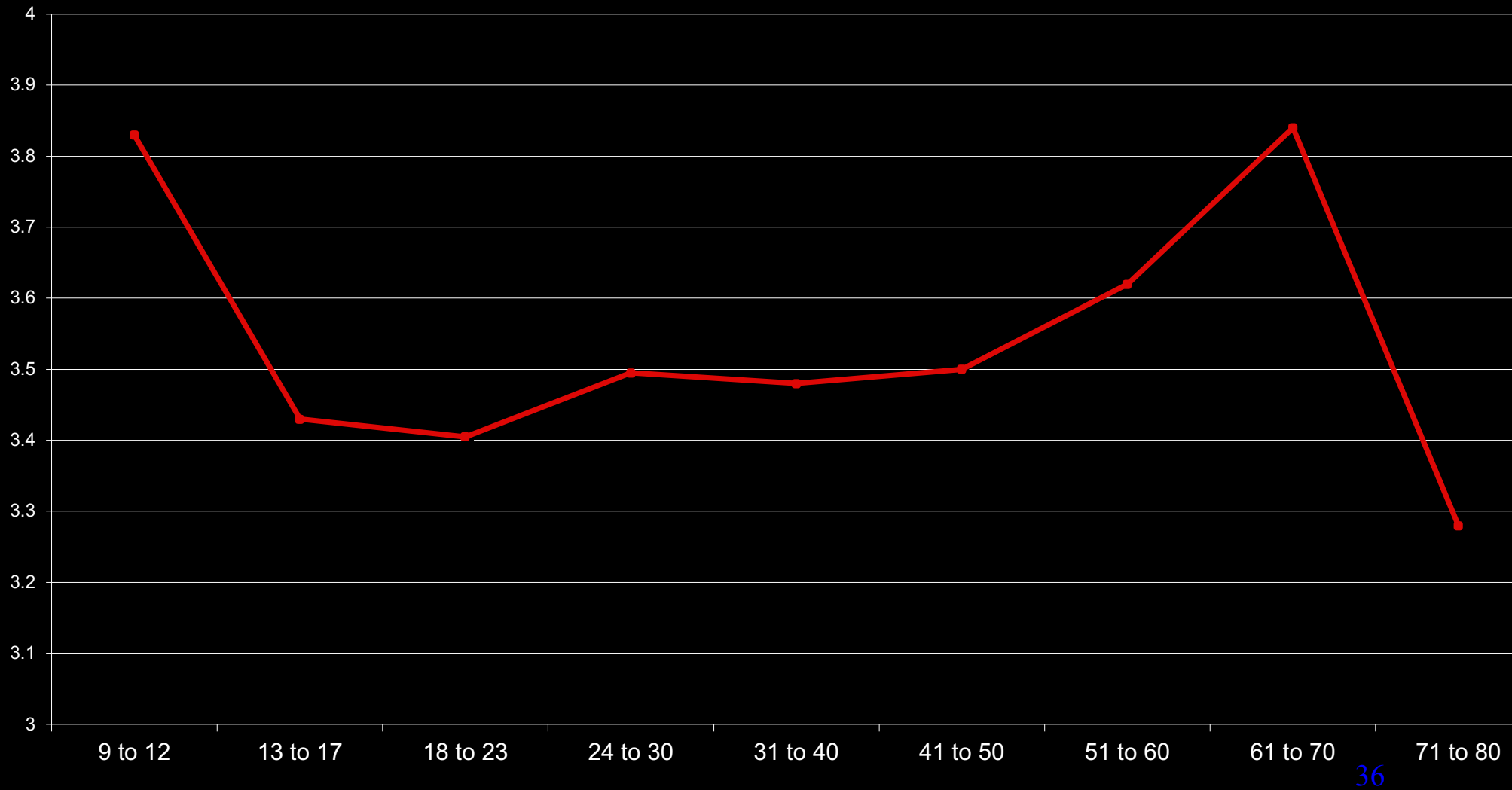
# Cross-Sectional Study

<i>Age</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total (% of total)</i>
9 to 12	1,825	1,571	3,439 (2.7)
13 to 17	10,075	18,258	28,625 (22.4)
18 to 23	18,075	17,417	35,963 (28.1)
24 to 30	19,835	14,131	34,571 (27.0)
31 to 40	7,750	7,774	15,850 (12.4)
41 to 50	2,415	4,018	6,566 (5.1)
51 to 60	819	1,352	2,228 (1.7)
61 to 70	197	224	430 (.03)
71 to 90	94	69	166 (.01)
<b>Total</b>	<b>61,085</b>	<b>64,814</b>	<b>127,838</b>

