

Ethnicity, Nationality, Diaspora, and Hybridity

Ethnicity

- sharing of norms, values, beliefs, cultural symbols and practices. The formation of ethnic groups relies on sense of belonging.
- Ethnicity is relational concept concerned with categories of self-identification and social ascription.
- a process of boundary formation > *us* vs. *them*; power relations between groups; relations of marginality, of the center and periphery.

(Barker et al., pp. 250 – 251)

Ingredients that can be used in **defining ethnic groups**:

- the group is perceived by others in the society to be different is some combination of the following traits: language, religion, race, or ancestral homeland;
- the members also perceive themselves to be different;
- they participate in shared activities built around their common origin and culture.

(Gudykunst, p. 82)

Ethnicity and race

- ethnicity can be based on national origin, race, or religion (Gorden, 1964);
- but whereas race is based on biological characteristics, ethnicity is based on cultural characteristics shared by people of a particular race, national origin, or religion;
- both race and ethnicity are socially constructed categories, but it is the *shared cultural characteristics* that *influence communication*.

(ibid., p. 81)

Nationality, nation-state, and national identity

- nation-state is a political concept that refers to an administrative apparatus; sovereignty over a specific space or territory;
- national identity is a form of imaginative identification with the symbols of the nation-state; it is a way of unifying cultural diversity > “National identity is a form of identification with representations of shared experiences and history. These are told through stories, literature, popular culture and the media.” (Barker et al. 253).
- nations are systems of cultural representation by which national identity is continually reproduced;

- representations of national culture> symbols and practices embedded in the nation's history.

(Barker et al. 252-253)

Diaspora

- a dispersed network of ethnically and culturally related peoples.

Hybridity

"Cultures are not pure, authentic and locally bounded. They are the syncretic and hybridized products of interactions across space." (Barker et al. 41)

- mixing of cultures and the emergence of new forms of identity
- cultural hybridization: cultural responses ranging from assimilation to separation; blurring of cultural boundaries;
- requires sensitivity to cultural differences and to forms of identification that involve recognition of similarity;
- Examples:
- two distinct cultural traditions kept separate in time and/or space: Asian or British
- two distinct cultural traditions sharing in time and space: Asian and British
- hybridization: British Asian, African American
- one cultural tradition absorbs or obliterates the other, such as assimilation (my parents are Asian but I am British) or cultural domination and imperialism (one tradition is wiped out).
- the notion of 'two cultures' is incorrect because both 'British' and 'Asian' cultures are heterogeneous and stratified.

Literature:

Barker, Chris. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. London: SAGE Publications, 2003. Second Edition.

Gudykunst, W.B. *Bridging Differences. Effective Intergroup Communication*. 4th edition, London: Sage Publications, 2004.