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Introductory Chapter

Wilfred Isak April and Daniel Ileni Itenge

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this book is to provide abundant and substantial information that has very important implications on the theory of culture and identity as it evolves over a period of time. In addition, this book is also essential for the diffusion of scientific knowledge. The concept of cultural identity can be used in many different ways. First, it can be used as a reference point to the collective self-awareness that a particular given group embodies and reflects. This is how the term is widely used in society. The purpose of this book is to bring forth how culture and identity shapes the socio-economic advancement of economies around the world. Due to the advancement of technological and the interconnectivity of the world, communities have to interact with each other, from Australasia to Africa, otherwise you run the risk of being excluded from trade and the opportunities of advancement coupled with it.

With these changes, people have their own culture and identity, which needs an understanding, appreciation, respect and care, if not there is also the risk of being excluded from global trade. It is all fairness to say culture and identity plays a more critical role in this twenty-first century, more than before—in short, it can be referred to as a full-fledged economic sector. In this book, various authors capture their ideas from various perspectives of how culture and identity shapes various dimensions of life from the vantage point of socio-economic development.

According to Bochner [1], cultural identity of a particular society or community is usually defined by the most prevalent or dominant group. This group is usually very distinguishable from the minority subgroups, with whom they share the physical environment; territory or neighbourhood they live in. It is important to reiterate to the readers that the concept is akin to the idea of national or in some instances, the social character, which usually encompasses a unique set of traits or qualities that members of a given society share with one another and look beyond their individual differences. These traits usually includes, but are not limited to

the constellation of values and how one views life, death, birth, children, religion and nature. In a collective sense, the concept of cultural identity includes typologies of cultural behaviour, such behaviours which are usually the appropriate or inappropriate ways of satisfying the fundamental needs of the society and how we deal with the challenges confronting us on a daily basis. Cultural identity also looks at shared premises, values, beliefs and the daily life events even those we are at times not aware about.

Another specific use of the concept revolves around identity of the individual in relation to his or her culture. Identity looks at the fundamental symbol of a person's existence. According to Erikson [2], identity is an elemental form of psychic organisation which develops in successive psychosexual phases throughout life. The primary focus of Erikson's work mostly on analytical studies related to identity conflicts, recognising the anchoring of larger ego in a much broader cultural context. Identity can take a variety of forms within an individual. This can refer to the conscious sense of an individual identity. On the other hand, it refers to an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character. In addition, as a criterion for silent doings of ego synthesis and finally, as a maintenance of inner solidarity with the ideals of the group and identity. The views of Erikson are only one of the many variations of the definitions.

A prominent world renowned scholar of "Culture" Hofstede [4] defines culture as a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. This implies that every person carries within himself or herself patterns of thinking, feeling and potential acting that we learn and acquire throughout a person's lifetime. Much of it is learned in the early childhood because it is at that point of time a person is most fragile in absorbing, learning and assimilating information. As soon as certain patterns of thinking, feeling and acting are established in a person's mind, he or she must develop the ability to unlearn these patterns before being able to learn something completely different, and certainly unlearning information is more daunting than learning it in the first place. In a brief, interview at his homestead of Velp in the Netherlands in December 2012 with the editor, Hofstede clarified to the editor that the definition does not imply that people are programmed like computers (Hofstede, personal communication, December 8, 2012). The behaviour of people is only partially predetermined by his or her mental programs: possibilities of deviation are possible to react in new ways which could be creative, destructive or, at times, unexpected. Hofstede also described culture across five dimensions namely individualism, collectivism, power distance, masculinity and femininity. Although regarded by some scholars such as McSweeney as a "triumph of faith" and a failure of analysis, Hofstede's dimensions still remain one of the most widely used in research, especially within organisations [3].

From the teachings of the above-mentioned authors, we are reminded that human beings can certainly not hold them apart from some form of cultural influence, which can then in turn shape their identity. No one is culture free. We are experiencing and being reminded daily as culture evolves on a daily basis. We also exist in a very dynamic environment compared to a few centuries ago, and we as a people should make the commitment to try and shape the

landscape by educating society on the importance of culture and identity and how it can lead to both professional and personal advancement of nations and communities globally.

This is the purpose why this book was written and we have structured it into three sections.

In Section 1, Dr. Wilfred Isak April and Mr. Daniel Itenge introduced us to the concepts of culture and identity from a global perspective. In addition the scholars set a pace from how culture and identity can lead to the socio-economic advancement of communities around the world. From Africa, Professor Reginald Monyai looked at the *proverb manong a j aka ditshika* as an embodiment of the Principle of Unity. This chapter explores the relationship between proverbs, identity and culture, and how proverbs impact one's identity. In addition, this chapter is based on the theory of Structuralism, grounded on the idea that the community producers' literature and an author is the product of a society.

In Section 2, "Space and Time Travellers Exploring Cultural Identity of the City", Professor Arzu Ispalar and Gizde Ozer looks at architectural graduate students work on exploring culture in Turkey. The authors are looking at ways of benefiting from city culture in favour of city identity. The aim of this chapter intends in addressing showing that achieving sufficient and healthy urban environments is possible with underlying the importance of culture and its benefits of culture led development with aid of architectural and urban design. Aida Huerta-Barrientos, Alma Elia Vera Morales and Tania Vazquez Fonzalez looked at the impact on socio-economic indicators in Mexican rural communities' metabolism. The authors argues that rural poverty in Mexico is mainly from a lack of access to basic services such as health, education, sanitation and housing. Other factors include land, technology, and scientific knowledge. The core objective of this study is to analyse the metabolic scaling of cultural, environmental, and economic aspects in the context of Mexican rural communities in order to predict the energy required to ensure that they remain connected and estimate the impact of socio-economic development. The outcome this study intends in achieving is ensuring that better polices are designed in improving the current living conditions of Mexicans. It is in this section that we also learn from Nigerian Catholic Sisters about the life experiences of losing one's culture as a narrative. The authors Dr. Eze Chika, Professor Lindegger and Dr. Rakozcy focusses on how identity is constructed using a cultural perspective and experience.

In section 3, Professor Botshabeng Monyai addresses 'The Significance attached to Education and Youth Development in Rural South Africa'. This study argues that education plays a significant role in improving the socio-economic conditions of individuals and communities. This chapter aims at demonstrating the essence attached to the education of young people in rural areas of South Africa and the challenges brought about by cultural and social expectations, which are usually compounded by the bottlenecks in educational resource mobilisation. Lastly from the continent of South America, Dr. Christian Parker discuss the issue of Religion in the Modern Era: Popular religions and Multiple Mordernities: A non-Western Perspective where the main argument is that religious changes towards pluralism can fully be understood in the context of multiple mordenities theory. New ways of producing sense and spiritual search in non-Western geo-cultural areas are framing specific relationships between religion and mordenities and bringing about new religion pluralism's.

Author details

Wilfred Isak April^{1*} and Daniel Ileni Itenge²

*Address all correspondence to: aprilw@unam.na

1 University of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia

2 Ministry of Labour, Windhoek, Namibia

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