

## **Social Construction of Self and Identities: Psychology 792**

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Class: Tu 9-11:30

Office hours: Tues 11:30a-12:30, Th 11-12:30 and by appointment

This course is an exploration of self and identities from constructivist and constructionist views: What is identity? What is self? What is the difference between self and identity? How does one develop a sense of identity? Is identity singular or multiple? How do multiple social contexts and constructions (including power) influence the perception and construction of identities?

This will be a student centered, discussion oriented seminar. The course begins with an introduction to various ideas of self and identity, as well as a brief (and by no means thorough) review of some constructivist/constructionist theory. We will then go on to explore in more depth specific identities/topics generated by students. Specific topics may include: specific racial and/or ethnic identities; gender identities; feminist identities; gay, lesbian and bisexual identities; class/SES identities; identities related to ability/disability, identity related to trauma; the more traditional ideas about general adolescent identity (or identities); etc. See attached for some examples of topics and associated readings.

### **Course Objectives**

- To introduce/overview post-modern perspectives (constructivistic and social constructionistic theories) as they relate to clinical psychology, with a particular emphasis on their implications for minority populations. These theories are increasingly affecting the conduct and critical analysis of research and the development of therapeutic interventions (e.g. narrative family therapy, cognitive constructivism), particularly in relation to minority populations whose worldviews are frequently marginalized.
- To contribute to understandings of individual differences in a social context, highlighting the complexities of the interaction between individuals and social constructions, particularly for minority populations.
- To contribute to developing an understanding of the perspectives of ethnic minorities, low-income groups, sexual minorities, and other people/groups experiencing systemic oppression.
- To encourage creative thinking and practice in theorizing, creating conceptual connections, and integrating concepts based on prior research, theory, and lived experience.
- To support students' particular clinical and/or research interests by enabling in-depth exploration of student-chosen topics related to self and identities.

### **Structure:**

The first third of the semester will be used to create a foundation in some of the theory regarding constructivism/constructionism and self and identity. We will use this reading to explore issues and dilemmas and attempt to come to some tentative agreement or structure of understanding (co-constructed meaning) regarding self and identity.

For the remainder of the semester we will discuss student-defined/chosen areas of more specific interest related to identity and self (see assignments below).

**Assignments:**

*Model/metaphor of self and identity:* metaphor/model demonstrates your understanding of self and identity (in whatever media you choose), answering the question "What is identity (and or self)?" As a work in progress, it is not definitive. One of the wonderful things about metaphors is that they are multifaceted, frequently richer in meaning than we first intend, and open to co-construction due to their ability to encompass multiple (even contradictory) meanings. When thinking about how to approach this, consider not only the base question ("What is identity?") but also the framing of the metaphor: "Identity is like..." (sometimes its easier to explicitly put in the "like." This assignment is primarily a class Discussion Facilitation, with notes that you turn in (to guide and remind me when I am writing feedback). 20%

*Class discussion facilitation(s):* Students will be scheduled for 2 discussion facilitation sessions (varying in length depending on class size) and will be responsible for providing readings related to their chosen topic for the class beforehand (see reading guidelines below). Students will be responsible for preparing discussion questions and guiding the class discussion on their topic, demonstrating "expert knowledge" and critical thinking/integration. This means that you will have read more about your subject than what you have assigned. You are also responsible for writing up and disseminating a discussion summary after each class discussion of your topic. This discussion summary should include full citations for your readings! 30% (including summaries).

*Final paper:* The final paper for this class will be an exploration of your understanding of self and identity, based on issues discussed in class. The paper should integrate the collective knowledge gleaned from the different class perspectives as well as explore the specific research and theory associated with your particular chosen topic. 35%

*Class participation* including discussion/written feedback on shared papers. You will read two of your peers' paper and provide a one page response to them. 15%

**Foundational Readings:**

Required:

- Ashmore, R. D. & Jussim, L. (Eds.) (1997). *Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues*. Oxford University Press: New York.—ebook available online through the UMB library!
- Readings available in class

Recommended:

- Leary, M. R. & Tangney, J. P. (Editors) (2003). *The handbook of Self and Identity*. Guilford.

