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Elaborating the Communication Theory of Identity: Identity Gaps and Communication Outcomes

Eura Jung and Michael L. Hecht

The Communication Theory of Identity identifies four frames of identity and their interpenetration. This article articulates identity gaps as a way to study interpenetration and selected two of the gaps, between personal and relational frames and between personal and enacted identities, for the study. A survey was administered and, as hypothesized, significant negative correlations were observed between the identity gaps and three communication outcomes. Possible causal directions were suggested by post hoc analyses. The results support the theory and suggest the utility of identity gaps as a means for understanding the role of identity in social relationships.

KEY CONCEPTS communication theory of identity, identity gaps, communication outcomes

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Identity has, for many years, been a central construct in the social and behavioral sciences. Many origins can be traced as this construct emerged across disciplines as a means of understanding human thought and action. For example, within psychology, identity has been conceptualized as a salient aspect of self and self-concept, functioning to give meaning to people and their self-images (Hogg, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1991). Within sociology, identity is often conceptualized as social roles, helping to explain how social positionality influences one's sense of self (Schlenker, 1985; Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Recently, scholars have attempted to link individuals and society, turning their attention to the relationship between identity and communication. As early as Goffman's (1959) formative work, researchers have been interested in how individuals "perform" their selves. It seems almost obvious to say that one's self-concepts are engaged when he/she interacts. However, it is less obvious that ascribed identities, the identities that others project on a person (see Collier, 1997, 1998), are not only related to a person's self-images but also to his/her social behavior. R.D. Laing (1966), for example, described a "spiral of reciprocal perspectives" to capture the notion of how one views

him/herself and others' view of him/her play out in social relationships.

This concern with identity, social interaction, and social relations gave rise to the new tendency in studying identity—focusing on direct relationships between communication and identity. Mokros (2003) claimed that identity is constituted by self-reflection of discourse and interaction. Noticing that identity was formed in communication, Ting-Toomey (1999) focused more on identity negotiation. People's identities are asserted, defined, and/or changed in mutual communication activities. Through this identity negotiation process, people approach mutually desired identities. For Collier (1988, 1997, 1998; Collier & Thomas, 1988), identity is co-created in relationships to others and emergent in communication. An individual's identity is created through internalization and negotiation of ascribed identities by others. The co-created identity is avowed in communication and adjusted again by other ascriptions. These communicative perspectives on identity note the close association between communication and identity, especially, the influences of communication on identity.

COMMUNICATION THEORY OF IDENTITY

Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) is one of the communicative approaches to identity. Compared to the aforementioned perspectives, CTI focuses more on mutual influences between identity and communication and conceptualizes identity as communication rather than seeing identity as merely a product of communication or vice versa (Hecht, 1993; Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993; Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003). The theory posits that social relations and roles are internalized by individuals as identities through communication. Individuals' identities, in turn, are acted out as social behavior through communication. Identity not only defines an individual but also reflects social roles and relations through communication. Moreover, social behavior is a function of identity through communication.

In American culture, identity tends to be situated within the individual who is seen as a separated and discrete entity (Carbaugh, 1989). Identity is seen as residing within the individual as the cognitive schema by which one understands and interprets self in the social world (Markus & Sentis, 1982). However, identity also exists in social spheres between and among people (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Pearce, 1989). CTI embraces both the individual and social relations as loci of identity. In view of the close association between identity and communication, CTI posits several loci of identity integrating the individual (self), communication, relationships, and society. This idea of multiple loci of identity is further refined in the four frames of identity in CTI.

The four loci or frames of identity are labeled personal, relational, enacted, and communal identities (Hecht, 1993; Hecht et al., 1993; Hecht et al., 2003). *Personal identity* is an individual's self-concepts or self-images. It exists at the individual level of analysis as a characteristic of individuals. *Enacted identity* is an individual's performed or expressed identity. People enact their identities and exchange the enacted identities in communication. In CTI, enactments are not mere expressions of identity but are considered identity itself. That is, some aspects of communication are identity itself, and, at the same time, identity influences communication. *Relational identity* has four levels. First, an individual develops and shapes his/her identity partially by internalizing how others view him/her. This level of relational identity is referred to as *ascribed relational identity* in this study. Second, an individual identifies him/herself through his/her relationships with others, such as someone's spouse and someone's friend. This is another kind of relational identity. Third, identities exist in relationship to other

identities. Since people have multiple identities they exist in relation to each other. One can be both parent and lawyer; teacher and follower; lover and member of hate group. Fourth, a relationship, itself, can be a unit of identity. A couple, for instance, can establish a relational identity (Baxter, 2004). The final frame is called *communal identity* and deals with how collectivities define their identities. The communal layer transcends individuals and is a characteristic of the group or collectivity. This concept is similar to "collective memory" (Middleton & Edwards, 1990) and objective ethnolinguistic identity (Harwood, Giles, & Bourhis, 1994).

