



Communication Theory of Identity



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Overview

- Communication Theory of Identity was created by Michael Hecht
- This theory was created during the 1980s
- It was an idea based off of Hecht's reading of Eastern Philosophy, specifically Taoism
- "The main goal of this theory is to capture the complex, fluid and multilayered nature of identity by articulating a "layered" perspective of identity in which communication is conceptualized as identity enactment or performance rather than merely a cause or result of communication"
- Communication theory suggest we have multiple identities

Four Identity Layers

- An integral part of this theory is the four identity layers
- The first layer is the Personal Identity
 - This is how a person defines themselves
- The second layer is the Relational Identity
 - This is who you are in the eyes of other people
- The third layer is the Enacted Identity
 - This is how you express your identity to others
- The fourth and final layer is the Communal Identity
 - This is how society defines identity and identities

Example



Communication as an identity

- One of the key parts of CTI is that it is to see communication as identity and identity as communication
- Before CTI, scholars focused on how communication developed identity and how identity causes people to communicate
- In 1959, Erving Goffman wrote about communication as identity performance and saw communication as more than something caused by identity but an element of identity itself
- CTI agrees with this as when we talk, we are our identifiers

Communication as an Identity. Continued

- A simple example of this is how we express ourselves
- When we express ourselves we are more likely to be self conscious because we wonder what others will think of us
- We may have two different types of identities
- A person can be their own communication because the act of expression is one's identity

Citations

- Braithwaite, D. O., & Schrod, P. (2022). *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication : multiple perspectives* (3rd edition.). Routledge