



Cultures: Ethnicity/race, gender, sexual orientation, religions and disabilities.

Cultural identity is self-identification, a sense of belonging to a group that reaffirms itself.

It is the extent to which one is a representative of a given culture behaviorally, communicatively, psychologically and sociologically. **It consists of values, meanings, customs and beliefs used to relate to the world. It reflects the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which give us as one entity a stable, unchanging, continuing frame of reference and meaning.**

People's judgments about whether they or others belong to a cultural group can be influenced by physical appearance, ancestral origin or personal behavior (dressing, speech, holidays, and celebrations). A historical event, political conditions, who is present, situation/site of interaction and public discourse, also affects cultural identity.

Cultural identity is dynamic and constantly evolving. It covers the entire life span of a human being and changes every moment based on social context. Cultural identity is the constantly shifting understanding of one's identity in relation to others.

Cultural identity is negotiated, co-created and reinforced in communication with others when we socially interact. They are manifestations of social reality – reflect on our unique personal life history and experience.

Forming a cultural identity involves making choices about the cultures one identifies with and deciding to join the cultural community to which one belongs.

Beliefs and practices of one or more communities can also be adapted.

It is possible for members of dominant or majority culture adopting elements of minority culture like dressing or music.

Every individual belongs to numerous overlapping and non-overlapping cultural and sub-cultural groups.

Therefore each person has different identities at different levels that make up their cultural identity.

Source: Cultural Identity Theory

in CULTURAL COMMUNICATION, INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Excerpts from <https://www.communicationtheory.org/cultural-identity-theory>

Properties of Cultural Identity

Jane Collier and Milt Thomas combined the ethnography of communication and social construction in order to frame the properties of cultural identity. These properties refer to the manner in which members of a group communicate their identity.

1. Avowal and Ascription.

Avowal is how one articulates or expresses her/his views about group identity. It is how one presents oneself to another.

Ascription is how others perceive an individual. It is how one refers to others. This may include stereotypes. (i.e. How Asians are viewed by Europeans, or African Americans are viewed by cultures.)

Our identity is constructed as a result of how others view us and how we view ourselves. Therefore both avowal and ascription are important. (i.e. Insiders describe their culture different from how it is perceived by others.

Avowed qualities versus ascribe qualities leads to conflict, but resolutions depends on the status position of group members.

2. Modes of Expression : The use of core symbols (expressions of a group's cultural beliefs and theories about the world around them), names, labels and norms (expected standard of behavior) that a cultural community share and follow in order to show that they belong to a particular group, demonstrates shared identity.

3. Individual, Relational and Communal Identity :

Individual refer to how an individual interprets his cultural identity based on his experiences.

Relational refers to how individuals interact with one and another (what is the appropriate behavior.)

Communal identity is the use of communication in the creation, affirmation and negotiation of shared identity. The actions and interactions of the group, their communal practices reflect the identity of the group.

4. Enduring and Changing Aspects of Identity : The cultural identity changes due to several factors which are social, political, economic and contextual.

5. Affective, Cognitive and Behavioral Aspects of Identity : This refers to emotions fully attached to cultural identity in particular situations.

6. Content and Relationship Levels : This refers to the interaction between two or more individuals. The message exchange carries information/content.

The participants of the conversation interpret the choice and meanings of the words based on their experiences. The interactions also show the relational level based on how a person delivers the message. This level of a message implies a cultural interpretation of who is in control, their levels of closeness, what they feel about each other, level of trust, etc.

7. Salience or Prominence : This is the degree to which an identity is demonstrated in a situation and refers to how much a person's cultural identity stands out and attracts attention. This is influenced by the extent of similarity or difference, and differs depending on context, situation topic and relationship. Prominence shows a strong investment/involvement in an identity.

Importance of Communication

1. **To begin an action:** Be it a small act of initiating a conversation or launching a multi-million business project, communication plays a key role in determining the end result. For example, a smile and a firm handshake while introducing oneself can set a good base for communication. Similarly, an effective use of language in marketing can make or break products.
2. **To manage tasks:** To sustain an activity or keep a process going, we need to give instructions or guidance. Teachers have to mentor students, managers have to ensure team members give their best, adults need to run a home etc. All these activities can happen smoothly only when there is coordination and cooperation between individuals. To achieve that, how we communicate becomes important.
3. **To influence people:** The most influential people in the world (leaders, writers, thinkers) are good communicators who know when, where and how to say things. The ability to talk or write persuasively comes with practice. To disagree without offending, to be assertive without being aggressive, and to engage with people without being insincere requires a mastery of communication.
4. **To be empathetic and lend support:** Language has the power to heal people. Being able to articulate our emotions and offering consoling words or spreading positivity through encouraging words are part of effective communication strategies.
5. **To realize complete self-potential:** The most crucial aspect of communication is to help us bring out our maximum potential. Our latent talents and creativity can be expressed through our words, both written and spoken. We also feel happy when we can express ourselves without any barriers.

We have seen the power of communication.

Although the ultimate goal of communication is the sender is able to convey the information to the receiver, it is also important to avoid language errors.

Errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar will give a poor impression about the person. It can also give rise to misunderstandings.

Therefore, it becomes pertinent that irrespective of the century you were born in, use a language appropriately giving due respect to the rules of the language while communicating.

Tips for Effective Communication

- Clarity – Be clear and concise when giving instructions. Clarify doubts to avoid miscommunication. It is better to be careful than contrite later.
- Consistency – Be constantly in touch with the people you are working with. Regular updates given and received leads to lesser chances of miscommunication.
- Economy – Be precise in the process of communication. Choose the most effective media of communication (either written, oral, face-to-face or otherwise) for sharing information.
- Feedback – Be open to taking feedback. Communication is a two-way process and feedback enables us to evaluate the effectiveness of the message. Feedback also ensures open inter-personal communication.
- Networking – Keep open and unrestricted channels of communication. Communication also includes networking, which has a significant impact on productivity, employee satisfaction, and the revenue of the organization.