



Overview of Module

Self and Social Identity

Overview

Lecture	Topic
1	Self & Identity / Identity Theory
2	Exploring identities through Narrative Methods
3	Social Identity Theory / Self-categorization Theory
4	Social Representations Theory / Social Categorization
5	Social Representations and Identities
6	Introduction to Communities of Practice
7	Communities, Participation and Identity
8	Social Constructionism and the Discursive Self
9	Social Knowledge, Trust and the Public Sphere
10	Diversity and Social Cohesion

You will need to **read** for this module!

Assessments

1 Essay 2,500 words (50%):

Critically evaluate how a narrative psychological approach can contribute to explaining how people construct and negotiate identity.

You are expected to

- Critically evaluate the narrative approach to understanding the formation and maintenance of identity
- Provide an explanation and critique of the narrative methods that are used to study identity.

2 Reflective written assignment 2,500 words (50%):

Drawing upon appropriate psychological theories covered in this module, critically reflect upon the role of a chosen Community of Practice in supporting your personal and professional development.

You must identify, and briefly describe, one community of practice to which you belong/have belonged to some degree. Using appropriate theory and research to support your submission, critically reflect upon your own participation and membership of this community over time. Consider your own participation (e.g. activities, roles, relationships, responsibilities) and how well the community of practice has supported your endeavours as a member of the community of practice.

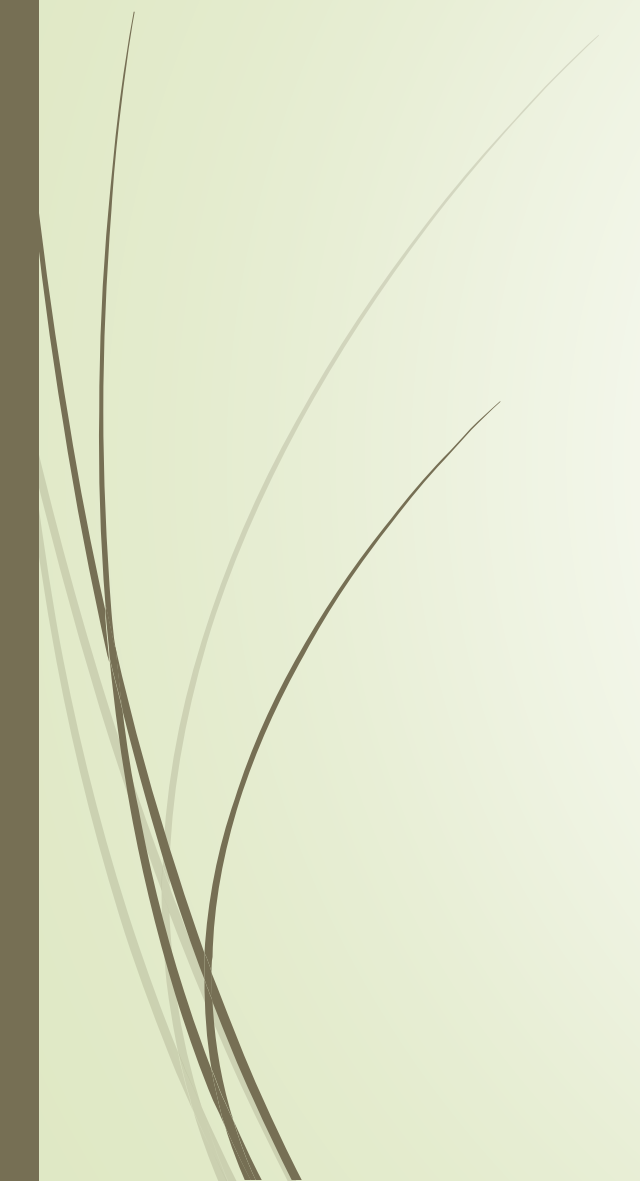


The nature of the self: early thinking

- Descartes (16thC): dualism 'I think, therefore I am' ('Cogito ergo sum')
 - Whenever I think, I exist
 - Whatever I know, I know intuitively that I am
- Kant (18thC): Self as object (empirical self) and as subject (ego)
 - Self as 'me' (empirical me, the known)
 - Self as 'I' (the knower)



The nature of the self: early thinking



➤ James:

“In its widest possible sense...a man's Self is the sum total of all he can call his, not only with his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works...if they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant, if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down”

(1890/1950, pp.291-292)



Self

- The collection of beliefs that we hold about ourselves
e.g.

