Summary and Keywords

Within the discipline of communication, the concept of "cultural identities" has captivated, fascinated, and received sustained attention from scholars of communication and culture over time. Like the concept of "culture," which is varied, complex, and at times contested, the study of cultural identity has been approached from diverse lenses, whether theoretically, methodologically, or ontologically. In one sense, *cultural identity* can be understood as the experience, enactment, and negotiation of dynamic social identifications by group members within particular settings. As an individual identifies with—or desires acceptance into—multiple groups, people tend to experience, enact, or negotiate not just one cultural identity at a time but often multiple cultural identities at once. Further, how one experiences her/his intersecting cultural identities with others can vary from context to context depending on the setting, the issue at hand, the people involved, etc. Not surprisingly, intercultural communication scholars have contributed quite a number of theories concerning cultural identities within communication interactions: co-cultural theory, cultural contract theory, and identity negotiation theory, to name a few. In addition, intercultural communication scholars have offered rich cases that examine dynamic enactments, negotiations, or contestations of cultural identities across important contexts such as race, media, and globalization. Ultimately, the study of cultural identities offers rich understandings for both oneself and others. As the world that we inhabit is becoming increasingly diverse, the study of cultural identities will continue to gain traction within the communication discipline and beyond.

Keywords: culture, diversity, intercultural communication, approaches to cultural identities, theorizing about cultural identities

Introduction

The concept of "(cultural) identities" has received sustained attention from scholars of communication and culture for the past few decades. In fact, several recent reviews evidence the persisting centrality of (cultural) identity as a construct in inter/cultural communication studies (Bardhan & Orbe, 2012; Croucher, Sommier, & Rahmani, 2015). The goal of this article is to assemble and introduce key conceptualizations of, approaches to,

theorizing about, and emerging trends concerning cultural identities by inter/cultural communication scholars.

The study of cultural identity has been approached from diverse lenses depending on researchers' scholarly orientation and underlying assumptions about the nature of cultural identity. One thing that inter/cultural communication scholars do agree on is that the term *cultural identity* has been employed as an umbrella construct to encompass, or subsume, related group identities such as nationality, race, ethnicity, age, sex and gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, regional identity, ethnolinguistic identity, political affiliation, and (dis)ability. Also, cultural identities are inherently relational, and shape and are shaped by communication choices, behaviors, and negotiations, particularly within intercultural interactions. Across time, field, and space, groups of intercultural communication scholars have attended more to certain cultural identities than others. For example, Moon (1996) surveyed journal articles on intercultural communication and found that starting about 1978 and throughout the 1980s culture as nation-state dominated the field. Shin and Jackson (2003) have reviewed the tendency of intergroup and intercultural communication scholars to privilege ethnicity and ethnolinguistic identity. Others have called for attention to the saliency of racial identities in intercultural communication studies (e.g., Moon & Holling, 2015; Nakayama & Martin, 1999). Despite the differing priorities, cultural identities are understood to be multiple, intersecting, and simultaneously personal and social.

Collectively, key reviews of cultural identity research within the communication discipline in the United States indicate an evolving trajectory of approaches across time. In brief, the 1970s features a diversity of cultural identities examined, including race, social class, gender, and nation-state (Moon, 1996). The late 1970s and most of the 1980s is characterized by focuses on national identities, ethnicities from intergroup lenses, cross-cultural comparisons, and social psychological approaches (Moon, 1996; Shin & Jackson, 2003; Yep, 2004). The late 1980s and the 1990s witnesses a rise in popularity of interpretive and cultural approaches to identities. The beginning of the 2000s marks a turn toward identity politics, intersectionality, and critical approaches such as postcolonial theory, postmodern theory, and critical race theory (Mendoza, Halualani, & Drezwiecka, 2002; Shin & Jackson, 2003; Yep, 2004). Today research on cultural identity remains ubiquitous in intercultural communication and celebrates multiple, pluralistic, and blurring conceptions and approaches (Kim, 2007). Kim's synthesis of differing conceptions of cultural identity consolidates three core understandings about cultural identity. First, cultural identity is simultaneously an individual entity, a social category, and a system of communicative practices. Second, cultural identity is both an individual choice and a group right. Third, cultural identity is adaptive, evolving, flexible, negotiable or non-negotiable, distinct, communal, and discrete.

Here the term *cultural identity* is defined as the status, experience, enactment, (co-)creation, (re)negotiation, and/or contestation of group memberships and social identifications (often through communication) within particular contexts. Specific discussion will be given to how cultural identities have been conceptualized differently from various

approaches (i.e., social psychological approaches, interpretive cultural approaches, critical/interpretive approaches, and critical approaches). The different approaches often make incommensurate assumptions about the nature of cultural identity, and differ fundamentally on questions surrounding agency, choice, and the relationship between cultural identities and social structures. For instance, scholars of the various approaches would offer differing responses to questions such as: To what extent are cultural identities such as race and ethnicity individual choices? How are cultural identities constituted, and what role does communication play in the constitution of cultural identities? To what extent and how might macro forces such as colonialism, histories, economics, geopolitical relations, and power and knowledge influence our understanding of and experience with cultural identities?

