

○ Conceptions of Identity in the Culture-Communication Dialogue

The most significant intellectual movements of the last two decades . . . have placed cultural analysis at the center of the human and literary disciplines. The most significant political and moral strategies of the time, at least in the industrial West, focus on cultural issues concerning personal identity, community building and social legitimation and inclusion, moral order, and everyday ethics.

—Jeffrey C. Alexander and Steven Seidman,
Culture and Society

Goals and Objectives/Concepts and Definitions

In their encyclopedic book, *Managing Cultural Differences*, Harris and Moran (1989: 53) argue convincingly that Americans must learn to improve interpersonal and intercultural communication skills in order to become more effective performers in an increasingly global and plural environment. Western business leaders, they point out, could benefit from training in cultural awareness if we expect to succeed in our social and commercial relations in other parts of the world.

This cultural awareness might involve recognizing values and attitudes that differ from our own or simply becoming more sensitive to taken-for-granted social customs that signal a different sense of time, privacy, tradition, status, and the role of women in culture. Maintaining successful encounters with minority groups living within the boundaries of a nation, such as the handicapped or the elderly, can also be problematic (Harris & Moran 1989: 345). Failure to recognize the social distinctions of minorities, then, can have serious implications for intergroup harmony. Even when such differences are

not primarily cultural, the communication styles of group members may differ in part from those of mainstream Americans.

Clearly, communication is at the heart of international, intercultural, and interpersonal relations. If we are to become better global communicators, we must learn new competencies, skills, and sensitivities not the least of which involve new ways of looking at self, or identity, as this construct relates to communication. A primary goal of *Metaphors of Identity* is to use the bridging concept of identity to gain insight into the contemporary debates about culture and communication—what I call “*the culture-communication dialogue*.”

In recent years, psychologists and anthropologists have witnessed the revival of interest in the concept of self and its relationship to both social and cultural variability. Advances in travel and mass media have demonstrated the reciprocal influences of culture and communication. The growing and impressive communication literature attests to this emphasis. In the Western world, we live in a veritable information society that affects the nature of work, the use of time, power relations, systems of stratification and values as well as, more fundamentally, the way we conceive of self (McQuail 1989: 77; Markus & Kitayama 1991: 224).

Few books, however, have attended to how the self-concept relates to culture and the communication processes. Work in this area, though exciting, is still somewhat exploratory; and definitions of communication, even in the communication sciences, remain variable (Hall 1992: 51).¹ There is an urgent need for clarification of theoretical concepts, such as culture versus society; change (social and cultural change²); community as it relates to communication; and, finally, metaphorical conceptualizations of all these interrelated abstractions.

Identity, a central construct of the social sciences, can provide the bridge between studies of interpersonal and mass communication. Since both personal and group identity are, to some extent, always mutually involved in communication encounters, the identity model presented in this volume attempts to integrate both interpersonal and intergroup levels of communication, thus dealing with the “microworld” of interpersonal communication and the “macroworld” of mediated mass communication, to borrow—with minor alteration—Thomas Scheff’s terminology (1990). Both are necessary for a full understanding of human relationships. The focus, then, is on understanding the impact of social and cultural factors on behavioral communication, specifically how identity is crucial in situations of interpersonal and cross-cultural communication.

Erikson ([1950]1963: 282), the first to use the term *identity* in its presently accepted scientific sense, felt that the study of identity would become as strategic in our times as the study of sexuality was in Freud's. Certainly this volume gives special prominence to the academic construct of identity. While teaching ideas from this book for a graduate seminar, I made a surprising discovery. Midway through the semester, students suddenly realized that identity was something they had been studying all along, only under different labels in diverse fields. Philosophy, they began to recognize, typically considers personhood. Psychologists study ego, personality, and self-actualization. Sociologists tend to talk about social identities in group contexts, while anthropologists write about cultural identity. Self-concept, on the other hand, dominates recent work in both education and psychology. Evoking the familiar blindmen-and-elephant imagery, ultimately we were all talking about the same animal: self-in-context; the emphases were merely on different parts of this same metaphoric elephant.

In the identity literature, Phinney and Rotheram (1987) remind us, researchers too often limit themselves to single components of the identity pool, thus making the results of such studies seem more concrete and definitive than they really are. The principal players in the ongoing culture-communication dialogue have been anthropology, psychology, and the communication sciences; but this volume does not confine itself to these three. Obviously many disciplines have been concerned with understanding significant aspects of this multifaceted construct.