# Frequency Distribution of Self-Esteem Scores

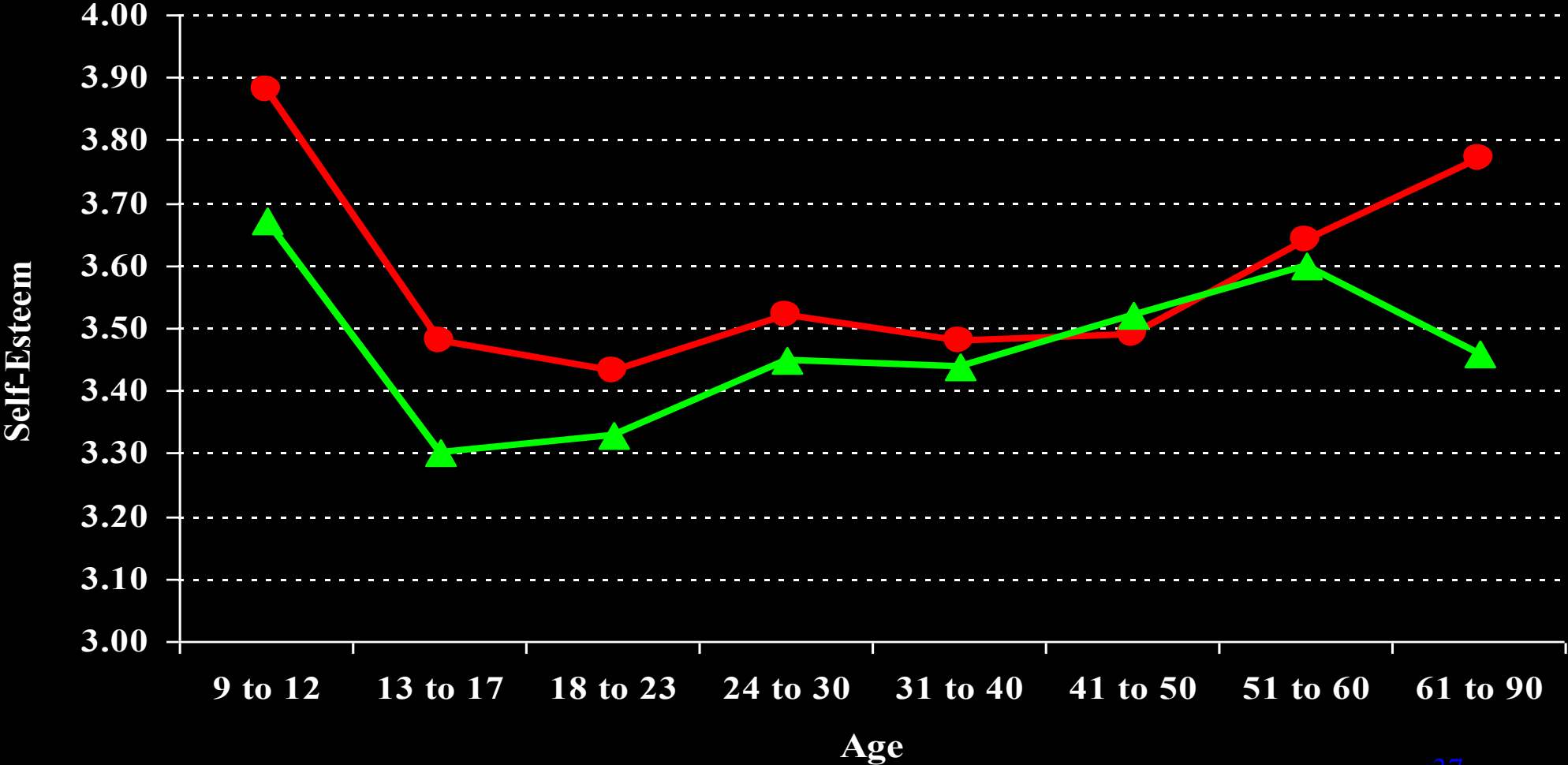


# Trajectory of Self-Esteem from Age 9 to 90

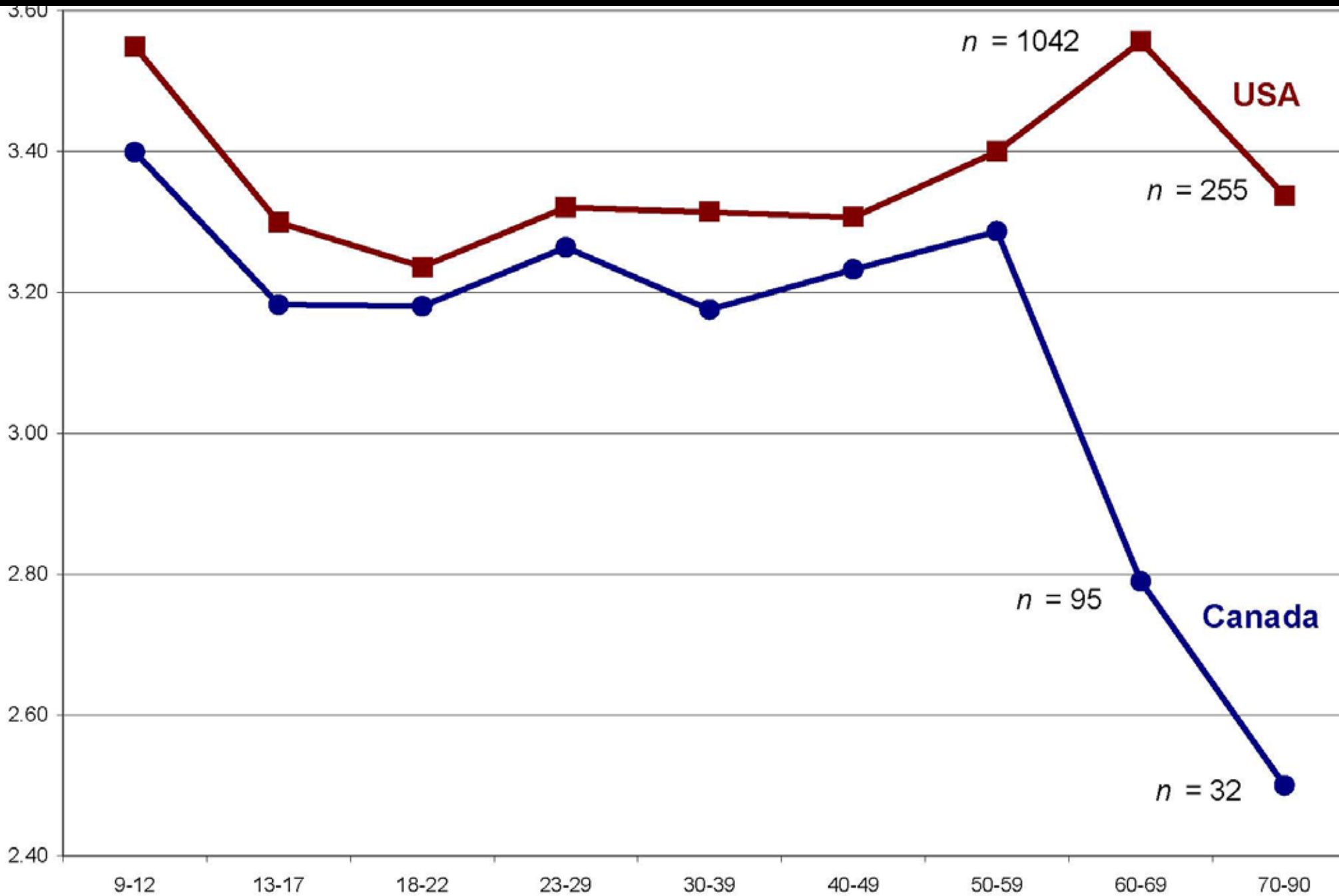


# U.S. vs. Other countries

● Living within U.S. ▲ Living outside U.S.



# U.S. vs. Canada



# Limitations with Internet Study

- Sample selectivity
  - Are internet users a select sample?
    - Or, were they in 2000 when this research was conducted?
- Cross-sectional design
  - Cohort effects
  - Selective mortality

alpha books


**THE COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO**

**Enhancing Self-Esteem**

- Quick and easy ways to rediscover your true identity and self-worth
- Idiot-proof steps on how to take initiative
- Down-to-earth advice on handling personal and professional setbacks.

Mark J. Warner, Ed.D.

*"In this book and its author, you have discovered a travel companion and a friend worthy of your trust."*  
 —John W. Jones, M.T.S. (Harvard Divinity School), Ph.D. (Yale University)



With a New Introduction by the Author

**TEN DAYS TO SELF-ESTEEM**

IN 10 CRUCIAL STEPS YOU WILL LEARN HOW TO

DEFEAT DEPRESSION  
DEVELOP SELF-ESTEEM

DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF JOY IN DAILY LIVING

**David D. Burns, M.D.**

Author of *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*, the breakthrough 3-million-copy bestseller



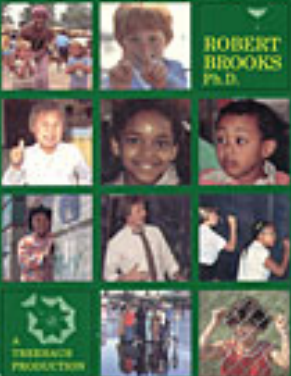
**THE SELF-ESTEEM TEACHER**

**ROBERT BROOKS Ph.D.**


A TREASURES PRODUCTION

**SEEDS OF SELF-ESTEEM**

AMERICAN GUIDANCE SERVICE, INC.



**YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM**

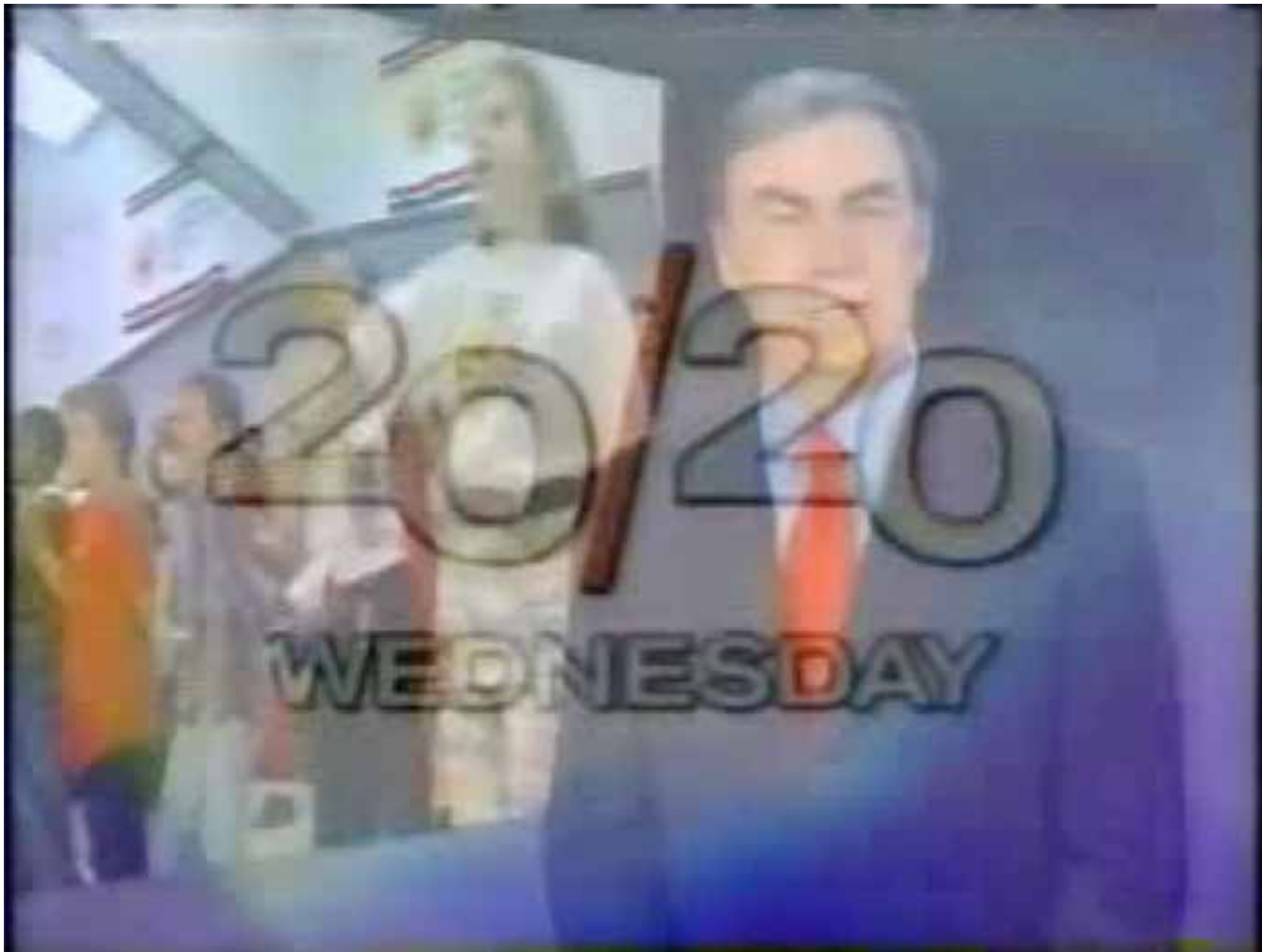


Step-by-Step Guidelines for Raising Responsible, Productive, Happy Children

**DOROTHY CORKILLE BRIGGS**



# 20/20 video



# What did they mean by “high self-esteem” in the 20/20 video?

- **Noise-blasting study**
  - People high in NARCISSISM, not self-esteem, became aggressive after ego threat
  - Test was NPI
- **High self-esteem isn't problematic; but narcissism can be!**

# **Self-Esteem Programs for Kids: Positive Illusions**

- **Are we creating a generation of narcissists?**
- **“I know I am good because everyone keeps telling me so.”**
- **Origins of narcissism**
  - Unrealistic, idealized positive feedback
  - Positive feedback without actual accomplishments

# Can Positive Illusions Be Harmful?

- **“Threatened egotism”**: Inflated pride is easily wounded
- **High self-esteem has a “dark side”**
  - New York Times
- **Media reports of adolescent killers suggest that killers felt humiliated by peers, suffered from wounded pride and powerlessness**
- **Shame-rage spiral; shame may be brought on by excessive pride**

