

Identity Crisis Within Culture

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Abstract

I decided to write about cultural diversity, specifically the identity crisis within the culture. I chose this topic because I know this is a topic that is not really spoken about like others. I spoke about how many cultures experience this but I particularly spoke about my own culture. I go on to describe how there are specific criteria to fit into one's culture and if you don't physically look like it or speak the language you will be belittled and made feel like an outcast. Having parents from other countries and being born here yourself causes a kind of culture shock since you are both basically growing up with distinct cultures. An example of this is when I traveled to Ecuador and I didn't really eat the cuisines that they had, they all called me spoiled for not eating it. Not realizing that that was a cultural shock for me food-wise because in The

U.S. were used to soul food or burgers and chicken tenders. Another experience I had was in The Dominican Republic wherever I go I get stared down getting asked if I'm really Dominican because to them I look more Ecuadorian. I got over there with blow-out hair just because it's a tradition to always get your hair done before traveling but when I washed it again my curls popped out and they just looked at me confused. I also got into religious differences in Ecuador, my family only believes in god, and on my Dominican side, we are catholic so we believe in god and saints.

Being raised catholic when my Ecuadorian side hears about my practices they start thinking it's weird. Honestly, I feel like they should just try to be more open-minded and understand that there's a lot of diversity within one's culture. I think if there were resources such as multicultural education people from other cultures would be more open-minded and have a better understanding.

Introduction

When you think about culture you think about all the things that bring you back home. Whether it be the food that you'll eat at the family gatherings, the music that you heard growing up, or the traditions that your family has passed down through generations. There are a lot of people that come from the same culture as you do, that being said there is a common interest. I'll present an example, you're at a new job and see all types of people at the meeting which can tend to make you feel overwhelmed. Yet, you notice someone with the same amulet as you and start realizing that you might have common beliefs. As you talk to them you both find out you come from the same culture and start feeling a sense of comfort. Being part of any culture makes you feel like you're included in something at all times. Although it's not always the same case for everyone. Sometimes you may feel like you're stuck between cultures or that you aren't qualified to be a part of this culture. All these mixed feelings that are brought up might lead you to have an Identity Crisis. More specifically a Cultural Identity Crisis that people tend to experience, which is what my research topic is about.

I chose this topic because I know this is a topic that is not really spoken about like others. I spoke about how many cultures experience this but I particularly spoke about my own culture. I go on to describe how there's a specific criteria to fit into one's culture and if you don't physically look like it or speak the language you will be belittled and made feel like an outcast. I genuinely have a big interest in being an advocate for self identity crisis, since I myself have gone through this. I know what it's like to feel like an outcast inside of your own culture and not know if anyone else feels the same way. In the future, I hope that people are more honest and comfortable enough to talk about this. Even though speaking about it will help bring awareness we need to also address it in big places. Places such as public institutions where they should notice how much multicultural education is needed.

Background Of Research

This research paper talks about the ongoing problem of cultural identity crisis that goes on foreseen within society. Sometimes you may experience this when you are born in another country or when you were raised by immigrant parents. Growing up with parents from different cultures was the case for me as for many others. You see so many different sides of each culture that it's kind of overwhelming. People often go up to others asking where they may be from, which is normal to ask. This question may leave you feeling unsure (Khan, 2017). Being born In the United States with parents from other countries.

Oftentimes your culture makes you feel understood because only people within your culture know about certain things. Of course, culture is a piece of what makes you who you are but some people get it confused. Notice how I said "a piece" not that it entirely makes you the person you are. People often become self-indulged in the thought that culture is what makes them and if they don't know which culture they are a part of they feel lost. Not only are they left with that feeling but they are also getting judged by many because of it (Khan, 2017). Families are the main group of people who judge these people because they think that because they are aware of their culture so should everyone else.

This issue is seen often with a lot of cultures but I believe it is seen more with minority groups. I say this for the fact that most minority groups have often migrated from various countries. In doing so some don't really know what place to call home or where they can connect with it. But to come up with a solution for this we need to fully understand what culture is and what culture identity crises are. Culture is basically a group with the components of beliefs, values, practices, and lifestyle all shared by a society. While on the other hand, Culture Identity is a sense of self that is made up by our cultural experiences and social locations.

