Chapter 1
Introduction

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Byron G. Adams

Introduction

Every person grapples with the question "Who and/or what am I?" at some point in their life. The answer to this question speaks to their identity, both in terms of process and content. Identity as a process accounts for how people go about (un)consciously (re)constructing and (re)negotiating a meaningful sense of self; this results in identity content or aspects (e.g., gender, ethnicity) that the person uses to define themselves as either similar to or distinct from others. Aspects of identity are critically shaped throughout a person's life, for example, during adolescence or during the process of them establishing a career. People seek to establish a clear "sense of self" because knowing oneself helps in decision-making and informs how one behaves (Farmer et al., 2003). However, this self is not established in isolation; it is co-created with others, both within the confines of particular contexts and across the intersections of different contexts. Answers surrounding questions about identity are essential for how well people are doing, no matter where in the world they are.

Henrich and his colleagues (2010) categorize the world as either WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic) and non-WEIRD (viz., non-Western contexts, the majority world, or the global south). What distinguishes the non-Western from the Western (terms used in this book) are often the social complexities faced by people in non-Western contexts—complexities brought on by the historical, socioeconomic, and health-related challenges, as well as ethnic,

B. G. Adams (✉)
University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Tilburg University, Tilburg, The Netherlands

Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa
e-mail: b.g.adams@uva.nl

cultural, and religious diversity, and the beliefs and norms of different groups within these contexts. In non-Western contexts, these complexities contribute substantially toward how people go about "carving out" an identity for themselves within a particular setting.

As a representation of the multifaceted and intersectional nature of the self, their identity allows people a facility to resolve two eternal needs with which they continuously grapple: to be unique and to belong (Brewer, 1991). Identity accommodates both the personal and relational/social aspects of the self. First, personal identity accounts for what makes a person distinct from others, captured by their personality, personal attributes, values, and goals. Second, relational identity accounts for social roles people hold and the interpersonal relationships that define them (e.g., mother, doctor, and employee). Third, social identity accounts for the groups to which people belong and the similarities they have with others. Social identity accounts for people's affiliations, connections, and memberships within and toward groups (see Adams & Van de Vijver, 2015, 2017). Many aspects of identity are predetermined and relatively stable (e.g., biological sex and race). However, people also have many choices available for how they go about defining themselves (e.g., hobbies and work), which makes relational and social aspects of identity more fluid or malleable. In combination, these relatively stable and more fluid aspects allow people to determine "who and what they are" as unique individuals, within the roles they embody and the groups to which they belong.

Identity is important both theoretically and practically because it is associated with (a) how people are doing in in terms of well-being and health (Bauer et al., 2008; Dimitrova et al., 2013; Galyapina et al., 2020; Schwartz et al., 2019), (b) how well they adapt to new contexts (Adams & Van de Vijver, 2017; Berry, 2013; Yağmur & Van de Vijver, 2012), and (c) how well they get along with others both interpersonally and at the group level (Gaertner et al., 2016; Hogg et al., 2017; Sanders, 2002). Identity has implications throughout people's development from childhood (Pnevmatikos et al., 2010; Rogers, 2020) and adolescence (Arnett, 2007; Klimstra & Van Doeselaar, 2017), through to adulthood (Beaumont, 2017; Fadjukoff & Kroger, 2016). Given the importance of identity both as a developmental task and for psychosocial functioning, it is essential to gain a better understanding of what identity is in non-Western contexts and for non-Western groups. In light of the contextual factors presented by non-Western contexts, we are able to (a) find new and interesting ways to study identity, (b) define the role identity plays as a developmental task, and (c) better explain the variability in psychosocial functioning of identity across different groups.