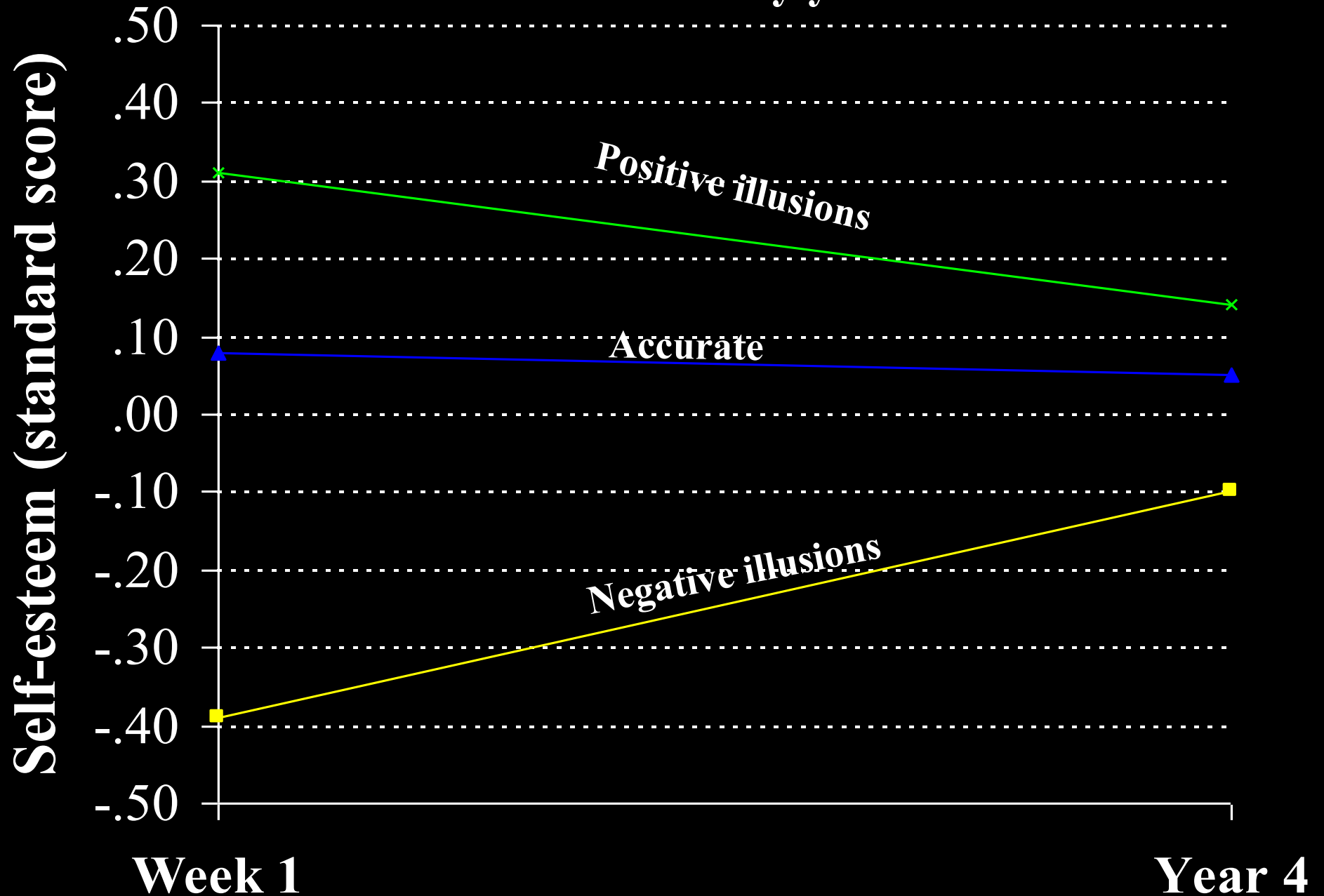
# What's the Process?

- **When we are insulted and humiliated, we feel shame – a painful emotion that we want to avoid feeling at all costs**
- **Narcissists are so dependent on their inflated high self-esteem, they externalize blame**
  - Convert shame into anger, expressed as aggression

# What about positive illusions in undergrads?

- **Research study identified students who entered university with overly positive beliefs about their academic ability (i.e., positive illusions)**
- **Compared to students with more accurate beliefs, students with positive illusions:**
  - Generally happier but less happy over the course of college
  - Did not perform better in school, despite thinking they would
  - More likely to disengage from school (e.g., say “grades are not important to me”)
  - More likely to drop out of university

# POSITIVE ILLUSIONS AND SELF-ESTEEM CHANGE Across University years



# **But... different results emerged from a recent study**

**(Murphy et al., 2017)**

- **Longitudinal study of ~900 Australian high school boys, across 2 years**
- **Overconfidence about intelligence (self-perceptions compared to actual grades and performance on an IQ test) led to increases in self-esteem over time**
- **Overconfidence about sports led to increased sporting effort & increased popularity**



# Research suggests... Positive Illusions are a “Mixed Blessing”

- **In the short term, positive illusions are associated with:**
  - Psychological well-being and self-esteem
  - Better performance on experimental tasks
- **In the long term, positive illusions are associated with:**
  - Decreasing levels of well-being and self-esteem for university students, but not high school boys
  - Disengagement from school and increased likelihood of dropping out – for university students
  - Impact of positive illusions may vary by stage of life

# **Assessing the Self with Narrative**

**Dan McAdams:**

**To truly know someone, you  
must know their life story**

# Self-Narratives: Key Components

- Self-defining memory = single episode in your life
- *Life chapters*: “Think about your life as if it were a book. Please divide your life into its major chapters and briefly describe each chapter”
- *Key events*: peak experience; nadir experience; turning point; earliest memory; important childhood, adolescent, and adult memory; other important memory”
- *Significant people*: “Each person’s life story is populated by a few significant people who have a major impact on the narrative.”
- *Future script*: “As your life story extends into the future, what is your script or plan for what is to happen next in your life?”

