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Abstract

The emergence of Deaf culture and recent developments in identity research fueled by cultural diversity has ignited exploration of identity development in deaf people. The issue of how individuals go through the process of developing identities related to being deaf is now receiving much attention. Two major theoretical models in the literature, specifically racial identity development models and bicultural/acculturation models are presented and then discussed in terms of how they might apply to deaf people. Subsequently, we describe two separate measures that have been developed to empirically test the application of these models to deaf populations. While research on both measures indicates good psychometric properties, ongoing reconceptualization of social identity models that may explain how deaf people develop identities related to Deaf and hearing societies continues to be necessary. It is hoped that these measures will lead to better understanding of the relationship between aspects of identity and healthy psychological adjustment in deaf people.

Introduction

The interactivity between the individual and the collective culture(s) of that individual that influences identity formulation is a phenomenon that currently occupies much interest in the social sciences (Holland et al., 1998; Valsiner & Lawrence, 1997). Historically, when the social context was stable, one's identity constellation tended to be relatively constant (Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997). But when the social context metamorphosed into diverse segments due to the infusion of new groups of people, identity formation then became a dynamic process whereby individuals struggled to integrate their membership within several different collective cultures.

The socialization process in modern societies has been transformed by the rise in immigration and technology, and this has given rise to problems of identity. Within the United States, the infusion of immigrants and the increased presence of a multitude of cultural and ethnic groups is now forcing an acknowledgment of diverse group identifications not necessarily based on a collective White majority group (Sue & Sue, 1999). These changes also require the development of new ways by which diverse groups can co-exist. Subsequently, there has been a recent explosion of

published work on identity across several disciplines, as based on psychological, sociological, and anthropological foundations. Most focus on addressing the question of what identity is and how it is measured, in order to facilitate individual adjustment within and between the different cultural contexts found in the United States. Deaf people have not been immune to these changes. With the recent conceptualization of Deaf culture, identity categorizations for deaf persons are now being explored. In this paper, we examine the concept of identity and how it develops. We subsequently describe deaf identity and present two particular social identity models that contribute to the conceptualization of deaf identity.

The Salience of Identity

Identity is an aspect of psychological functioning that is critical for a sense of well-being and positive personal development (Waterman, 1992). It is a complex social construction that incorporates self-representations or self-perceptions (Baumeister, 1997; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), which evolve out of various interactions with others in multiple ongoing social contexts (Baumeister, 1997; Grotevant, 1992; Harter, 1997; Kroger, 1996). This evolution is a multi-dimensional, reflexive process involving psychological motivation, cultural knowledge, and the ability to perform appropriate roles (Fitzgerald, 1993). As new information about oneself emerges, there is often a process of identity restructuring. Hence, one's identity, or rather identities, is very much influenced by the responses of others and molded by past and ongoing experience, a process that continues through the life span (Grotevant, 1992). These identities are strongly related to social expectations and the cultural context. Basically, identities become the pivot by which people select behaviors, change their self-representations and in turn influence their cultural worlds. Woodward (1997) argued that as people experience their sense of self through internalized images and external pressures, identities are forged. This occurs through the perception of differences that are frequently constructed as oppositions, leading to the establishment of classificatory structures that incorporate fundamental distinctions between "us and them."

Theories of Identity Development

Theoretical foundations are a prerequisite for describing and assessing identity in any one individual. Currently, there are two distinct theoretical frameworks in the study of social identity in general. The first

originates in the study of racial identity development, and the second is based on immigrant groups acculturating to a new host society. Each model is believed to have evolved out of the collective experiences of different cultural groups in America (Birman, 1994). Therefore, although both models are essentially bicultural in nature, the philosophy and structure behind each differs.