What are my important characteristics?

What am I good at?

What am I poor at?

What situations do I prefer/avoid?

What do I want to be?

What do I think I am



More recent conceptualising

- Self-concept; a collection of beliefs about oneself (e.g. gender roles, racial identity)
- Self-awareness: involves being aware of the different aspects of the self
- Combine to form a coherent sense of identity
- Humans not the only species to have a sense of self
e.g.
 - Primates (Gallup, 1970, 1997)
 - Dolphins (Reiss and Marino, 2001)
 - Humans – rudimentary self-recognition approx. age 2 years (e.g. Lewis and Ramsay, 2004)



Self: two key functions

1. Organisational

- Self-schemas:
 - Organise our knowledge about ourselves (e.g. Oyserman et al, 2003)
 - Structure our memories which support:
 - Our sense of self
 - How we notice and remember other people
- Self-reference effect: we remember information better when we relate it to ourselves (e.g. Markus, 1977; Kilstrom, Beer and Klein, 2003)



Self: two key functions

2. Executive

- Regulates or behaviour, choices and plans for the future (e.g. Higgins, 1989; 2005; Leary, 2004)
- Humans the only species to
 - Imagine events that have not yet occurred
 - Engage in long-term planning (Gilbert, 2006)
- How easy is self regulation?
- Self-regulatory resource model (Bauminster and Hetherington, 1996)
 - Limited resources for self-control
 - Distraction, stress, tiredness etc.

Write some quick sentences in answer to the question...

Describe yourself to yourself

- Children – typically describe self in terms of concrete, observable characteristics
- I am a boy
- I have blonde hair
- I live in a big house
- I have a laptop



- Adults – more emphasis on psychological states (thoughts/feelings)
- I am an optimistic person
- I am a sociable person
- I am a Christian
- I am ambitious
- I am vengeful



Self-concept

- Functions as
 - repository of autobiographical memories
 - organiser of experience
 - emotional buffer
 - motivational resource (Markus & Wurf, 1977)
- Idea of stability over time is intuitively appealing (Oyserman, 2004)
- SC frames experience and motivates action, but is not assumed to reflect some absolute truth about our skills, competencies, worth
- SC provides and maintains a cognitive anchor, consistent yardstick, way of making sense of
 - who we are
 - What to expect of the self and others

