



Cross Cultural Understanding

Chapter 6

Language and Identity in Intercultural Communication

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

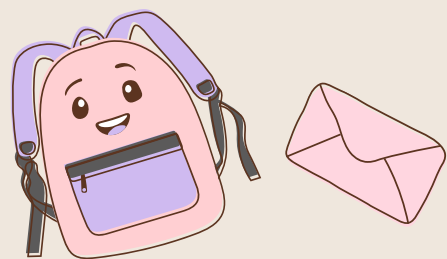
1. Define identity.
2. Identify and discuss multiple characteristics of identity.
3. Explain how identities are shaped and formed.
4. Identify, define and provide examples of different types of identity.
5. Describe ways in which people communicate their identities to others.
6. Explain how and why identities may be contested or challenged.
7. Describe the relationship between language, culture and identity.
8. Explain the role of identity in intercultural communication.



INTRODUCTION

"Identity is not something one has, but something that develops during one's whole life."

(Beijaard et al., 2004: 107, as cited in Jackson)





CHARACTERISTICS OF IDENTITY

Recent scholars (n.d.) (as cited in Jackson, 2014) identities are:

- (1) developed through primary socialization,
- (2) formed in different ways in different parts of the world,
- (3) multiple and complex,
- (4) both dynamic and stable,
- (5) both chosen and ascribed,
- (6) variable in strength and salience, and
- (7) conveyed through verbal and nonverbal means.

Identities are formed during the socialization process

‘Through others we become ourselves’

(Vygotsky, 1997: 105, as cited in Jackson, 2014).



Identities are shaped in diverse ways in different cultural contexts

Individualism ‘the dimension of culture that refers to the rights and independent action of the individual’

(Jandt, 2007: 430, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

An independent self-construal ‘a self-perception that emphasizes one’s autonomy and separateness from others’.

(Smith et al., 2006: 277, as cited in Jackson, 2014).