The first model, the racial-ethnic identity model, focuses on how members of oppressed racial or ethnic groups develop a positive sense of self in difficult circumstances. This model presumes that these individuals move from a passive-acceptance or preencounter phase, during which they internalize the dominant White culture's oppressive views of their group, towards an immersion stage in which the White culture is rejected in favor of the culture of origin. Lastly, there is an integration phase where individuals feel free to select particular cultural behaviors that seem most appropriate for the specific situation in which they find themselves (Cross, 1971; Glickman, 1993; Helms, 1990; Sue & Sue, 1999). This gives rise to the expectation that an integrative or bicultural stance ultimately leads to enhanced psychological health encompassing the possibility of finding values in both cultures. It also implies that individuals in this phase can adjust their cultural behavior to fit various situations without experiencing undue conflict. Sue and Sue (1999) warned that progression is not always linear from preencounter to integration. Culturally different persons may exhibit conformity characteristics in some situations, and immersion type behavior in others. Much depends on the situations in which individuals find themselves.

The second model focuses on biculturalism primarily in a behavioral sense, as a process by which individuals adapt to or acculturate to American culture while maintaining ties and allegiance to the culture of origin (Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980). This model originated in the study of how groups immigrating to the United States integrated their membership within a new culture while maintaining a sense of identification with their culture of origin.

At the turn of the 1900s, either one of two alternatives were believed to be possible for acculturating individuals; such individuals could give up their culture of origin and assimilate to the majority culture, or they could retain their cultural affiliation and remain on the margins of the larger society (Birman, 1994). Assimilation was considered to be the most adaptive acculturation style. Therefore, most of the early measures on acculturation tended to be unidirectional and focused primarily on individuals adjustment to *either* the majority culture *or* their ascribed culture. However, following the civil rights movement in the United States,

it was found that acculturative processes that resulted in the loss of one's culture were related to distress (Cross, 1971), low self-esteem (Franco, 1983), and poor achievement (Buriel, 1984).

Today biculturalism is understood to be a two-directional process in which the acculturating individual "undergoes two independent processes of acculturation - one to the culture of origin and one to the new host culture" (Birman, 1994; p. 269). In this case, individuals can be acculturated to either, both, or neither culture, and four possible acculturative styles have been identified in the literature: assimilation, marginalization, separation (immersion within culture of origin), and biculturalism (Mendoza, 1984; Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980). Moreover, it is no longer believed that adaptation to a host culture necessarily requires the rejection of the culture of origin.

Overall, bicultural/acculturation models have tended to focus on behavioral dimensions, or how people behave in terms of cultural requirements. However, the process of establishing dual cultural affiliations often involves psychological conflicts that are not fully addressed within the bicultural model. In contrast, studies on racial identity development have tended to focus on the psychological dynamics of identification with different cultures without examining the behavioral dimensions involved in identity. Therefore, current researchers have begun to recognize the need to integrate both behavioral and psychological dimensions in order to better understand how bicultural identity and acculturative styles emerge (Landrine & Klonoff, 1994). For example, one writer proposed as many as seven types of biculturalism, involving different combinations in the level of psychological identification and actual cultural behaviors (Birman, 1994). Current thinking is also beginning to shift away from bicultural approaches per se, towards a recognition that many individuals struggle with not two, but possibly three or more cultural affiliations. Nevertheless, understanding biculturalism has provided an important framework for understanding how individuals adapt to multiple cultural affiliations.

Deaf Identities

Before attempting to explore how each of the two identity models we have described can contribute to our understanding of deaf identities, we need briefly to explore deaf identity issues per se. Historically, labeling oneself as deaf, Deaf (representing affiliation with Deaf culture), hard of hearing, hearing impaired, or "hearing" (representing adherence to a mindset that devalues the state of being deaf) carried different connotations