Culture and Cultural Identity

Culture and Cultural identity both go hand in hand since your culture is what most of your customs come from and cultural identity is made up of cultural experiences. Sometimes it's not one's fault for not feeling a connection to a culture. It could have been that you weren't exposed to that certain culture enough or that you were only taught one culture. Being exposed to several cultures is very important since it makes you look back at yours and appreciate what makes yours special from others. Having this openness to other cultures also makes you become more open minded. You acknowledge that some of these cultures may have the same interests and values that you have.

Culture

Personally, culture is one of the most beautiful things people should go in-depth about. What makes it beautiful is all the unique foods, music, art, history and religion that is included in each one. Culture is also made up of languages which is one of the main ways that people communicate. When you're from a culture and you aren't used to hearing their language you tend to be left confused. This is one of the major conflicts for the simple fact that you can't understand the way they're trying to express themselves (Lesadmin, 2021). Being included into group activities is a big part of culture for example, In Hispanic culture when someone opens a new business in the family it is typical for us to shower them with gifts. When you aren't aware of your culture and you don't contribute you might be talked about or look bad in front of them.

Cultural identity

Feeling like you belong to a place and are accepted there makes you feel special. This is what happens when you identify with a certain culture. Where you and your family come from is a big factor in cultural identity. Many groups within certain cultures make this a

certain standard though. Where they think that they could come up with what is acceptable and what isn't acceptable in a culture(Wilson, pg5) Due to this sometimes we feel like we don't fit into our culture because we are nowhere near those standards or don't agree. Other things that could possibly play into your cultural identity is your social environment. You go out into the world and gain experiences from different activities. Doing that you're creating your own little community with whom you connect with.

Diversity

I've always said that differences are what makes us special and I stand on that till this day. Diversity is the state of having different forms, types, ideas and people(Webster,1828). Having diversity is very important especially in workplaces and schools since people from all over the world are coming there. Being different and bringing different views into a culture is actually a good thing. I say this good since bringing all these differences makes a person able to various perspectives, making them open minded. Seeing more diversity in places also changes the standards that most cultures hold against people.

Cultural Relativism

Now this is something very interesting that I came across in one of my readings. Cultural relativism is the ideology that ethical and social standards reflect the cultural context from where they derived(Carnegie, 2006). At the end of the day everyone has their own view on things from which they think something is right or wrong. You could see this especially in culture when different groups meet and aren't aware of the others customs. An example of this is when you go to Mexico and see people eating crickets. For the natives there it's a delicacy but for foreigners it is disgusting to eat insects. This could also happen when you back home and don't eat the same food as others eat there. There is a sense of disconnect because your ideas on a certain thing aren't the same. This often happens across cultures all over the world.

My Experience To Cultural Identity Crisis

There are a lot of dilemmas that are brought up when talking about cultural diversity. Cultural shock is a big thing when it comes to cultures seeing things they usually don't see in their own culture. But just because you don't do a certain thing within your culture, doesn't mean you have to judge others for doing it. Another issue that is commonly seen within a culture is an identity crisis. People not knowing what resonates with them or where they would fit in. This is the issue that I'm gonna elaborate on in this paper. People dealing with an identity crisis is a developmental event that involves the person questioning their sense of place in the world. I feel like an example of this is Dominicans thinking that they're not black when they are. Then the other half of them think that they do have African roots in them, but are told they don't.

We get attacked by a lot of people which gets us very confused leading us to an identity crisis. There is a lot of discrimination within the Dominican community and it is so sad to see. Some believe that because they're light-skinned it means that they are pure Dominican with no other ethnicities involved. Others might even be in disbelief; an example is a person who is dark skin calling themselves "indiecita/o" which is a light Indian. They don't realize that isn't the case and that they are actually African too. I recently read an article about this happening to someone, they thought they were a light Indian and came to realize they were actually black. They learned about this when they came to the United States. I don't blame them though this is a common issue seen in a lot of cultures. I feel like this could be fixed if people just got a little bit more educated on their background. A lot of Dominicans are brainwashed to think that if you are black you aren't really Dominican. There is a lot of racial prejudice seen in the country.

I believe that light skin privilege is seen a lot and even when people don't think they're using it. They should acknowledge they actually are even if it's unintentional. Back to

the person who found out that they were black when they came to the U.S I feel like they were taught that here because we're more Intune. If the country was giving the same resources we are given in this country this would be occurring less and less. Multicultural education should be a topic brought up in government and how it should be taught in all schools. It is very important to implement this because this way people will feel like less than an outcast. Honestly, not only The Dominican Republic, but a lot of countries especially Latin countries need this education.

