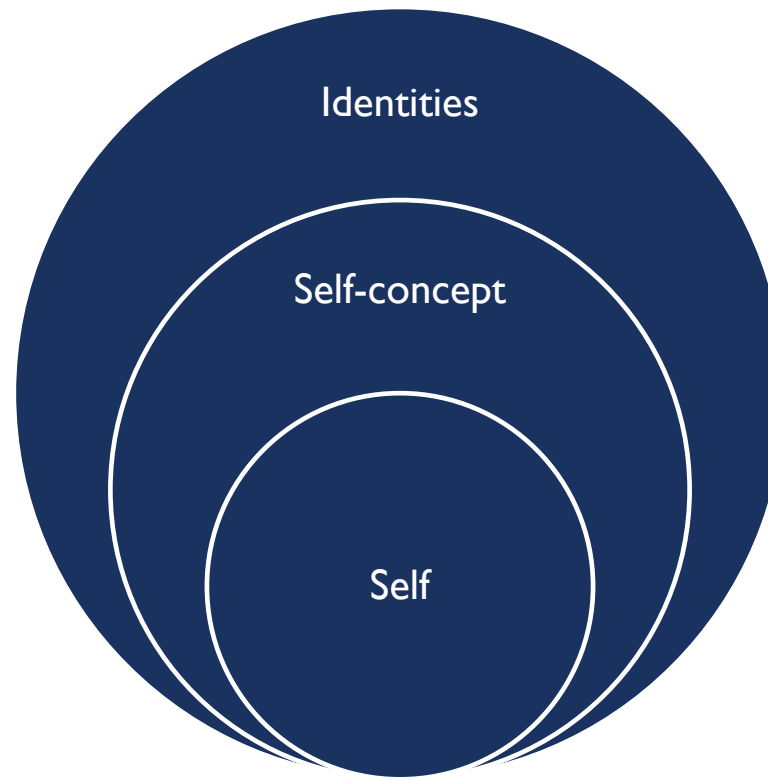# OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY & OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

FEBRUARY 1, 2023

IDENTITY THEORIES IN SOCIOLOGY - FOUNDATION

To read more about identity theories in sociology:
Owens, Timothy J., Dawn T. Robinson, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2010. "Three Faces of Identity." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36(1):477–99. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134725.

SELF

- Reflexive
  - the ability to consider how others view you

- Develops as a consequence of social interaction

GEORGE HERBERT MEAD – THE **I** AND THE **ME**

I

- Subject
- Active self
- Reacts to 'me' / situation and decides on course of action

Me

- Object
- One's social self / socialized self
- I's opinions towards self
- Collected impressions from others of the social self

SELF-CONCEPT - ROSENBERG (1979)

- Roughly equivalent to the 'me' in George Herbert Mead's formulation

- All of one's feelings/impressions toward oneself:

  - self-referring dispositions

    - Like type C from the 20 Statements test – traits, abstract ideals/qualities

  - physical characteristics

  - and **identities**

IDENTITIES

Personal

Role

Category

Group

PERSONAL IDENTITY

- Unique to self

- May be drawn from one's personal history & abstracted into the other types of identities.

- Not as useful from a research perspective, but we can begin to see the influence of the social on the self by what aspects are meaningful to report.

- I was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1995. I am the second child of four, with two sisters and a brother. I went to the University of Georgia and studied sociology and cognitive science. I am working toward my PhD in sociology at Duke University now.

ROLE IDENTITY

- Social position within larger social structure

- Have socially defined behavioral expectations to fulfill performance of the role

- Typically have structural counterparts, those who you often engage with when enacting the role