regarding the cultural affiliations of deaf and hard of hearing individuals. These choices often reflected individual perceptions of one's deafness as a disability versus a state of being that makes the person a member of a unique cultural group. Such labels also often reflected individual preferences for socialization with deaf or hearing peers (Higgins & Nash, 1996; Leigh & Lewis, 1999). For example, those who were labeled as "hearing" were perceived as preferring to socialize with hearing persons, and "denying" their deafness. Those who labeled themselves as "Deaf" strongly identified with deaf culture and exhibited a strong sense of pride in their membership within the deaf community. For many years, the possibility of being truly "bicultural" (meaning ability to connect with hearing as well as deaf societies) was rarely entertained, particularly because Deaf persons were concerned that incorporating behaviors, attitudes, and values from the dominant hearing culture would in essence lead to the demise of Deaf culture (Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996). This reaction stems from the fact that, as a community, deaf people have had to face many of the same linguistic and cultural pressures that various other immigrating or minority groups have had to face in the United States. As a result, Deaf people have gravitated towards each other for centuries (Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996). Those who see themselves as part of the Deaf-World have embraced American Sign Language (ASL) but historically have faced discrimination and relentless oppression of their language just as African-Americans have faced oppression of their equal rights in society. This linguistic issue serves as a very important dynamic in the formation and maintenance of Deaf culture.

Though overt rejection of "hearing" values has been an ongoing theme within the deaf community over the last several decades, deaf people nonetheless have had to struggle to balance their membership within the deaf community and the majority hearing society, a society which represents different standards than those to which deaf community members adhere. This struggle to balance membership within the two communities parallels the struggle of individuals immigrating to America. Most deaf people have hearing family members, employment requirements and must venture out into the hearing society for daily essentials (Davis, 1995; Higgins, 1980). Recent societal transformations are also changing the face of the "hearing-deaf" struggle for deaf people. The decline in residential schooling and deaf club attendance, the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990), and advances in technology (e.g., availability of telecommunications, closed captioning, cochlear implant technology, hearing aids), have all served to increase contact with

hearing environments. Schools are also beginning to develop what is called "bilingual-bicultural programs" for deaf children. Such trends indicate a move from the cultural to the bicultural, or, in other words, from Deaf culture to traversing both Deaf and "hearing" societies (Padden, 1996).

According to Padden (1996), "to talk of the 'bicultural' is not to talk about an additive state, to be of two cultures, but more about states of tension" (p. 95). These states of tension emerge as deaf individuals deal with peers in different parts of the deaf community and with hearing persons in the workplace, restaurants and the supermarkets. In support of this notion, Grosjean (1992) described biculturalism in Deaf people as not only incorporating simple competence in two cultures (as in bilingualism), but also involving the ability to negotiate the tensions between the competing and often profoundly contradictory beliefs and values between the Deaf and hearing cultures. Indeed, currently a number of deaf people describe feeling torn between their loyalties to these two cultures (Leigh, 1999). Hence, to be seen as bicultural can be perceived as either fraught with danger in terms of the loss of a Deaf identity, or as a way to accommodate to new realities.

So where do we go from here? It is time to explore how biculturalism, specifically meaning the ability to interact with both Deaf and hearing worlds, can be framed as a healthy form of identity for deaf individuals. Both the racial-ethnic identity models and the bicultural/acculturation models of identity have been used to formulate theoretical bases for how deaf people develop identities reflecting affiliations with deaf and with hearing people. We now briefly present recent research on deaf identity measures that use both of these theoretical foundations.

Empirical Investigations

Neil Glickman (Glickman, 1993; Glickman & Carey, 1993) used the racial identity model as a theoretical foundation for his theory of deaf identity development. His model of identity development proposed that individuals move from a passive acceptance of hearing culture values towards an increasingly bicultural stance. He defined four identity categories in this process. The first refers to those who are culturally hearing, where hearing norms are the reference point for normality, health, and spoken communication. The role of deafness in one's identity is not emphasized. There is an implicit assumption that this category, the first one in the deaf identity developmental sequence, does not reflect ideal adjustment for the deaf person in that it encompasses passive acceptance

of hearing values. This has come to mean that such adjustment may be inherently pathological within this model. The second category covers the culturally marginal, those who do not fit into either hearing or Deaf environments. Their identities emerge without clear notions of hearingness or deafness. The third identity reflects immersion in Deaf culture to the extent that there is a positive and uncritical identification with Deaf persons. Hearing values are denigrated. Lastly, those with a bicultural identity possess the skill to negotiate comfortably hearing and Deaf settings. They embrace Deaf culture and also value hearing contacts. This last category poses the possibility of greater flexibility and presumably better psychological health.