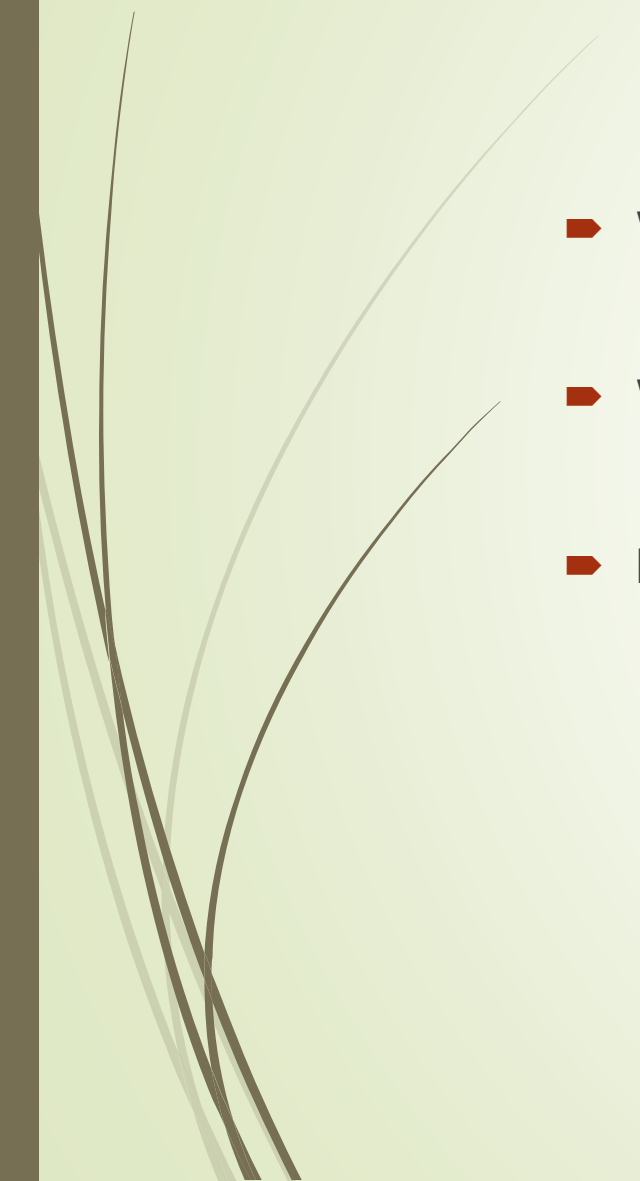
How do we learn about ourselves?

- Early socialisation
 - Parents, experiences e.g. being taken to church may instil a self-concept of being religious
- Feedback from others
 - Information from others regarding what we are good/poor at
 - Reflected appraisal Cooley's 'looking glass self' – our perception of how people see/react to us