Social Scientific Approaches

The social scientific approaches conceptualize cultural identity as "*a social categorization process*" based in part on individual choices and in part on the relationship(s) between the individual and the group, or groups, to which she/he belongs (Yep, 2004, p. 74). In other words, cultural identity takes on both individual and social meanings that are inseparable. In particular, social scientific approaches such as cross-cultural psychology usually operationalize culture in terms of nations or other large groups as opposed to ethnic or regional groups. Berry (1980) has explained that such choices are to "maximize the variance available for study" (p. 3). Primarily, the social psychological approaches are concerned with the degree—or strength—of group identification, psychological attachment, and emotional significance that a person attributes to a particular cultural group membership and its values, customs, norms, or communication practices.

Interpretive Cultural Approaches

The interpretive cultural approaches view cultural identity as *a social and cultural construction* that is not solely created by the self but dynamically co-created, negotiated, and reinforced through interactions with other group members and non-group members. The goal of the interpretive cultural approaches is to examine how individuals as cultural group members come to experience, do, be, or know their cultural identities. These approaches are largely informed by social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) and the work of ethnographers of communication such as Gerry Philipsen and Donal Carbaugh. Collier and Thomas (1988), theorists of cultural identity theory, defined cultural identity as a negotiated "identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has shared systems of symbols and meanings as well as norms/rules for conduct" (p. 113). Similarly, Jackson (1999), author of cultural contract theory, conceived cultural identity as "the sense of belonging to a cultural community that reaffirms self or personhood for the individual and is created by: the people, their interactions, and the context in which they relate" (p. 10). For Jackson, a cultural community "is comprised by values, norms, meanings, customs, and beliefs used to relate to the world" and continually defines and redefines "what it was, what it is, and what it is becoming" (p. 10). The interpretive cultural

approaches emphasize the emergent, dynamic, interactive, and contextual nature of cultural identity within a particular cultural group and with others.

Critical/Interpretive Approach

In response to critiques that center on issues of power struggles, colonial histories, and crises of representation, Collier and colleagues have updated a conception of cultural identity as intersecting cultural positioning and identifications that are "*historical, contextual, and relational constructions*" (Chen & Collier, 2012; Collier, 1998, p. 131, 2005; Thompson & Collier, 2006).

This has been organized as the critical/interpretive approach to cultural identity in that this orientation embodies a "both/and dialectic of critical and interpretive perspectives" (Collier, 2005, p. 243). From this approach, cultural identity is understood as "socially constructed, structurally enabled or constrained, discursively constituted locations of being, speaking, and acting that are enduring as well as constantly changing, multiple yet nonsummative, and political as well as paradoxical" (Chen & Collier, 2012, p. 45; Yep, 2004). The critical/interpretive approach aims to advance understanding of the ways in which individuals as members of groups, organizations, and social institutions discursively negotiate their positioning and identifications while simultaneously navigating the complex and particular contexts in which they live (Collier, 2005). In other words, the critical/interpretive approach seeks to both understand how people come to know, be, or negotiate their cultural identities and identifications and unpack how social institutions such as colonialism, racism, sexism, and classism enable and constrain people's identity negotiations and enactments.

Critical Approaches

Informed by the work of Stuart Hall, Michel Foucault, and postcolonialism, the critical approaches view cultural identity as "*an ideological construct and representation of power structures*" (Shin & Jackson, 2003, p. 220). The goal of the critical approaches is to expose and challenge (or even emancipate) existing power structures and identity politics that produce and reproduce inequalities, dominations, and oppressions based on race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and so forth. To do that, the critical approaches attend to how cultural identities are maintained through social, political, and material conditions, how individuals identify with certain groups rather than others and the choices available to them, and how group members (re)claim historically marginalized identity position(s) to gain voice, access, representation, and political solidarity.

Key theories of and about cultural identities from different perspectives are identified and reviewed. Trends of (cultural) identity research in recent publications appearing in intercultural communication journals are synthesized, and reflections and suggestions are presented.

Theorizing about Cultural Identities

There have been a number of theories that play influential roles in shaping understanding of (cultural) identities. These theories are surveyed based on the approaches they originate from, including communication theory of identity, identity management theory, cultural contract theory, assimilation theory of cross culture adaptation, cultural identity theory, co-cultural theory, cultural identity theory, critical race theory, and postcolonial theory. For each theory, a brief genesis is provided with an emphasis on key concepts as they relate to cultural identities.

Social Scientific Approaches

Identity Management Theory

At its core, identity management theory (IMT) considers identity as the key building block in intercultural communication (Imahori & Cupach, 2005). IMT was first theorized based on a relational and culture-synergistic view of intercultural competence, which considers people's ability to communicate effectively and properly with others from different cultures. Tadasu Todd Imahori and William R. Cupach assume that the core aspect of IMT is the ability of individuals to experience and negotiate their identities in ways that can be understood and accepted by mutual parties in intercultural communication processes. IMT theorists approach identities as anchored on intercultural competence and face negotiation. On one hand, intercultural competence implies the effective management of both relational and cultural identities. More than that, competent negotiation of cultural identities also means achieving mutual satisfaction. On the other hand, because "face is the communicative reflection of people's relational and cultural identities," Imahori and Cupach argue that "effective identity management requires competent facework" (Imahori & Cupach, 2005, p. 196). Thus, IMT concerns the process of affording people who are involved in interpersonal communication in intercultural contexts a confirmation of self-esteem and self-efficacy in their identity.