# Self-Narratives: Key Components

- ***Stresses and problems:*** “All life stories include significant conflicts, unresolved issues, problems to be solved, and periods of great stress.”
- ***Personal ideology:*** “Your fundamental beliefs and values are an important part of your life story”
- ***Life theme:*** “Looking back over your entire life story as a book with chapters, episodes, and characters, can you discern a central theme, message, or idea that runs throughout the text? What is the major theme of your life?”

# Self-Narrative Research

- **Provide a way to know the self, beyond a trait profile**
- **Narratives are coded for various themes**
  - E.g., positive emotions, negative emotions, redemption
  - Turn qualitative (written) data into quantitative (numbers) data
- **One example: recovering alcoholics whose self-narratives indicate redemption were less likely to relapse**

# Trait Taxonomies

# What is a trait?

- Almost any adjective (or sometimes a noun) that describes the way some people are and others are not

# Traits are the Basic Building Blocks of Personality

- Shy
- Happy
- Organized
- Punctual
- Talkative
- Creative



# Key Elements of Traits

- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')

# Key Elements of Traits

- Chuck and Lyndie
  - INTERNAL traits vs. EXTERNAL situation

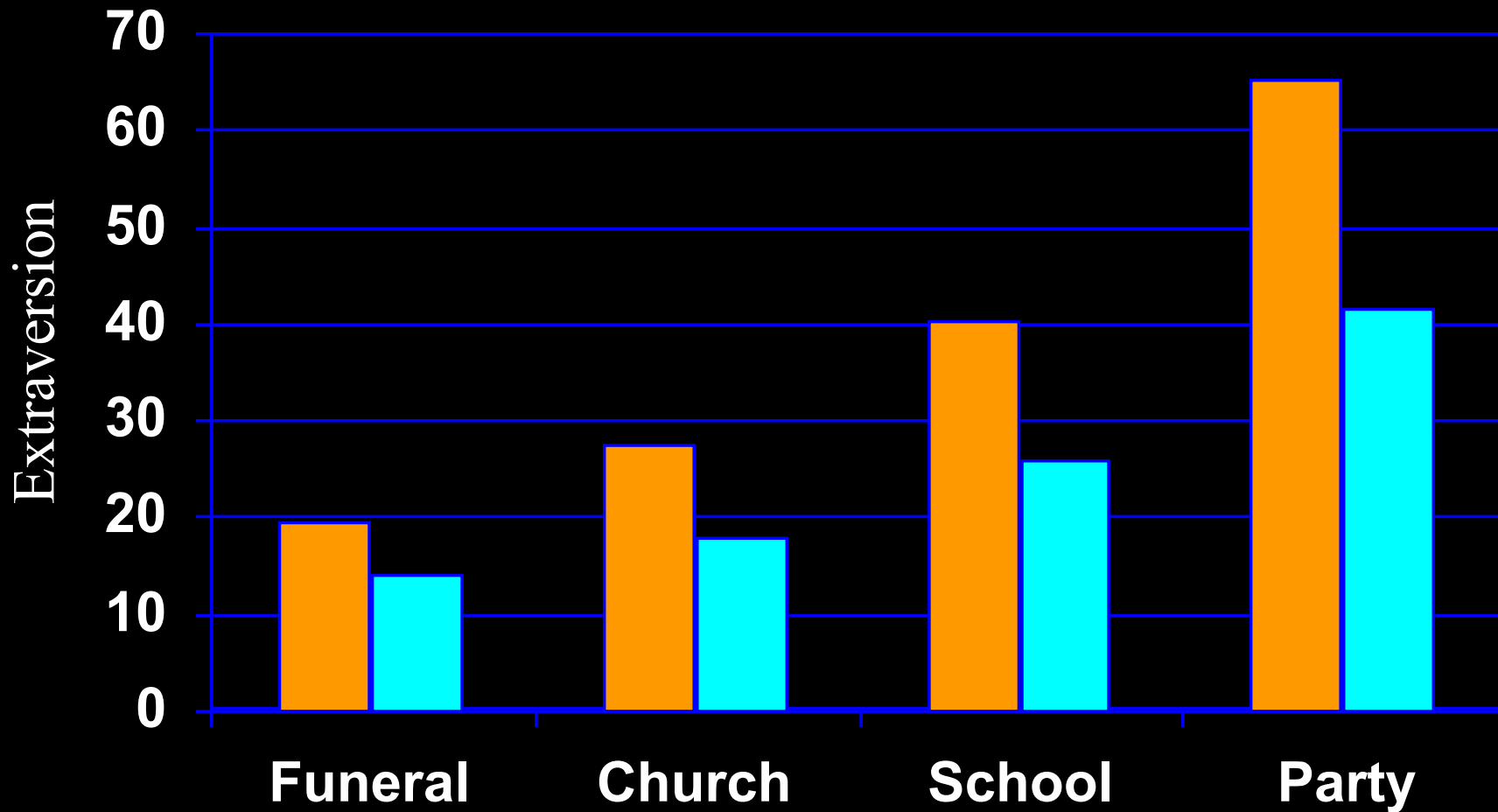


# Key Elements of Traits

- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')
- Consistent across 'similar' situations
  - People who are friendly at school also tend to be friendly at home, at work, when they meet new people, etc.
  - But, situations also influence behaviour