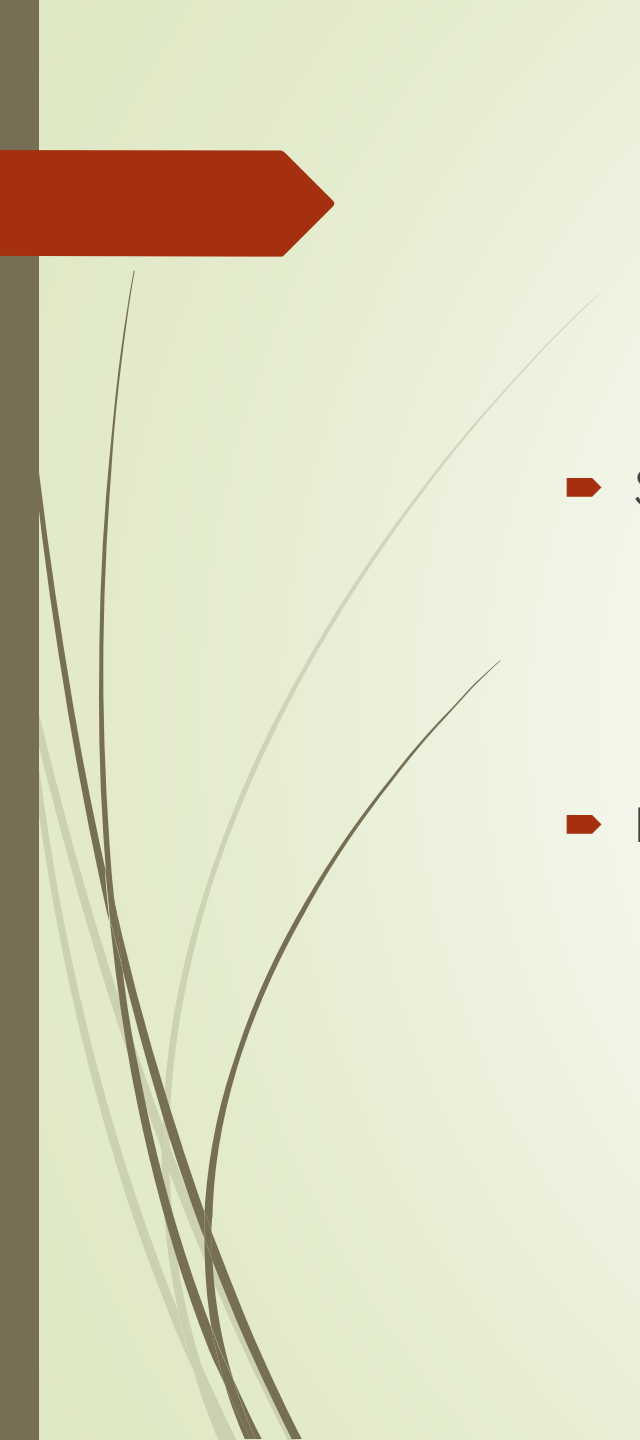
Self-concept and identity

- Who am I?
 - Where do I belong?
 - How do I fit in?
- 

Identity

- **Sense of self:** a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action
- **Identity:** the distinctive characteristics belonging to any individual, or shared by all members of a particular social category or group





➤ Sense of self: Your own individuality

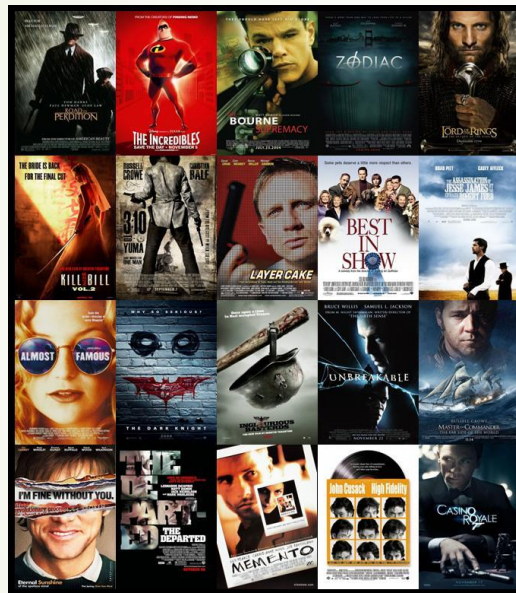
‘Who am I?’

➤ Identity: Social category:

‘Student’

‘School leaver’

‘Non-traditional student’





Identity

Development of identity grounded in:

- Cognitive development – emergence of self-reflection on emotions and relationships
- Experiences with peers and family – changing roles, expectations and responsibilities
- Experiences with culture at large – changing expectations in autonomy and independence



Identity

Domains of exploration:

e.g.

- Gender
- Sexuality
- Ethnicity
- Occupational
- Interpersonal
- Religion



Identity formation

Cognitive processes

- Categorisation – simplifies perception (cognitive miser view)
- Social comparison

Motivational processes

- Self-esteem / Self-enhancement

Break



15 Minutes!



Identity Theory

- Arose from two different threads of ideas:
- **Symbolic interactionism**
 - Blumer
 - Philosophical roots e.g. James (1890), Baldwin (1906), Cooley (1902, 1909)
 - What makes up identities?
 - How do they function?
- **Perceptual control theory**
 - Powers (1973)
 - Control systems
 - Purpose, goals



Symbolic interactionism

- Blumer – interpretations of Mead
- Centres on shared use of symbols
- Can be used to represent objects, events (and other symbols) – even when the objects or events are not physically present
- Words are symbols



Mead

- Ability to recognize the self as an object
- Can think/act on self, as on any other aspect of the environment
 - e.g applying make-up (acting toward the self), decorating the home (acting toward something that may help define the self)
- Act upon aspects of environment that have relevance for own behaviour and goals
- Adjust/change environment and self and behaviour in order to achieve goals
- 'I' – **agent/actor** initiates action in order to bring about desired consequences or intentions
- 'Me' – **perceptive-observer** aspect of the self that looks at the action, environment and their relationship.
Guides activity of the 'I' to achieve the goal



Signs and symbols

- Learning and understanding other people's reactions/behaviour
 - Imitation understanding the response is shared
- Responses to events, objects, people – may be shared
 - Person as stimulus – conventional (or significant) sign/symbol
- Use of symbols allows thinking, language, communication and interaction

James (1890)

➤ Two important points that pre-date Mead...