These four frames of identity may be considered independently for analytic purposes but are not really separate from each other. One's personal identity is infused into one's enacted and relational identities, as well as communal identities, just as the communal identities are a part of personal, enacted, and relational identities. For example, one cannot examine a person's gender identity (personal identity) without considering how society defines gender roles (communal identity) or how others view a person as a man or woman (relational identity). CTI refers to this as the interpenetration of the frames. These relationships can also be conceptualized as juxtapositions or mutual interdependence, and those with a quantitative slant may think of them as statistical interactivity (as well as statistical mediation and moderation). The frames are perspectives on a whole (and holistic), integrated identity.

Thus, while one may want to focus on an individual frame, since frames operate collectively, a more complete analysis would examine them two at a time, three at a time, and/or all four at a time. To further complicate the picture, in some situations, the frames may contradict each other. In other situations, some or all of the frames are integrated. With the separation and/or integration, that is, interpenetration, the four frames of identity show various aspects of identity in various situations.

CTI is particularly concerned with this quality of interpenetration or juxtaposition of identities (e.g., how the frames relate to each other). Unfortunately, this part of the theory is not well articulated or understood. Most previous research has focused on individual frames, neglecting how the frames act jointly. The present study was designed to fill this gap in CTI research.

The goal of this paper is to articulate a way of studying interpenetration. To accomplish this goal, first, the theoretical construct of *identity gap* was conceptualized as an aspect of interpenetration. Second, instruments to measure the identity gaps were developed. Third, the relationships between identity gaps and communication outcomes were examined to check the conceptualization of the identity gaps and an assumption of CTI.

Identity Gaps

Interpenetration occurs in a number of ways. Dialectical interpenetration is one of them. The four frames of identity are not always consistent with each other. They can be contradictory or exclusive to each other. However, despite the contradiction, the frames still coexist and work together as parts of identity. That is, the frames interpenetrate each other with dialectical tensions between and among them. For example, a discrepancy or a contradiction can arise between the personal and relational frames, or between the personal and enacted frames. Even when these frames contradict each other, they coexist and work together composing an individual's identity. While not all interpenetrations involve contradictions or discrepancies (e.g., some may involve frames which enhance each other), discrepancies or contradictions may be one important way

to conceptualize the interpenetration because the dialectical tension between contradiction and coexistence of the identity frames can be a source of the dynamic and fluid nature of identity. To define this kind of dialectical interpenetration the construct, *identity gap*, was proposed.

Identity gaps are defined as discrepancies between or among the four frames of identity. Theoretically, the number of possible identity gaps is 11 (six gaps between any two of the four frames, four gaps among any three of them, and one gap among all four frames). Identity gaps are almost an inevitable result of communication and social relations. Because communication is not perfect, people are rarely transparent or perfectly consistent. In addition, two people rarely share the same experiential domain nor have the exact same interpretation of social life. Thus, when people come together and communication occurs, identity gaps are unavoidable. One might posit that gaps always accompany communication and are present to some degree in all relationships. The issue is the degree and type of gap, as well as the implications of these gaps for social relations.

While identity gaps can exist between and among any of the identity frames, this study focuses on two specific gaps. Traditionally, identity tends to be conceptualized as an individual's personal properties with little consideration of its communicative aspects (Hecht, 1993; Collier, 1997). This study is interested in comparing the traditional, personal concept of identity with communication-based concepts of identity. The personal identity in CTI parallels the traditional concept of identity. The ascribed relational identity and the enacted identity result from interpersonal interaction and communication behavior. Thus, the focus of this study is on two kinds of gaps, one between the personal and the ascribed relational identities and the other between the personal and the enacted identities. The communal identity was not considered in this study since it operates on a collective level of analysis and, thus requires a study with a collective level of observation.

Personal-relational identity gap. The personal-relational identity gap is defined as discrepancies between an individual's personal identity and ascribed relational identity, that is, discrepancies between how an individual views him/herself and his/her perception of how others view him/her. It is certainly not unusual for an individual's self-view to differ from the ways in which others see him or her.

The idea that an individual's identity (in CTI terminology, personal identity) includes how others see the person (in CTI terms, ascribed relational identity) has been suggested in various theories. Cooley (1902) developed the conception of the "looking glass self" to describe how people see themselves in the mirror of others' eyes. This idea was developed further in the work of Mead (1934) who divided self into "I" and "me." Mead (1934) explained the process of incorporating others' attitudes and responses to the "me" in terms of the concept of "taking the role of the other."

