Chapter 4
Who Am I?
Identity, Culture, and the New Media

Beth Bonniwell Haslett
University of Delaware, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on how culture and the new media shape one's identity. While culture and one's family initially shape one's identity, the new media provide new ideas and lifestyles that influence one's identity. One's identity changes throughout one's lifespan, and the new media presents more information and alternative lifestyle choices for individuals. Identity itself is a complex concept and the self is viewed as the continuing, consistent narrative that one presents over one's lifetime and over different contexts. The new media enable people to develop online identities, and such identities may be authentic or inauthentic when compared to one's real life identity. The new media present different venues for developing and expressing one's self. The new media also enable individuals to maintain cultural and identity links with their home culture although they may have located elsewhere in the world.

INTRODUCTION

Through modernity and globalization, the world is more interconnected now than ever before. Giddens' structuration theory (ST) explains how both transportation and telecommunication systems enable modern, interdependent economies and how this, in turn, has led to political, cultural and social changes (Giddens, 1990, 1991, 2003). These changes have fundamentally altered cultures, identities and the nature of interaction itself. This chapter will focus on the changes in communication and its influence on culture and identity. Identity and culture matter because they provide the fundamental bases upon which we engage others.

Structuration theory (ST) argues that social systems, like cultures, reflect both social structures and agency. Agency, viewed as social action and interaction, creates social structures, such as educational, legal, political and judicial structures. Through daily interaction, individuals create, support or change social practices. ST relies on the interaction order (Goffman, 1955, 1981) to characterize daily interactional practices, such as using face and alignment strategies. These interactions create, maintain and alter varied social structures, such as family structures, group patterns, organizations and cultures.

In addition, such interactions provide the means through which one establishes, maintains and alters one's identities.

Communication and culture are mutually interwoven and ST helps articulate these interconnections. Communication is needed to create the shared knowledge and values that form the basis for cultures: Cultures, in turn, shape communicative practices and individual identities. Communication can also introduce new information and ideas that challenge existing social structures and cultural patterns. Telecommunication systems, such as media, new media and social media platforms, introduce individuals to more information and from a more diverse set of sources previously available. This information may facilitate both cultural convergence and cultural divergence, and there is evidence to support both effects (Bauman, 2001; Giddens, 2003).

Modernization and access to many new sources of information have challenged our concepts of culture and relationships, providing new ways to interact and live our lives. We exist, as Ng (2004, p. 257) pointed out, in a "media landscape in which the roles of cultural producer, consumer, and citizen are merging and media content flows across a range of platforms and devices." Giddens' structuration theory plays an important role in illuminating the context in which communication, culture and identity influence one another.

Cultural patterns influence the manner in which we interact with one another, and thus provide a significant basis for our identities. Initially, families and cultures are the primary context in which we develop our identities—however, family models and cultures themselves are evolving. Media provide many competing models for parenting and childrearing as well as competing sources for identification. With new information and ideas from both intracultural and intercultural sources, new media alters the way in which we think about ourselves. More understanding of these interrelationships will help us unpack the various influences upon our own identity and how others in different cultures develop their identities. Understanding the complexity of identity will hopefully make us more effective cross-cultural and intercultural communicators through our increased knowledge of ourselves as well as others. We now turn to a more detailed analysis of the ways in which modern telecommunication processes have influenced culture and identity.

41 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/who-am-i/202777

Related Content

Asynchronous and Synchronous Learning and Teaching
Nguyen Tien Dung, Pham Chien Thangand Ta Thi Nguyet Trang (2023).
Multidisciplinary Applications of Computer-Mediated Communication (pp. 1-16).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/asynchronous-and-synchronous-learning-and-teaching/321355

Navigating COVID-19: How the Portuguese Health Authority Managed Social Media
Branco Di Fátima, Francisco Garcia, Ana Barros, Rita Espanha, Daniel Brandãoand Nuno Martins (2024). *Transformed Communication Codes in the Mediated World: A Contemporary Perspective (pp. 175-190).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/navigating-covid-19/335362

Capturing and Conveying Chamorro Cultural Knowledge Using Social Media
Tonia San Nicolas-Roccaand James Parrish (2014). *Digital Arts and Entertainment: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1489-1506).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/capturing-and-conveying-chamorro-cultural-knowledge-using-social-media/115086

Literature Review
(2018). *Global Perspectives on Frameworks for Integrated Reporting: Emerging Research and Opportunities (pp. 1-4).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/literature-review/191816

Taking "Use Case" Inventory of Available Open Shared Visuals for Teaching and Learning From Searches in the Federated Creative Commons Search (Old)
(2022). *Practical Peer-to-Peer Teaching and Learning on the Social Web (pp. 298-314).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/taking-use-case-inventory-of-available-open-shared-visuals-for-teaching-and-learning-from-searches-in-the-federated-creative-commons-search-old/290520