In this book, identity is defined as *the academic metaphor for self-in-context*. Each chapter addresses a different, often neglected, context for the expression of this many-sided abstraction. Furthermore, the book explores the implications of identification for a better understanding of culture and communication. Identity cuts across almost all academic boundaries; hence it is one of those truly transdisciplinary ideas that touches all of us in myriad ways and is interpreted and understood differently by individuals and groups. There is ample evidence of the complexity of this multi-dimensional concept; the range of identity topics is extremely wide, overlapping areas such as mental health, ethnicity, gender, education, social conflict, and change. However, the far-reaching applicability of the construct may be one of its major strengths.

In general, *Metaphors of Identity* traces the relation of identity to its biological roots, briefly outlines the history of the concept, and considers its relationships to communication, education, ethnicity,

gender, and age. As the search for identity has been described as a "modern existential dilemma," some philosophical speculations on the adaptive functions of identity for human survival are offered as well (Weigert, Teitge & Teitge 1990: 14).

The number of philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, and others that have tried to make sense of identity is enormous; and the scientific literature on specialized aspects of this subject (person, self, self-concept, ego, and so forth) is equally extensive. I have attempted in this volume to achieve some academic holism, or integration of ideas. The need for synthesis in this field is great; and, among the social sciences, anthropology may be best suited for such a multidisciplinary effort. Certainly the transdisciplinary nature of the identity construct forbids any slavish respect for academic boundaries.

Specifically, the book attempts to use ideas from various disciplines for a multi-interest audience. Drawing upon many disciplines to get a picture of identity in its full complexity is, nevertheless, a daunting task. For one thing, as the book has multiple audiences in mind, certain chapters reflect mixed levels of writing consistent with this aim. I have also tried to reduce jargon to a minimum. For clarity's sake, *principal points* are included at the end of each chapter to highlight central debates in the culture-communication dialogue.

Although there have been attempts to study identity before, the results generally have been highly specialized or do not really deal with the relationships between culture and communication (White & Kirkpatrick 1985; Carrithers, et al. 1987). Books from the science of communication, including the excellent examples mentioned in the bibliography, underscore the importance of understanding the diversity of cultural and social outlooks by different human groups, but have tended to neglect the construct of identity even when narrowly focused on interpersonal communication. As a case in point, Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) address some salient issues of identification, although naturally their central concern was with the communication process itself. The present volume takes a broader perspective.

What many previous books have demonstrated is that serious scholarship dealing with culture is still possible and fruitful, especially studies concerned with how the concept relates to identity and change. Much of the current intercultural communication literature is still inconsistent and contradictory in its definition and application of the culture concept. Confusion of the constructs *culture* and *society* typifies this problem. Although there is often an interdependence

between culture and society, the two can and do exist separately. The notion of culture can be problematic at several levels. Although not suggesting that the term be dropped, *Metaphors of Identity* calls for a better understanding of its underlying meanings. Certainly a secondary focus of this volume has been to examine and critique the uses and abuses of the culture concept, while attempting to clarify culture's impact on identity and communication.

The concept of culture has helped us greatly in understanding the diversity of human behavior; but, according to Alexander and Seidman (1990: 235), it has become a theoretically, as well as politically, contested terrain in contemporary scientific discourse. Consider the modern debates over so-called multiculturalism in the schools and their implications for hindering or improving minority relationships. Identity is surely at the core of these contemporary dialogues. The American intellectual tradition, Marcus and Fischer (1986: 35) assert, is biased toward downplaying the importance of cultural differences for a more general, egalitarian humanism. According to these authors, we accept cultural differences but play down their consequences. These tendencies are further reinforced by the widespread diffusion of communication technologies. At the very least, identity changes are speeded up by telecommunication influences.

Identity remains a good construct for interdisciplinary use, one of the central and characteristic issues in modern pluralistic societies. However, a major factor largely ignored in studies of identity is the mediated reality of the contemporary social order, i.e., the influence of media, and mass communication in general, on the identification process. Bergheim states boldly that the electronic world has become "as American as microwaved apple pie and video baseball" (1990:94). It is precisely the implication of mediated communication in the institutionalization of human selfhood that is a primary concern of the present volume. Definitions of self are today the work of mediated experiences as well as culturally and socially constructed beliefs and values (Weigert, et al. 1990: 63).

The tripartite theoretical model employed in this book considers self a multi-dimensional, reflexive process involving psychological motivation, cultural knowledge, and the ability to perform appropriate roles. These roles have been shaped by the individual's social positions, but at the same time they are significantly influenced by the mediated environments in which most of us live today. Put another way, social relationships in the contemporary world include mediated cultural and social experiences in ways not true, for example, of non-

industrialized societies. We emerge as human selves through the responses of others. However, these responses, in a modern, Western context, are largely filtered through communication channels that themselves call for further investigation (Altheide 1976, 1985; Snow 1983; Arterton 1987; Dennis 1989).