It has become and remains evident over the last two decades that a significant limitation in psychological science has been the underrepresentation of non-Western peoples and contexts in psychological research (Arnett, 2016; Henrich et al., 2010; Thalmayer et al., 2020). A primary objective of this book is to take into account the rich and diverse contexts in which identity develops. With this aim, we distance ourselves from perspectives in Western psychology that strive to decontextualize psychological constructs and offer untested, culturally bound, and blind claims of universality. In this book, we accomplish this by seeking to balance established

Western views on identity by amplifying the non-Western perspective in two ways. First, we seek insight into how identity is conceptualized, understood, and studied in non-Western contexts using a bottom-up, more indigenous psychological approach (Bender & Adams, 2021). Second, we consider the value of established Western theoretical perspectives for understanding identity in non-Western contexts through a more top-down, (cross-)cultural psychological approach, which takes into account the limitations of the applied theoretical perspectives and models (Bender & Adams, 2021). The combination of these approaches allows for a better understanding of what identity is for peoples in different non-Western contexts, and we therefore contribute to the established literature in two ways. First, the rich and diverse contributions from the non-Western world contribute toward developing a holistic view of identity. Second, this holistic view of identity provides insight into processes crucial for enriching and enlarging established Western theoretical perspectives and models.

Overview

We present perspectives for identity in non-Western contexts and groups in three parts: (1) identity in underrepresented world regions and contexts, (2) identity of specific non-Western groups, and (3) identity perspectives important in non-Western contexts.

    Part I, Identity in Underrepresented World Regions, begins with an overview of identity in sub-Saharan Africa by Naudé in Chap. 2. She evaluated both Western and sub-Saharan perspectives about different (in particular, social) identity aspects important for examining people in sub-Saharan Africa. Naudé provides an overview of the importance of national, ethnic, religious, and cultural identity perspectives. In addition, she evaluates how indigenous, spiritual, and postcolonial identities and the symbols, stories, poetry, and folklore through which these identity aspects are formed are articulated. All of these facets are considered while accounting for the impact of acculturation and globalization for identity in the region. In Chap. 3, Sugimura, Umemura, and Nelson examine identity in East Asia from a developmental perspective. In particular, this chapter focuses on the importance of personal identity development and attachment in changing societies, accounting for the shifts in the cultural dimension of individualism (Greenfield, 2016). Herein, the authors consider a more cross-cultural perspective by examining identity in East Asia using established models and theoretical perspectives while accounting for the importance of the nuance provided by the particular context. In Chap. 4, Gibbons, Poelker, and Hasbun provide an overview of how identity might be understood in Central and South America. They present empirical research from the region and provide an account of the extent to which traditional or heritage identities, global and Western identities, and hybrid identities can be classified within the Cheek and Cheek (2018) identity domains. In Chap. 5, Jessop examines Caribbean cultural identity through the socio-historical identity formation theory (SHIFT) and postulates a framework

to capture the complexity associated with the cultural identity of the Caribbean peoples and diaspora. In the last three chapters in this part, the authors take a closer look at more specific settings (as opposed to broader geographical contexts). In Chap. 6, Ng Tseung-Wong examines different identities in the multicultural Mauritian context, in particular the importance of the relationship between subordinate (ethnic and religious) and superordinate (national) identity. In Chap. 7, Javakhishvili examines identity aspects in the South Caucasus. She focuses on personal and social (gender, national, ethnic, and religious) identity aspects and argues why these are important for people from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Given the dearth of empirical psychological studies across these contexts, she does this by relying on neighboring social science perspectives that have studied identity within this region. In Chap. 8, the final chapter in this part, Lebedeva, Galyapina, and Van de Vijver examine how different social identity aspects, such as ethnic identity, ethnic self-consciousness, religious, civic, and regional identities, have become deconstructed since the collapse of the USSR. Given the complexity of the post-Soviet space, the authors relate these social identities to intercultural relations in the post-Soviet environment.