**Student conduct and academic dishonesty:**

Please review the sections on Academic Standards, Cheating, and Plagiarism. See:

- Student code of conduct: [https://www.umb.edu/life\\_on\\_campus/policies/community/code](https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/community/code).
- Description of academic honesty violations: [https://www.umb.edu/pages/standard\\_page/19536](https://www.umb.edu/pages/standard_page/19536)

**Special Assistance:**

In accordance with Section 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 the University of Massachusetts Boston attempts to accommodate all students with a documented disability. Through the **Ross Center** for Disability Services various aids such as sign language interpreting, readers, testing accommodations, etc. are available to students. If you believe that you require such services, please contact the Ross Center (617-287-7430; Campus Center 2nd Fl., Room 2010) as soon as possible. Please let me know, as well.

**COURSE CALENDAR**

1/ 26	<b><u>Week 1: Introductions</u></b>
2/2	<b><u>Week 2: Historical Contexts</u></b>  <u>Required Reading:</u> A&J: <u>Skim</u> Chap. 1: Introduction, Ashmore & Jussim, read particularly “Classic Contrasts” A&J: Chap. 6: The historical formation of selves, Danziger A&J: Chap. 8: The self and society, Baumeister Neimeyer, R. A. (1995). Constructivist psychotherapies: READ 11-24 (required; the rest is recommended). Gergen, K. J. (2001). Psychological science in a postmodern context... McKinlay & McVittie (2011). Introduction: Identities in Context...READ only to p. 14, and then the summary on p. 19.  <u>Recommended:</u> If you want more on constructivism and constructionism, search these terms on YouTube. Here’s a really basic one: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVVWmZASn8s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVVWmZASn8s</a> Cox, L. M. & Lyddon, W. J. (1997). Constructivist conceptions of self... Guidano, V. F. (1995). Constructivist psychotherapy.  <b><i>PRESENTATION TOPICS DUE</i></b>
2/9	<b><u>Week 3: Meanings and Development</u></b>  <u>Required Reading:</u> A&J: Chap 5: Me's and we's, Thoits & Virshup A&J: Chap 3: The case for Unity..., McAdams. READ to page 65, and 71-72 to close Kihlstrom et al (2003): (on memory, particularly: 68-75 and 81-84) Watch: More on me’s vs we’s: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcRNQtvOCbc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcRNQtvOCbc</a>  <u>Recommended Reading:</u> Stets and B 2000: (on comparing/integrating identity theory and social identity theory) McAdams (2001): (on research on life stories and selfing)
2/16	<b><u>Week 4: Development</u></b>  <u>Required Reading:</u> Harter (2003): The development of self-representations...READ ONLY pp. 616-624 Habermas and Bluck (2000): Getting a life...READ ONLY pp. 748 to top of 752 Markus and Nurius (2000). Possible selves. Fine (2011) Symbolic interactionism...READ ONLY 2-9, the rest is recommended (from McGraw Hill reader download!)  <u>Recommended Reading:</u> Rigazio-DiGilio, S. A. (1997). From microscopes to holographs...(on development) Ryan and Deci (handbook): (on motivation for developing particular identities)

