

Communication

between cultures

8TH EDITION

Chapter 7

Culture and Identity: Situating the Individual

Key Ideas

- Role of Identity
- Defining Identity
- Types of social identities
- Developing and acquiring identities
- Establishing and enacting identities
- Dark side of identity

The role of identity

- Identity development plays a critical role in the individual's psychological well-being
- Our technology driven world is influenced by perceptions of identity
- Identity is becoming an important factor in how they live their lives and with whom they associate

Identity Defined

- *The reflective self-conception or self-image that we each derive from our family, gender, cultural, ethnic, and individual socialization process. Identity basically refers to our reflective views of ourselves and other perceptions of our self-images. (Ting-Toomey 2005, p. 212)*
- *The concept of who we are. (Martin and Nakayama 2010, p. 162)*

Identity Defined

- Identity is an abstract idea
- Identity is dynamic
- A person can have multiple identities

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Types of social identities

- Social identity sets you apart from other in-group members and marks you as special or unique and include the following
 - Racial identity
 - Ethnic identity
 - Gender identity

Types of social identities

- National identity
- Regional identity
- Personal identity
- Organizational identity
- Cyber and fantasy identity

Developing and acquiring identities

- Largely a product of group membership
 - Family influences
 - Socialization
 - Personal experiences
- Begins at a young age
 - Family members teach children specific behaviors for girls and boys
 - Extended family teaches age-appropriate behaviors
 - Family instill concept of an individual or group-based identity

Developing and acquiring identities: Phinney

- *Unexamined ethnic identity* - characterized by the lack of exploration of ethnicity
- *Ethnic identity search* - individuals become interested in learning about and understanding their own ethnicity
- *Ethnic achievement* - individuals have a clear and confident understanding of their own cultural identity

Developing and acquiring identities: Martin and Nakayama

- *Unexamined identity* - individuals are unconcerned with identity issues
- *Conformity*, minority members endeavor to fit in with the dominant culture and may even possess negative self-images
- *Resistance and separatism* - cultural awakening that stimulates a greater interest in and adherence to one's own culture
- *Integration* - individuals have a sense of pride in, and identify with, their own cultural group, and demonstrate an acceptance of other groups

Developing and acquiring identities: Martin and Nakayama (5 step model)

- *Unexamined identity* - individuals are unconcerned with identity issues
- *Acceptance* - acquiescence to existing social inequities, even though such acceptance may be at a subconscious level
- *Resistance* - members of the dominant culture become more aware of existing social inequities, begin to question their own culture, and increase association with minority culture members
- *Redefinition and Reintegration* - increased understanding of one's dominant culture identity and an appreciation of minority cultures

Developing and acquiring identities: Martin and Nakayama's **biracial identity**

- Phase 1 - become conscious of differences in general and the potential for discord
- Phase 2 - gain an awareness of their personal differences from other children
- Phase 3 - begin to sense they are not part of the norm

Establishing and enacting cultural identity

- Established through rights of passage
- Enacted on in many ways
 - Cultural ways of displaying religious or spiritual identity
 - Clothing worn
 - Involvement in commemorative events
 - Language
 - Accents

Identity in intercultural interactions

- To communicate effectively in an intercultural situation an individual's cultural identity and communication style should match the identity and style ascribed to him or her by the other party
- Communication styles are likely to be different
- Participants will have to search for a middle ground, and this search will require flexibility and adaptation

Identity in a globalized society

- Globalization has increased cultural diversity and has revived local cultural identities in different parts of the world
- Multiple cultural identities are becoming more commonplace
 - Globalized economy, immigration, ease of foreign travel, communication technologies, and intercultural marriage are bringing about an increased mixing of cultures
 - Mixing is producing people who possess multiple cultural identities

The dark side of identity

- Stereotyping - complex form of categorization that mentally organizes your experiences with, and guides your behavior toward, a particular group of people
 - Stereotypes are learned
 - Stereotypes are the result of limited, lazy, and misguided perceptions

The dark side of identity

- Stereotypes hinder intercultural communication
 - stereotypes are a kind of filter
 - Assumption that culture-specific information applies to every member of a particular cultural group
 - Stereotypes are oversimplified, exaggerated, and overgeneralized

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- Stereotypes hinder intercultural communication
 - stereotypes are a kind of filter
 - Assumption that culture-specific information applies to every member of a particular cultural group
 - Stereotypes are oversimplified, exaggerated, and overgeneralized
 - Try to engage in “flexible” stereotyping
 - be open to new information and evidence
 - beware of your own zone of discomfort.

The dark side of identity

- Prejudice
 - Functions of prejudice
 - *Ego-defensive function* allows individuals to hold a prejudice while denying to themselves that they possess negative beliefs about a group
 - *Utilitarian function* permits people to believe that their prejudicial beliefs produce a positive outcome

The dark side of identity

- Prejudice
 - Functions of prejudice
 - *Value-expressive function* occurs when people maintain their prejudice in the belief that their attitudes represent the highest and most moral values of the culture
 - *Knowledge function* enables people to categorize, organize, and construct their perceptions of other people in a manner they see as rational—even if that perception is woefully inaccurate

The dark side of identity

- Prejudice
 - Expressions of prejudice
 - *Antilocution*, - talking about a member of the target group in negative and stereotypical terms
 - *Avoidance* - people avoid and/or withdraw from contact with the disliked group
 - *Discrimination* - exclude all members of the group in question from access to certain types of employment, residential housing, political rights, educational and recreational opportunities, churches, hospitals, or other social institutions

The dark side of identity

- Prejudice
 - Expressions of prejudice
 - *Physical attacks* - escalate in hostility and intensity if left unchecked
 - *Extermination* - acts of physical violence with the objective of removing or eliminating all or major segments of the target group community

The dark side of identity

- Prejudice
 - Causes of prejudice
 - Social sources
 - Maintaining social identity
 - Scapegoating
 - Avoiding prejudice
 - Personal contact
 - Education

The dark side of identity

- Racism

- Racism defined: *Racism is the belief in the inherent superiority of a particular race. It denies the basic equality of humankind and correlates ability with physical composition. Thus, it assumes that success or failure in any societal endeavor will depend upon genetic endowment rather than environment and access to opportunity.* (Leone 1978, p. 1)

The dark side of identity

- Racism
 - Racism defined
 - Expressions of racism
 - Personal
 - Institutional
 - Avoiding Racism
 - Try to be honest with yourself
 - Avoid racists jokes and insults
 - Respect freedom
 - Examine historical roots of racism

The dark side of identity

- Ethnocentrism
 - Levels of ethnocentrism – positive, negative, extremely negative
 - Ethnocentrism is universal
 - Ethnocentrism contributes to cultural identity
 - Avoiding ethnocentrism
 - Try to avoid dogmatism
 - Learn to be open to new views

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