The important point is that the media shape our lives in ways not always obvious. This book, like others that have placed emphasis on mass communication, stresses the impact of electronic media on social behavior.³ The link between communication and identity has yet to be completely forged. *Metaphors of Identity*, then, is concerned with understanding the "why" and "how" of managing, or failing to manage, human differences, cultural or social, that can become potential barriers to communication.

As a psychological anthropologist, I have used the concept of identity extensively in the past twenty years: in research and writing that have focused on Canadian Indians, New Zealand Maoris, Cook Island migrants in the South Pacific, sexual minorities in Sweden and Finland, and to a lesser extent racial and ethnic groups in North America (Fitzgerald 1972, 1974, 1975, 1977a, 1977b, 1977c, 1979, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992). Fieldwork experiences are employed to give a fuller understanding of identity, with the following specific objectives in mind:

1. A substantive overview of identity, from the point of view of several perspectives, is attempted. Including ideas from other disciplines is one way of pointing out areas of identity not previously considered. Although identity always comprises a subset of different parts, it is considered in its various dimensions, including social, cultural, and personal identity. The goal for the first half of the book is to try and achieve academic integration compatible with the more research-oriented second half of the volume. This approach constitutes a more holistic view of self than is characteristic of the contemporary literature on identity.

2. Another objective is to provide a theoretical model that grounds identity in both biology and culture, attempting to explain what it does in terms of its communication functions. Self-consciousness, after all, develops largely through communication with other persons. This integrative, adaptive/growth model views identity as a psychological process that mediates between culture and communication. Cultural, social, and psychological systems have been portrayed, in the past, as operating more or less autonomously. Human action is likely to be seen today as symbolic, social, and motivational all at the same time (Alexander & Seidman 1990: 5).

Although presenting a new definition of identity (the academic metaphor for self-in-context), this book does not offer a new communication theory. Rather, the performance model attempts to show the interrelatedness of culture, identity, and communication. The present volume focuses squarely on culture and identity, with emphasis on the theoretical implications for the communication sciences.

From the point of view of the communicating individual, personality structure is seen as involving three subsystems: psychological motivation, cultural knowledge, and ability to perform socially appropriate roles. Performance, in this integrative scheme, becomes critical in the analysis of meaning and experience. In addition, special attention is paid to the media through which the performance is often realized in contemporary society.⁴ In delineating the interrelatedness of these three concepts within a single theoretical system, the book affords a unique opportunity to integrate diverse disciplinary perspectives.

Ideas like culture and identity have been compared to the air we breathe: something taken for granted until there is an external stimulation that forces us to think about them (Brislin, et al. 1986: 22). For some reason, in the past twenty years, life seems to have forced me to want to think about culture and identity. The interest in communication arrived later, but with no less intellectual impact.

3. A further objective is to demonstrate how the model works using specific cultures, or social groups, many chosen from my two decades of anthropological fieldwork. I have tried to pick the best theoretical insights from studies of Indians, Pacific Islanders, sexual minorities, and identity and aging (condensed and summarized, hopefully in an appealing writing style) that illustrate how culture, identity, and communication influence each other. There is need for convergence of disciplinary perspectives, and *Metaphors of Identity* is clearly a book that bridges many academic disciplines.

Identity studies have involved two methodological traditions: one qualitative and interpersonal, the other quantitative and measurement-oriented. These are the so-called "subjective" versus "objective" methodologies (Weigert, Teitge & Teitge 1990: 27). Although studies cited in this volume lean toward the qualitative, effort has been made to include both approaches where appropriate. This book should be especially attractive to students and instructors needing to ground abstract, theoretical discussions of identity in concrete, ethnographic examples.

4. Finally, I consider some of the larger implications of this quest for identity, or the modern search for a more relevant identity in an age of instant communication, especially how identity—cultural, social, or personal—relates to the communication processes. Admittedly, this latter discussion is highly speculative. Identity is certainly a central concern of the social sciences, but there is still lack of agreement on its various levels and meanings. We are reminded that identity, the academic metaphor for self-in-context, is always both a “technical” and a “folk” category, a philosophical inquiry as well as a “cultural cliché” for making sense of everyday realities (Weigert, et al. 1990: 21). My aim was to write a down-to-earth account that tackles both the scientific and some of the more ineffable dimensions of identity in the exciting, contemporary culture-communication dialogue.

