



EC SO4002: Who Are We?: Culture and Identity

Theme 4: Social Norms and Values

Learning Review

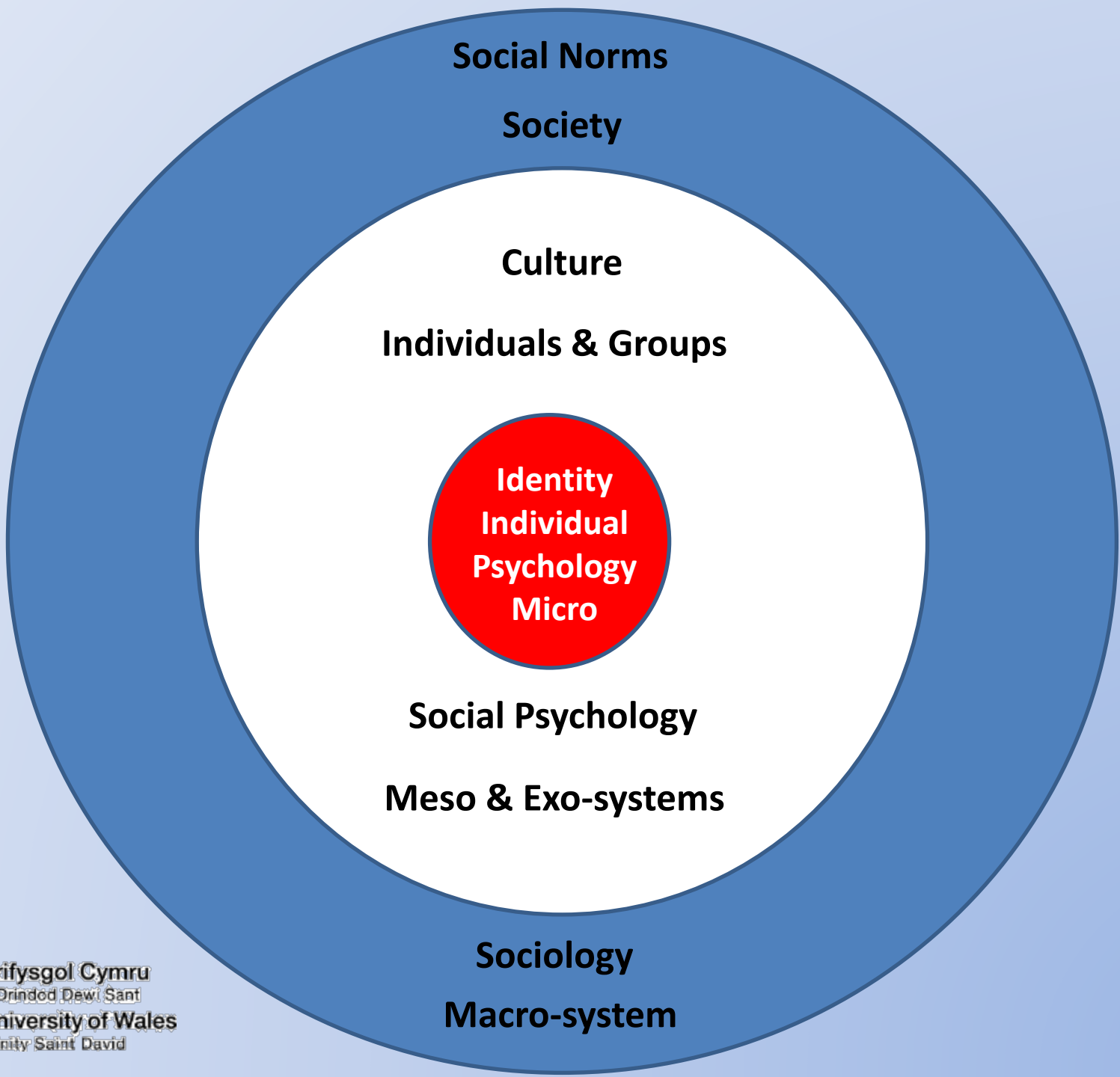
What did we cover in Theme 3?



**Social Norms
& Values**

Culture





What are norms and values?

In small groups revisit your notes from Theme 1 where we initially discussed the concept of social norms and values.



Guided Study Activity: Social Norms and Values?

What ideas and concepts did we discuss?

Feedback to your Tutor.



