

SECTION A

Introduction: Defining concepts

Theme | Identity

Construction of identities

Identity qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make a person or group.

Individual or collective identity.

psychological identity relates to self- image.

Peter Weinreich :

ethnic identity: "One's ethnic identity is defined as that part of the totality of one's self-construal made up of those dimensions that express the continuity between one's construal of **past ancestry and one's future aspirations in relation to ethnicity**".

[social identity](#), or the collection of **group memberships** that define the individual. [Sociology](#) places some explanatory weight on the concept of [role-behavior](#).

[Identity negotiation](#) may arise from the learning of social roles through personal experience. Identity negotiation is a process in which a person negotiates with [society](#) at large regarding the meaning of their identity.

[Gender identity](#) how one views oneself both as a person and in relation to other people, ideas and nature.¹

Other aspects of identity- racial, religious, ethnic, occupational

Linguistic identity refers to a person's identification as a speaker of one or more languages. The **linguistic identity** is part and often an important part of our **identity**.

SECTION

B

Theme | Identity

IDENTITY AS A PERSONAL PROJECT

UNIT B1.1

In recent years there has been an emphasis on the interrelationship of culture and *identity*, as well as on the longer-established emphasis on the interrelationship between culture and *behaviour*.

Ribeyro, J.R. (1972) 'Barbara' from *La Palabra del Mundo*, collected short stories, translated by D. Douglas (1986) from *On Being Foreign: Culture Shock in Short Fiction*; an international anthology, Lewis, T.J. and Jungman, R.E. (eds), Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press (extracts)

Despite the fact that he was a mulatto¹ named Lopez, he longed to resemble less and less a goalie on the Alianza Lima soccer team and increasingly to take on the appearance of a blond from Philadelphia. Life had taught him that if he wanted to triumph in a colonial city it was better to skip the intermediate stages and transform himself into a gringo² from the United States rather than into just a fair-skinned nobody from Lima. During the years that I knew him, he devoted all of his attention to eliminating every trace of the Lopez and zambo³ within him and Americanizing himself before time could sentence him to an existence as a bank guard or a taxidriver. He had had to begin by killing the Peruvian in himself and extracting something from every gringo that he met. From all this plundering a new person would emerge, a fragmented being who was neither mulatto nor gringo, but rather the result of an unnatural commingling, something that the force of destiny would eventually change, unfortunately, for him, from a rosy dream into a hellish nightmare.

DECONSTRUCTION: Peruvian who wants to look like a white person- from zambo to gringo

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. We should establish the fact that his name was Roberto, that years later he was known as Bobby, but that in the most recent official documents she is listed as Bob. At each stage in his frantic ascension toward nothingness his name lost one syllable...

First of all he had to eliminate every trace of the zambo in himself. His hair didn't cause any major problem; he dyed it with peroxide and had it straightened. As for his skin, he mixed starch, rice powder, and talcum from the drugstore until he found the ideal combination; but a dyed and powdered zambo is still a zambo. He needed to know how the North American gringos dressed, talked, moved, and thought: in short, precisely who they were.

In those days we saw him marauding about during his free hours in diverse locales which seemingly had nothing in common, except for one thing: they were usually frequented by gringos...

He changes his name, he dyes his hair, he dresses up like a gringo, he mingles with

gringos, he wants to seem white= he is imitating white people

. . . This phase of his plan was for him absolutely perfect. In the meantime, he was able to confirm that the gringos were distinguishable from others by the special way they dressed, which he described as sporty, comfortable, and unconventional. Because of his observations, Roberto was one of the first to discover the advantages of blue jeans, the virile cowboy look of the wide leather belt fastened by an enormous buckle, the soft comfort of white canvas shoes with rubber soles, the collegiate charm of a canvas cap with a visor, the coolness of a flowered or striped short-sleeved shirt, the variety of nylon jackets zipped up in front bearing an emblem of special significance, always influential and distinctive, and worn underneath, a white shirt also bearing an emblem of a North American university.

All of these articles of clothing were not sold in any department store but had to be brought from the United States, a place where he had no contacts. There were North American families who, prior to returning to the United States, announced in the newspaper their intention to sell everything they had. Roberto showed up on their doorstep before anyone else, acquiring in this way a wardrobe in which he invested all of his savings.

With hair that was now straightened and bleached, a pair of blue jeans and a loud shirt, Roberto was on the brink of becoming Bobby.

- 1 'Mulatto' means someone who is a mixture of white and black.
- 2 'Gringo' is a term used to identify a (white) North American.
- 3 'Zambo' means someone who is a blend of Native Indian and black.

He changes his name, he dyes his hair, he dresses up like a gringo, he mingles with gringos, he wants to seem white= he is imitating white people

Cultural aspects: components?



Task B1.1.3

- Do you think it is possible to change your identity by changing these things? Have any changes you have made to your own name, appearance or social contacts affected your own sense of self-identity?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SP0bAQ8J6C0&t=185s&ab_channel=TEDxTalks

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv_UfDBNWI8

Giddens,A.(1991)ModernityandSelf-Identity:SelfandSocietyintheLateModernAge,Cambridge:Politypp.14/81; 53–55(extracts)

Today each of us lives a biography reflexively organised in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life. 'How shall I live?' has to be answered

In day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat, and many other things[14]...each of the decisions a person makes everyday are decisions not only about how to act but who to be[81].

Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent. This includes the cognitive component of personhood. To be a 'person' is not just to be a reflexive actor, but to have a concept of a person (as applied both to the self and others). What a 'person' is understood to be certainly varies across cultures, although there are elements of such a notion that are common to all cultures. . . .

DECONSTRUCTION: Self-identity- how we consider ourselves, but within a culture.

The existential question of self-identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography which the individual 'supplies' about herself. A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor in important thought his is in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort the mind to the ongoing 'story' about the self....

. . . the 'content' of self-identity – the traits from which biographies are constructed – varies socially and culturally. In some respects this is obvious enough. A person's name, for example, is a primary element in his biography; practices of social naming, how far names express kin relations, whether or not names are changed at certain stages of life – all these things differ between cultures. But there are other more subtle, yet also more important, differences. Reflexive biographies vary in much the same ways as stories do.

Deconstruction: Identities are dynamic, they are ongoing. It is not a static process

DECONSTRUCTION: Self-identity- how we consider ourselves, but within a culture.

Identities are dynamic, they are ongoing. It is not a static process



Task B1.2.1

- How far, and in what ways, would you say your sense of your own identity has been affected by global trends, the flow of goods, people and images around the world, and the increasing possibilities available for global communication?

Mathews, G. (2000) *Global Culture/Individual Identity: Searching for home in the cultural supermarket*, London: Routledge pp. 19–23 (extracts)

The cultural supermarket bears some resemblance to its metaphorical root, the material supermarket. Just as the material supermarket has been transformed as to the scope of its goods in recent years, ... so too has the cultural supermarket, thanks to television and computers. And just as in the material supermarket shelves space is unequally distributed—products like Coca-Cola being on the middle, easily seen shelves, other, less heavily advertised products being above the customer's head, and less noticeable—so too in the cultural supermarket. Those societies whose material goods are readily available in the world also have greater cultural influence in the world. 'The United States', writes Robert Boock, '... has come to epitomize the modern [worldwide] consumer's dreamland', and certainly the world's cultural supermarket has more than its share of American 'goods,' in the influences of movies, music, and sports—America's celebrity culture, spread worldwide.

DECONSTRUCTION:

Metaphor: 'cultural supermarket' = physical supermarket

The US occupies the central space of the cultural supermarket (language, music, sport, ...)

But the structure of the cultural supermarket is far more complex than this metaphor indicates; in its far-flung intangibility, it is more like a vast library than like a grocery store, more like the internet than like a map of nations of the world...

... The information within the cultural supermarket may be categorized by its users in a number of different ways, but the two most readily available are (1) region of origin, and (2) realm of use. For most of the information in the cultural supermarket, we have some idea of where it comes from. This usually corresponds to culture as 'the way of life of a people,' as embodied in national culture: we refer to Indian music, Brazilian samba, French cuisine, and so on, in order to have a shorthand way with which to refer to these entities. These representable signs, often of questionable validity but of considerable convenience, in labeling and dividing up the vast array of materials in the cultural supermarket for consumers' ease. As we will see, these claims may become particularly vital when applied to oneself; claims of 'Japanese' art or 'American' religion or 'Chinese' values may seek to make what may

seem a choice from the cultural supermarket into one's underlying essence—they may seek to make a choice not a choice.

The metaphor of a supermarket is a simplification-'library'
Information depends on region and use
Highly influence our lives, how we categorise the world.
Cultural determinism is always around the culture.

There is also the realm of use. We fashion ourselves from the cultural supermarket in a number of areas, among them our choices in home decor, in food and clothing, in what we read, watch, and listen to in music, art, and popular culture, in our religious belief, and in ethnic and national identity itself: whether, in the United States, to identify oneself as Hispanic-American or as American; whether, in Hong Kong, to be Chinese or Hongkongese. These different shapings bear differing degrees of personal significance: one's choice of home decor, for example ("That Buddhist mandala in the living room? No, of course I don't believe in that stuff. I just thought it looked neat"), may be of considerably less significance for one's sense of cultural identity than, for example, one's choice of religion, which may lie at the core of who one senses oneself to be. In this book, we will consistently see that the choices people make in the realms of artistic expression, religious belief, and cultural identity are of deep personal significance: we will find that choices from the cultural supermarket, unlike many choices from the material supermarket, are very often agonized over, for they may be of extraordinary importance to these people in defining what their lives are most essentially about.

Deconstruction: the way we use culture (religion, music, arts, home décor....)