If this were to be implemented in all school systems there would also be more inclusion. Teach them that because we got our homelands invaded by the conquistadors we have different ethnicities running through our blood. If Dominicans would interact with African people they would see how similar their culture is from the music, vibrant colors, gestures, etc. This would definitely promote cross-cultural understanding because they are sharing common things and learning while at it. If I had to explain to someone my ethnic group I would start off with the history behind the country. What different ethnicities make up the country where I come from and how I understand that not everyone has to look the same. There are all types of different characteristics from hair color, eye color, height, skin color, etc. There isn't one single image of a person that is supposed to represent the country and I think that's beautiful.

Most countries have the same norms and values but not all of them. If I were explaining this to someone I would tell them why saying good morning to people around you is a sign of respect. How greeting people with a kiss might be weird to them but for us it's a normal thing. When it comes to traditions I would explain to them why wearing specific colors in our clothing actually has a meaning. That all the colors have a different significance to them and we wear it to represent that. I would also inform people that in Latin countries, we communicate a lot with facial gestures and different expressions. An example would be

when we are showing something to someone we pucker our lips and nod our head to show the direction of the object. Some of our food might seem weird from people outside our culture. I would understand where they're coming from and teach them that we eat these foods because this is what our ancestors first ate and we keep that tradition. Now that I've explained how I would explain my culture to someone coming from a different ethnic group, I want to turn back to my previous point. This being the issue of identity crisis.

While in class there was this one presentation that this student made that caught my attention. She talked about how before doing this assignment she herself was dealing with an identity crisis. After finishing her presentation she talked about how she never really thought about her culture and gained a sense of self identity. This actually proves my point as to why cultural understanding and teachings are so important. This student would've never found herself if she didn't have to indulge in this assignment. I'm glad that this assignment was given to us because we get to share our different experiences with culture. Not only that but also similarities that we have that we didn't know until we saw each other's presentations and papers.

I myself learned that Dominicans aren't the only one suffering from an identity crisis but that it is commonly seen in people who live in the U.S also. Comparing experiences in class might also bring us a sense of inclusion since we get to see that we aren't the only ones dealing with these issues. In each one of everybody's presentations, I found something that I resonate with. Whether it be the foods talked about, the values that we share in common, the experiences with discrimination or stereotypes that we've had, all of it. These are some of the reasons why I find that talking about cultural diversity issues is important because we could all relate in a way.

Solutions and Recommendations

Every conflict that we face in life has a solution to it, as I have gathered a few of my own for this identity crisis issue. I believe that instead of following the sheep in situations you should be the wolf who leads the situation. Since differences are made to seem scary, people tend to feel frightful. Especially when they don't have the same race, gender, sexual identity or religion. To stop this you have to be the one to speak up first and try to make a difference within your community. When you do this people see that they aren't alone and tend to join the movement as well.

One of simplest ways to avoid the issue of cultural Identity crisis would be to make laws on making multicultural education a mandatory class. Multiculturalism is the belief that culture, races and ethnicities, especially minority groups need better acknowledgement. By bringing up these discussions people become more aware of other groups other than theirs. When bringing multicultural classes into place there is a space created for diversity and equalness(University of Washington, 2021). People learn the prejudice and hardships that certain groups of people have faced throughout history. Knowing this creates a sort of appreciation for these cultures and countries.

The first place that I saw this actually happening was in the college that I'm in at the moment. The class that I'm talking about is my cultural diversity. I've learned so much within this class about other cultures and came to realize how many similarities we have. I gained a sense of respect for a lot of other cultures and became a cultured person. I learned about the unfair treatment that the LGBT community faces as well as minority groups. Most of the people in the LGBT community are white. Which proves my point as to why other countries need classes like these to teach them that it's okay to be different. Maybe people like Latinos, African Americans and Asians learn how to accept these kinds of things. Since sexual identity is also a big part of cultural identity.

Conclusion

To come to a closing, identity crisis within culture does exist and is something that needs more awareness. you have to be the one to speak up first and try to make a difference within your community. When you do this people see that they aren't alone and tend to join the movement as well. Knowing that you aren't the only one stuck between cultures might let someone else open up about the same issue. When this happens more people start coming out and this builds your own community where you feel safe. Doing this allows everyone to take their time exploring their cultures. Multiculturalism classes teach individuals about a lot of cultures' do's & don'ts and understanding that cultural evolutions do happen. All of these sequences of events lead to discussions at home. To those suffering from a cultural self identity crisis you are not alone and should talk about it with someone. Hopefully people becoming more aware and open minded puts an end to this crisis.