As an identity-based model of intercultural relationship development, IMT proposes three highly interdependent phases of identity management: trial, enmeshment, and renegotiation. Trial refers to the early stage of intercultural relationship development in which people find it necessary to share their cultural identities. When the relationship progresses into the enmeshment phase, people gradually start symbolic convergence based on the commonality that they share. In the renegotiation phase, a truly interdependent and personal relationship occurs. In this third phase, people communicate with their narrowly defined identity in order to clarify their separate cultural identities. However, in order to protect each other's autonomy and positive self-image, people negotiate their cultural identity based on the relational identity that was developed in the second phase, because people desire to evaluate different cultural identity positively.

Since its inception, IMT has been applied to examine different intercultural relationships such as intercultural friendships (e.g., Lee, 2008). As an example, Lee's (2008) research examined the development of intercultural friendships and identified two transitional

phases of intercultural friendship formation in addition to the trail, enmeshment, and renegotiation phases. Also, the stronger and more developed relational identities are, the more likely partners in those intercultural relationships are to embrace each other's different cultural identities.

Communication Theory of Identity

Aiming at making interdisciplinary contributions, Michael L. Hecht, Mary Jane Collier, and Sidney A. Ribeau (1993) first proposed the communication theory of identity (CTI). CTI focuses on the direct association between communication and identity and identifies interaction of four layers of identity: personal, enactment, relational, and communal (Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2005). The development of CTI is informed by both social identity theory and identity theory. Social identity theory directs attention to understanding the formation of identity as the product of social categorization. People are categorized into different social categories, and society is internalized by the individual in the form of social identities. Moreover, social identity in turn influences members' beliefs and behaviors of different social categories. Identity theory also sees identity through the lens of social symbolic interaction (Hecht et al., 2005). Combining both theories, CTI aims both at the individual and social levels. It sees social behavior itself as a part of individual's identity and social behavior as involved in the communication process about identity.

Considering identities across time and space, CTI researchers theorize the concept of self and identity in light of three ancient civilizations: ancient Greece, Asia, and Africa (Hecht et al., 2005). African and Asian cultures emphasize that individuals should minimize their impact on the community and try to infuse themselves into the collective level. Yet slight differences exist—African culture sees identity as a product of individuals' endeavor on achieving the balance, while Asian culture promotes ideals of the self that are rooted in tradition—"the self should be restrained, disciplined, and in harmony with everything" (Hecht et al., 2005, p. 258). However, in Greek culture, identity of self stands out as the opposite of "others" (Hecht et al., 2005). Further, CTI conceptualizes identity from modernist and post-modernist perspectives. From the modernist perspective, CTI emphasizes the notion of identity that is rooted in the individual. From the post-modernist perspective, there is no true self. Individuals' identity will change according to time and space. From this view, CTI conceptualizes a fluid, multilayered self as well as the interplay between static status of self and the change of self in different occasions in everyday life.

Hecht (1993) proposed two ways in which communication is internalized as identity. First, social interaction makes the exchange of symbolic meanings of social phenomena possible. Second, people have the right to select what socially recognized categories are relevant to them regarding their identities. And because CTI combines individual position and social interaction as the loci of identity, it further refines four layers of identity in CTI—personal, enacted, relational, and communal. The personal layer takes the individual as a locus of identity and how individuals define themselves; the enactment layer indicates identity is enacted in communication through messages, among which self is seen as a

performance; the relational layer sees identity as a mutual product in social interaction—identity is constructed through people's relational communication between each other; the communal layer means that identity also exist in a collective group and in turn can influence individual identity. These four layers are not separated from each other—they are inter-presented.

So far, most research using CTI focuses mainly on ethnic labeling, ethnicity, and identity negotiation. New directions of CTI research will enrich the literature by applying CTI to health communication, focusing on identity transformations that accompany particular types of long-term illness, such as cancer or diabetes. Also, CTI has been applied to technology, focusing on how identity has been changed through computer-mediated communication. Future research using CTI can explore the boundaries of identity transformation to see when and why identity has been changed or stays the same during people's interactions. The effectiveness of verbal communication and nonverbal communication can also be worthwhile to investigate.

Interpretive Cultural Approaches

Identity Negotiation Theory

Stella Ting-Toomey (1993, 2005) has proposed identity negotiation theory (INT) to explain the transactions and interactions in which individuals try to construct their self-images as desired by both themselves and others. Individuals acquire and develop their identities through interaction with others in their cultural groups in their daily life. In the process of the construction of their cultural identities, people will intentionally act according to the interpersonal dynamic according to their initial perception. Or they will act in a relatively mindless way based on how they usually behave as "proper" according to social norms.

INT offers ten core theoretical assumptions about the antecedent, process, and outcome components of intercultural communication, including the process of development of people's construction of identity in identity negotiation (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Synthesized from symbolic communication with others, those assumptions can be summarized as paired identity dialectics about five boundary-crossing themes: identity security and identity vulnerability, identity inclusion and identity differentiation, identity predictability and identity unpredictability, identity connection and identity autonomy, and identity consistency and identity change. These identity dialectics interact when they are examined within the context of cultural encounters, which probably will cause tension if people go too far toward either end. For instance, people need basic identity security in order to be recognized by others as from a different culture, yet too much emotional security needs will cause tight ethnocentrism. On the other hand, too much emotional insecurity will cause fear of outsiders or unfamiliar strangers.