2/23	<p align="center"><b><u>Week 5: Social and Cultural Contexts</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Required Reading:</u></b>          Brewer and Gardner (1996): Who is this “we”? READ ONLY pp 83-87.          Worchel and Coutant (2004): It takes two to tango....          Cross &amp; Gore (2003). Cultural models of the self          Read one of the following from the recommended: A&amp;J4 (Harter), A&amp;J7 (Holland), Tawa &amp; Suyemoto, Markus &amp; Kitayama, 2010.</p> <p><b><u>Recommended Reading:</u></b>          A&amp;J: Chap.4: The personal self in social context, Harter          A&amp;J: Chap.7: Selves as cultured, Holland          Tawa &amp; Suyemoto (2010): The influence of race and power...          Gergen, K. J. (1991). <i>The saturated self</i>. Excerpt from Ch. 6: From self to relationship.          Suyemoto, K. L. &amp; Kim, G. S. (2005). Journeys through diverse terrain...</p>
3/1	<p align="center"><b><u>Week 6: Models and Metaphors</u></b></p> <p>Suyemoto, K. L. (2002). Constructing identities...</p> <p align="center"><i>Models/metaphors due</i></p>
3/8	<p align="center"><b><u>Week 7</u></b></p> <p>Discussion Facilitations 1 &amp; 2 (60 min each): Shirley and Sam B</p>
3/15	No Class: Spring Break
3/22	<p align="center"><b><u>Week 8</u></b></p> <p>Discussion Facilitations 3 &amp; 4 (60 min each): Sam D. and Julie</p>
3/29	<p align="center"><b><u>Week 9</u></b></p> <p>Discussion Facilitations 5 &amp; 6 (60 min each): Franciso and Jacquie</p>
4/5	<p align="center"><b><u>Week 10</u></b></p> <p align="center">Self, Identity, and Psychotherapy</p> <p><b><u>Required Reading TBD</u></b></p>
4/12	<p align="center"><b><u>Week 11</u></b></p> <p>Take 2: Discussion Facilitations 1 &amp; 2 (60 min each)</p>
4/19	<p align="center"><b><u>Week 12</u></b></p> <p>Take 2: Discussion Facilitations 3 &amp; 4 (60 min each)</p>
4/26	<p align="center"><b><u>Week 13</u></b></p> <p>Take 2: Discussion Facilitations 5 &amp; 6 (60 min each)</p> <p align="center"><i>Final papers due May 6 for all except Presenters 9 to 12 due May 11 by 9 am</i>  <i>Please post papers on assignments page on Google Site.</i></p>

5/3	<b><u>Week 13</u></b> <i>Unknown White Male film</i> <i>No reading for class. Read and respond to peer papers. See paper assignment for reading assignments.</i>
5/10	<b><u>Week 14</u></b> <i>Discussion and Wrap-Up</i>

### Student Facilitated Topics—some guidelines for readings

Readings for the discussion facilitation should consist of a minimum of 2 articles/chapters, total reading not to exceed 40+ pages (35 is better!). The majority of this reading should be current primary sources or good reviews of specific issues with primary theory included, although classic contextualizing research and theory is also acceptable. It is fine to assign part of an article, or to provide a brief summary of part and assign the rest. Personal narrative, case examples, fiction, etc. directly relevant are encouraged but should be no more than 10 pages of the required readings (feel free to include more as optional). You may, if you wish, use up to 10 of your pages in providing *detailed* summary of articles you have read but that would be too long or unwieldy for the class to read. Some examples are provided below (the presenter would need to select from these or assign specific pages).

### **Radicalization and Extremism: Embracing and Resisting Related Identities**

#### Required Reading (first week)

- van Stekelenburg, J. & Klandermans, B. (2011). Radicalization. In A. E. Azzi, X. Chrssochoou, B. Klandermans & B. Simon (Eds), *Identity and participation in culturally diverse societies: A multidisciplinary perspective*, pp. 181-194. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Arena, M. P. & Arrigo, B. A. (2000). White supremacist behavior: Toward an integrated social psychological model. *Deviant Behavior*, 21, 213-244.
- Blee, K. M. (2011). Trajectories of ideologies and action in U.S. organized racism. In A. E. Azzi, X. Chrssochoou, B. Klandermans & B. Simon (Eds), *Identity and participation in culturally diverse societies: A multidisciplinary perspective*, pp. 239-255. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.

#### Required Reading (second week)

- King, M., Taylor, D. M. (2011). The radicalization of homegrown Jihadists: A review of theoretical models and social psychological evidence. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23, 602-622.
- Mythen, G., Walklate, S., & Khan, F. (2009). "I'm a Muslim, but I'm not a terrorist": Victimization, risky identities, and the performance of safety. *British Journal of Criminology*, 49, 736-754.
- Internet assignment: Check out Islamophobia Watch site, search "white supremacist anti-muslim," search "muslim extremists united states." (time spent should be about the time spent on reading a 10 page article).

### **Identity and Trauma**

#### Required Reading (week 1)

- Baerger, D. R., & McAdams, D. P. (1999). Life story coherence and its relation to psychological well-being. *Narrative Inquiry*, 9(1), 69-96.
- Stewart, A. E., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2001). Emplotting the traumatic self: narrative revision and the construction of coherence. *Humanistic Psychologist*, 8-39.
- Habermas, T., & Bluck, S. (2000). Getting a life: The emergence of the life story in adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(5), 748-769.

