



Culture and Identity

Social Identities
Similarities and
Differences

Identity and Cultural Identity

- Identity -- A reflective self-conception or self-image that we each derive from our family, gender, cultural, ethnic, and individual socialization process. (Ting-Toomey)
- Cultural Identity -- Shared system of symbolic verbal and non-verbal behaviour meaningful to a group. A social construction. (Fong)



Selected Social Identities

- Racial Identity | Ethnic Identity
- Gender Identity | National Identity
- Regional Identity | Organizational Identity
- Personal Identity | Cyber/Fantasy Identity

(Others include age, religion, physical ability,
socio-economic class.)



Racial Identity

- Race is a social construct arising from efforts to categorize people into different groups.
- Science has determined there is very little genetic variation among humans.
- Human population will become more alike as the races merge. (Jones)



Ethnic Identity

- Ethnicity is derived from a sense of shared heritage, history, traditions, values, similar behaviours, area of origin, language.
- Ethnicity of many Americans/Canadians is tied to ancestors' place of origin prior to coming to North America.



Gender Identity

- Gender refers to how a particular culture differentiates masculine and feminine social roles.
- Culture influences on what constitutes gender beauty and how it is displayed. Examples are: Fashion in Denmark. Language in Japan. Tanning in Europe/America.



National Identity

- Refers to your nationality.
- Usually becomes more pronounced when persons are away from home country.
- Interesting phenomena currently happening where young adults from EU think of Europe as their native land. Texans ... Quebecers.



Regional Identity

- Smaller divisions of geographic area. Cultural contrast among these regions may be manifested through ethnicity, language, accent, dialect, customs, food, dress, historical and political legacies,



Organizational Identity

- In collectivistic cultures organizational affiliation is often more important.
- Eg is in Japan where people are often introduced firstly by where they work.



Personal identity

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Cyber/Fantasy Identity

- The Internet provides an opportunity to escape constraints of everyday identities.
- Infatuation with “imaginary personas” can become so strong they take on a life of their own.
- Second Life is an example of a virtual world where participants construct avatars. Becoming popular **for virtual business meetings.**



Dark Side of Identity

- Stereotyping
- Prejudice
- Ethnocentricity



Dark Side of Identity

- Psychologists conducting research in area of interpersonal attraction have established that the more similar two people are to each other the more likely they are to like each other.
- This preference for things we understand are familiar with can adversely influence our perception and attitudes.



Stereotyping

- learned in a variety of ways
 - from parents
 - from peers
 - from religious, social groups
 - from mass media
 - from fear of difference



Stereotyping

- Defined: form of categorization containing perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, expectancies about particular collections of people.
- Difficulty lies with overgeneralization and negative evaluations (attitudes and prejudices).
- Even positive evaluations can narrow perceptions, jeopardize intercultural communication.



Stereotyping – Negative Effects

1. Filtering quality only allows in information consistent with held beliefs.
2. Rigid preconceptions prevent correct assessment that all in any group do not have same traits.
3. False assumptions (untrue premises, half-truths, exaggerations, oversimplifications) alter/distort communication.

Early and/or increased interaction diminishes effects



Prejudice

- Defined: deep negative feelings associated with a particular group; irrational (inflexible) generalizations with little/no direct evidence
- Characteristics
 - directed at specific groups (social class, sex, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, race, ethnicity)
 - involves evaluative dimension, ie judgmental



Expressions of Prejudice

1. Antilocution: talking about target group in negative, stereotypic terms
2. Avoiding, withdrawing from contact with target group
3. Discrimination: excluding target group from employment, housing, political rights, educational/recreational opportunities, churches, hospitals.
4. Physical attacks
5. Extermination: lynching, massacres, genocide



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Causes of Prejudice

1. Societal sources: built into major organizations and institutions; help maintain power of dominant groups over subordinate ones
2. Maintaining social identity: strengthening bond with person's culture
3. Scapegoating: singling out group to bear blame for circumstance, events. **Placing blame.**

Avoiding prejudice: • personal contact • education



Ethnocentrism

- The notion that one's own culture is superior to any other. We are ethnocentric when we view other cultures through the narrow lens of our own culture.
- This narrow lens links ethnocentrism to the concepts of stereotyping, prejudice, and racism.

