

WEEK ELEVEN
Mon Nov 23, 2009
Tues Nov 24, 2009

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: PRODUCING AND MANAGING IDENTITIES

LECTURE OUTLINE

- 1. CREATING IDENTITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE**
- 2. PRODUCING IDENTITIES**
- 3. SITUATED IDENTITIES**

- 4. SOCIAL IDENTITIES**

- 5. PERSONAL IDENTITIES**

- 6. CONCLUSIONS**

Questions of the Week

- What is the difference between self and identity?*
- What is the difference between personal identity and social identity?*
- How is language and symbolic communication accomplished?*
- Is language raced?*
- In what ways is language gendered?*
- How does language construct masculinity/femininity?*

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DETAILED LECTURE NOTES

1. CREATING IDENTITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE

THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN SI

Mead's SI Theory: Important points to remember:

- SI stresses the significance of language
- definition of language
- Significant Gestures
- Gestures

Language = words are symbols with meaning
= they define, describe and evaluate us and the world in which we live

The Power of Words = lies in the fact that the members of a culture share those meanings and valuations
= a common language is what allows members of a society to communicate and understand one another and thus makes social order possible

Language = the medium of socialization
= the way in which children learn to think and behave as a social member

Meanings are created through human interaction with symbols

- humans are symbol-using creatures (Blumer, 1969); Hewitt)
- symbols are abstract, arbitrary and ambiguous ways of representing phenomena

EG: symbol for woman =

DISCOURSE =

- humans rely on symbols to communicate and this distinguishes them from other
- animals
- because human communication is symbolic, it requires mediation and reflection

SPEECH COMMUNITIES = exists when a group of people share a set of norms regarding communicative practices
= share understandings about goals of communication, strategies for enacting those goals and ways of interpreting communication

Are there gendered speech communities? Yes

Are gangs speech communities? Yes

Are children's peer groups speech communities? Yes

2. PRODUCING IDENTITIES

Identity: The Self as Social Object

- SI view of the person rests on the concept of identity
- Self is seen as primarily a social experience that arises in and is sustained through social interaction
- the self is an object toward which we direct symbolic communication, is also an object we see in situations and because of self, we are able to picture our self in situations
- over time, we develop a fairly consistent self-concept yet our image of ourselves changes in every situation to some extent
- we also judge ourselves and this constant self-evaluation is part of what our self-concept is
- the other part of self-concept we call "identity"

What is the difference between identity and self?

Identity in Everyday Life

- here we focus on the routine, typical, relatively straightforward nature of identity in everyday life
- identities are part of what we mean by self
- self is the object we act toward
- identity is the naming of that self, the name we call ourselves
- as are all objects, identities are socially bestowed, socially maintained and socially transformed (Berger, 1963)
- identities are meanings a person attributes to self (Burke, 1980)
- they are relational, social and placed in a context of interaction

Definition = identity is the name we call ourselves, and usually it is the name we announce to others that tells them who we are as we act in situations

= the perceived social location of the individual
ie where one is "situated" in relation to others, who one tells the self one is, and, in his or her actions, the name one tries to communicate to others (Greg Stone)

Are there any identities which are not situated?

Remember: Identity is an important part of self-concept. It is who the individual thinks s/he is and who is announced to the world in word and action.

Identity arises in interaction, is reaffirmed in interaction and is changed in interaction

Identity is important to what we do

Not all identities matter; however, some may matter most all the time

3. SITUATED IDENTITIES

- Identity is primarily a matter of establishing and maintaining social location
- Situations and their roles and other perspectives provide a way for people to locate themselves relative to one another
- The social space in which they do so is that of the situation – hence, the term “situated identity”

How Situated Identities are Produced?

- when people come together to interact in a situation, they generally establish situated identities without much difficulty

EG: sales clerks, medical offices, fishing trips, visits from friends, classrooms, post offices, restaurants, libraries, family dinners etc = we readily identify other people and place them in relation to us

Situated Identity Examples

Patient and Physician

Alonso arrives at the physician's office on crutches and checks in with the receptionist, who expresses concern about his broken foot and makes sure Alonso's insurance coverage is current. At this point, Alonso becomes a patient in the hands of a variety of medical personnel: nurses, aides, x-ray technicians, and Physicians. They weigh him, check his blood pressure, ask questions, probe, prod, examine, pull, push, inject, wrap, caution, instruct, and perform a variety of other tasks. Alonso is swept into an office routine, moved from place to place by others, told what to do next, and in general made the focus of a medical team who have treated hundreds of broken feet. Along the way, he answers questions (“I broke it when I fell off the ladder”), listens dutifully to instructions about how to care for the cast (“keep it dry”), tries to ignore the pain as the broken bones are set and the cast applied, and in general acts as a patient is supposed to act.

How do we announce our identities?

