



ECSO4002: Who Are We?: Culture and Identity

Theme 2: Key Concepts - Theories of Identity (Part 1)



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Learning Review

What did we cover in our last session?



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Key Concepts

Identity

Culture

Social Norms & Values

- These are all words that we take for granted but when we use them in the study of people and society then we need to be clear what they mean



Identity



Group Activity

Discuss the concept of 'identity'.
(If online please raise your hand to contribute)

What do you understand this to mean?

What other words and concepts do we associate with the word identity?



Guided Study Worksheet from previous session



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Feedback to your Tutor

Culture



Group Activity

Discuss the concept of 'culture'.
(If online please raise your hand to contribute)

What do you understand this to mean?

What other words and concepts do we associate with the word culture?



Guided Study Worksheet from previous session

Social Norms & Values



Group Activity

Discuss the concepts of 'Social Norms & Values'.
(If online please raise your hand to contribute)

What do you understand this to mean?

What other words and concepts do we associate with these phrases?



Guided Study Worksheet from previous session



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Feedback to your Tutor

Key Concepts

- These three Key Concepts will form a central part of this Module
- They are also central to social science in general and will therefore be common themes in much of your studies
- It is possible to think of these three concepts as forming three 'layers' which help us to answer the question 'Who Are We?'

Social Norms
& Values

Culture



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Key Concepts

- We will look at each of these concepts in turn and, as we move through the Module we will explore how culture and social norms and values influence our 'identity'



Key Concepts - Identity

- In his seminal work *Mind, Self & Society* George Mead (1934) argues that our sense of self is made up of the 'I' and the 'Me'.
- The 'I' refers to the individual's subjective, internal, personal and private sense of ourselves
- The 'Me' refers to the individual's social face or 'how people see themselves through the eyes of others' – this is closely related to the concept of identity



Key Concepts - Identity

- We will now explore the idea of self and identity through two self-reflective exercises.

Our sense of 'I'

- This exercise is a **personal** self reflection. You will not be asked to share this with the group.
- In the centre a piece paper draw a small self portrait
- Around that self portrait, write words that you feel represent you



Our sense of 'Me'

- This exercise is a **personal** self reflection. You will not be asked to share this with the group.
- On the reverse side of the paper draw another self portrait
- This time write words that you think that people who know you (friends, family, work colleagues etc.)

Our sense of 'Me'

- Once you have completed both tasks, compare the two
- Circle any words that are the same on both versions of 'you'
- Are there any words that you have written on side 2 (the Me side) that you think are accurate but that you wouldn't use about yourself
- The first sheet represents 'I' and the second sheet represents 'Me'

Identity

We will go on to look at Theories
of Identity



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Theories of Identity

In looking at theories of identity the social scientist can draw on a number of theoretical disciplines.

These include;

