

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON IDENTITY IN THERAPY

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The exploration and understanding of identity is a complex and dynamic undertaking. Everyone has multiple identities, some of which are public and others are private. Identities may also be in conflict. Social scientists tend to examine the more public aspects of identity and how these are shaped by the sociocultural context. Identity may be assumed or ascribed, and may hold social capital or stigma. Identities may be used in the negotiation of power and control. On the other hand, psychologically oriented professionals tend to examine the internal workings of identity, its relation to constructions of self and other, the role of internalized objects and the vicissitudes of development. However, these two disciplinary gazes are not distinct. Any attempt to thoroughly understand a person, must appreciate both perspectives and how the public and the private, the sociocultural and the psychological interact and influence each other. The workshop will focus on the case material from an on-going long-term individual therapy with an Afghani refugee. After presentation of the case there will be group discussion on the various perspectives which can be utilized to understand this man's identity. Perspectives will include, but are not limited to, Culturally Constructed, Psychodynamic, Jungian, Intersubjective/Interpersonal, and Trauma Based. Discussion will be directed to formulate the man's identity via these perspectives. Discussion will then focus on an effort to construct a more holistic and multifaceted model of his identity and the implications of that for his treatment and adjustment to the United States. This workshop may be of most benefit for early career members.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Participants will be able to analyze a case history from multiple perspectives and explore the advantages of each.
2. Participants will be able to integrate various perspectives in order to formulate a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of identity.