The original Deaf Identity Development Scale (DIDS) was a 60-item scale that was developed to measure the four cultural identity constructs described above (Glickman, 1993; Glickman & Carey, 1993). It consisted of four subscales, each with 15 items each that tapped into the constructs described at each stage of identity development. Administration of the DIDS was conducted using either a written English version or a videotaped version in American Sign Language. Respondents were then categorized depending on which subscale they obtained the highest score. Initial research testing the reliability and validity of the scale was conducted by using 105 deaf college students enrolled at Gallaudet University and 56 members of the Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA). An item analysis revealed problems with some items, which Glickman either dropped or reassigned to a more appropriate subscale. The resulting DIDS consisted of 14 hearing, 14 immersion, 14 bicultural, and 12 marginal items for a total of 54 items to be rated on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. He found acceptable reliabilities for each of the subscales and reported alpha's of .86 for the hearing subscale, .77 for the marginal subscale, .83 for the immersion subscale, and .81 for the bicultural subscale. Findings indicated that the four subscales measure related but not identical constructs. The results also demonstrated the viability of operationally measuring Deaf people's orientation to and affiliation with the deaf community. Glickman also gave specific directions for improving the DIDS.

Leigh, Marcus, Dobosh and Allen (1998) modified the DIDS in order to include hearing people affiliated with Deaf culture, in particular hearing children of deaf adults. They modified three items on the culturally hearing subscale, four on the culturally marginal scale, one on the immersion scale, and five on the bicultural scale. Modifications involved changing items from self as deaf/hearing-impaired to parents as deaf/hearing-impaired in order to be more relevant for those with deaf

parents. Such changes enabled the authors to begin exploring the impact that being raised in a deaf family might have on a hearing person's identity.

The modified DIDS was administered to a sample of 244 deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing respondents (adult children of hearing parents and of deaf parents). Alpha's for the modified DIDS were .85 for the hearing subscale, .79 for the marginal subscale, and .80 for the immersion subscale. The alpha for the bicultural subscale was .33. Because the alpha for this scale was found to be lower than the Glickman study, and unable to discriminate between subjects in this study, it was not included in follow-up analysis. Respondents were compared on the basis of hearing status of self and parents on the hearing, marginal, and immersion scales. Results proved to be quite enlightening regarding differences in how each of the groups saw themselves. Children of deaf adults (Codas) were found to be more marginalized, less immersed, and similarly "hearing" in comparison to deaf persons with deaf parents. Hard of hearing respondents with deaf parents endorsed more hearing values and fewer deaf values in comparison to deaf counterparts, and also appeared to be more marginalized. There were no significant differences between deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals with hearing parents.

The development of the DIDS has greatly facilitated the academic study of social identity in deaf people. In exploring the foundations of the DIDS, Maxwell and Zea (1998) noted some considerations that called for further attention. Specifically, the four DIDS subscales as currently constructed appear to mix several dimensions of identity (i.e., attitudes, behaviors, and psychological identification) within each subscale, making it difficult to examine the relationship that the various dimensions related to cultural involvement have with each other. It also makes it difficult to assess the contribution of each dimension to its related identity construct.

The bicultural subscale of the DIDS revealed some unexpected problems. As previously mentioned, this modified subscale did not discriminate among subjects in the Leigh, Marcus, Dobosh, and Allen (1999) study despite the use of a varied sample. Additionally, in this study the bicultural subscale did not demonstrate adequate reliability while the other subscales did. Friedburg's (2000) study using Glickman's DIDS also encountered difficulty with the bicultural subscale. Specifically, she found that this scale did not discriminate among a national sample of deaf college students.

