



ECSO4002: Who Are We?: Culture and Identity

Theme 2: Theories of Identity (Part 2)



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Learning Review

What did we cover in our last session?

Discuss and summarise the theories of Identity that we have already looked at.

- Mead's theory of 'I' and 'Me'
- Kuhn & McPartland's Social Roles Theory
- Stryker's Identity Theory
- Bauman's theory of Liquid Modernity



Share Your Thoughts

*It is important that we each have a concept of what we mean by **Identity** before we move on.*

This is an opportunity to ask any questions, make any comments etc. regarding what we have looked at so far.



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Theories of Identity - Structural symbolic interactionists

- As we have seen structural symbolic interactionists, are interested in studying how social structures and culture affect human social interaction
- That is to say that they begin by looking at the wider (macro-, exo- and meso-systems) and how these influence individuals
- One example of this is the **Role Identity Theory** developed by McCall and Simmons

Theories of Identity - Role Identity Theory

- This theory uses concepts from the theatre and drama to describe the way in which people take on 'characters' depending on their social positions within groups
- Their 'character' will change in relation to changes in the make up of the group and the 'situations' that the group finds itself in
- 'The immediate situation plays a paramount role' in an individual's choice of 'character'.

Theories of Identity - Role Identity Theory

- They argue that ‘identity performance’, that is the way that people behave, relies on the relationship with others in the group.
- ‘The more **prominent** an identity, the more it will be invoked in a situation’.
- Individuals are more likely to have identities high in their prominence hierarchy when they receive support from others for the identity, when they are committed to the identity, and when they receive rewards (both extrinsic and intrinsic) for the identity.

Theories of Identity - Role Identity Theory

- But what does this mean in practice? – *another hypothetical situation*
- A group of long-term friends are out walking
- Each person in the group has a ‘role’ that they have ‘performed’ for a long time (e.g. the leader, the joker, the quiet one etc.)
- During the walk one of them falls and breaks a leg
- The ‘quiet one’ has first aid training and takes over the situation because this additional role gives them **prominence**



Can you think of other examples?

Theories of Identity - Role Identity Theory

A real example?



What do you think?



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Theories of Identity

Conclusions

Group Discussion

*Can we summarise what we have learnt
about concepts of identity?*



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References

McCall, G. J., and Simmons, J. L. (1978) *Identities and interactions: An examination of human associations in everyday life*. New York: Macmillan.

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