Some aspects of small culture are more influential than others (e.g. religion may be more important than home décor)

The foregoing should not, however, be taken to mean that our choices from the cultural supermarket are free; rather, as earlier noted, our choices are restricted in a number of different senses. There is first of all the differential in receiving equipment for the cultural supermarket. One who is educated and affluent may possess optimal receiving equipment: access to and ability to make use of the repository of human thought contained in libraries, and access to the contemporary repositories of thought in the Internet and in mass media – the world assortment of newspapers, magazines, and compact disks available at key outlets throughout the world. A person with such advantages may make full use of the cultural supermarket, but many of the people in the world cannot – their access to the cultural supermarket is more limited, confined to whatever echoes of the cultural supermarket may reach their particular corner of the world. No doubt more people from rich societies than poor societies, and more people from the upper, affluent, educated classes in every society than the lower, poorer, less-educated classes have this optimal receiving equipment. It may be that the less sophisticated the receiving equipment you have, the more likely that you will be manipulated down the standard

paths of Coca-Cola, Marlboro, Rambo, Doraemon, although there are certainly exceptions to this; and as anthropologists often note, how consumers in different societies actually interpret these various products may differ substantially from the plans of marketers.

Deconstruction: richer= more access

Beyond this, there is the fact that the choices each of us makes as to cultural identity are made not for ourselves but for performance for and in negotiation with others: we choose ourselves within the cultural supermarket with an eye to our social world. One's cultural identity is performed in that one must convince others as to its validity: one must have the knowledge and social grace to convince others that one is not an impostor. Efforts to this effect may be seen in many different social milieux,...from the Japanese salaryman/rock musician who wears a short-hair wig to his office rather than get his hair cut, so that he can convince his fellow rock musicians that he is 'for real,' to the American spiritual seeker who pursues various religions despite the scorn of her husband, snickering that she 'goes through religions like she goes through clothes,' to the mainland Chinese woman in Hong Kong who wears expensive fashions but not with quite enough of a sense of style to disguise her mainland background from the disdainful eyes of Hong Kong people.

Deconstruction: sometimes, we 'follow' our culture because we want to fit in.

A wide range of cultural identities in this world is available for appropriation; but although culturally the world may be wide open, socially it is not. One's cultural choices must fit within one's social world, which is more limited. In a typical middle-class American neighborhood, I could probably become a Buddhist without alarming my neighbors, but I could not become an Islamic fundamentalist; I may study the Mbuti pygmies in an anthropology text, but were I to express beliefs such as theirs to my co-workers, I would at best be seen as eccentric, at worst as a lunatic. One's social world – outside one's mind, and more, as resident within one's mind – acts as a censor and gatekeeper, selecting from the range of possible cultural ideas one might appropriate only those that seem plausible and acceptable within it. One's social world particularly constrains one's choices in terms of such factors as class, gender, and age. The elderly woman who wears a miniskirt and the working-class kid who uses fancy foreign words are likely to learn quite rapidly, if they have any sensitivity at all to the cues of their social world, about the inappropriateness of their cultural choices.

Culture has no limits, but the society we live in gives us constraints.

Despite these strictures, there is often the effort to bring into one's social world what Pierre Bourdieu terms 'cultural capital': knowledge from the cultural supermarket that one can display to one's social credit, justifying and bolstering one's social position. One's interest, at least within some segments of American society, in Indian ragas as opposed to top 40 hits, or in Tibetan Buddhist writings as opposed to evangelical Christian tracts, is a way of advertising cosmopolitan discernment: my far-flung tastes may well be the servant of my

local strategy of impressing the people around me. The matter of what from the cultural supermarket can provide status in a given social milieu is highly complex. Each social milieu has its rating system for information and identities from the cultural supermarket; individuals seek to attain maximum credit and credibility, not only through consumption within the existing cultural rating system, but also through bringing in new information and identities, whose high status they seek to establish.

Cultural capital = what the supermarket offers - then, society can censor it

The criteria for the establishment of such status are thus highly specific and flexible; individuals play the game with an extraordinarily acute sense of its implicit rules and strategies. But all this is not to claim that there is absolutely no room for individual choice from the cultural supermarket. Why does one person thrill to Bach, another to juju? Why does one person become a Christian, another a Buddhist? Why does one person revel in her ethnicity, while another spurns that ethnicity? Why does one person travel the world while another stays home? Much can be predicted about our choices by considering such factors as social class, educational level, income, gender, and age, as well as our personal histories, but not everything can be predicted. We are not slaves to the world around us, but have (in a social if not a philosophical sense) a certain degree of freedom in choosing who we are. This freedom may be highly limited, but it cannot be altogether denied.

Who establishes what is mainstream. Culture is influenced by social class, education, income, gender, age, individual aspects.

Not everything can be predicted! We have some freedom.

DECONSTRUCTION:

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The metaphor of a supermarket is a simplification-'library'

Information depends on region and use

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the way we use culture (religion, music, arts, home décor....)

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Task BI.2.2

Mathews suggests that ‘our choices in home decor, in food and clothing, in what we read, watch, and listen to in music, art, and popular culture’ all help to fashion our identities.

- Do you think that your own identity has been partly fashioned by such things, and if so, how important are they to your own sense of identity?

Task BI.2.3

Mathews writes that ‘class, gender, and age’ limit people’s choices from the cultural supermarket?

- To what extent do you agree with this idea?
- In what ways might your own class, gender or age place limits on your own choices from the ‘cultural supermarket’?