- **Sociology**
- **Psychology**
- **Social Psychology**

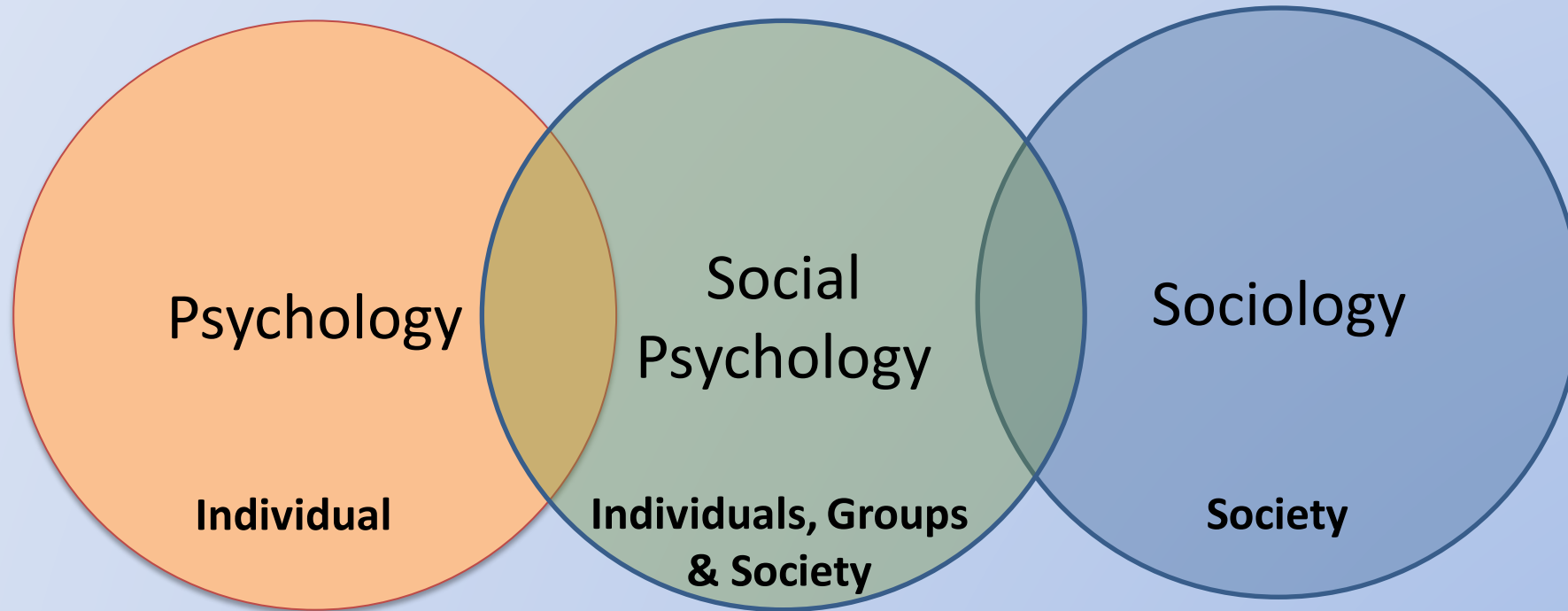


Theories of Identity

So Ken.....you've mentioned three 'ologies' but what are they and how do they relate to each other.

- **Sociology** – the study of how a society develops and is structured
- **Psychology** – the study of the human mind and how a person thinks and functions
- **Social Psychology** – the study of the way in which social interactions help to shape the individual (and vice-versa)

Theories of Identity



- The mind
- Behaviour
- Perception
- Cognition
- Emotion

- Social behaviour
- Social compliance
- Group Dynamics
- Social Attitudes
- Attribution processes

- Social structure
- Group processes
 - Social norms
 - Social Change
- Social institutions