Identities are shaped in diverse ways in different cultural contexts

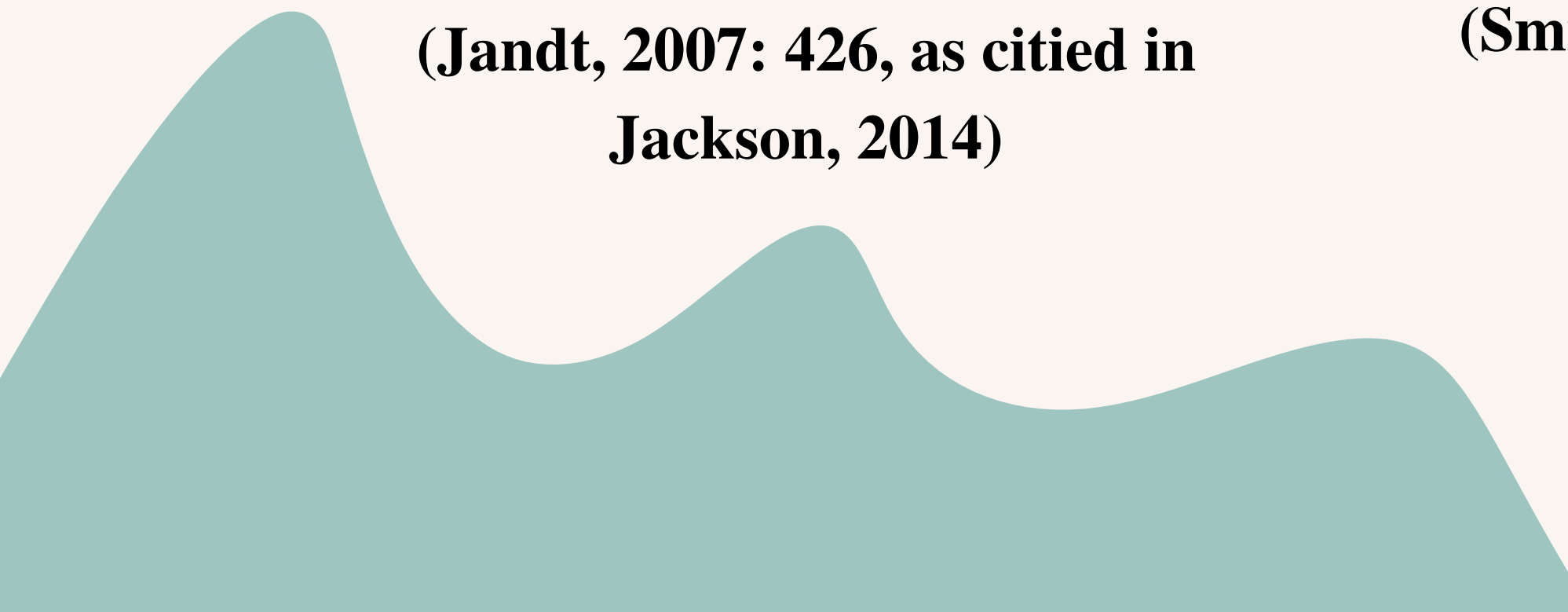


Collectivist ('the dimension of culture that refers to interdependence, groupness, and social cohesion 'we' rather than 'I' is emphasized.

(Jandt, 2007: 426, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

An interdependent self construal 'a self-perception that emphasizes one's relatedness to others'.

(Smith et al. 2006: 277, as cited in Jackson, 2014).



Identities are multiple and complex

"We carry a bewildering range of different, and at times conflicting, identities around with us in our heads at the same time. There is a continual smudging of personae and lifestyles, depending where we are (at work, on the high street) and the spaces we are moving between."

(Mort, 1989: 169, as cited in Jackson, 2014)



Case Study

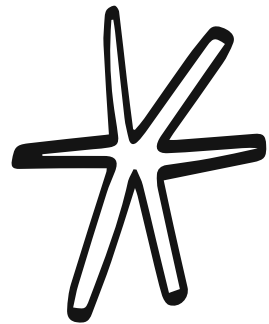
. . . People now find him strange after he comes home from work in Europe. He became colder and less expressive than he used to be. Daniel has now changed many things in his life. Now he likes to dress luxuriously and loves to go shopping. Worse, he withdraws from the social circle around him.



Identities are dynamic

"Identity is not something one has, but something that develops during one's whole life."

Beijaard et al., 2004: 107, as cited in Jackson, 2014)



Case Study

Lean, is an Asian immigrant who has been married for more than 10 years with a guy from a small town in England. After many years abroad, she probably feels at home in her new world. Lean is learning hard to adapt her speech style to be like an English native speaker. She really wishes to be seen as a member of the host community; but there are things that are difficult to change, her physical appearance, second language accent, and also a lack of familiarity with local social norms. In fact, these set her apart from the locals who still treat her like an outsider.

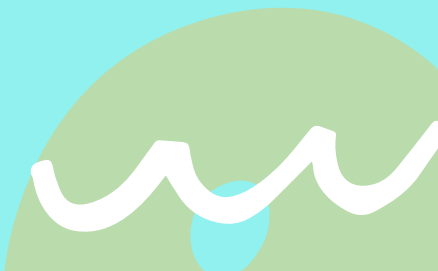


Identities are both avowed and ascribed



Avowed identity is the one that we wish to present or claim in an interaction. **Ascribed identity** is the one that others give to us or we give to someone else.

(Jackson, 2014)

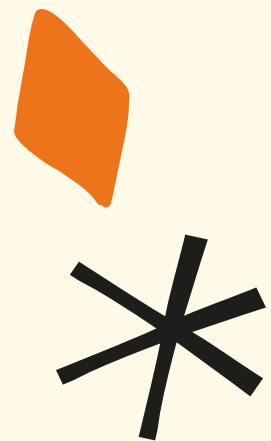




Identities are variable in salience and intensity

"Some members will identify with particular communicative cultural practices, while other members may choose not to partake and identify themselves as enacting the same expressions, rituals, and so forth because of differing preferences, values, attitudes, and beliefs."

