

〈論文〉

# How are our identities simultaneously global and local?

Aya TAKAGI

Identity is not solely built upon personal ‘choices’ but social and collective forces (Lawler, 2015). From this perspective, our knowledge about the world is constructed through social ‘realities’ in addition to our ‘personal’ decisions. This echoes the idea of the social constructionist theory. This claims that our knowledge is a product of human-constructed ‘reality’, not observable reality (Burr, 2015). Identities are simultaneously global and local despite the geographical or cultural framework one belongs to. This essay aims to (1) define identity in the social constructionist view (2) consider how globalisation has influenced the construction of identity (3) assess identity from an essentialist view.

## Identity and how it is constructed

Identity develops over the course of a lifetime and this influences both local and global imaginaries. For Weber, ethnicity is merely an observable indicator of people who believe they share a common ancestor. Therefore, it is unimportant whether they act or do not act according to the specific traits of that community (Jackson, 1982). However, this does not take away the importance of ethnic influences in shaping one’s identity. Having the social constructionist theory in mind, “Cultural homogeneity arises first from

imitation, not from some innate, prosocial tendency to internalize norms and values. Social norms and values are inculcated mainly through language, which requires the faculty of imitation” (Calcagno and Fuentes, 2012, p.183). Relating this to ethnic influences surrounding the child, it could be said that children imitate the observable features until they develop the cognitive skills to be capable of deciding. A meta-analysis shows that children begin to develop ethnic, racial, and national prejudice from early ages, its peak being in middle childhood (5 to 7 years old) (Raabe and Beelmann, 2011). When children reach maturity and acquire the capacity to make decisions, their decisions are based on the early acts of imitation. Therefore, it is likely that their early identity would be linked to their ethnic and cultural background. Now that globalisation has modified children’s global imaginaries about the world, children are enclosed by a local and global image of society. Along with their local identity, children develop a sense of global identity. Consequently, they consider themselves to be part of global culture, raising awareness of practices, styles and events related to it (Arnett, 2002).

### Global mobilities and its influence on identity

Globalisation influences how we construct our identity through multiple dimensions. It is difficult to define globalisation as it depends on the interpretations given. In Giddens view, globalisation is “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa” (Giddens, 1990, p.64). The notion of identity being both global and local echoes with its definition of globalisation, as it builds upon the premise that both local and global events shape our ‘reality’ of the world. Based on this idea, global mobilities are key in formulating our reality. These are fostered by the neoliberal logic bringing both positive and negative consequences. Global mobilities are not limited by physical transportation of humans and resources, it extends to the virtually interconnected systems (Sheller and Urry, 2016). Considering the case of universities, these could be seen as a hub of intensified global mobility, highlighting its strengths

and weaknesses. International students undergo life-changing experiences by studying abroad (Furnham, 2004). This would not have been possible without the physical transportation systems that enable global mobility. Even in situations of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, digital learning has enabled learning across borders despite school closures (OECD, 2020). Therefore, students can connect to a global network despite being physically distanced from the host country. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that fast and reliable internet connection becomes essential, thus students who have no access to these may feel alienated.

Both developed and developing nations are being affected by global mobilities and transnational companies, this having an impact on the formation of one's identity. It is difficult to imagine how the 'unconnected individuals' are directly or indirectly affected by global mobilities and global transnational companies. Taking as an example the case of India "As of 2020, the country with largest offline population was India. The South Asian country has over 685 million people who were without internet connection" (Johnson, 2020). At the same time, India has one of the biggest e-commerce markets in the world. It has been reported that India ranks second place in the world with 360.1 million online shoppers (eShopWorld, 2018). Clear disparities in terms of network connection can be seen in a single nation. Having said so, this does not eliminate the impact that global mobilities and transnational companies have on individuals living under unconnected regions. Digital divides have exacerbated disparities between the connected and non-connected world by creating a new economy dependent on information technology (Drori and Jang, 2003). As a result of these disparities, it could be assumed that the non-connected world or non-connected regions in the same nation could become economically dependent on large transnational companies, taking advantage of their non-connected nature. Alike the legacies of post-colonialism, the structuring of these networks modify one's view of the world. Mead wisely defines the two dimensions of self by setting 'me' as the actor performing according to society's view whilst 'I' shows to be the critical reflections of 'me' (Lawler, 2015). In this view, it could be assumed that the 'me' aspect of a non-

connected individual would reflect both the local and global view of society, despite being indirectly connected.