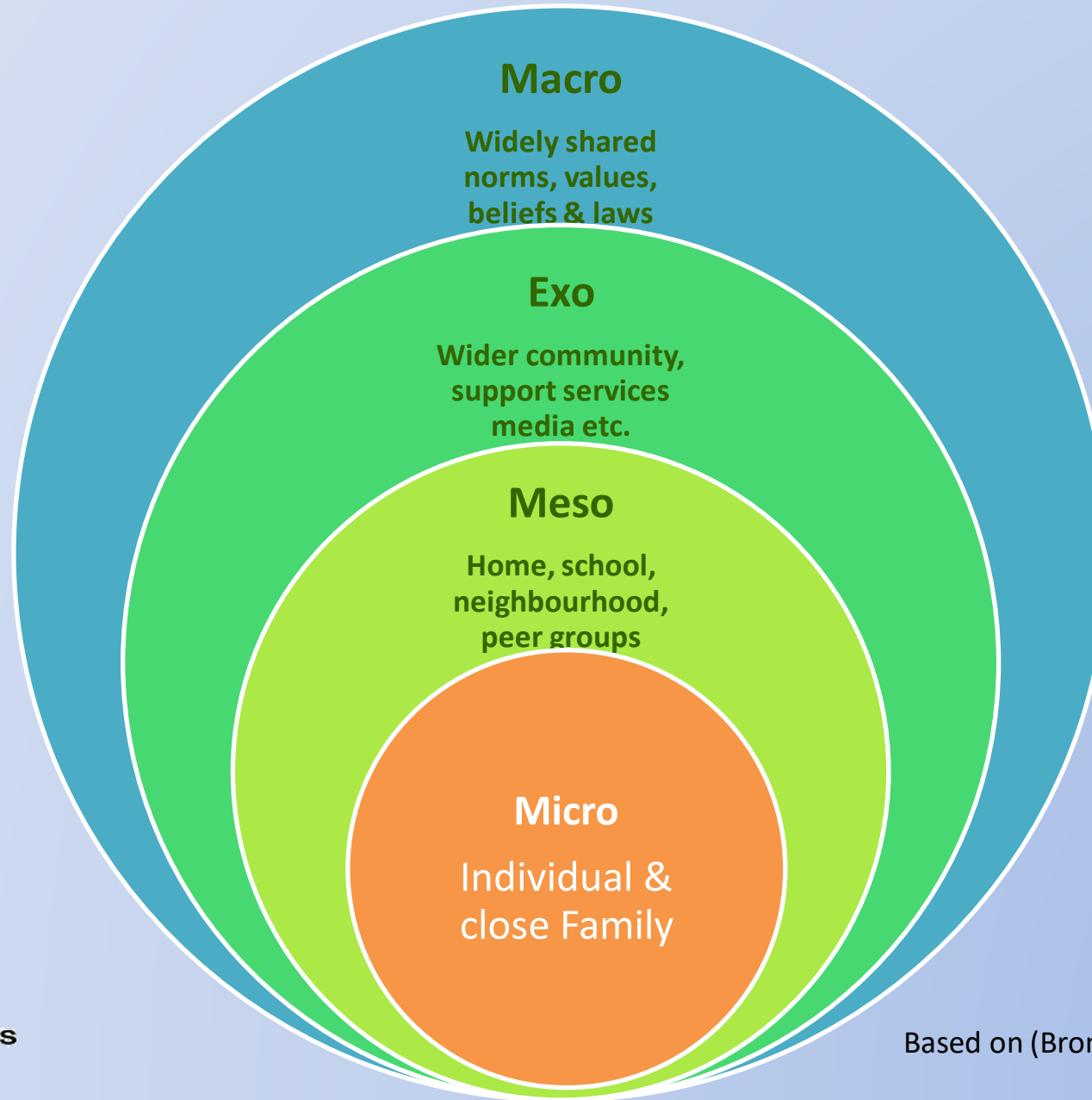


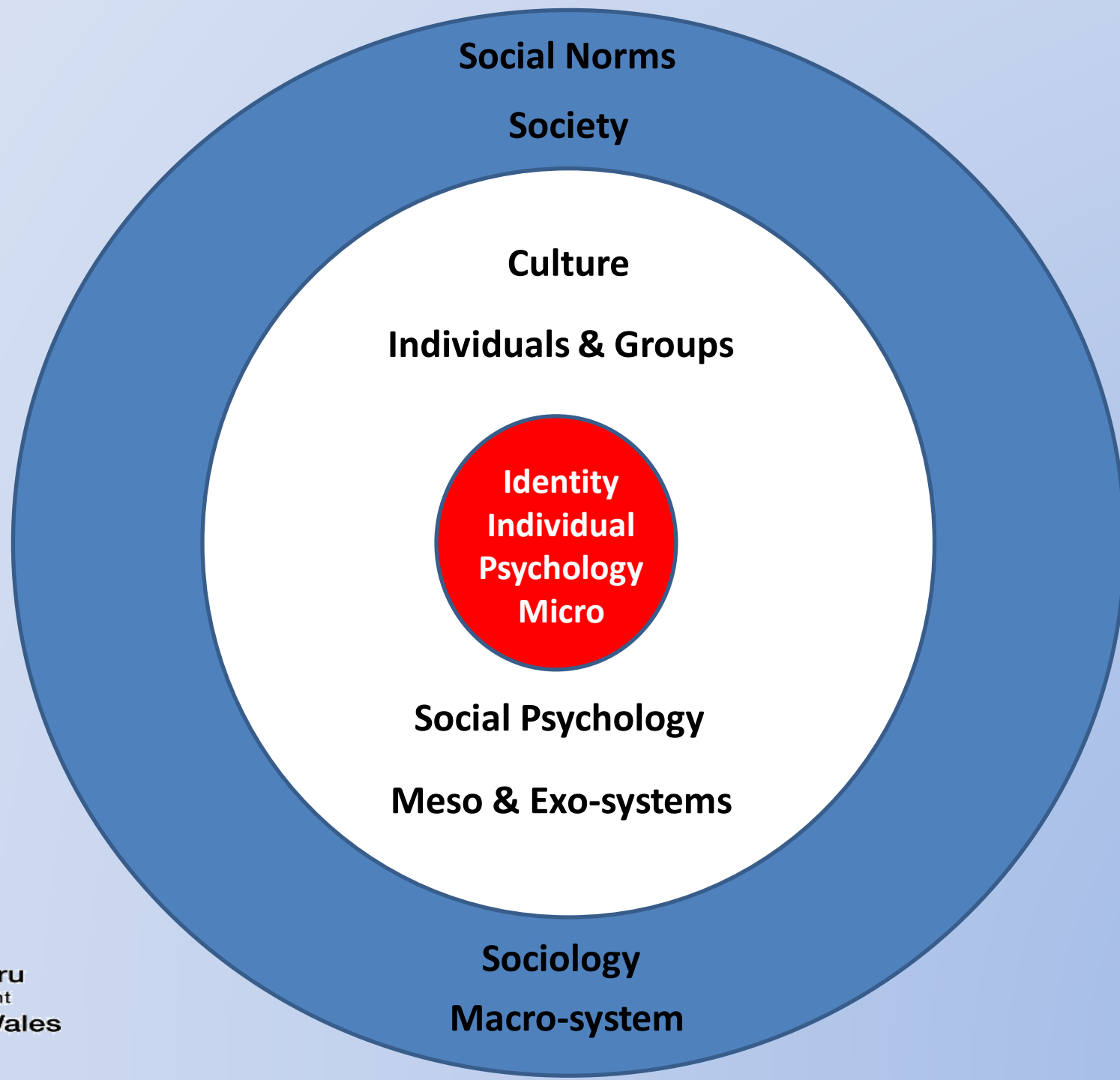
Does that remind you of anything?