  - Teacher – student // student -- teacher

  - Offensive line – defensive line

- Frequent enactment suggests internalization into one's idea of the self

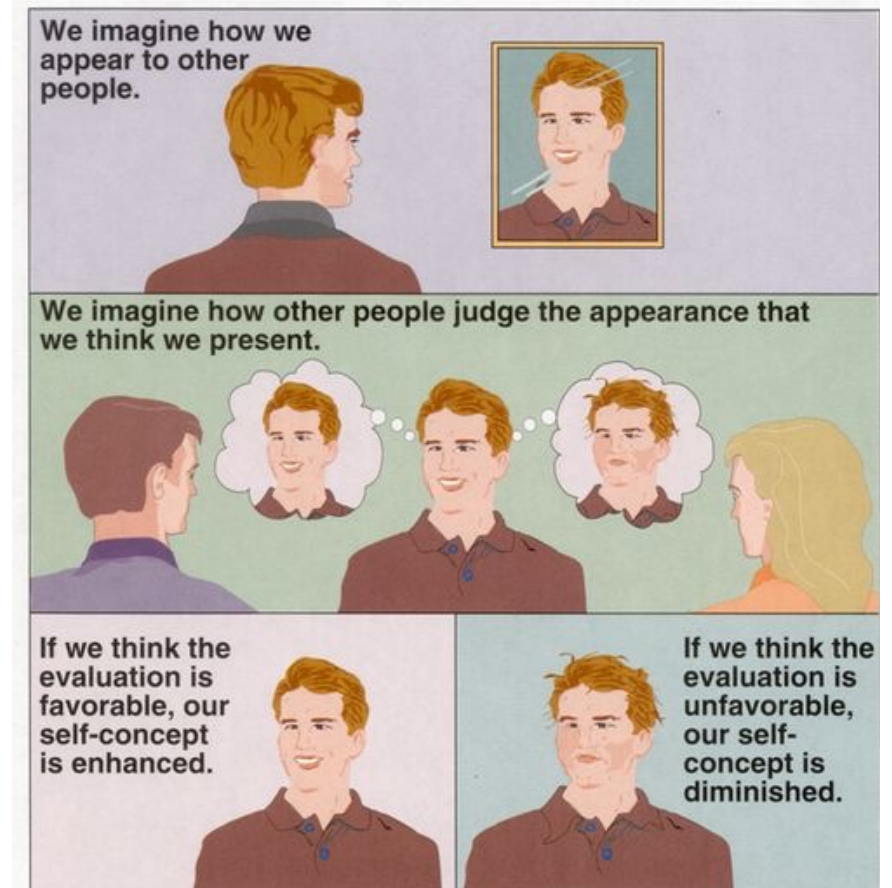# CATEGORY/SOCIAL IDENTITY & GROUP IDENTITY

Category Identity

- Membership in socially meaningful group:
  - Gender
  - Race
  - Nationality
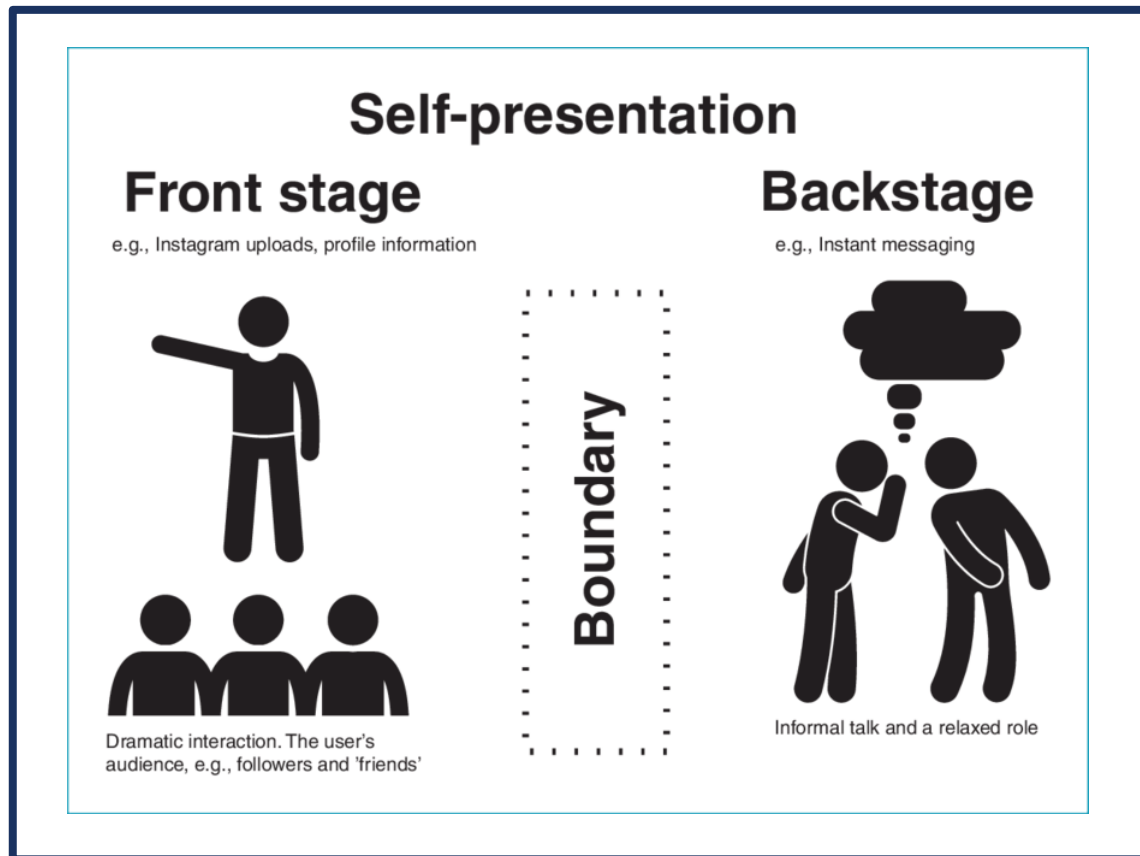 - Religious category

