**SOC 3120 Social Psychology**

 **Prof. J. S, Kenney**

 **Overheads Lectures 9-10: Individuality/Identity**

\* Today and next class we will delve more deeply into two related questions:

 (1) What is the meaning of individuality?

 (2) What does it mean to have a distinct identity?

\* We deal with these using four sources:

 (1) Classical writers (Mead vs. Simmel)

 (2) Sheldon Stryker (“Identity Theory”)

 (3) Ralph Turner (“The Real Self”) and

 (4) Yours truly (“Cross cultural” aspects of self)

 **(1) Classical Writers:**

\* Mead/Simmel’s differing conceptions of individuality result from differing views of relationship between individual and society:

 - Simmel: -Dialectical relationship

 -Not necessarily harmonious

 -Operation of developed individual

 -Individual both inside and outside society confronting it

 - Mead: -Dialogical relationship

 -Cooperative

 -Developmental model

 -Individual has unique pattern from ‘standpoint’ in

 society

\* Simmel: -Focus on form (type) and content

 (interest/drive/motive) in sociation

 -Differention drive may be satisfied by similarities/

 contrasts with others in group

 -Individual surrounded by concentric circles with

 double meanings: (1) what common; (2) what

 distinguishes

 -Problems: development; cooperation; downplays

 emotion

\* Mead: -Self develops in communication/cooperative

 activities

 -Two aspects of individuality (1) I/ me; (2) unique

 standpoint of self in social process

 - Problems: oversocialized; “I” ambiguous;

 overemphasizes cooperation; downplays

 emotion

 **Sheldon Stryker: Identity Theory:**

\* Central ideas: - “Commitment impacts identity impacts role

 performance”

 - Identities are the subjective aspects of roles

 - Identities are ranked in a hierarchy of importance

 - Relative commitment/identification with identities

 determines behavior

 - Heavy focus on positivism/ methodology/

 hypothesis testing

\* Distribution of identities in hierarchy reflect commitment to various social roles

\* Commitment reflects institutional, organizational, and stratification features of society reflected in social networks

\* Choices among behaviors reflect relative hierarchical identity position

\* This approach criticized as:

 - Overly determinative/ dismissive of agency

 - Unidirectional in emphasis (structure to self)

 - Simplistic

\* Stryker responds by focusing on:

 - Determination (answers with “probabilities”)

 - Multidirectional relationship between role performance/ identity

 salience

 - Reconceptualizing commitment/identity salience relationship

 (interactional/affective commitment)

 - Incorporating emotions/master statuses/personal traits into

 formulation

 - Do these elaborations really answer critics (???)

 - Is individuality really a matter of one’s “unique pattern” of

 identities, in a particular salience hierarchy, situated in a unique

 structural context?

 **Ralph Turner: “The Real Self: From Institution to Impulse”**

\* How do we recognize our real selves?

\* Idea of self as object enables us to distinguish between feelings/actions

 - Some peripheral (take little credit/blame)

 - Some central (embodying “true self”)

\* One’s “true self” may be seen as feelings/actions related in varying degrees to: (1) institutions; or (2) impulses

\* Crucial differences between these:

 - Standards of behavior reveal differently

 - Discovery vs. attainment of self

 - Control vs. lowered inhibitions

 - Differences in idea of hypocrisy

 - Qualities of an admirable performance

 - temporal perspective (present vs. future)

 - individualism has different meanings

\* Contemporary trend is away from an institutional focus and toward an impulsive one (e.g. 1960's, Freud, literature, child rearing, changes in responses to TST)

\* Four explanations:

 (1) Changing cultural definitions of reality (institutional religion

 giving way to relativism/diversity);

 (2) Shift away from production to consumption orientation;

 (3) Increased deprivation caused by impulse suppression/ growing

 contradictions in society;

(4) Institutional order becoming characterized by disorder/

 undependability while society opens up more routes for

 impulse gratification

\* This trend has implications for conceptions of social structure, role behavior, norms and values, emotion, ritual, and social control

\* Sociologists writing from a structural perspective (e.g. Stryker) may miss implications

 **J.S. Kenney**

 **"The Varying Structure of the Self Across Cultures:**

 **A Preliminary Analysis"**

\* My attempt to develop framework to understand self across cultures

\* Three interlocking/interpenetrating dimensions of self:

 (1) Lateral dimension (“I” and “Me”) (*Lewis’ interpretation)*

 (2) Vertical dimension (Identity hierarchy w/o Stryker’s

 determinism)

 (3) Moral dimension

\* Organization/integration of self by symbolic universals. Aspects:

 Perception: Implicates relationships

 Typifications

 Limits alternatives

 Leads to appropriate response

 Perceptions unconsciously structure boundaries of response

 *Perceptual beliefs* structure *form* of role/identity (subject

 matter/types of social relationship)

 *Evaluative beliefs* provide the *content*

 Together map out the generalized other (salience hierarchy exists

 both *between* and *within* roles)

\* Cross-culturally: (1) Durkheim’s “mechanical solidarity”:

 - Fewer institutional roles/shared beliefs

 - Content more interpersonally complex (e.g. kinship)

 (2) Durkeim’s “organic solidarity”:

 -More institutional complexity/diverse beliefs

 -This comes to structure interpersonal complexity

\* Illustrations:

1. Hunter-gatherer, agricultural and indigenous societies (relative institutional simplicity and interpersonal complexity);
2. India: metaphysical ideas structure self: relatively uniform/ adaptable in organizing traditional interpersonal and

 increasing institutional complexity

1. Japan: perceptual/evaluative beliefs reify roles/downplay

 individualism: cut across roles /adapted to modern life

1. China: Confucian perceptual/evaluative beliefs traditionally

downplayed individual self re: kin group/ bifurcation with

 those born after the revolution (more Western individualism/

 institutional focus)

\* Ultimately, this model provides theoretical framework for analysing/ comparing self (and “individuality”) across cultures.