The Notion of Dialogue/A Cross-Disciplinary Conversation

The word *dialogue* generally conveys the image of a conversation between two or more people. In fact, it was a conversation that sparked my initial interest in the scientific field of communication. A young colleague at the university, recognizing the significance of the contemporary debates over culture for her own research and teaching, sought an anthropological perspective on this complex and abstract issue. In fact, anthropologists and communication specialists have been more or less sharing intercultural insights since the seminal publication of Edward T. Hall's *Silent Language* in 1959.

Little was I to know the passionate, intellectual ferment that would result from this innocent conversation. For the past three years, I have been avidly reading in the areas of interpersonal and intercultural communication, trying to relate my lifelong fascination with identity to the modern debates over culture and communication. At this juncture, I began to view dialogue less literally as a conversation and more broadly as an exchange of ideas—in this case, an extended, somewhat metaphorical, dialogue between those interested in culture and those specializing in the area of the communication sciences.

Unfortunately, most of the discussions among different disciplines that have concerned themselves with these ideas have been characterized by a series of separate monologues. Each, however, has made distinct and valuable contributions. This book attempts a more dialogic approach, which invites different parties to listen to diverse

viewpoints, perspectives, and debates with the aim of trying to unify this complex subject.

Marcus and Fischer, in *Anthropology As Cultural Critique*, suggest that the metaphor of dialogue has become the dominant imagery for expressing the way many contemporary anthropologists inquire about communication within and between cultures (1986: 30). Certainly, a dialogue has developed between those interested in communication and those concerned with social and cultural variability. Hence, my choice of subtitle for this volume: *A Culture-Communication Dialogue*. However, the exchange is not solely between anthropology and the communication sciences; the culture-communication debates extend well beyond these two disciplines. Although clearly a book about identity, the work focuses on the impact of socio-cultural factors on behavioral communication—namely, how identity can be instrumental in improving or hindering interpersonal and cross-cultural communication.

Stimulated by international exchanges and multicultural trade, a unique world culture may be emerging that places immediate and practical emphasis on a global environment (Featherstone 1990). Modern-day assertions of ethnic identity, as well as the political demands of minorities for basic human rights, make a better understanding of the socio-cultural dimensions of communication more and more a daily imperative. The development of knowledge and skills needed to cope with diversity, both social and cultural, are widespread demands that cannot be ignored.

Interpretive anthropology, Marcus and Fischer have reminded us (1986: 25), tries to elucidate how different cultural constructions of reality affect social action or, broadly, communication. Social life, viewed from such a perspective, is nonetheless concerned ultimately with the negotiation of meaning at the personal, psychological level. Clearly, identity is *a* core, if not *the* core, issue in terms of broader communication processes. Dialogue becomes a powerful “image-metaphor” for continuing the discourse on identity in the context of the contemporary culture-communication debates.

Metaphor/The Organizational Frame

Why metaphors of identity? In preparing to write this book, I experienced something similar to what Jeff Greenwald describes in his book, *Shopping for Buddhas*, a funny-serious portrait of a traveler's quest for identity in a strange and exotic land: “No matter what's

going on in your life," wrote Greenwald matter-of-factly, "if you walk down the streets in Katmandu you'll run smack into a metaphor for it" (1990: 130).

Greenwald's "shopping for Buddhas" was, of course, the quintessential American metaphor of consumerism, whereas the perennial academic quest for me has been something more abstract, if no less illusive. Everywhere I looked, I discovered metaphors of identity. Even the label "identity" can be seen as the academic metaphor for self-in-context; and the contexts—historical, biological, cultural, and social—are fascinating and intricate in the contemporary culture and communication dialogue. Identity, regarded here as part of the communication process—functioning as metaphor—links the individual to his or her expanding world. Used in this fashion, metaphor is simply a logical way to tie together complicated, abstract data on identification from a culture-communication perspective.

Metaphor, the essence of which is the conceptualization of one thing in terms of another, has always played an extensive role in the dialogues surrounding discussions of identity.⁵ In fact, metaphors are ever-present in academic studies. Even the power of research itself has been explained metaphorically, using an analogy of crafts (Johnson & Tuttle 1989: 461). The researcher is likened to a crafts person in that both use imagination (the art) and scientific tools (the science) to create an end product (the craft). Not confined to poetry or esoteric language, metaphors are commonly used in scientific discourse, especially in abstract discussions of identity, culture, and communication. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 19) argue convincingly: "The intuitive appeal of a scientific theory has to do with how well its metaphors fit one's experience."

One goal of *Metaphors of Identity*, as already stated, is to summarize theoretical approaches to the study of identity, showing how this many-sided construct is related to the culture-communication debates. Another aim is to place these discussions in the context of concrete, ethnographic examples that explore the implications of identity for improving communication in an emerging world culture. Integrating the general summaries (part 1 of the book) and the more specific, ethnographic research (part 2), through the use of metaphor, became an effective way of organizing these debates.