The ideas related to personal and relational identities are also present in a number of more recent psychological theories. For example, Self-Verification Theory developed the idea that self has two aspects: the target's self-concepts or self-views and others' appraisals (Giesler & Swann, 1999; McNulty & Swann, 1994; Swann, 1983, 1987, 1996). The theory acknowledges that discrepancies often exist between self-concepts and others' appraisals, and argues that people seek out consistency. Control Theory (Carver & Scheier, 1982; Hyland, 1987; Powers, 1973) and Identity Theory (Burke, 1991; Stryker & Burke, 2000) also focus on internal standards of individual and environmentally determined situations that may include others' evaluations of an individual. As with Self-

Verification Theory, these theories posit that discrepancies are aversive and that people seek to reduce or avoid them. Consistent with these theories, Self-Discrepancy Theory reported that discrepancies between a person's own actual self and ideal selves imposed by others were associated with depressive feelings (Higgins, 1987; Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986; Higgins, Klein, & Strauman 1985).

Personal-relational identity gaps add conceptual clarification to the above ideas. Cooley and Mead noted that others' views of an individual can be a part of an individual's self. However, they did not clearly separate identity into two parts (personal and relational identities). They attend to neither the nature of relationships between the two identity frames (i.e., the degree of difference between the two) nor the negotiation of the differences when they occur. In addition, the implications and outcomes of the gaps or differences were not considered. Self-Verification Theory and Control Theory do note potential differences between a person's self-concepts and others' appraisals but do not consider others' appraisals to be internalized as a part of self. Thus, it was not evident if differences between self-concepts and others' appraisals in these theories refer to differences between two aspects of an individual's identity or between identity and an external faculty (appraisal). Self-Discrepancy Theory conceptualized self-concepts and others' appraisals as different aspects of a self. However, this theory did not note the dynamic nature of the discrepancy and overlooked the role of communication in creating and negotiating them. Considering these factors, the conceptualization of personal-relational identity gap starts with the assumption that others' appraisals are internalized and form a part of identity and then focuses on the discrepancies between self-concepts and internalized others' appraisals that are created and negotiated through communication.

Personal-enacted identity gap. An individual's personal identity also can differ from his or her enacted identity. In other words, an individual's expressed identities in communication can be different from his or her self-views. One can see oneself as open minded but cut off discussion of differing opinions in certain situations. The enacted identity (cutting off discussion) differs from the self-image (open mindedness). There can be a variety of reasons for this discrepancy, including impression management, dishonesty, shyness, and intimidation. Regardless of the motivation, discrepancies between an individual's self-views and identities expressed in communication were defined as the *personal-enacted identity gap*.

Ideas related to differences between personal and enacted identities appear in a number of theories. The concepts of "front stage" and "back stage" in Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach to self-presentation roughly correspond to the concepts of personal and enacted identities. Petronio's (1991, 2000) Communication Boundary Management Theory implies the existence of disclosed and undisclosed parts of self and boundaries between them. Jack's (1991, 1999) Silencing the Self Theory also involves expressed and suppressed parts of self, and research related to this theory supports the negative implications of this discrepancy.

While personal-enacted identity gap is related to these other approaches, it differs in important ways. The Dramaturgical Theory and the Communication Boundary Management Theory focus on intentionally or actively manipulated ways of expressing self for impression management and private information control. These two theories are concerned not with the implications for identity but, instead, how people manage impressions and private information. On the contrary, Silencing the Self Theory focuses on passive and less intentional ways of expressing self overlooking actively manipu-

lated ways of expressing self. CTI's treatment of enacted identity involves both active and passive expressions. Accordingly, the personal-enacted identity gap refers to discrepancies between expressed and unexpressed selves occurring in communication. While the above theories provide support for the proposition on the identity gaps and are quite complementary in many respects, they do not cover the same terrain as CTI's view of these gaps nor do they consider the range of gaps posited by CTI.

In summary, CTI delineates four, interpenetrated frames of identity. In this paper, the construct of identity gaps was articulated as one way to conceptualize the interpenetration of frames, and two particular gaps were selected as the foci for this study. In addition to helping understand the role of identity in communication, examining the implications of identity gaps provides a means of testing the explanatory power of CTI. The theory argues that identity is inherently communicative and social. If this is true, issues related to identity should be related to communication issues, and thus identity gaps should be associated with communication outcomes. In order to test these assumptions, the relationships between the two identity gaps and three key communication outcomes, such as communication satisfaction, feeling understood, and conversational appropriateness and effectiveness were examined.