Definition of Social Norms

- According to Young & Mack (1959) Social norms refer to the shared expectations of a group or society
- They can be seen as rules developed by a group of people that specify how those people should and should not behave in various social situations.
- ‘social norms are seen as central to the production of social order or social coordination, research on norms has been focused on the functions they perform’

(Bicchieri *et al* 2018)

Let's paraphrase this quote.



Definition of Social Norms

- Social norms consist of rules of conduct and models of behaviour prescribed by a group or society.
- They are rooted in the customs, traditions and value systems that gradually develop in this group or society
- Social norms are often classified into different types of norm by social scientists

Types of Social Norms

There are, broadly speaking, three types of social norm;

- ‘Folkways’ or social conventions
- ‘Social Mores’ or ethical and moral codes
- Law and legislation

See, for example (Crawford & Novak, 2018, p.292)

We will now look at these in turn.

Types of Social Norms

Folkways or social conventions

- Social conventions are the most ubiquitous type of social norm, we come across them all the time
- They 'govern the way in which we keep our houses, what and when to eat, how we dress and how we spend our leisure time, among other things' (Crawford & Novak, 2018, p.292)
- According to Gillin & Gillin (1948) folkways are behaviour patterns of every day life which generally arise unconsciously in a group.
- They regulate many day-to-day aspects of our lives but we are often not aware that they exist until they are broken

Types of Social Norms

Folkways or social conventions

- It is often easier to recognise folkways when they are broken
- At best society can consider such behaviour as eccentricity
- At worst it can be seen as 'deviant' (we will return to this concept)
- *Look at the following video clips, what examples of social conventions are being broken?*
- ***N.B. because these examples break social conventions some people may be offended by some of the images***



Guided study sheet: Breaking Social Conventions

1



2



3



Types of Social Norms

Folkways or social conventions

- Social conventions are informal social norms that are ‘acquired’ by individuals
- They are created through the process of social interaction
- They are passed on from generation to generation by the process of socialisation
- Attitudes to people who break social conventions are inconsistent and depend on context (e.g. she is eccentric, she is mad, she is a witch)
- Sanctions for breaking social conventions are informal and inconsistent.

Types of Social Norms

Social Mores, moral and ethical codes

- According to Gillin and Gillin (1948) Social Mores are those customs and group routines which are thought by the members of society to be necessary to the group's continued existence
- Crawford & Novak argue that they are 'more serious' than some social conventions however they are still often 'informal'
- They state that social mores can 'prohibit murder or the enactment of behaviors that harm other people in other ways'

(Crawford & Novak, 2018, p.292)

Types of Social Norms

Social Mores, moral and ethical codes

- The American Psychological Association state that social mores are 'customs and codes of behavior established by a social group that are not necessarily supported by legal sanctions but that may be as binding as laws' (American Psychological Association, 2018)
- Their violation can be perceived as a serious threat to social order.
- It is generally thought that people have to obey social mores in order to be part of a society . (Forsyth, 1990)
- Individuals are often punished if they fail to conform to the mores of the society.
- This punishment can be formal and informal but it can be brutal