In the connected world, online identity becomes the new stage enabling the presentation of 'self' to both local and global audiences. For instance, social media allows individuals to connect on both global and local levels. In the process of expanding their networks, individuals learn to construct their online identity. Walsh and Baker (2017) have applied Goffman's study of the theatrical self to describe the modern self by referring to selfies. In their view, selfies are a clear example showing the ambiguous division between social and private life. Taking the selfie analogy as the parting point, it could be said that the modern self is more likely to self-monitor themselves in both social and private scenarios due to increased feeling of surveillance. Individuals feeling of increased surveillance and the desire for 'uniqueness' has pushed the Korean popular music Industry despite the highly competitive music market based on the dominant language i.e., English. A study by Laffan (2020) revealed that individuals subscribing to a K-pop fandom have shown an increased level of optimism, self-esteem, and social connectedness. In other words, the industry has achieved to create positive connotations to K-pop. In addition to the psychological connection, financial globalisation has enabled fans to consume their contents no matter the geographical boundaries. Fans experience a hybridisation of local and global identities due to the global impact they could bring into their fanbase by their economic participation. Yoon (2019) studied K-Pop fans in Vancouver, one of the interviewees *Cora* said she has organised a food charity in honour for her favourite K-pop group. In the process, she got involved in a shared economy allowing her to connect with other fans in her local community. *Cora's* case provides an example of how K-pop contributes to the formation of both global and local identities.

## Global and local identity in trouble

Individuals with third culture identity could be a clear example of how the local and global identity cause trouble in self. Individuals who have spent their developmental years in a nation outside their parent's culture are defined as having a third culture identity (Moore and Barker, 2012). Mobile parents allow third culture individuals to explore diverse cultures and identities. However, this does not take away the negative implications. Although third culture kids show good adaptability in settling to new environments, they seem doubtful about their identity (Fail *et al.*, 2004). The sense of belonging to everywhere but nowhere shows the trouble in how to perform the image of self in front of society. Now we could ask where this sense of belonging arises from. Bourdieu (1979, cited in May 2011) asserts that remaining in a specific social field for a considerable time makes individuals internalise their habitus giving them the feeling of nature. Relating this with the early example about children imitating the social field and developing their cognitive skills, it could be said that children are developing their habitus based on the lived experiences they develop. Thereby the holders of third-culture identity could be considered as lacking the necessary time to develop their habitus. However, it could be argued that this fails to consider the idea of belongingness not necessarily being limited to the social field. As mentioned in the case of *Cora* who identified with their local and global community through the K-Pop network, it is possible to feel belonged through a network despite being physically distanced. Therefore, it could be said that belongingness and habitus are closely related but the lack of emotional value and intersubjectivity needs to be considered. Identity is fluid and performative, thus the necessity to talk in terms of intersectionality and the discourses that support the existing structure of habitus.

## Essentialism and identity

The notion of identity being primarily a social construct could limit our understanding of identity. Essentialists consider identity as something

innate, which remains static over the course of a lifetime (Zilliacus *et al.*, 2017). This could be partially true if we saw identity based on Bourdieu's theory on cultural capital. For Bourdieu, cultural capital is an indicator of class position as it serves as an indicator for academic standards, belonging class and access to power (Lamont and Lareau, 1988). Although his theory may oversimplify the complex nature of social class and identity, it could be assumed that the higher the cultural capital one poses, the more likely to have a static, an essentialist view of identity. This is due to the view that higher cultural capital opens access to many other capitals, limiting the networks and views of an individual, making them have a static view of identity. Akio Toyoda's statement could be an epitome of how identity can remain linear due to the human capital he has built up, "As you well know, I am the grandson of the founder, and all the Toyota vehicles bear my name. For me, when the cars are damaged, it is as though I am as well" (Guardian staff reporter, 2010). While it is true that this idea is underdeveloped, this could be seen as an opportunity for further research. To do so, the notion of identity could be examined in a psychological focus to give a further understanding of how humans internalise these elements that construct identity.

## Conclusion

In essence, it could be said that identity is simultaneously global and local, what differs is the degree in which one is influenced by these. In contrast to the essentialist view supporting the idea of a static identity, this essay supports the idea of identity being a fluid concept that is highly influenced by the social factors surrounding the individual. Due to globalisation and the expansion of global imaginaries, now individuals pose both global and local identities. Hence, the process of individuation involves the inclusion of both identities. This may be troublesome for some, especially for the western world that is characterised by people's 'uniqueness'. It is not unique for individuals to search to be different, however, it could be said that our uniqueness is dependent on the experiences we live and the structures

that shape these experiences. This essay suggests that our uniqueness may not necessarily have to be explicit or visible but the experiences and the 'I' elements that allow us to make critical reflections of ourselves in view of society.

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