Identity announcement (Greg Stone)

- = people regularly make announcements of their own situated identities and placement of others in their situated identities
- a person with identity is situated, cast in the shape of a social object by the acknowledgement of his participation or membership in social relationships – a situated identity comes into being when one person's announcements coincide with the placements of that person by others
- an identity announcement consists of anything that another can potentially interpret as an indication of the role that an individual intends or wants to enact in a situation

EG: wearing a wedding ring (married person identity); simply walking into a car dealership (customer identity); playing instruments in the subway (street musician)

What happens when identity announcements do not exist?

- * One's capacity to act rests on the establishment of situated identity.
- * Lacking a response from the other that acknowledges one's possession of a situated identity means one cannot act in terms of that identity ie acknowledgment of co-presence is a fundamental condition for the establishment of a situated identity and action in terms of it

How do Situated Identities Function?

- like clothing: warms and protects even though one is scarcely aware of wearing it
- provide the framework within which people act
- mostly invisible and taken for granted

Integration and continuity: two concepts that explain how situated identities function

Integration = refers to the joining or bringing together of the individual's attention, interest, feelings, skills and energy that are brought together and focused on the situation and the person's place in it

EG: for that time period, the person is only a patient

Continuity = situated identities create feelings of continuity by unifying the person's thoughts, feelings and actions for a limited period of time, it makes possible a series of events and actions flowing logically and meaningfully from one point to another

EG: golfers judge the lay of each hole, calculates the effects of wind and weather, puts in place a winning strategy

Styker: talks about identity salience and identity commitment

Identity salience = refers to the level of importance a given identity has to many situations

ie some identities are important only occasionally; others are important to the individual all the time

Identity Commitment = refers to the degree to which a certain identity matters to the individual in relation to certain other people

EG: when I am around my family, my identity as a family member is very important to me

4. SOCIAL IDENTITIES

3 identifying attributes

a) locates a person in a social space larger and longer-lasting than any particular situation

EG: social identity as an athlete goes beyond any particular game

b) identification with a social category lies at the heart of social identity

EG: Jew, Muslim, Christian = identification with members of a social category who are seen as sharing your goals

c) identification converts social categories into functional communities (defined as a set of people who live in close proximity to one another over a prolonged period of time)

EG: small towns, Greek section of town = know one another, lead their lives in presence of others, feel a sense of shared purpose, develop enduring relationships with one another

EG: imagined communities = provides a set of beliefs, values and purposes that the individual can share with others, even if only in the mind

- Social identities are announced
- Social identities are accomplished when announcements and placements coincide
- Social identities established through identification and differentiation

5. PERSONAL IDENTITIES

- locates the individual in a social space larger and longer-lasting than any particular situation by differentiating one person from another and focusing on the individual's life story
- stresses uniqueness and differences
- rests on shared ideas about what people can be or become
- rests on social confirmation of some kind, recognition by others of what she/he has become
- is dependent on announcements and placements in the same way that social and situated identities are

EG: Life story = her/his property, something s/he has created, owns and is entitled to modify

Identity Chart

	Situated	Social	Personal
What is the basis of the Identity?	A role is required (e.g., student, priest, friend, professor, etc).	Membership in or identification with a community is needed (e.g., fellow students, the gay community, a neighborhood, etc.).	A life project or life story in required (e.g., becoming famous being a nonconformist, being oneself, etc.).
How long does the identity last?	The identity lasts for the duration of the situation in which the role is located (e.g., as long as one is in class or interacting with a friend).	the identity lasts during the span of membership in or identification with the community (e.g., as long as one lives in or identifies with the neighborhood).	The identity lasts until the narrative of the life story changes (e.g., as long as one is doing things designed to achieve fame or establish differences from others).
What kinds of announcements are made?	Announcements are expressive and instrumental actions that show identification with the role and/or perform activities of the role (e.g., taking notes wearing a priest's	Announcements are about one's identifications, especially announcements made on narrative occasions (e.g., telling others about the importance of family or friends).	Announcements are about plans, projects, and individuality, especially announcements made on narrative occasions (e.g., wearing distinctive clothing, piercing body parts etc.).

<p>What kinds of placements are made?</p>	<p>garb, etc.).</p> <p>Placements are expressive and instrumental actions by others that confirm the acceptance of the individual's appropriation of role. and his or her willingness to interact in terms of the role (e.g., answering a student's questions, confessing to a priest, etc.).</p>	<p>Placements are expressive actions by community members and/or outsiders that confirm legitimacy of identification and willingness to accept claims of membership (e.g., treating a claimant as a friend or family member).</p>	<p>Placements are expressive actions that confirm legitimacy and desirability of the life story (e.g., expressing agreement or admiration).</p>
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6. CONCLUSIONS

Define identity.

Distinguish between personal and social identities.

Terms to understand: identity announcements

identity placements

identity salience

identity commitment

integration and continuity

basic, general and independent

Questions for Wit

1.) Take notes as you are watching, give examples of language, dress, manner, etc. that demonstrate the socialization of the doctors.

2.) What types of Impression Management are going on?

3.) Do you see examples of the Cloak of Competence?