INT distinguishes between two models concerning ethnic and cultural identity development: (a) a cultural-ethnic identity typology model and (b) a racial-ethnic identity development model. Emphasizing assimilation, Ting-Toomey (2005) argues that culture identity

determines how easily people can accept and get involved in another culture. Based on the understanding of the difference of ethnic identity and cultural identity, the first model is a fourfold model that focuses on "an individual's adaptation option regarding ethnic identity and larger culture maintenance issues" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 223). The cultural-ethnic model demonstrates the interplay between cultural identity and ethnic identity and possible results from the interplay. There are four possible outcomes. First, when people form strong cultural identity and ethnic identity, they will internalize with bicultural groups. Second, when people identify strongly in their ethnic identity but weakly in their cultural identity, they will have an ethnic-oriented identity because their ethnic identity is the one that will be easier to reform. Third, people will have an assimilated identity if they define themselves as strong in cultural identity yet weak in ethnic identity. Fourth, people who identify weakly at both cultural and ethnic identity will be found as having marginal identity.

The second model is about the development of racial-ethnic identity, which consists of four stages of racial/ethnic identity development: (a) pre-encounter stage, (b) encounter stag, (c) immersion stage, and (d) internalization-commitment stage. Through these stages, the identity of people changes from highly culture identity salient to secure racial-ethnic identity, which enables them to communicate with other people from the dominant group and other multiracial groups (Ting-Toomey, 2005).

Research that applies INT is mainly focused on identity conflicts in intercultural communication in various contexts, including academia and intergroup communication. Toomey, Dorjee and Ting-Toomey (2013) applied identity negotiation theory to investigate the meaning construction of bicultural identity of Asian-Caucasian individuals and their intergroup communication strategies. They found that bicultural identity development is a multilayered lived experience and summarized several thematic patterns, including bicultural construction of integrated identity, distinctive communication practice, and identity buffering strategies (Toomey et al., 2013). Lamsam (2014) looked into American Indian identity negotiations in academia from a cultural contracts perspective. The study found that American Indians build their identity by co-created contract, which is also related to cultural contracts theory.

Cultural Contracts Theory

Cultural contracts theory was proposed by Ronald L. Jackson (2002), aimed at introducing a paradigm for exploring processes of identity shifting and negotiating. Cultural contracts theory is informed by the identity validation model, identity negotiation theory, and uncertainty reduction theory. Jackson's proposal of a cultural contracts theory derives from personal experiences in the everyday lives of people in the United States. In particular, cultural contracts theory is motivated by an interest in understanding how individuals select others who are worthy of maintaining a relationship in the first place and also communication choices and behaviors during the initial interactions.

Cultural Identities

Cultural contracts theory is based on the idea "that intercultural relationship may or may not be coordinated, depending upon the dynamics involved, such as power, boundaries, cultural loyalty, group identification, and maturity" (Jackson, 2002, p. 361). The theory proposes that human experience is defined partially through the coordination of relationships grounded in assimilation, adaptation, or the valuation of one another (Jackson, 2002). Culture contracts theory describes three types of cultural contracts—ready-to-sign (non-negotiable), quasi-completed (somewhat negotiable), and co-created (very negotiable) that play out in inter-cultural identity relations (Bardhan & Orbe, 2012). Ready-to-sign cultural contracts are pre-negotiated agreements designed to promote assimilation and maintain the current status of the relationship. This type of contract suggests a person is not going to change who he or she is and is forcing other people to act like him or her (Jackson, 2002). These contracts are usually used by individuals who are self-centered and refuse to see the value in a different perspective, perception, or communication. Quasi-completed cultural contracts can somewhat be negotiated. Those people who enact this type of cultural contract have a desire to maintain one's own worldview and some ways of control in a specific situation. Different from ready-to-sign cultural contracts and quasi-completed cultural contracts, co-created cultural contracts are agreements that are "fully negotiable, with the only limits being personal preferences or requirements". Individuals are aware of the value of alternative perspectives, perceptions, and communication. They validate the cultural differences of all parties and are motivated by respect for each other but are not forced to act this way (Jackson, 2002).

Cultural contracts theory helps scholars explore issues and processes of identity negotiating. Communication scholars have applied this theory to investigate how individuals negotiate their identities within the context of race, culture, and power in the United States (Bardhan & Orbe, 2012). Drummond and Orbe (2010) explored the dominant worldview of race in the United States to see how diverse groups of individuals understand and adapt to the labels that are linked with a particular worldview. This study supports and re-affirms the proposition of cultural contracts theory. Harris (2007) investigated identity negotiation by women of color in academia at a white-predominant institution. She discussed the function of gender and race when faculties are using the title "doctor" as a form of address to manage interaction with students in the classroom. To sum, cultural contracts theory explains how individuals negotiate their identities and worldviews when they are involving in interpersonal communication. It gives a framework to understand how people in the United States who are from different cultural backgrounds construct their identity within various societal categories.