In **Part II, Identity of Specific Non-Western Groups**, we present aspects of identity for specific non-Western groups, both in non-Western and Western contexts. In Chap. 9, Buzea provides insight into the complexity of the Roma people, particularly in Eastern Europe, and the difficulty associated with the ethnic identity of a group that experiences such high levels of discrimination. Similarly, in Chap. 10, Fleischmann and Verkuyten examine the importance of identity for the Muslim minority in Western societies. Specifically, the importance of social identity aspects, such as religious identity and multiple group identification, is considered and how these inform intragroup and intergroup processes. In Chap. 11, identity aspects of the Kurdish and Alevi minority groups in Turkey are examined by Acar, Sandal Önal, and Şen. The authors specifically consider the boundaries of Turkish national identity for these groups in relation to their own ethnic identities. The authors sought to understand how inclusion and exclusion are understood both for mainstream Turkish and the minority Kurdish and Alevi people. The last chapter in this section provides some interesting insights into how identity is constructed for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Dudgeon and Bray discuss the impact of colonization on these groups and unpack the challenges they have overcome in the quest for cultural identity. They present a model in which they (a) examine the importance of relational aspects for the cultural identity and (b) position social and emotional well-being as central for understanding the cultural identity of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

In **Part III, Identity Perspectives Important for Non-Western Contexts**, we sought to consider a few general perspectives important for the study of identity in non-Western contexts. These chapters in particular provide an overview of established Western literature, its applicability to and application in non-Western contexts. In Chap. 13, Klimstra and Adams consider how developmental perspectives, especially related to personal identity, may be relevant for non-Western contexts. Specifically, we examine how personal aspects of identity might not be as distinct

from relational and social aspects as theorized in Western contexts. In Chap. 14, Blommaert, Lu, and Li delve into online identity—their conceptualization of the "selfie" is imbedded in specific examples from China. They consider how identity is negotiated on digital platforms and the implications this has for our general consideration of identity. In Chap. 15, Tavitian-Elmadjian and Bender focus on the role identity plays for intergroup processes by considering the role and importance of self-affirmation, first in terms of how it is studied in relation to threat theory in Western contexts and after that, its applicability within a diverse non-Western context such as Lebanon. In Chap. 16, the final substantive chapter, Crafford examines the central role played by the work in which people are engaged in how they define themselves. The author provides an overview of how work identity is conceptualized and studied. This allows insight into the value of work in non-Western contexts and how people give meaning to their lives through work.

Concluding Remarks

Given that much of the theory around identity remains rooted in predominantly Western understanding, conceptualization, and lines of inquiry, this book aims to serve as a bridge between Western and non-Western perspectives on models of identity. What is evident in many of these chapters is that we need to account for the indigenous perspectives and culturally situated experiences of non-Western people when studying identity. Within their chapters, contributors to this book have gone about integrating important developments and advancements in identity research in primarily non-Western underrepresented contexts, regions, and groups. Given the nature and complexity of identity as a construct, it is essential to consider this book an introductory text for understanding non-Western identity. It is by no means exhaustive as many vital aspects still need to be covered, including (a) identity politics, (b) the multidimensionality of identity, (c) methodological considerations of identity, (d) LGBTQI+ identity (in non-Western contexts), and (e) the identity of native, indigenous, and diasporic groups across the world, to mention but a few. While we were unable to consider these topics in this volume, we consider these areas of research as crucial for the continued broadening of our understanding of non-Western identity.

However, despite these limitations, through this book we have gained a better understanding of non-Western identity, and we move closer toward a more holistic view of identity by integrating non-Western theoretical perspectives and models into the Western perspectives. Through the authentic representation of what identity is across the non-Western world, we have sourced authors from different parts of the globe and provided them with extensive scientific freedom to develop their discussions. While predominantly psychological, some authors have also considered additional social (e.g., sociological and anthropological) or managerial (e.g., critical management studies) scientific perspectives to enrich our understanding of identity. The result has been a volume that provides novel and unique insights into identity,

with implications and suggestions for how to move identity research forward more inclusively and critically.

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