#### Required Reading (week 2)

- Selections from Lin, N. J. (2009). *Journeys to Self and Identities: Cambodian and Southern Sudanese Refugee Experiences*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Boston.
- Lee, E. & Oberst, G. (1989). My mother's purple dress. In Asian Women United of California (Eds.) Making waves: An anthology of writings by and about Asian American women, (pp. 99-115). Boston: Beacon Press.

**Social Construction of Self and Identities, Spring 2016 Reading List**

- Neimeyer, R. A. (1995). Constructivist psychotherapies: Features, foundations, and future directions. In R. A. Neimeyer & M. J. Mahoney (Eds.), *Constructivism in psychotherapy* (pp. 11-38). Washington, D.C.: APA.
- Gergen, K. J. (2001). Psychological science in a postmodern context. *American Psychologist*, 56, 803-813.
- McKinlay, A. & McVittie, C. (2011). *Identities in context: Individuals and discourse in action*. Malden, MA: Wiley & Sons. Introduction, pp. 1-20.
- Harter, S. (2003). The development of self representations during childhood and adolescence. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney, J. (Eds), *The handbook of Self and Identity*, pp. 610-642. New York: Guilford.
- Habermas, T. and Bluck, S. (2000). Getting a life: The emergence of the lifestory in adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 748-769.
- Markus, H. and Nurius, P. (2000). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41, 954-969.
- Fine, G. A. (accessed 2011). Symbolic Interaction: An introduction. In G. C. Ritzer (Ed). *The Sociology Collection*. McGraw Hill Higher Education. (*this is in the McGraw Hill reader, it is listed here only so you will have the full reference*).
- Brewer & Gardner (1996). Who is this "we"? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 83-93
- Worchel & Coutant (2004). It takes two to tango: Relating group identity to individual identity within the framework of group development. In M. Brewer and M Hewstone (Eds.) *Self and Social Identity*, (pp. 182-202). Malden MA: Wiley.
- Cross, S. E. & Gore, J. S. (2003). Cultural models of the self. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney, J. (Eds), *The Handbook of Self and Identity* (pp.536-564) . New York: Guilford.
- Suyemoto, K. L. (2002). Constructing identities: A feminist, culturally contextualized alternative to "personality." In M. Ballou & L. S. Brown (Eds.), *Rethinking mental health and disorder: Feminist perspectives* (pp. 71-98). New York: Guilford

**Recommend Readings (included in folder except chapters from *Handbook of Self and Identity*)**

- Cox, L. M. & Lyddon, W. J. (1997). Constructivist conceptions of self: A discussion of emerging identity constructs. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 10, 201-219.
- Rigazio-DiGilio, S. A. (1997). From microscopes to holographs: Client development within a constructivist paradigm. In T. L. Sexton & B. L. Griffin (Eds.), *Constructivist thinking in counseling practice, research, and training* (pp. 74-97). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kihlstrom et al (2003). Self and identity as memory. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney, J. (Eds), *The handbook of Self and Identity*, pp. 68-90. New York: Guilford.
- Ryan and Deci (2003). On assimilating identities to the self: A self-determination theory perspective on internalization and integrity with cultures. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney, J. (Eds), *The handbook of Self and Identity*, pp. 253-272. New York: Guilford.
- Guidano, V. F. (1995). Constructivist psychotherapy: A theoretical framework. In R. A. Neimeyer & M. J. Mahoney (Eds.), *Constructivism in psychotherapy* (pp. 93-108). Washington, DC:APA.
- Stets, J. E. & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63, 224-237.
- McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5, 100-122.
- Markus, H., & Kitayama, S. (2010). Cultures and selves: A cycle of mutual constitution. *Perspectives On Psychological Science*, 5(4), 420-430. doi:10.1177/174569161037555.
- Tawa, J. & Suyemoto, K. L. (2010). The influence of race and power on self-construal in bicultural Asian Americans. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 1, 275-289.
- Gergen, K. J. (1991). *The saturated self*. New York: Basic Books. Excerpt from Chapter 6: From self to relationship, 156-170.