Critical/Interpretive Approaches

Co-Cultural Theory

Co-cultural theory was first posited by Mark Orbe. Generally, co-cultural theory describes the interaction among under-represented group and dominant group members. When people from different cultures encounter each other, there will be a power dynamic regarding whether they come from a dominant culture or an under-represented culture. Co-

culture theory examines how people from an under-represented group communicate when they are aware of the salience of culture difference in any given interaction (Orbe & Spellers, 2005).

Co-culture theory was first described to explain the ways in which people who are traditionally marginalized in dominant societal structures communicate in their daily lives (Orbe, 1998). It was grounded on muted group theory and standpoint theories. There are five assumptions on which co-cultural theory was based. First, there is a hierarchy existing in each society that gives certain groups of people more power. Second, those people have more power and privilege to create and maintain communication systems that contribute to promoting their field of experience. Third, whether directly or indirectly, dominant communication structures barricade co-cultural group members whose lived experiences are often under-represented or invisible in society. Fourth, although different co-culture group members' experiences will not be the same, they will have a similar societal position as under-represented within dominant societal structures. Finally, co-culture group members adopt communicative behaviors to negotiate during their communication with members of the dominant culture (Orbe, 2005).

The core concepts of co-cultural theory include three aspects: co-cultural practices, co-cultural factors, and co-cultural orientations. In the early stage of co-cultural theory research, the focus was on specific practices that co-culture group members have when they are interacting with dominant group members. These identified co-cultural practices were categorized according to the preferred outcome. Each practice has three communication approaches: nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive (Orbe, 2005). For instance, emphasizing commonalities is a type of nonassertive assimilation, while dissociating is a type of aggressive assimilation, and confronting is a type of aggressive accommodation while attacking is a type of aggressive separation (Orbe, 1998). Co-cultural theory explains six inter-related factors that influence a co-cultural group's communication process, including preferred outcome, field of experience, abilities, situational context, perceived costs and rewards, and communication approach (Orbe, 2005). These factors cover the aspects of what people in co-cultural groups are expecting from the communication with people from the dominant group. The past experience of people from that co-cultural group can influence their consideration of the current experience. Their abilities to use specific practices in certain situational contexts and their perception of costs and rewards function together for them to decide the communication approach that they choose in communication with people from the dominant group. Co-cultural orientations are sets of combinations of one preferred outcome and one communication approach, which demonstrate the strategy people choose in communication in order to achieve expected outcome. For instance, if accommodation is the preferred outcome and assertive communication is the preferred approach, then the result is a co-cultural orientation of assertive accommodation (Orbe, 2005).

In the past, many scholars conducted research applying co-cultural theory in organization context (Orbe, 2005). Scholars have become more interested in exploring life experiences of under-represented group members outside an organization context. For instance, Mat-

sunaga and Torigoe (2008) explored how Japan-residing Koreans manage their ethnic identity and found that these marginalized people's identity management was complex and challenging due to the ambivalence of their position. These authors proposed a multi-level perspective on co-cultural communication (Matsunaga & Torigoe, 2008). Also, Urban and Orbe (2007) explored how international students' positional and identity as cultural outsiders affects their communicative practices. They highlighted co-cultural communicative practices that international students find effective in overcoming challenges related to their status as outsiders.

Cultural Identity Theory

Cultural identity theory (CIT) (also known as cultural identity negotiation theory, cultural identifications theory, and theorizing cultural identifications) was first theorized by Mary Jane Collier and Milt Thomas (1988) during a time when intercultural communication scholarship in the United States moved from being aparadigmatic to paradigmatic (Martin, Nakayama, & Carbaugh, 2012). Reflecting the dominant paradigm of the communication discipline in the 1980s, CIT was originally conceived as an interpretive inquiry to cultural identities. Later, mirroring the paradigmatic shifts within intercultural communication studies over time, CIT was extended to incorporate critical perspective (Collier, 1998, 2005; Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993). As an illustration, Collier (2005) has broadened cultural identities to include cultural identifications as a move to locate oneself and one's identity positioning and alignments in complex cultural structures and dynamic relations with others.

Since its inception, CIT has posited different properties and processes associated with cultural identity enactment and negotiation, including avowal, ascription, scope, salience, and intensity. First, cultural identities differ in *scope*—or "the breadth and generalizability"—in terms of the number of people or frequency with which a certain identity such as nationality or class applies (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 113). Second, cultural identities differ in the *salience* (or importance) of particular identities relative to other potential identities across situational contexts, time, and interaction. For example, a working-class Asian woman in the presence of a group of working-class Asian men might be more acutely conscious of her identity as a woman than of her other identities. Third, cultural identities vary in the levels of *intensity* with which they are communicated. For example, Gust Yep (2004) discusses how he is often ascribed the identity of an Asian American because he "looks Asian American"; however, he prefers and uses the label "Asianlatinoamerican" to highlight his claim to and the increasing presence of multicultural and multiracial identities in the United States. *Avowal* patterns refer to how group members present themselves as group members to others. On the other hand, *ascription* patterns are views of one's own group communicated by others. There are often tensions and contradictions in the group identities that are avowed and ascribed because they involve different experiences, levels of agency, histories, perspectives, and worldviews. Finally, cultural identities have both content aspects and relational aspects that are of interest to this project, especially in considering the role of cultural identity negotiation in intercultural relationships.