Although not a book about metaphors per se, discussions of identity are linked together in the culture-communication dialogue through metaphorical imagery—whether involving the geographic metaphor of "place," employed extensively in analyses of identity and change throughout the South Pacific, or the various metaphorical

representations of the culture construct: culture represented as map, schema, code, script, or text.⁶ Visualizations of the communication process itself typically have used, among others, transportation metaphors with mass communication pictured as mediating social relations.

Metaphors of identity in the culture-communication dialogue have evolved from the older, more static images of "person in society," as the mirror of social reality; to the more action-oriented dramaturgical metaphors, suggesting role competence and "on-stage" activity; finally, to more contemporary metaphors that—rightly or wrongly—imply that we humans are in total control of our lives, and hence are potentially constructing, creating, or transforming identities as situations vary. For an excellent example of this approach, one might read Dorinne Kondo's new book, *Crafting Selves*.

The mechanical notion of interactive feedback provides the final metaphorical link in the mutuality between humans and our social and cultural environs. Building metaphors of identity, coupled with the transportation metaphors from the field of communication, afford the reader and the scientist "emotional snapshots" of a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. Certainly *image-metaphors* have played a central role in media presentations and descriptions of media influence on human behavior.

As a brief aside, while researching the literature, it occurred to me that the recent revival of interest in metaphor, the study of this figure of speech being at least two thousand years old, is probably not accidental. The audience for this topic is the generation reared on television, with its thirty-second attention span that, I would argue, is more compatible with image-metaphors as a learning device.

In my generation, people (especially scientists) were skeptical of metaphorical applications in a scientific context, preferring to relegate such emotional snapshots to poetry or art. The present generation (accustomed to making sense of their lives through lyrics, such as Neil Diamond's [1981] "You are the Sun, I am the Moon; You are the Song, I am the Tune, Play Me!") has been literally nurtured on metaphorical images! Television only enhances such visual learning at the expense of more analytic approaches to acquiring knowledge. At least one sociological study has indicated that young television watchers, rather than closely following narrations, tend to pay more attention to distinct, out-of-context images (quoted in Gitlin 1990: 38).

Metaphors, therefore, have been borrowed and used in this text to tie together otherwise disparate and seemingly unrelated parts of a complicated reality. They may be employed also to clarify the parts

themselves. On the positive side, metaphors can link multifaceted domains of human experience, providing quick visual images of these realities. Metaphor often enhances a "feeling" for context, thus dealing with interpretive subject matter that is at the very heart of scientific imagination. As a lively "poetry of everyday life," it has been argued that metaphor serves useful, even unavoidable, functions in scientific discourse (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

Although having the power to "connect, associate and gather together," metaphor undeniably has some potential weaknesses (Harries 1979b: 72). There has been widespread distrust of interpretations of metaphor in scientific discourse. Perhaps rightly so, but it can no longer be claimed that metaphors are absent in science. Correspondingly, contemporary social science has become increasingly interested in subjective thought processes. Culture, in its expressive aspects, Fernandez has claimed (1974: 132), rests upon such metaphoric sign-images.

Consciously or unconsciously, all scientists probably use "guiding metaphors" as fundamental ways of noting similarity and difference. For example, Brown has argued that the image of the world as "organism" is as deeply entrenched in Western thought as the "machine" metaphor which underlies much of our contemporary positivist philosophy (1987: 130). Scientists certainly use guiding metaphors as frameworks for interpreting meaning, but the real issues are how and with what degree of effectiveness. In the broadest sense, all scientific models, or theoretical paradigms, are metaphorical mediating devices "connecting the unconnected and bridging the gaps in causality" (Fernandez 1974: 126).

However, metaphors must be judged as to their aptness, if you will, in given contexts. Although researchers have used metaphor to help conceptualize their ideas, metaphors may limit as well as extend observations. Metaphors are especially difficult in anthropological research (ethnographic comparisons) because they do not easily translate across cultures. A case in point is Harriet Rosenberg's account of the problem of doing cross-cultural research on aging when using "feminized" metaphors to describe her results (1990: 40). Whereas we tend to think of caretakers as women, among the !Kung (Africa) men *and* women frequently cared for the elderly. "Mothering" in this context, was difficult to express in nongendered language, contributing inadvertently to subtle distortions of ethnographic truth. As we shall see in later discussions, misleading emotional imagery in media contexts can even deteriorate into a type of political persuasion (Berger 1990; Solomon 1988).