# Extraversion Across Situations

Jane the Extravert Jim the Introvert





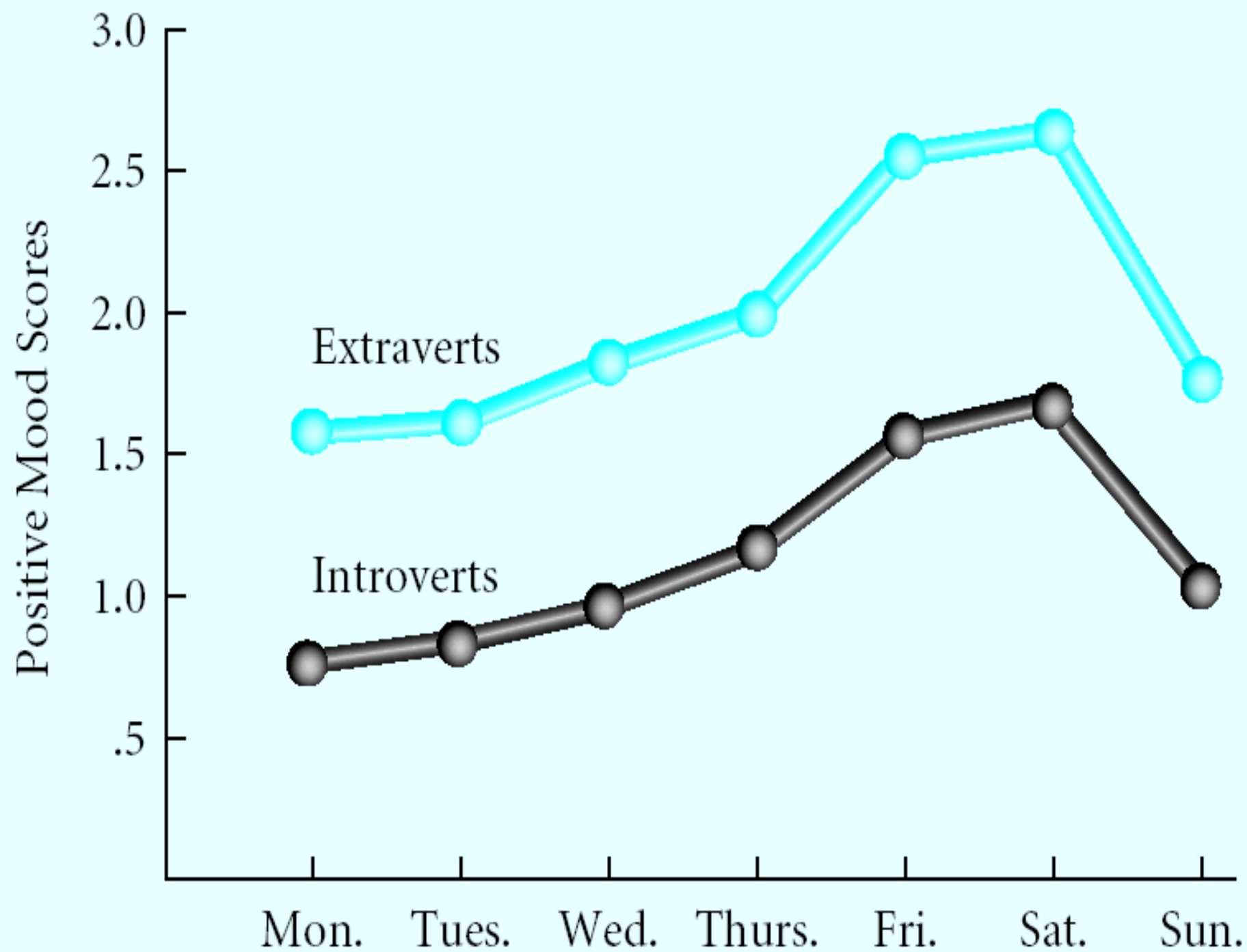
# Key Elements of Traits

- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')
- Consistent across 'similar' situations
- Stable across time