Cultural Identities

CIT has been widely applied to examine the role of cultural identities across contexts ranging from interracial marriages in the United States to intercommunity groups in Northern Ireland to identity-based nonprofit organizations. Thompson and Collier (2006) examined interview discourses of how black and white interracial martial partners in the United States jointly negotiated their intersecting cultural identifications (e.g., race, sex, and class) and social structures. Collier (2009) investigated intergroup community discourses in Northern Ireland to analyze how participants negotiated intercommunity group identities, privileged positions around gender, generation, and class, levels of agency, and dialectic tensions. Chen and Collier (2012) analyzed interview discourses of how members of two identity-based nonprofit organizations across organizational positions negotiated their avowed and ascribed cultural identities.

Critical Approaches

Critical Race Theory

Originated in the mid-1970s in legal studies by pioneers such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework aims to make visible and transform relationships of race, racism, and racial power in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). With that said, the thinking behind CRT dates back to Franz Fanon and W. E. B. DuBois. CRT has been widely applied to examine phenomena of racial domination, differential racialization, and racial injustice beyond legal scholarship in disciplines such as education, humanities, and social sciences. At its core, CRT is premised on the belief that the genesis and production and reproduction of racism are structural, systemic, determining, and predictable events, meaning that they are not incidental, aberrational, or irregular. In fact, Bell (1992) states that "racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this [American] society" (p. xiii). Much of CRT research renders visible processes, contestations, and situated experiences of *racialization*—contextualized ways in which racial groupings are (re)created, racial meanings are (re)constituted, and racial power relations are (re)produced.

Several key tenets of CRT are particularly relevant to (intercultural) communication studies, including but not limited to: differential racialization, counterstorytelling, and macroaggressions. First, the notion of differential racialization highlights that the processes that are becoming racialized are constantly in flux and changing over time, space, and contexts. Differential racialization concerns the ways in which the dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times in response to its shifting needs, such as the labor market (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Second, counterstories are stories grounded in everyday experiences that seek to vocalize perspectives from the margins and reveal struggles for equitable treatments and opportunities. Counterstorytelling as a method views and legitimizes the personal and communal experiences of people of color as sources of knowledge. Thus, counterstorytelling seeks to produce, understand, and honor knowledge from peoples and communities of color that challenges dominant Eurocentric ways of knowing. Third, the term *microaggression* was first coined by Chester Pierce to describe subtle, commonplace, incessant, sometimes ambiguous, and

never-ending insults, invalidations, or assaults targeted at racial and other minorities. Microaggressions are usually brief and might be unintentional but they are a major vehicle for reproducing racial hierarchy and domination. For instance, Camara and Orbe (2010) argue to extend racial microaggressions to consider "cultural microaggressions" broadly as based on intersecting cultural identities such as race, sex, and age (p. 109).

CRT work is interdisciplinary in nature. Communication scholars have just begun to capitalize on the promises of a communication-based CRT approach to examine the lived experiences and identity negotiations of racial minorities in the United States and around the world. For instance, scholars have examined communication about (intersecting) racial identities—including both racial others and whites—and rhetorical strategies enabled or constrained by ideologies about race relations such as white supremacy, color-blindness, and post-racialism (e.g., Cooks & Simpson, 2007; Nakayama & Martin, 1999; Warren, 2003).

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory and critique was first introduced to communication studies by Raka Shome (1996). Edward Said's *Orientalism* is often considered the hallmark piece in post-colonial theorizing. Postcolonial theory and criticism fundamentally addresses colonization and decolonization. As Shome has stated, the postcolonial project is "a critical perspective that primarily seeks to expose the Eurocentrism and imperialism of Western discourses" (1996, p. 41). In addition to raising questions about Western discursive imperialism and postcolonial self-reflexivity, postcolonial theorizing approaches cultural identities from the lenses of borderlands, hybridity, and diasporas. That is, cultural identities from a postcolonial perspective center on cultural indeterminacy, spaces in between, and cultural intersections. With increasing globalization, immigration, and border-crossing, it becomes challenging, if not impossible, to essentialize national and cultural identities. The quintessential postcolonial individual might be part of two or more cultures but not feeling as belonging to either, because she/he is transnational. Considering everyone at cultural intersections, the postcolonial project attends to "(disjunctured) diasporic cultural identities" that are in between borderlands, fractured, and conflicted (Shome, 1996, p. 52). Since Shome's introduction, postcolonial theory and critique has continued to challenge, interrogate, and expand critical theories and communication research from media representations in global contexts, to hybrid communication practices, to ethnographic research with immigrant others as raced, gendered, and classed.

Overall, theories about culture identities provide rich insights for researchers, practitioners, and students of culture and communication. All of the theories introduced take a social constructionist approach to cultural identities. Together these theories offer rich understandings of cultural identity regarding how cultural identities are communicated and being applied in life. They also proffer some tools or guidelines for better managing and negotiating cultural identities.