(Fong and McEwen, 2004: 166, as cited in Jackson, 2014)



Identities are variable in salience and intensity

Identity salience is ‘the degree to which an identity is prominent or stands out to us in a given situation’.



(Oetzel, 2009: 59, as cited in Jane Jackson, 2014).

The salience of a particular identity can influence one’s emotional state and behaviour since each identity carries with it certain understandings (e.g. knowledge), beliefs and expectations

(Forehand et al., 2002, as cited in Jane Jackson, 2014).

Case study

Sarah is an exchange student from Afghanistan in New Zealand during Ramadan (the holy month of fasting). She is very under pressure because none of her classmates are fasting. She distances herself from her religious affiliation and chooses not to fast in order to fit in with her new peers. Meanwhile, Ratna, who is also from the same country, feels closer to her religious affiliation. She was increasingly able to see how her religious affiliation becomes more and more meaningful.



Contested identity- facets or elements of one's identity that are not accepted by the people we are in contact with.

‘Where are you from?’

‘What is your nationality?’

‘You have an accent.’

‘But, I never think of you as . . .’

‘I didn’t know you were . . .’

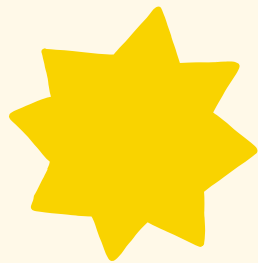
(James, 2001:1, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

"Identity intensity refers to the degree of significance of a particular identity."

People with a weak ethnic identity

Individuals with a strong ethnic identity

(Collier, 1994, as cited in Jane Jackson, 2014).



Case Study

Sahid, an international student at a well-known foreign languages campus in India, enjoyed studying there. Even though the first year was very difficult for him, but in the second year everything changed after he got a very close friend from India, Jameela. Jameela had studied in Sahid's country and could even speak Sahid's first language.

**Identities are expressed verbally and
nonverbally**

"Our language and communication styles can express
multiple dimensions of our identity."

(Jackson, 2014)

TYPES OF IDENTITIES

Personal identity ‘unique qualities of ourselves such as personality and relationships’

(Oetzel, 2009: 369, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

Social identities ‘include cultural or ethnic membership, gender, sexual orientation, social class, political or religious affiliation, age, disability, professional, and also family and relational role identities.’

(Ting Toomey and Chung, 2012: 309, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

TYPES OF IDENTITIES

Cultural identity ‘our social identities based on our cultural membership, they are our identification with and perceived acceptance into a larger culture group into which we are socialized and with which we share a system of symbols, values, norms, and traditions’.

(Liu et al., 2011: 283, as cited in Jane Jackson, 2014)

Race and ethnicity both involve drawing boundaries between people. A conceptual distinction can, however, be made between race and ethnicity. While **racial boundaries** are drawn on the bases of physical markers, **ethnic boundaries** are drawn on the basis of cultural markers.

(Pilkington, 2003: 27, as cited in Jane Jackson, 2014)



Racial identity, - one's
'biological/genetic make-up,
i.e. racial phenotype'

(e.g. black, white, biracial).

(Block, 2007: 43, as cited in
Jackson, 2014)

"Ethnic identity is linked to one's
perceptions and emotions regarding one's
affiliation with one's own ethnic group(s)."

(Fong, 2004, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

TYPES OF IDENTITIES

Class identity ‘a sense of belonging to a group that shares similar economic, occupational, or social status’.

(Martin and Nakayama, 2008: G-1, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

Language identity ‘the assumed and/or attributed relationship between one’s sense of self and a means of communication which might be known as a language (e.g. English), a dialect (e.g. Geordie) or a sociolect (e.g. football-speak).’

(Block, 2007: 40, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

"Language identity is linked to language **expertise** (one's degree of proficiency in a particular language), language **affiliation** (one's attitudes towards and feelings about the language) and language **inheritance** (being born into a family or community where the language is spoken)."