# Key Elements of Traits

- Traits are stable across time





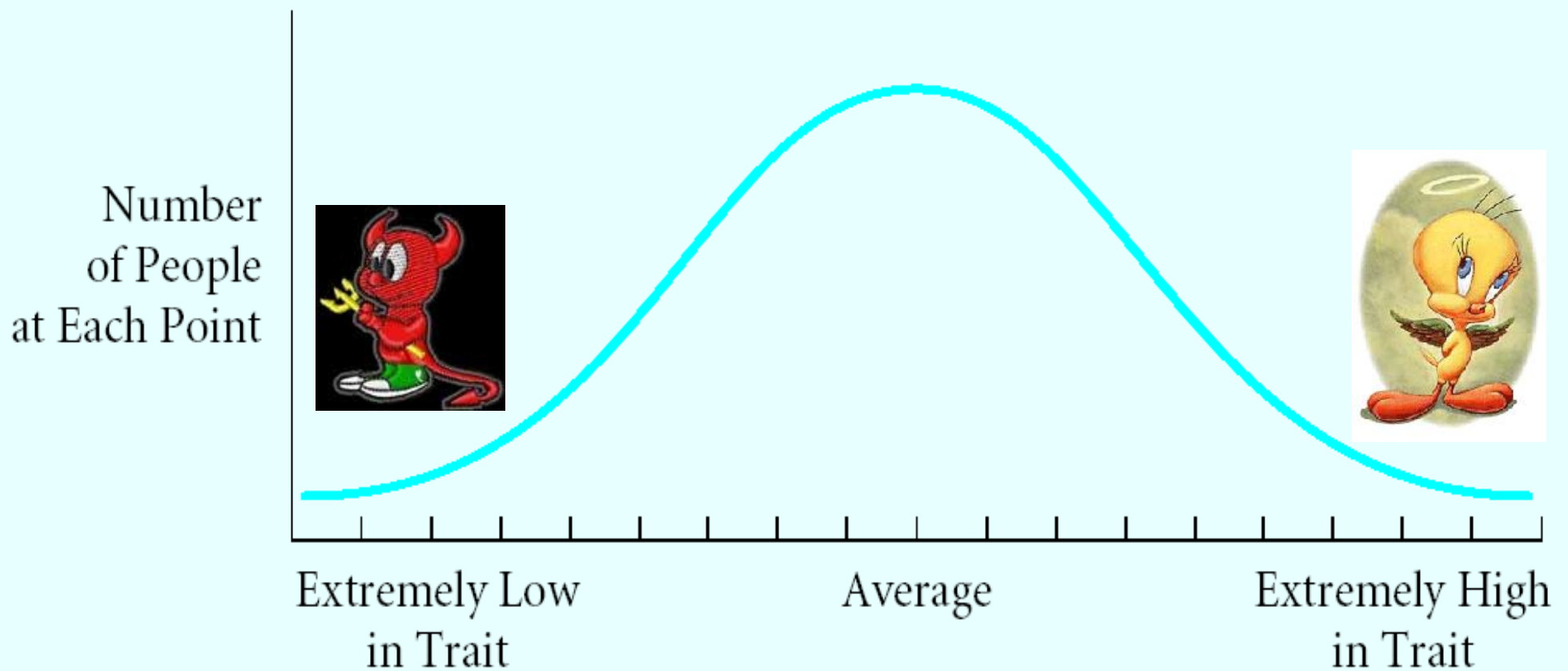


# Key Elements of Traits

- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')
- Consistent across 'similar' situations
- Stable across time
- Universal dimensions: Individual differences (across people)
  - Useful way of describing and comparing personality differences in all people

# Key Elements of Traits

- Compare people across a continuum



# Key Elements of Traits

- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')
- Consistent across 'similar' situations
- Stable across time
- Universal dimensions: Individual differences (across people)
  - Useful way of describing and comparing personality differences in all people
- **Descriptive, not explanatory**
  - Why did he talk a lot? Because he's extraverted

# What Aren't Personality Traits?

- Temporary states (e.g., embarrassed)
- Attitudes (e.g., sexist, liberal)
- Cognitive ability (e.g., GRE scores)
- Physical attributes (e.g., tall, short, thin)
- Social categories (e.g., bully, wimp, jock)

# How can we figure out which traits are most important?

- Lexical Approach
  - We can learn about personality by studying *language*
  - If a trait is important, people everywhere will have a word for it
    - cross-cultural universality
  - If a trait is very important, there will be many words for it
    - Synonym frequency

# Fundamental Lexical Hypothesis

- “the most important individual differences in human transactions will come to be encoded as single terms in some or all of the world’s languages”

-Goldberg, 1990

# Trait Taxonomy

- Comprehensive system that includes all of the major traits of personality
- Traits in a taxonomy are organized in some systematic manner
  - Hierarchical system
  - Some traits more important (or “basic”) than others

# Trait Hierarchy

## Extraversion

**outgoing**

**friendly**

**social**

**Many clubs**

**Likes parties**

**Club  
president**

**Many friends**



# Next Class

- Guest Lecture by Eric!
  - Trait Taxonomies
  - Personality Change and Stability
- Regular Lecture
  - Theoretical Issues in Trait Research
  - Review for Midterm 1
- Reading: Larsen et al. Chapters 4 &5