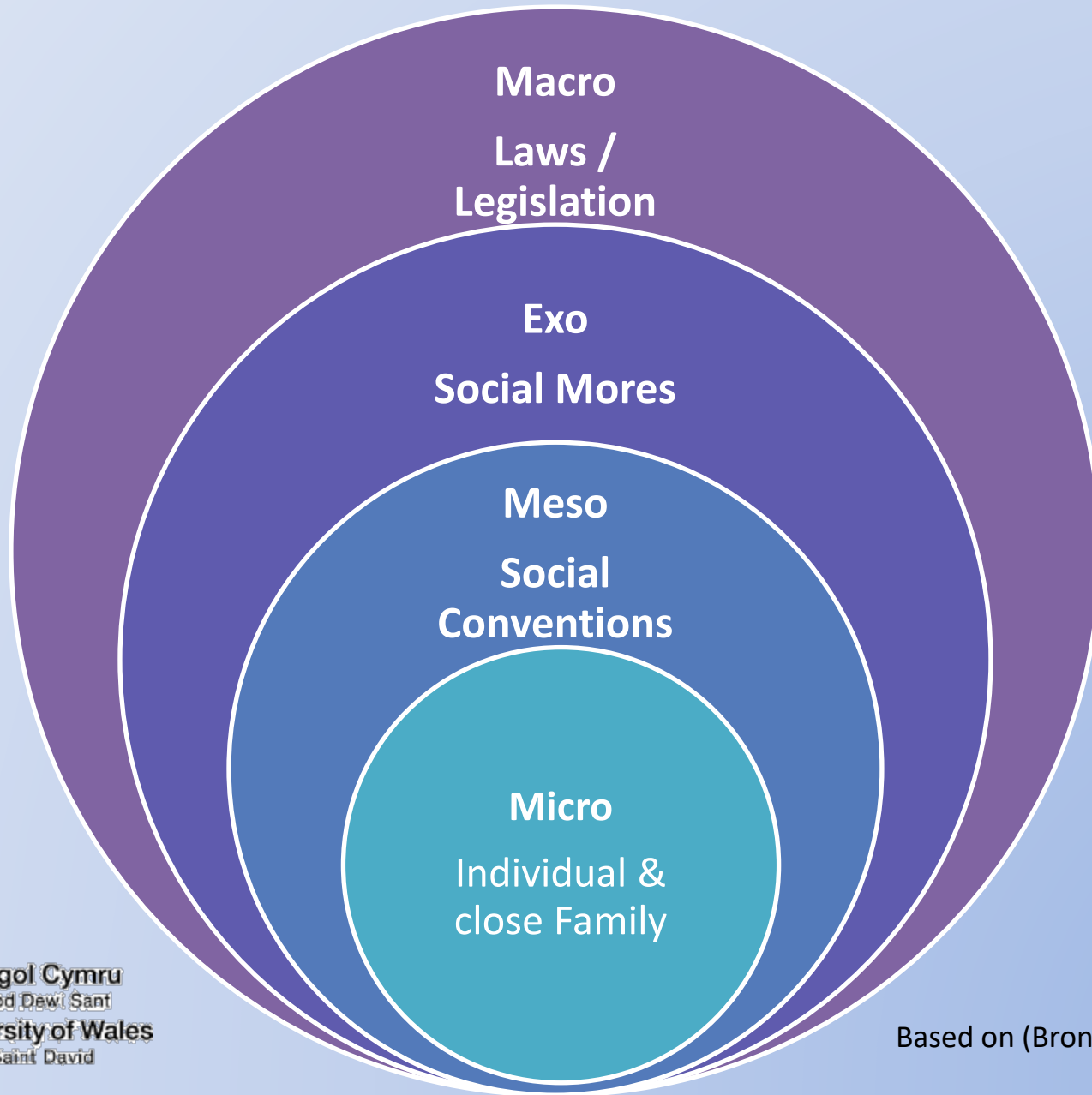


Types of Social Norms

Laws / Legislation / legal Codes

- These are always, by their nature, formal social norms
- They are ‘codified and enforced by the state through the institution of criminal justice’ (Crawford & Novak, 2018, p.292)
- They usually but not always conform to social mores
- Crawford and Novak give the examples that the law against murder conforms to most people’s own social mores but many individuals do not see speeding laws as having the same moral imperative (Crawford & Novak, 2018, p.292)

Bronfenbrenner's Theory & Social Norms



Functions of social norms

From what we have discussed thus far, social norms can be seen to serve the following functions for society;

- **Self-control:** social norms give individuals a guide as to what they should or shouldn't do
- **Controlling group behaviour:** if enough individuals conform to social norms then societal behaviour is also controlled
- **Systemising behaviour:** social norms provide a system which people can follow, i.e. a person does not have to think about every action they take

Characteristics of norms

Descriptive Norms

- Descriptive norms are concerned with an individual's interaction with a group
- They develop from watching the actions of other group members in certain situations.
- The more that target group members behave similarly in a given situation, the more the observer will tend to view their behaviour as appropriate.
- When individual group members believe that the group supports a certain behaviour, they are more likely to exhibit this behaviour themselves.

Characteristics of norms

Injunctive Norms

- Injunctive norms refer to what individuals feel is “right” based on morals or beliefs.
- These morals and beliefs are acquired by socialisation.
- They are specific guidelines about behaviour in certain situations (i.e. reciprocity norms – that is the norm that we should repay a favour that another does for us)

(Peiyu Pai & Hsien-Tung Tsai, 2016)

- They develop through normative influence or when group members conform to receive social approval.
- Rather than describing appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, injunctive norms prescribe it.

Characteristics of norms

Subjective Norms

- Subjective norms are group members' perceptions about what important and influential individuals (e.g., leaders) think about a certain behaviour. (*What would Jesus Do?*)
- Thus, they are subjective in the sense that there are variations between individuals as to who is considered important.
- The theory of reasoned action suggests that the main influence on individual intentions is subjective norms.
- This may be one reason it is common practice for people to consult others before making decisions.

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