(Block 2007; Leung et al. 1997; Rampton 1990, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

TYPES OF IDENTITIES

Multicultural identity as '[a] sense of in betweenness that develops as a result of frequent or multiple cultural border crossings.

(Martin and Nakayama, 2008, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

"They may develop **hybrid (mixed) identities** that integrate diverse cultural elements (e.g. multiple languages, local values, global perspectives)."

(Kraidy, 2005; Kramsch, 1993, 2009, as cited in Jackson, 2014)



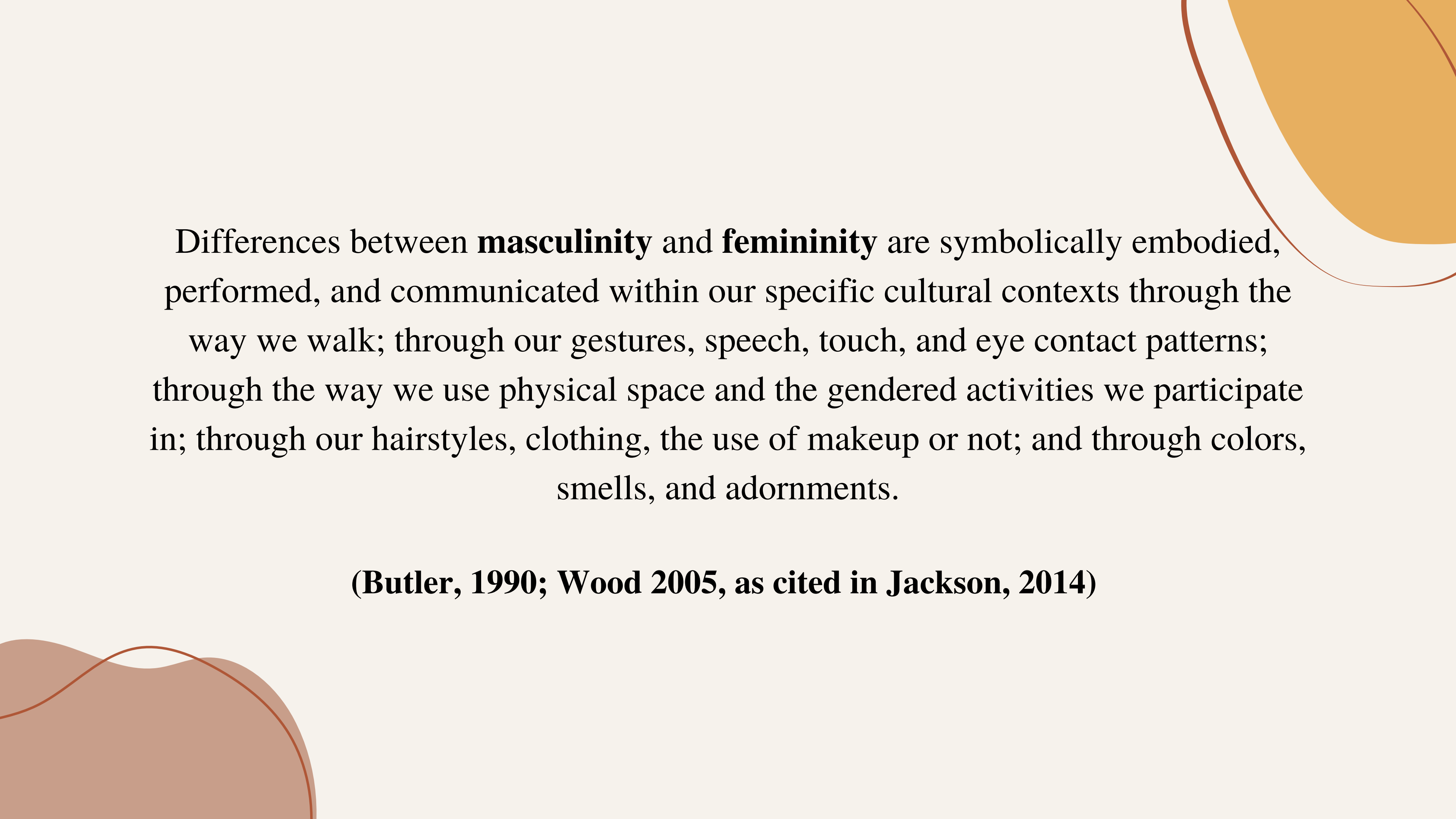
Gender identity ‘a part of a personal identity that entails the social roles, assumptions, and expectations established for each sex’.