Annotated Bibliography

My Ethnic Identity Crisis. Ritu Bhasin. (2021, September 23). Retrieved December 16, 2021,

from <https://ritubhasin.com/blog/my-ethnic-identity-crisis/>

This source talks about how Ritu shares her past experience with ethnic identity crisis. She shares how she became really confused about where she belonged and how disconnected she felt from her culture. This source is important to me because in my research paper I wrote about how migration is a factor in this crisis.

The author proves my point and is a real life example of my point, I respect her for having overcome this. Not many people talk about this issue and she actually chose to.

Wilson, V. (2021, June 29). *What is cultural identity and why is it important?*

Exceptional Futures. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from

<https://www.exceptionalfutures.com/cultural-identity/>

This source talks about what cultural identity is and why it is very important to learn. The author talks about all the components that shape a person's cultural identity & how each part plays an important role. I found this article interesting because I found out there's so much more than just one thing. It's not only about where you come from but the positive and negative experiences you've had. Always was made aware that point of views vary when it comes to culture.

Ha, T. (2019, October 2). *Scholar speaks on race identity in Dominican culture*.

Fordham Newsroom. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from

<https://news.fordham.edu/arts-and-culture/scholar-speaks-on-race-identity-in-dominican-culture/>

This source talks about race identity within Dominican Culture and how people identify. The author talks about how Dominicans often get misunderstood and how they struggle to navigate their racial identity. I found this article special to me because I myself am Dominican and I know where they're coming from. I have dealt with the confusion of not being enough for either side and having to figure it out on my own.

Lesadmin. (2021, October 11). *What are the benefits of understanding different cultures?*

English. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from

<https://www.leselfes.com/understanding-different-cultures/>

This source talks about how understanding different cultures has a lot of benefits. The author talks about how by doing this you're promoting coexistence. The author goes on to explain what culture is and what we learn when interacting with diverse groups. I found this article interesting because it is encouraging people to go out and talk to others from different cultures. It is so interesting to get to know cultures from someone on the inside that teaches you everything. You get to eat their food, exchange perspectives and see why they celebrate certain things.

Cultural relativism. Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs. (n.d.).

Retrieved December 16, 2021, from

<https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/education/001/terms/00001>

This source talks about what cultural relativism is and how people have different points of views about things. The author goes on to talk about how the fundamentals and morals within cultures differ. I found this to be interesting because I've seen these situations in real life. In my Ecuadorian culture people celebrating someone's death is weird because they don't know the meaning behind it. In my culture this means that we

are making a pathway for heaven to receive them. While for other cultures it may seem as disrespectful to do so.

Multicultural education: Goals and dimensions. Multicultural Education: Goals and Dimensions

| UW College of Education. (n.d.). Retrieved December 16, 2021, from

<https://education.uw.edu/cme/view>

This source talks about what multiculturalism is and how multicultural classes can be a good thing. The author then proceeds to talk about the different dimensions within multicultural education. I found this article to be interesting because I myself am an advocate for public institutions to provide multicultural classes. I feel like it is the very start for people to be more open-minded and aware of other cultures other than their own. I would personally email this article to several schools so that they could also see its importance of it.

Cherry, K. (2021, May 28). *Could you be experiencing an identity crisis?* Very well Mind.

Retrieved December 16, 2021, from

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-an-identity-crisis-2795948>

This source talks about how to recognize if you have experienced an identity crisis. This goes on to define what an identity crisis is and how it develops and how it has to do with you being unable to make a commitment to an identity. I found this interesting because a lot of people tend to not know where they fit in, whether it's this side or the other. I also appreciated how the author talks about how to cope with the identity crisis if you do find yourself in this predicament. This article is basically bringing awareness to this crisis which I barely see get brought up.

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when it comes to race and ethnicity? UW News. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from

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<https://news.fordham.edu/arts-and-culture/scholar-speaks-on-race-identity-in-dominican-culture/>

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Ren Zhihong, The Cultural Identity of Ethnic Minorities and the Educational Development of National Schools[J]. Hebei Academic Journal, 2010.6:242-244.(In Chinese)