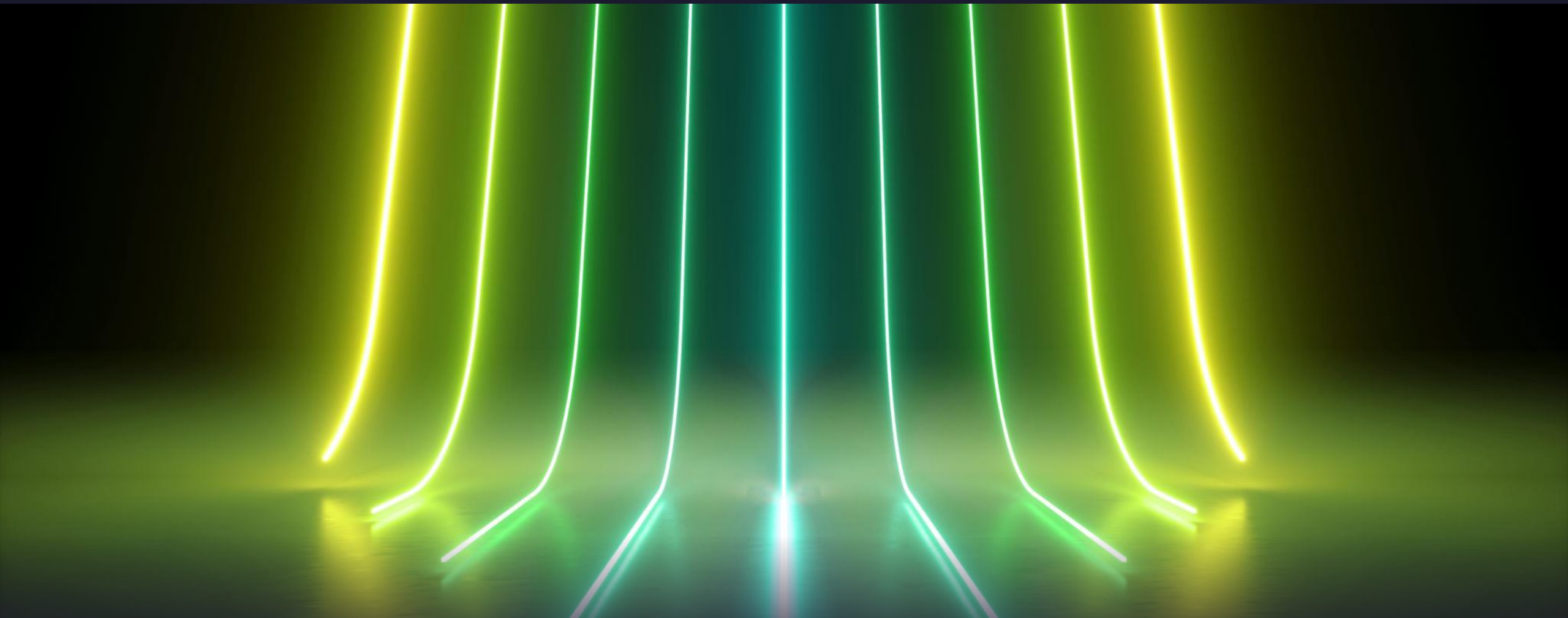


Understanding the Self

Theories of Identity

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Lecture outline

- Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979)
- Self Categorisation Theory (SCT; Turner, 1985)
- Social Constructionism



Social Identity

- Tajfel and Turner (1979): Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Relations
- Intergroup relations, group processes and the social self
- Assumes that society is structured into distinct groups
- Membership of any group provides a social identity

Social Identities:

- Describe attributes
- Prescribe cognitions and behaviours
 - Associated with ethnocentrism, in-group favouritism, intergroup differentiation
- Conformity and cohesion (link to stereotypes)

Social Identity Theory

Intergroup behaviour



Perception, cognition, or behaviours influenced by group membership

Competitive and ethnocentric; favouring of in-group over out-groups

Theories of social identity aim to explore the processes and forces behind intergroup behaviours

Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner (1979)

- Intergroup behaviour is motivated by group categorisation
- Three elements to understanding the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination:

CATEGORISATION

- Putting others (and ourselves) into categories

IDENTIFICATION

- Associate with certain groups (in-groups) which serves to bolster our self-esteem

COMPARISON

- Compare in-groups with others (out-groups); favourable bias towards in-group



Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner (1979)

- Personal identity:
 - Qualities and characteristics which are strictly individual
- Social identity:
 - The part of the individuals self-concept that derives from:
 - His/her knowledge of his/her membership of a social group (or groups)
 - The value and emotional significance of that membership
- Our self-concept partly depends on how we evaluate the in-group relative to other groups
- Self as group member – multiple selves/identities

Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner (1979)

- Self-concept can be inseparable from group concept – so individual utility is inseparable from group utility

Two cognitive processes:



Motivated Cognition

Motivated for positive group (self) image
relative to other groups



Cold Cognition

Group classifications used as a shortcut in
determining how to behave



Minimal Group Paradigm

Tajfel et al. (1971)



- Minimal Group Paradigm (MGP) is a methodology employed to explore the minimal conditions required for discrimination to occur between groups
- MGP generally demonstrates that even arbitrary and meaningless distinctions between groups can trigger tendencies to favour an in-groups at the expense of others

Minimal Group Paradigm

Tajfel et al. (1971)

Tajfel et al., 1971: Study with British Schoolboys

- Proposed as task of decision-making.
- Preference of Kandinsky or Klee (completely random categorisation)
 - Only the individual boy knew which group they were assigned to
- Task was to distribute money between pairs of recipients identifiable **only** by code number and art preference (group membership)



Minimal Group Paradigm

Tajfel et al. (1971)

Results: strong favouritism for own group even when there was no self-interest (not receiving money themselves)

Part 2:

- Random allocation to group X or Y
 - No inference of personal characteristics
- Results still showed strong favouritism to own group



Self Categorisation Theory Turner (1985)

Elaborates upon the processes referred to in SIT

- Personal identity but also multiple social identities

SCT provides a cognitive explanation as to how group categorisations occur and how we form groups

- Often dependent upon objective facts

Self-categorisation is hierarchical

- Turner et al. (1987): self can be conceived at different levels of inclusiveness

Self Categorisation Theory

Turner (1985)

- SCT proposes that:
 - 1. Categorisation is based upon schemas
 - 2. Categories are represented by **prototypes** (fuzzy set of attributes)
 - Typical group member (exemplar)
 - Ideal group member (meta-contrast principle)
 - 3. Aim to maximise differences between groups and minimise differences within groups
 - 4. Strive for entitativity
 - 5. Depersonalisation and self-stereotyping can occur



Self Categorisation Theory

Turner (1985)

- How do we choose to create group categories?
 - Several factors influence how we categorise the world and social groups we, and others, belong to:
 - **Readiness** (what we already know)
 - **Comparative fit** (meta-contrast principle)
 - **Normative fit** (behaviours)





Social Constructionism

- Mead (1930) 'symbolic interactionism' – humans construct their own and each others identities through their everyday encounters with each other
- Berger and Luckmann (1966): humans create and sustain all social phenomena through their social practices



Social Constructionism

Personality



Social Constructionism: Personality

- Psychological view = behaviour
 - Many attempts to quantify personality; many quantitative methods used to assess human personality
- According to SC, this view is essentialist; assumes a fundamental, objective set of truths that determine personality
- Personality is constructed entirely through our social interactions; it is not a physical entity.
- Personality theories are used to describe the variations of self that result from interactions between people