Key Trends of (Cultural) Identity Research in Inter/cultural Communication

Predominantly, cultural identity research tends to focus on highly unstable, permeable, or contested contexts that require constant negotiation, management, or even reconstitution of cultural identities.Studying abroad is one of those contexts. Zhou and Todman (2008), examining the experiences of Chinese post-graduate students and the staff teaching them in two Scottish universities, discussed a process of cultural synergy as the students merged into other cultures and negotiated their cultural identities. They found that some students preferred to deal with problems among themselves, as they did not want to "lose" their original culture(s); in turn, they also gained greater awareness of their cultural identities in the process (Zhou & Todman, 2008). Journal reviews have identified three key trends in identity research in intercultural communication: (a) the continuing salience, prominence, or importance of racial (and ethnic) identity/ies, (b) cultural identities in mediated contexts, and (c) forging new identity/ies at the cultural intersections.

Continuing Salience of Racial-Ethnic Identity/ies

The two special issues on "Race(ing) Intercultural Communication" published by the *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* in 2015 evidence a continuing need to examine racial identity/ies as salient cultural identities in intercultural interactions. The critical turn in intercultural communication scholarship has propelled identity theorizing that takes into account its "cultural, historical, and political embeddedness" (Mendoza, Halualani, & Drezwiecka, 2002, p. 312). The sites of racial (and ethnic) identities have been particularly rich for such efforts both internationally and domestically within the United States (e.g., Cooks & Simpson, 2007). As Martin and Davis (2001) stated, "to study intercultural communication within the United States and not focus on race/ethnicity of white Americans is to leave a picture unfinished" (p. 299). Intercultural communication scholars have examined the experiences, negotiations, and performances of racial (and ethnic) minorities as well as whites.

There are a number of studies that focus on identity issues from the angle of racial discrimination. Such research generally aims to open up spaces for racial minorities to speak up and consider strategic responses toward racial discrimination issues. Kinefuchi and Orbe (2008) looked into how individuals situated their racial positions in response to the controversial film *Crash* and how their racial locations informed their situated-ness. They applied the principles of standpoint theory as the theoretical framework for the analysis, and demonstrated this situated-ness in terms of six emergent genres of responses that varied across positionality and contextual focus. They concluded that persons belonging to dominant groups may not develop racial standpoints but can cultivate informed racial locations if and when they can critically reflect on and resist the dominant worldview and work to create an oppositional stance. At the same time, their study found that while most European American students dissociated themselves from the film *Crash* altogether or situated themselves outside racism, a few students showed hints of self-re-

flexive critique, which is an important step toward resisting dominant perspective. Kine-fuchi and Orbe urge that individuals need to become conscious of not only their racialized locations but also how they are simultaneously situated within personal, racial, and social contexts.

Regarding how to confront white racism, Johnson and colleagues (2008) carried out a study looking into students' responses to critical race pedagogy in order to assist teachers in addressing similar stories told in their own classroom. They found some categorized patterns of white student resistance, including acknowledgement of racism, white self-preservation, diversion from structural power, and investment in white supremacy (Johnson, Rich, & Castelan Cargile, 2008, p. 113).

Hanasono, Chen, and Wilson (2014) applied a cognitive appraisal approach to examine how acculturation might affect racial minority members' appraisals of and responses to racial discrimination. The study found that acculturation helped explain individuals' need for social support, support message evaluations, and the pursuit of disengagement coping strategies (Hanasono, Chen, & Wilson, 2014). This study provided helpful information for the development of intervention and outreach programs for individuals coping with racial discrimination.

Deeply rooted in colonial histories, racial (and ethnic) identities will continue to be salient, prominent, and influential in intercultural interactions in the foreseeable future. Until society can identify and practice productive ways of talking about both our own and others' racial (and ethnic) experiences, engage in meaningful ways of relating across racial (and ethnic) lines, or challenge the unequal system of racial stratification, race will continue to hold power.

Cultural Identities in Mediated Contexts

Nowadays people not only negotiate their cultural identities within interpersonal communication, but also construct cultural identities via media platforms. In light of the unprecedented technology advancement, the Internet is now playing a more important role in advancing globalization and interaction between different cultures. Usually, web space is considered as "a safe discursive place for identity construction" (Cheong & Poon, 2009, p. 190). Additionally, the entertainment industry has made available another platform for constructing and negotiating cultural identities, which adds to the variety of avenues for communicating, performing, and negotiating cultural identities.

Cheong and Poon (2009) examined the relationship between new media use and international communication that addresses religious beliefs and affirms users' standpoints occupied by immigrants who are keen on transnational religious communication (also known as transmigrants). Most transmigrants have been marginalized in dominant societal structures. Cheong and Poon conducted a focus group interview among Chinese Protestant immigrants in Toronto and found that the new media uses broadened by users' cultural appropriation in situational contexts to include proxy Internet access as accommodative communication given the political and legal constraints in their home country.

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Chinese transmigrants not only reinterpret and alter semantic associations that spiritualize the Internet, at the same time, they also engage in innovative strategies that involve the interviewing of offline and online communicative modes (Cheong & Poon, 2009). In this way, they are showing their religious identity. The explorations of web page use in the communication of religious identities provide insight on a culturally specific group and how people from a specific culture construct and communicate their cultural identities using updated technology. This is also because of the bottom-up, consumer-controlled feature of new media today—consumers in fact become more and more information sources to the public, which weakens the traditional producer-consumer dyad and makes their movement of identity construction more conceivable.