(Liu et al., 2011: 285, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

Differences in vocabulary and communication styles may serve as markers of one’s gender in a particular cultural context.

(Samovar et al., 2010, as cited in Jackson, 2014)





Differences between **masculinity** and **femininity** are symbolically embodied, performed, and communicated within our specific cultural contexts through the way we walk; through our gestures, speech, touch, and eye contact patterns; through the way we use physical space and the gendered activities we participate in; through our hairstyles, clothing, the use of makeup or not; and through colors, smells, and adornments.

(Butler, 1990; Wood 2005, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

Sexual identity

Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. Whereas 'male and female' are sex categories, 'masculine' and 'feminine' are gender classifications.

(Jackson, 2014)

sexual
identity

sexual
orientation

heterosexuality

homosexuality

bisexuality

Age identity



‘the outcome of the processes through which one identifies with or distances oneself from different aspects of the aging process.’

(Westerhof, 2008: 10, as cited in Jackson, 2014)



Religious identity

Religious identity basically refers to one's sense of belonging to a particular religious group.

(Jackson, 2014)

Physical and mental ability identity

physical ability identity, both physical capabilities and limitations
. . . **mental ability identity**, -our cognitive abilities such as degree of intelligence, mental health such as depressed and ability to function in everyday life.

(Jackson, 2014)

National identity

National identity ‘a type of identity that is characterized by one’s individual perception of him- or herself as a member of a nation’.

(Liu et al., 2011: 289, as cited in Jackson, 2014)



Regional identity

Regional identities, -inspired by cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic or political ties as well as geography.

(Jackson, 2014)



Global identity

Global identity, -a sense of belonging in a worldwide culture that is often associated with the use of an international language.

(Arnett, 2002: 777, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

‘we human beings are now being challenged to realize that we are something more than citizens of separate nations, members of different races, and followers of different religions. We are also global citizens’.

(Gerzon, 2010: xvii, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

Organizational identity

Organizational identity is a sense of attachment to organizations, whether in their social, educational, religious or professional life.

(Jackson, 2014)

Organizational identity can also be linked to the notion of ‘communities of practice’.

(Lave & Wenger, 1991, as cited in Jackson, 2014).

Community defines of practice as ‘an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor’.

(Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992: 46, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

‘[w]ays of doing things, ways of thinking, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short practices’

(Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992: 464, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

Professional identity

A professional identity encompasses beliefs, attitudes and understanding about one's roles within the context of work

(Adams et al., 2006; Lingard et al., 2002, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

Virtual (cyber and fantasy) identities

Cyberculture has emerged from the use of computer networks for communication, business and entertainment.

(Jackson, 2014)

‘the desire to remain anonymous reflects the need to eliminate those critical features of your identity that you do NOT want to display in that particular environment or group’.

(Suler, 2002: 455, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

Fantasy identities, which centre on ‘characters from science fiction movies, comic books (manga), and anime’.

(Samovar et al., 2012: 224, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

discussion questions

1. Who are you? Make a list of ten statements about your identity (I am . . .). Write as many statements about yourself as you can possibly think of in ten minutes. What do these statements reveal about your cultural identity? Personal identity? Ethnic identity? What other facets of your identity have you disclosed? How has your linguistic and cultural background influenced who you are today and who you hope to be in the future?
2. In a small group, discuss how language use and gender identity/roles may differ in different cultural contexts.
3. How do you define yourself in your home environment? Does this change when you are outside your home country or region?

Reference

Jackson, J. (2014). *Introducing language and intercultural communication*. Routledge.