1. Multiple selves – complexity of identity

- As many different selves as there are different others that recognize the individual
- Each position – own set of meanings and expectations – internalized as an identity

2. Self-esteem

- Function of both our achievements and our aspirations
- Self-esteem = successes
Pretentions (aspirations)

If aspirations higher than achievements – self-esteem lowered



Cooley

- Highlighted the importance of the emotions that arise from interactions of the self with others
- Looking glass self – see self reflected in the reactions of others
 - ‘Reflected appraisals’
 - One of the main ways we come to see who we are (in identity theory)
 - If self-views are not confirmed and shared by others in the community – upset, bitter, feel excluded, attempt to change things

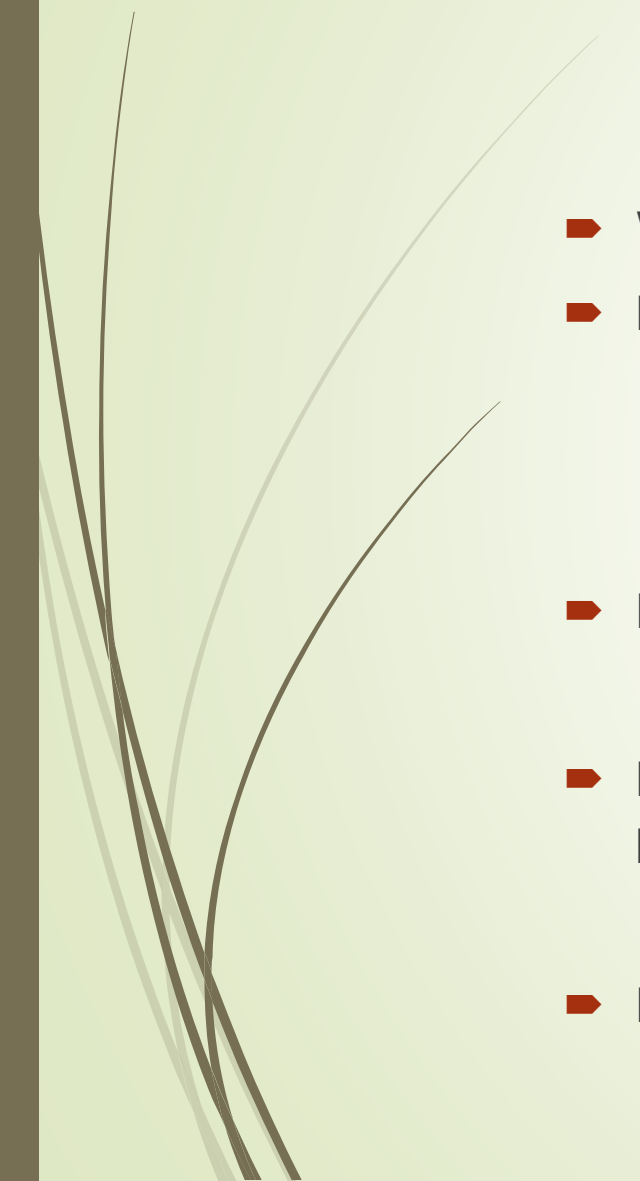
Sheldon Stryker

- One of the originators of **identity theory**
- An identity (internalized positional designation) for each of the different positions or roles the person holds in society (Stryker, 1980)
 1. Behaviour premised on a named and classified world – learned through interaction with others.