- In this Module we are looking at identity, culture and social norms.
- We have already seen that, in studying these aspects we will be using theories from;
 - Psychology (individuals)
 - Social Psychology (individuals and groups)
 - Sociology (society)
- These 'three tiered' approaches also allow us to use Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory in our investigations

(Bronfenbrenner, 2009)

Bronfennbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory





**We will now move on to look at some
specific Theories of Identity**



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Theories of Identity:

Symbolic Interactionism (SI)

- Symbolic interactionists study face-to-face interactions
- They are concerned with the 'symbols' we use to communicate or interact with others
- For example; speech, non-verbal communication (noises & gestures etc.)

Theories of Identity:

Symbolic Interactionism – Chicago School

- George Mead (1863-1931)
- Regarded as one of the founders of symbolic interactionism (SI)
- Taught and researched at Chicago University
- Gave rise to the 'Chicago School' of sociology
- We have already looked at Mead's theory of the 'I' and the 'Me' previously.

What is Mead's concept of the 'I'?



What is Mead's concept of the 'Me'?



Theories of Identity:

Symbolic Interactionism – Chicago School

- The primary focus of the Chicago School is how individuals (the 'I' & 'Me') interact with and shape society.



Theories of Identity:

Symbolic Interactionism: Iowa/Indiana School

- Sociologist Manford Kuhn (1911-1963)
- Taught in the University of Iowa's sociology department.
- Seen as founding a second form of symbolic interactionism
- The focus of this 'School' of thought was the influence that society and social roles have on the individual
- For this reason this form of SI is sometimes called **structural symbolic interactionism**



Theories of Identity:

Symbolic Interactionism: Iowa/Indiana School

- The primary focus of the Iowa/Indiana School is how society shapes an individual's sense of themselves



Theories of Identity:

Symbolic Interactionism: Iowa/Indiana School

- A classic example of research used in this form of SI is the 'Twenty Statements Test' (TST).
- They used this test to collect data on people's 'social identity' by asking about their 'social roles'

(Kuhn & McPartland, 1954)

What do we mean by 'social roles'?



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Theories of Identity:

Symbolic Interactionism: Iowa/Indiana School

Guided Study – The Twenty Statements Test

We will now undertake the TST exactly as it was administered by Kuhn & McPartland.