The problems noted on the bicultural subscale in these studies could have been caused by the fact that the other three subscales included items assessing attitudes, behavior, and psychological attributes for each type of cultural affiliation. However, the bicultural scale was made up of

primarily attitudinal items and this may have rendered the bicultural construct less meaningful because participants were likely to have answered in a socially desirable way. This is more likely with society's increasing acceptance of multiculturalism and the reduction of prejudice against culturally different groups over the past several decades. Taking the difficulties with the bicultural subscale into account, Leigh, Marcus, Dobosh and Allen (1999) suggested that a better way to measure biculturalism might involve consideration of dual competence, specifically within hearing culture and Deaf cultures.

An additional concern regarding the DIDS is that it theoretically assumes primary affiliation with the hearing world is pathological (i.e., these deaf persons who are labeled hearing tend to internalize negative views towards deaf people or, in essence, to be "self-hating." In view of current increasingly positive perceptions of bicultural stances regarding affiliation with hearing and Deaf cultures, this theoretical conceptualization may not accurately reflect meanings of affiliation with hearing society.

The considerations mentioned here led Maxwell and Zea (1998) to take a different approach in conceptualizing deaf-hearing identity processes in deaf populations. In the process of developing the Deaf Acculturation Scale (DAS), they focused on the bicultural/acculturation model, more specifically on how ongoing dual (deaf-hearing) identity processes could be applied to deaf groups. The DAS was designed to measure separately cultural behaviors, cultural attitudes, psychological identification with hearing culture and with deaf culture, and cultural competence (measured by questions asking about language competence and cultural knowledge). This format was chosen in order to enable the researchers to examine each of these dimensions in isolation and interactively with the other dimensions. It was theorized that the ability to examine these five dimensions independently would facilitate examination of the degree to which Deaf people are acculturated to each culture.

The DAS was also designed to measure acculturation without assuming a bias in terms of attitudes that individuals may have towards their in-group and out-group. For example, the assumption that hearing identity indicated potentially unhealthy adjustment was avoided, as was the presumption that in the progression towards a "healthy identity," deaf persons must go through an immersion phase whereby they become fixated on their anger towards hearing people. Though theoretically such dynamics are entirely possible, they are not necessarily unavoidable. It is, for example, possible that some deaf people may remain primarily acculturated to the hearing world without experiencing damage to their self worth, and

for other deaf people to be essentially separatist in their acculturative style without necessarily hating/alienating hearing people or hearing culture. Because the DAS was designed to keep various dimensions within identity separate, researchers can examine the relationship between such behaviors and attitudes without presumption of bias. Additionally, the DAS is not a developmental scale, so there is no hierarchical progression through stages implicit in its construction.

The overall design of the DAS was obtained by adapting the Birman and Zea Acculturation Scale (a Latino-American Scale, in process) to fit deaf individuals (Maxwell & Zea, 1998). As an overall scale, the DAS is made up of two acculturation scales, one reflecting acculturation to deaf culture (DASd) and the other representing acculturation to hearing culture (DASh). Each acculturation scale is made up of five subscales that are symmetrical to each other and measure acculturation across the five dimensions mentioned above, specifically: cultural identification, cultural involvement, cultural preferences, cultural knowledge, and language competence. In order to obtain an overall acculturation style, the two acculturation scales are mathematically combined using a median-split to obtain four kinds of acculturation in Deaf people. Those who score above the median on the hearing acculturation scale (DASh) and below the median on the deaf acculturation scale (DASd) are categorized as "hearing acculturated." Those who score below the median on both deaf and hearing acculturation scales are categorized as "marginally acculturated." Scores above the median on the deaf acculturation scale and below the median on the hearing acculturation scale are "deaf acculturated," and those who score above the median on both scales are categorized as "bicultural."