Symbolic character of the world
Social and physical objects
 2. Names, roles, classifications exist – are stable, are shared and only slowly change
 3. People are named by each other in terms of positions they occupy – invoke shared meanings
 4. People are reflexive and also name the self I these same terms – define us and are relational



Control systems



- Wiener (1948) Cybernetics, engines, motors
- Negative feedback controls output of systems
 - Too much output used to reduce the input/too little output used to increase the input – negative feedback
- Relates to perception-action co-ordination (Mead)
- People vary their actions to make their perceptions match a reference point (goal) = perceptual control model
- Behaviours control perceptions



Perceptual Control System

- Burke (1991) Distress in identity disruption
- Drew on Power's (1973) and Cooley's work
- Reflected appraisals as well as direct appraisals to understand meanings of own behaviours
 - We alter our behaviour in order to make our perceptions of the meaning of behaviours match the meanings in our identity standard
- Controversial - perception controls behaviour
 - the meaning is important, not the behaviour itself
 - meaning subject to social confirmation
- Achieving a match between perceived meanings and the meanings held in the identity standard – **identity verification** (discrepancy = non-verification)
- Prediction of behaviour – work to achieve match (e.g. leadership behaviour)



Resources

- Important extension to identity theory
- Not only symbolic meanings (symbolic interactionism) - Also **sign** meanings
 - To understand full range of resources (Freese and Burke, 1994)
- Sign meanings through direct and immediate experience (not social agreement)
 - E.g. sitting by a stranger – don't invade personal space, keep hands to yourself
 - Certain feelings and perceptions guide our reactions to objects
 - How they 'should' be
 - We respond to non-linguistic signs maintain order
- Identity theory – resources defined by their function
 - Sustains and supports individuals, groups or interaction (e.g. student buying books – identity verification)

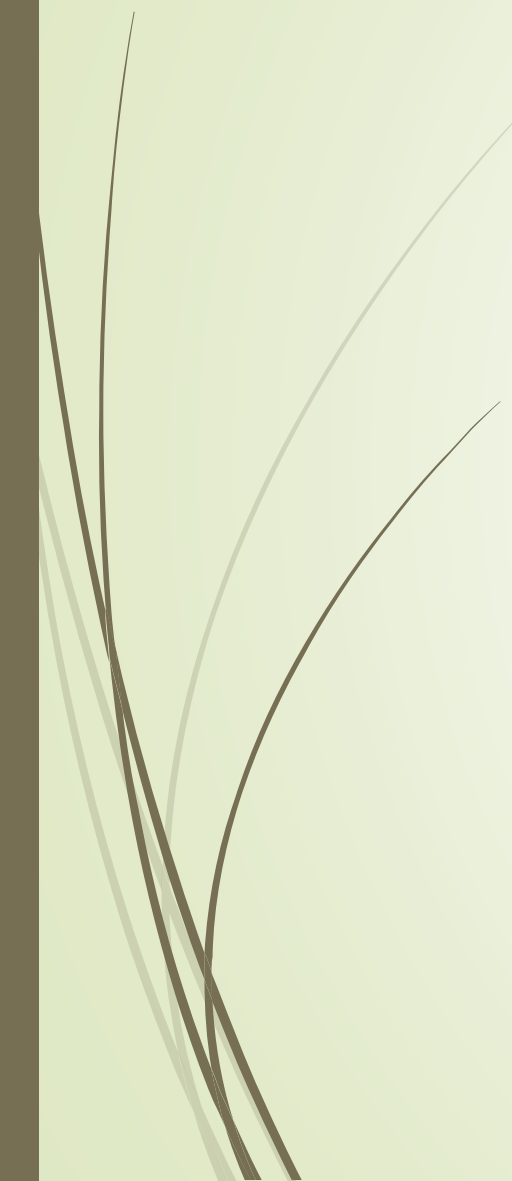


Social Structure

- Resources divided...
 - **Actual** resources – currently functioning to support etc.
 - **Potential** resources – not currently but may in future
(e.g. oil changed to petrol enables travel)
- Signs - not necessarily shared – own experience control actual resources
- Symbolic meanings control potential resources (Freese & Burke, 1994)
- Identity theory – Social structure –allocates rights and responsibilities for controlling various actual and potential resources