It is perfectly appropriate, therefore, to discuss identity in terms of metaphor, especially in the context of the culture-communication dialogue. In fact, one of the themes of this book is that the media are constant sources of contemporary images of reality. Metaphor, in this text, is often used synonymously with sign-image, or image-metaphor, since the image concept is especially fruitful for analyzing cultural material involving mediated communication. Identity, it will be argued, helps to establish a sort of metaphoric bridge in comprehending culture and communication.

In short, this book is about no less than the existential question: "Who am I?"—looked at holistically (in terms of the culture-communication dialogue) but also, to some extent, from a personal point of view if the reader can see his or her own life experiences grounded in such fieldwork examples. Hopefully, through this approach, the reader is provided with a solid theoretical, and scholarly, frame for understanding identity. Through concrete, ethnographic descriptions, we shall explore some of the larger implications of identity for improving interpersonal and cross-cultural communication in our emerging world culture.

Social and Cultural Awareness/Instructional Considerations

What are some of the unique features of this book? Basically, the pedagogical concerns of the book fall into three separate categories.

First, using the bridging concept of identity to strengthen our understanding of culture and communication, this volume attempts to be truly multidisciplinary. People talk a lot nowadays about multidisciplinary research—its virtues are endless—but I have not seen much evidence in practice. Such an approach implies a degree of academic risk-taking in its attempts to grasp the whole without always being totally aware of all of its parts.

I am reminded here of Jonathan Glover's apology when writing about personal identity from a multidisciplinary perspective (1988: 11): "I have had the sense of talking about things that others know much more about . . . [b]ut something is lost if everyone sticks to their own special field and a larger picture is never attempted." This book looks at the larger picture; in fact, it cannot adhere strictly to any special academic turf.⁷

Second, I want to engage the reader in a discovery frame for learning about such abstract ideas as identity, culture, and communication. Each chapter involves the reader in a series of debates

that constitute the essence of the culture-communication dialogue. Recall that identity is defined as the academic metaphor for self-in-context; hence, the examination of separate *contexts* acts to highlight major academic debates in this ongoing dialogue. Discussions are largely supported by ethnographic interpretations, an intellectual engagement intended to expand thinking about ourselves in different social and cultural contexts, thus enlarging our sense of diversity. If the goal of creating and sharing information is to reach mutual understanding, this enterprise is at least the beginning of effective communication.

The so-called communication revolution, suggests Dean Barnlund (1989: 139), rather than bringing about a harmonious, McLuhanesque "global village," may have dramatically increased intercultural and intersocietal encounters, hence potentially resulting in more inter-human conflicts. Through telecommunications systems, we are today immediately linked with peoples of vastly differing lifestyles that often sharply contrast with our own. In a real sense, communication has become the major challenge for world harmony. As we move toward this global village, with its increasingly frequent cultural and social contacts, we must learn more about the world views, lifestyles, and communication patterns of our neighbors in order to maintain constructive, rather than conflicting, encounters (Barnlund 1989).

Attribution training is the academic term to describe how people learn judgments and general principles that lie behind observed behavior: In essence, people learn the "how, why, and when of human behavior" through, for example, reading short case studies about socially or culturally different groups (Brislin, et al. 1986: 21–22). Ethnographic evidence offers such attribution training in the present volume. Brislin and associates call this approach the "culture assimilator method" for learning new material about culture (1986: 21–26). They suggest that using such examples can facilitate group discussions, can inform us about individual and group relations, or may simply contribute to individual adjustments to diversity in general. At the very least, the ethnographic approach may help to demonstrate where our previous assumptions have been less than adequate. *Metaphors of Identity* adopts many of these same ideas for "putting ourselves in different cultural shoes," although society, as well as culture, is an important concern of this book.

Focus is on the beliefs that individuals bring with them, often influenced by the media, to evaluate people from other cultural or social contexts. Hence, considered in this volume are the psychological

constructs (motivation, knowledge, and ability) that can act on these beliefs and values, ultimately to help or hinder in the development of both social sensitivity and cultural competence. The ultimate goal is to facilitate communication. After all, to communicate may not be just a useful social skill but the very price we pay for evolutionary adaptability (Crowley 1982).

Third, my objective has been to use metaphor as the organizational frame for tying together data on culture, identity, and communication—linking these multifaceted domains of human experience and, at the same time, providing visual images for these same realities. In spite of obvious limitations, metaphor has served some positive functions in scientific discourse. As Fernandez has suggested (1974), we may have overdone analyses of culture using language at the expense of images and impressions. Metaphor, then, allows the reader and the scientist to go beyond mere language in comprehension of this academic abstraction we know as “identity.” Image-metaphors, it is further argued, may be especially helpful in analyzing cultural material involving the media.