Guided Study: Twenty Statements Test

There are twenty numbered blanks on the [sheet you have been given]. Please write twenty answers to the simple question ‘Who am I?’ in the blanks. Just give twenty different answers to this question. Answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in the order that they occur to you. Don’t worry about logic or “importance”. Do not take too much time to think about your answers.

Theories of Identity: Symbolic Interactionism

Discussion Point



Are there significant differences between the 'social roles' that you have listed?



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Theories of Identity: Symbolic Interactionism

Discussion Point



Looking at what we have already discussed in this Theme can you identify any significant differences between the Chicago and Iowa/Indiana 'Schools' of sociological thought?



Theories of Identity:

Stryker's Identity Theory

- A more recent example of a theory from the Iowa/Indiana School is the **Identity Theory** of Sheldon Stryker (1980)
- Stryker builds on the concept of social roles used in Kuhn & McPartland's research
- He argues that the social statuses that people occupy influence their 'self-concept' which in turn influences how they choose to act in any given social situation
- 'How we see ourselves shapes the kinds of social encounters we seek out' (Crawford & Novak, 2018)



Theories of Identity:

Stryker's Identity Theory

Yes, ...but what does that actually mean in practice?

Hypothetical Situation

- Five individuals with a free Saturday afternoon are given an amount of money and asked to spend this on a 'leisure' activity
 - One goes to a rugby match,
 - One goes to the cinema,
 - One goes to an art gallery,
 - One buys a bus ticket and goes walking in the Brecon Beacons
 - One buys a book and spends the afternoon reading

*In terms of Stryker's theory what might
have influenced their decisions?*



Theories of Identity:

Stryker's Identity Theory

- Therefore, Stryker's theory indicates that although an individual has any number of choices, their sense of 'identity' or 'self concept' will mean that they select from a self-limited number of options.
- These options are defined by the social and cultural influences on that person
- That is to say, they will tell themselves "That is not for me", "I am not a party person", "I don't do sport" etc.
- We have looked at this in the context of leisure choices but it does have other important implications.



Theories of Identity:

Stryker's Identity Theory

- For example, if one accepts Stryker's hypothesis then pupil's subject choices will be influenced by their self concept.
- Therefore only children who have been 'socialised' into thinking that science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) are "for them" will choose them for GCSE, A Level or Degree choices.
- Theorists argue that this is why females are under-represented in STEM subjects and occupations (Lee, 2002)



Theories of Identity:

A different perspective

- We have now looked at two **social interactionist** interpretations of identity (the Chicago School and the Iowa/ Indiana School).
- We will now look at a theory of identity that takes this way of viewing individuals further
- Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017)
- Professor of Sociology at Leeds University
- A self-professed socialist but also interested in post-modernist perspectives.

What is post-modernism?



Theories of Identity:

Bauman's Liquid Modernity Theory

- In the past the relationship between the individual and society was relatively straightforward
- The individual often lived, worked and socialised in one geographically defined community
- Although individuals could move 'community' (geographic and social mobility) the community was contiguous
- In the post-modern world the situation is more.....

complex!

Theories of Identity:

Bauman's Liquid Modernity Theory

- We are now subject to multiple and often conflicting social influences
- Including the 'traditional' e.g. family, peer group, work, street etc.
- But increasingly involving post-modern online communities, social media, targeted advertising etc.
- 'Indeed, in our contemporary age the relationship between the individual and society is changing because the concepts of identity, individual and individuality are becoming meaningless' (Palese, 2013).

Theories of Identity:

Bauman's Liquid Modernity Theory

- Identity creation is no longer something that happens unconsciously through the interaction between the individual and society
- The creation of identity is an 'active task'
- 'Being individuals in the liquid society does not simply mean being good consumers, but also being competitive goods in the global market' (Palese, 2013).
 - *"people who bought Cite Them Right also bought....."*
 - *"230 people have liked your picture"*
 - *"Swipe right to like, swipe left to dislike"*



Theme 2 – Theories of Identity

- So far in this Theme we have looked at;
- Mead's theory – the 'I' and the 'Me'
- Kuhn & McPartland's ideas on self-concept and social roles
- Stryker's Identity Theory
- Bauman's Liquid Modernity
- In Part 2 we will explore some other theories of identity.



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