Group Identity

- Membership in 'real' group/organization:
  - Duke student
  - Greek affiliation
  - Synagogue, church, mosque membership

IDENTITIES – FOCUS ON INDIVIDUAL SELF-STRUCTURE

- Internalization of of cultural meanings attached to identities into one's self-structure

- Carry these identities throughout social interactions – more **salient** identities are more likely to be enacted

  - Prominence (how important it is to sense of self)

  - Commitment (the extent to which one's social relationships rely on enacting the identity)

    - E.g. Greek affiliation

IDENTITIES – FOCUS ON SITUATION

Self-presentation

Front stage
e.g., Instagram uploads, profile information

Boundary

Backstage
e.g., Instant messaging

Dramatic interaction. The user's audience, e.g., followers and 'friends'

Informal talk and a relaxed role

- Identity performance is not only determined by individual but by the situational context
  - features that affect the successful performance or which force the performance of certain identities
- ACT falls under this category

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

- Identities are defined culturally and upheld structurally

- Identities we are often enacting or that are important to us are internalized into how we view ourselves

- The situational context can affect one's identity enactment and constrain behavior

  - Others in the situation

  - Setting/environment in which situation takes place

  - Identity resources available

OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY

- Occupational identities are most often **role** identities

  - Have specified behavioral expectations (some version of required skills, duties, responsibilities)

  - Have cultural meanings attached to them

- Most working adults spend at least 8 hours a day in situations in which their occupational identity is the presumed identity being enacted, making it at least an identity with high **commitment**

  - Although perhaps this is changing with remote work!

AFFECT CONTROL THEORY AND OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY

- Reminder…what are the three dimensions of cultural meaning?

bad   **good**
awful   **Accountant**   **nice**

infinitely   extremely   quite   slightly   neutral   slightly   quite   extremely   infinitely

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powerless   **powerful**
limited   **Accountant**   **big**

infinitely   extremely   quite   slightly   neutral   slightly   quite   extremely   infinitely

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EPA

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slow   **fast**
quiet   **Accountant**   **noisy**
inactive   **active**

infinitely   extremely   quite   slightly   neutral   slightly   quite   extremely   infinitely

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

- Most people have a number of identities they embody on a semi-regular basis

- While the majority of situations evoke a singular identity, some identities are automatically enacted (social identities typically) or evoked by unexpected events!

  - E.g. Having family and friends mix

QUESTIONS?

ACTIVITY

- Fill out this survey:

  - https://bit.ly/occ_char

- For each occupation, select the top 10 characteristics you think are required for the job. You must select 10 and only 10 characteristics for each job, but you do not have to rank the individual characteristics themselves—simply indicate the 10 most important. You may select the same characteristic for more than one occupation if desired.