These objectives are ambitious and challenging. Nonetheless, it has been an exciting prospect pulling together such complex information and sharing a discovery that is, for me, the heart of learning and the proper use of knowledge. In preparing this book, however, I have had to admit that the topic of identity is always multifaceted. It is like trying to make sense of the reflections on a prism, each side offering new and different possibilities. Hopefully, with a judicious use of metaphor to provide some structure to the book, we can unravel some of the mysteries of identity, resolve some conflicting ideas in the culture-communication dialogue, and achieve a unitary whole around this many-sided construct of human identification.

The Book's Format/Parts 1 and 2

Chapter 1 concludes with a brief summary of the book's intended format. *Metaphors of Identity* is divided into two major parts, each section representing a separate theoretical thrust: Part 1 surveys diverse scholarly approaches to the study of identity in the culture-communication dialogue. It proposes that culture is “communicable knowledge” that, through the process of identity, functions to help individuals cope in specific cultural and social contexts. In short, identity functions primarily to help sustain self. Part 2 is more

research-oriented. Using my twenty years of inquiry into this subject, I try in this section to elucidate neglected aspects of the identity construct, exploring the social, as well as cultural, implications of theories of identity while linking multiple contexts of identification to concrete ethnographic interpretations.

Identity may be, as Weigert and associates suggest, the essential that transforms biological creatures into human persons (1990: 31). The place of biology in identity formation is examined in chapter 2, "Biology, Culture, and Communication," grounding identity in both culture and biology and offering a functional analysis of the properties of the self-concept which serve to enhance communication—ultimately, human adaptation and survival. Identity is considered in the context of split-brain patients, multiple personality, and other psychological pathologies; and a "doctrine of consistencies" is offered to explain why adaptive fictions often surround the identity construct in the debates over personality unity or diversity. How can we organize our identities successfully in an ever-expanding pluralistic society increasingly influenced by telecommunications and other media?

Questions about where our Western notions of the self originated are the focus of chapter 3, "History, Culture, and the Concept of the Person." Considering both the public and private layers of personhood, this chapter traces the emergence of the modern concept of "individuality," demonstrating how changing forms of self-conception indicate changing cultural configurations. Examples from contemporary research on "naming and identity," a special form of symbolic communication, explore the relationships between identity and communication in cultural context.

The focus of chapter 4, "Culture, Identity, and Communication," is squarely on the interrelatedness of these key constructs, specifically from the point of view of the communication sciences. It critiques major theoretical approaches to the study of identity in the exciting contemporary culture-communication dialogue. Using an adaptive-growth model, the chapter proposes a functional view of identity to explain the relationship between culture and communication. The interpersonal-intergroup distinction, so frequently drawn in the communication sciences, may have oversimplified the complex nature of many communication situations (Gudykunst 1990: 23). Thus, a Japanese example was chosen to highlight the principle of cultural context.

Metaphors, media, and social changes are examined in chapter 5, "Identity of Place or Mis-placed Identity," in an attempt to address complex issues, such as the "new ethnicity" and the social

implications of modern-day cultural revivals. The book's theoretical model is demonstrated in light of the author's Fulbright research in New Zealand, which attempted to explain changes in the locus of former "identities of place," at the same time considering major educational challenges of this thesis. The critical question is how can we retain a strong national identity while still recognizing a variety of interest groups, ethnic styles, and the continuing psychological need for separate minority identities in our increasingly pluralistic world.

"Males in Transition" is a much-needed complement to the expanding research on women. Chapter 6, then, looks at the connections between masculine gender, culture, and identity, offering an hypothesis about the cultural construction of an "oppositional identity" that considers gender-learning and its effects on identity and intergroup relations in more informal settings. Media and male imagery are linked through various metaphors of masculinity gleaned from the existing ethnographic literature. Recent research on metaphor analysis is also included, which supports an argument for positive gender-identity transformations. After all, identity is viewed from a performance-growth perspective with individual change at least a potential goal.

Using the "closet" metaphor as symbolic of the inclusion versus exclusion debate, chapter 7, "Homophobia and the Cultural Construction of the Social Stranger," questions the cultural myths that sustain a category of "social stranger" for sexual minorities. People become different when treated differently, not because they are different. To be arbitrarily separated, socially or culturally, from the mainstream may be the real issue. The chapter further explores the psychological and social consequences of an externally imposed identity, examines theoretical issues using the author's Swedish research, and points out some of the limits of media influence on social justice for sexual minorities. What are some creative solutions to the problems of exclusiveness and/or discrimination for sexual minorities?