Individual items were developed to match constructs that have been identified by researchers on Deaf culture as salient in Deaf identity, as well as those salient in acculturation to the hearing world by deaf people. Therefore, items that would measure both *paternity* and *patrimony* (Johnson & Erting, 1989), as well as *Deaf Experience* (or *DE*) and *Deaf World Knowledge* (*DWK*) (Bahan, 1994) were developed. Patrimony, defined as behavioral and attitudinal indicators of membership, was measured in the first three subscales: *cultural identification, cultural participation*, and *cultural preferences*. More specifically, *the Cultural Identification Subscales* measure the internalization and incorporation of the cultural values associated with both Deaf and Hearing world (e.g. "My participation in the Deaf world is an important part of my life," and "Being involved in the hearing world is an important part of my life"). The *Cultural Participation Subscales* were designed to measure cultural behaviors, and examine the degree to which deaf and hard of hearing

people participate in various cultural activities (e.g., "How much do you enjoy attending deaf/hearing parties, gatherings, events."). The *Cultural Attitudes Subscales* were designed to measure preferences for friends, lovers, spouses, educational and work settings to be either deaf or hearing. The remaining two subscales were designed to measure cultural competence, which in this case included both language competence, and overall knowledge of each individual culture (e.g., knowledge of the structure of social networks, and knowledge of the collective history of each). Therefore, items in the *Language Competence* subscales measure expressive and receptive competence in American Sign Language, as well as competence in spoken and written English, whereas *Cultural Knowledge* subscales measure deaf world knowledge (DWK) and hearing world knowledge (HWK) (e.g., How well do you know favorite jokes about deaf culture or how well do you know the names of famous hearing actors?).

The initial scale consisted of a total of 70 items that were administered in written English format to 102 deaf and hard of hearing college students and individuals within the deaf community in order to determine reliability and validity for the scale. Initial results suggested that as an instrument measuring acculturation, the DAS is both reliable and valid. Alphas for the subscales within the Deaf Acculturation Scale (DASd) ranged from .77 to .94, with an alpha of .95 for the overall scale. For the Hearing Acculturation Scale (DASh), alphas ranged from .32-.83 for the five subscales, with an alpha of .86 for the overall scale. It was found that deletion of two items in the Hearing Cultural Identification Subscale (the one that showed an alpha of .32) would increase the alpha from .32 to.67. Changes are currently being conducted on this scale in order to improve its reliability.

Construct validity for the DAS was assessed by exploring the relationship between parental hearing status and performance on the DAS. It was hypothesized that deaf individuals with deaf parents (d/d) would show higher levels of acculturation to deaf culture (DASd) than deaf individuals with hearing parents(d/h) and vice versa. Results were as expected; those who had deaf parents showed higher levels of deaf acculturation than deaf individuals with hearing parents, and those with hearing parents showed higher levels of hearing acculturation. One interesting finding, however, is that these two groups did not significantly differ in terms of their level of biculturalism. There were also no significant differences in the two groups with regard to their knowledge of hearing culture, or enjoyment/involvement of hearing situations; for both it was rather low.

Conclusion

Just as the composition of American society is evolving into an increasingly multicultural society, so too is the Deaf community evolving in its understanding of its own diversity. There is an ongoing flux in terms of how deaf people define themselves as individuals and members of their cultures. While theorists note a shift from the cultural to the bicultural, multicultural components are becoming more salient with the infusion of immigrants into the deaf community. How that plays out relative to identity requires specification and measurement. If deaf people, whatever their ethnic origin, are permitted to be bicultural, that is, having affiliations with both hearing and Deaf cultures, the implications for mental health are profound. There would be no need for deaf individuals to feel torn in terms of their loyalties to these two cultures (Leigh, 1999).

Both the DIDS and the DAS are part of a new movement to delineate how deaf people can develop healthy identities in a complex world. The purpose of this article is to highlight differences in the two measures in order to guide future researchers in selecting which would most appropriately address their research goals. Ongoing research is needed to assess the usefulness of both scales in reflecting the mental health of deaf people. For example, if one falls into the marginalized category on either measure, what are the expectations in terms of psychosocial adjustment? Another question that remains unanswered is whether biculturalism has a detrimental affect on mental health or if it promotes psychological health. Future use of both the DIDS and the DAS will enable researchers to address these important questions.

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