As the predominant form of media export and import between countries, entertainment has become a highly intercultural industry. Cultural identities stand out when media productions for entertainment enter into a different culture. Thus, cultural identities can also be communicated through the entertainment industry, such as with anime characters. Ramasubramanian and Kornfield (2012) used survey methods to examine the underlying processes through which U.S. fans create meaningful relationships with Japanese media characters. Specifically, this study tests an integrated model linking character perceptions, wishful identification, and parasocial relationships (which are long-term relationships in which audience members relate themselves to the media characters like friends) in the context of fans of a heroine-centric genre of Japanese culture. Through the anime characters, Japanese cultural values were also disseminated to consumers.

Communication of cultural identities in media platforms opens up new areas for the study of cultural identities. Because of media's extensive reach and the instant value that media have as channels of communication, people's understanding on a variety of cultural identities around the world is likely to evolve quickly, which makes the global village a new stage regarding the communication of cultural identities.

Forging New Identity/ies at Cultural Intersections

In this increasingly diverse world today, it is much easier for people to cross boundaries in great numbers and dimensions of space and time because of highly developed communication technologies. Scholars have investigated what happens when people are standing at the intersection of cultures. When people have more than one choice about identifying their cultural identities, how they negotiate and adjust their cultural identities has been scholars' interests.

Identity construction is not only important when it comes to the condition of intercultural communication, but also important when the communication happens with family communication. Young (2009) focuses on how immigrant mothers and second-generation interracial daughters construct, perform, and negotiate racial and ethnic hybrid identities (Young, 2009). Hybrid identities were conceptualized as including but not limited to individuals who have biracial or interracial identities. In Young's research, she mainly discussed hybrid immigration identity (Young, 2009). She auto-ethnographically examined

how location, language, and the assimilation-preservation dialectic are specific areas when hybrid identities emerge during the mother-daughter relationship (Young, 2009). She mentioned some areas that scholars should continue to investigate: First, scholars need to reevaluate how racial and ethnic identities are conceptualized. Second, how location and geographical and geopolitical discourse inform and shape racial or ethnic identities is a significant issue for scholarship on hybridity, identity, and Asian American studies. Third, scholars need to interrogate the geopolitical discourses embedded within conceptualizations of identity. Finally, she encouraged scholars to embrace more critical approaches to how personal narratives create identities as well as resist and reinforce larger cultural narratives.

The fusion of cultural identities always needs to go across the boundaries of cultures and nations. More than focusing only on the fusion of cultures between countries, scholars have paid attention to where the emergence of cultures happens. Sandel and Liang (2010) found some support for both the theory of cross-cultural adaptation and the theory of cultural fusion, especially the latter. They found that learning is an additive process; long-term association with co-ethnics appears to correlate with greater satisfaction and adaptation; and women's negotiated identities follow a range of outcomes (Sandel & Liang, 2010). This study's implications for future research are twofold: (a) the need for studies of intercultural communication in contexts and among people less well known and under-studied; and (b) in the past most studies of intercultural communication considered the plight of international students or business sojourners, but not that many scholars focused on women who are at the lower level of economic and symbolic capital. This study illustrates a new path for theory building that could broaden the scope of scholars' empirical data collection.

Collectively, these trends reflect expanding sites of cultural identity. Tanno and González (1998) considered the cultural identity sites as "a kind of 'geography' of the physical, intellectual, social, and political locations where identity develops its dimensions" (p. 4). Our reviews suggest that the "geography" of cultural identity sites has expanded tremendously from traditional localities such as nationality, race, and ethnicity to new dimensions, possibilities, and frontiers that are unrestricted by physical boundaries.

Conclusions

As the world is becoming increasingly globalized, the construct of cultural identities will play even more important roles in the study of intercultural communication. In particular, the study of cultural identities should encourage reflexive understandings of both one's own and others' identities in manners that promote productive intercultural encounters, interactions, and relationships. Ultimately, cultural identities are complexly and simultaneously nested at both micro-level everyday interactions and macro-level social institutions. Hence, how we experience, communicate, construct, (re)negotiate, and perform our cultural identities is intricately personal, relational, contextual, social, and political.

Over time there have been continuing expansions of the study of cultural identities across conceptualizations, localities, contexts, theoretical approaches, and so forth. And the expansions will only persist. Conceptually, cultural identities overlap with other key constructs in the study of intercultural communication such as competence, face and facework, and subjectivity. One fruitful direction will be to tease out what it means to take a communicative approach to cultural identities that takes into account all the complexities and contradictions at times. Methodologically, the study of cultural identities has traveled across social scientific and humanistic traditions. Though the different traditions offer rich understandings about cultural identities in their own rights, they are often perceived in a fragmented and incommensurate manner. Perhaps the perceived fragmentations might be bridged and it would make sense to consider a meta-theory of cultural identities that transcend traditions. Finally, communication research on cultural identities has offered many rich and heuristic cases across cultural groups, communities, and contexts. Emerging research into new contexts that have not been the focus previously, such as health, pedagogy, immigration, social media, and grassroots organizing, is likely.

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