"Metaphors and Scientific Discourse In Social Gerontology," chapter 8, asks how scholars have viewed aging and the aged metaphorically, as well as some of the social implications of using such theoretical analogies. The major debates in the culture-communication dialogue have been over what aging was like in other times and places and where it might be going in the future. This chapter considers aging and its identity transformations in cultural and social contexts. It reiterates the functional theme of the book, attempts to link individual and society and, through a review of

metaphorical imagery in the research literature, offers a bridge to the somewhat more speculative discussions of chapter 9.

The quest for meaningful self-process in an emerging world culture is explored in "Communication: Identity, Community, and Survival." Using the performance model, this chapter examines the concept of a global identity, asking how such a flexible identity structure relates to communication and "cultural competence" as guides for future transformations of self. Technology, after all, is created by human beings and may not be intrinsically opposed to cultural or personal adaptability.

Continuing the dialogue begun in chapter 5, the contemporary debates over multiculturalism in the schools are summarized in chapter 9. Education, by all means, should include attention to cultural difference; but culture may not be the only—even the most important—determinant of human behavior or human communication. Nevertheless, the culture-communication dialogue is far from neutral territory today. The novel idea of community as "romantic metaphor" is critiqued in light of contemporary theories of communication and culture. These debates typically have centered around so-called media effects. However, as Anderson and Meyer (1988: 160) point out, trying to predict "effects" (directly or indirectly) has been a contradictory business. Is mass communication still a useful concept in this dialogue?

Chapter 10, "Limits of Metaphor in the Culture-Communication Dialogue," sketches major theoretical conclusions while, at the same time, summarizing the critical debates of the book. Since metaphor has been used as the organizational frame for this dialogic analysis, some brief discussion of the intent of metaphor in scientific discourse is addressed. How helpful have metaphors been in scientific conceptualizations of identity in the contemporary culture-communication dialogue?

Principal Points

Identity is defined as the academic metaphor for self-in-context, and the contexts are examined chapter by chapter to show its many-sidedness. *Culture* is viewed as "communicable knowledge" that, through processes such as identity, "helps individuals to cope within a particular environment" but, furthermore, must be passed on from generation to generation (Harris & Moran 1989: 107). This approach avoids the contemporary tendency to equate culture with subjective

cognition, thereby reducing culture to identification. *Communication* is a dynamic process of human interaction involving symbolic transactions between individuals or groups *and*, in today's world, mediated experiences as well. *Metaphor*, the figurative conceptualization of one thing in terms of another, constitutes a didactic device for organizing the debates in the culture-communication dialogue.

Notes

1. Communication is defined as a dynamic process of human interaction involving symbolic transactions between individuals and groups—in short, the way people relate in social groups and through mediated social experiences. Stressing human interaction, potential relationship development, and exchanges of information, this approach is not essentially different from Rogers and Kincaid's definition of communication as "a convergence of meaning achieved by symbolic interaction" (1981: 31).

2. Culture change is often slow, cumulative, and conservative; hence, cultural identities stress continuity over transformation. Social identities, by contrast, facilitate change and adaptation (Fitzgerald 1974: 3).

3. Altheide 1985; Meyrowitz 1986; Real 1989; Littlejohn 1989; McQuail 1989; Dennis 1989; Berger 1990; and Brody 1990.

4. *Media* refer to explicit communication media, including newspapers, telephone, radio, computer terminals, VCRs, cable and, of course, the ever-present TV. The distinction between print media and electronic media is less frequently made as both increasingly resemble television in terms of media format. Altheide believes that all cultural activities today share a media component (1985: 232).

5. Metaphors fall into the larger category of semiotics, the science of signs. Metaphors are only specific types of images derived through analogy. Hence, Berger claims that various aspects of culture can be analyzed in much the same way one might analyze signs (1990: 144).

6. Figurative language, normal to both human thought and discourse, comes in a variety of forms: imaginative, emotional, and cognitive (Sacks 1979). The present text is primarily concerned with deliberate attempts to use *image-metaphors* in the conceptualization of research ideas. Questions, such as the following, have recently been the subject of intense research in psychology and linguistics: "Is cognition shaped by metaphor or is metaphor an illustration of cognition?" (Cohen 1979: 14); "Is metaphoric skill a linguistic ability or a broader perceptual capacity of human beings?" (Gardner

& Winner 1979: 123); or, "What happens in the brains of metaphorizing individuals (e.g., during strokes)?" (1979: 134). Although fascinating, these inquiries go beyond the intent of the present volume.

7. Kenneth Boulding, commenting on McLuhan's ideas: "It is perhaps typical of very creative minds that they hit very large nails not quite on the head" (quoted in Rogers & Kincaid 1981: 256). Multidisciplinary approaches are inevitably subject to this charge!