- 
- Identity theory conceptualisation of social structure

Structures

- Large-scale (macro)
 - Race, ethnicity, class, gender, SES...
 - Social boundaries, relationships etc provide social identity (rights, access etc.)
 - Intermediate (meso)
 - Localized networks, neighbourhoods, associations, organizations...
 - Create social boundaries – affect likelihood of relationships
 - Proximate (micro)
 - Families, departments, school clubs...
 - Provide social relationships specifically related to specific role identity
- 



The Situation

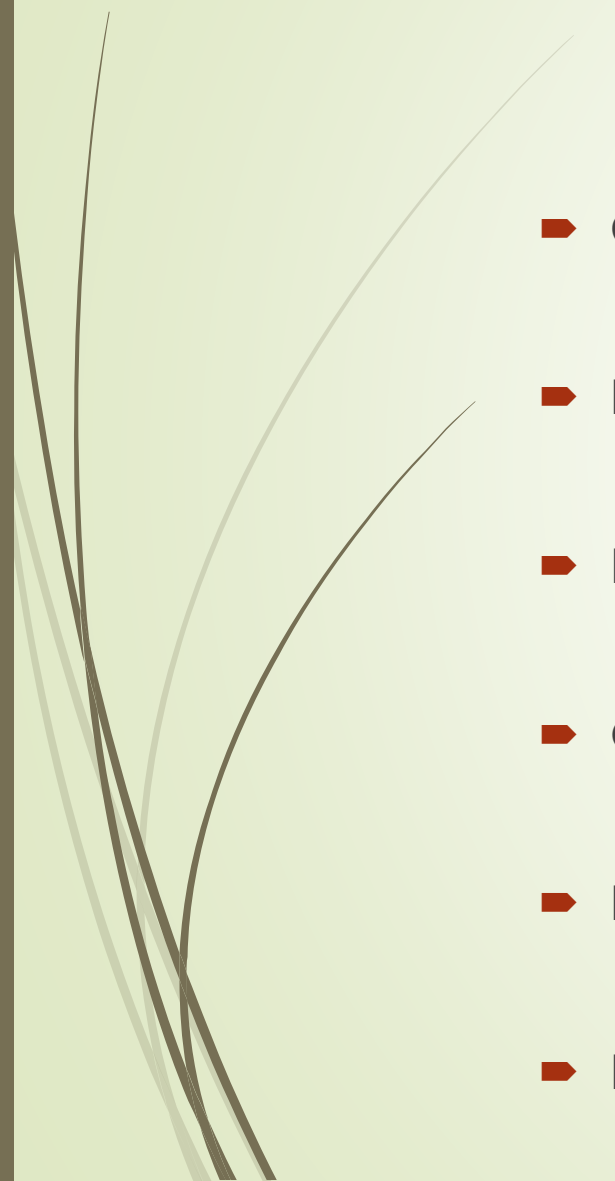
Importance of...

Situational meanings and identity meanings (Burke and Franzoi, 1988)

- e.g. Friend, student
- Cognitive situational meanings (framing rules), affective situational meanings (feeling rules) (Stets and Carter, 2012)
 - Relationship between evaluation of situation and evaluation of identity
 - Activity of the situation and activity of the identity
- Relevance of prior emotions in the situation for the functioning of identities (Stets and Osborne, 2008)
 - Feelings generated in one situation may influence identity processes in the new situation



Identity theory applications

- 
- Crime and Law
 - Education
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Gender
 - Family
 - Environment



Next week

- Critique of Identity Theory with reference to Social Identity Theory
- Social Identity Theory
- Self-Categorization Theory