Communication satisfaction. Communication satisfaction has long been seen as a key outcome of effective communication (Hecht, 1978; Spitzberg & Hecht, 1984). Communication satisfaction refers to the emotional response when inner standards are reinforced in communication (Hecht, 1978, 1993). Some of these inner standards are those about self. When an individual's inner standards about self are reinforced by his/her communicative behavior and/or others' appraisals, satisfaction may be experienced. On the other hand, when an individual cannot enact his/her inner standards in communication, in other words, when gaps between personal and enacted identities arise, he/she may feel that the inner standards are not reinforced by his/her communicative behavior expressing self and subsequently may not feel satisfied with communication. Similarly, when an individual receives appraisals from others that are inconsistent with his/her inner standards, that is, when gaps between personal and relational identities occur, he/she may think that the inner standards are not reinforced by others' appraisals and thus may not be satisfied with communication. Thus, it is anticipated that the smaller the gaps the more satisfied a person will be with communication.

Feeling understood. Feeling understood occurs when interactants believe that their meanings are successfully conveyed and shared (Hecht, Larkey, & Johnson, 1992; Martin, Hecht, & Larkey, 1994). This feeling can be related to identity gaps. An individual's problems with enacting an authentic self (personal-enacted identity gap) in communication may result in others' misunderstanding of his/her real self. Subsequently, the individual can feel that he/she is misunderstood by others. Then, this feeling of being misunderstood by others may lead to gaps between his/her self-concepts and perception of others' views of him/her. Therefore, it is anticipated that a personal-enacted identity gap produces feeling misunderstood, and then feeling misunderstood leads to a personal-relational identity gap.

Conversational appropriateness and effectiveness. Conversational appropriateness and effectiveness are, perhaps, the central criteria for competent communication (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). In fact, many have defined competence as communication that results in perceptions of appropriateness and effectiveness (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987; Hecht, 1978; Spitzberg, 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Wiseman, 2002). A conversation is appropriate when conversational behavior and messages meet expectations or

do not violate communication rules in a given situation, and it is effective when one's goals of a conversation are achieved (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). As with the other outcomes, identity gaps can inhibit the accomplishment of appropriateness and effectiveness. According to Self-Verification Theory (Giesler & Swann, 1999; McNulty & Swann, 1994; Swann, 1983, 1987, 1996), people seek others' views of them that are consistent with their own self-concepts. Receiving others' appraisals that are consistent with his/her self-views is a goal of communication. Hence, when a person has problems with enacting his/her real self (personal-enacted identity gap) in communication and thus receive others' appraisals that are not consistent with his/her real self (personal-relational identity gap), he/she may think that his/her communication is not effective and his/her communicative behavior violates the rules that can bring the others' appraisals he/she wants. Thus, it is anticipated that personal-enacted and personal-relational identity gaps influence perceptions of conversational appropriateness and effectiveness.

HYPOTHESES

The goal of this study is to elaborate the CTI's construct of interpenetration by articulating a new theoretical construct—identity gaps. Identity gaps are conceptualized as the discrepancies between and among the four identity frames. Two gaps, the personal-relational identity gap and the personal-enacted identity gap, were chosen for this study. Then, it was postulated that since CTI sees communication and identity as inextricably linked, the gaps should be associated with communication outcomes. However, since identity gaps are a new construct and no measures exist to operationalize them, new scales were developed to correlate the gaps with communication outcomes. Thus, the following research question and hypotheses were posed:

- RQ1: Can reliable measures of the personal-relational identity gap and the personal-enacted identity gap be developed?
- H1: The personal-relational identity gap will be negatively correlated with communication satisfaction, feeling understood, and communication appropriateness and effectiveness.
- H2: The personal-enacted identity gap will be negatively correlated with communication satisfaction, feeling understood, and communication appropriateness and effectiveness.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 135 students recruited from nine basic communication classes at a northeastern U. S. university. The students participating in the study received a small amount of extra credit. The sample was composed of 89.6% of European Americans, 4.4% of African Americans, 3% of Latinos/as, and 3% of Asians or Asian Americans. Also, 54.1% of the sample was female and 45.9% was male.

Procedures

One of the authors announced the opportunity to participate in the study for extra credit a week ahead of data collection in the nine sections of a basic communication course. Students were invited to the designated data collection site at various times. When students appeared in the designated site, one of the authors administered paper-

and-pencil questionnaires consisting of 61 items. Participants completed and submitted the questionnaires at the site.

Measures

To operationalize the two identity gaps, new scales were constructed. First, items were generated by one author from the theoretical literature. The second author then commented, edited and revised the scales. After administration, factor analyses were conducted to establish construct validities, and internal consistency reliabilities of the scales were established by Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The three communication outcomes were operationalized by existing instruments. All variables were measured based on participants' communication with their classmates. Thus, participants responded to all measures recalling their conversations with typical and average classmates.

Personal-Relational Identity Gap Scale. Twelve items were developed to operationalize the personal-relational identity gap. The items were written to describe situations in which another person ascribed characteristics to the participant that were either consistent or inconsistent with the way the participant saw her or himself. Consistencies were reflected in perceptions that the other person had correct information about the participant (item 5), while inconsistencies were reflected in stereotyping (item 7) and being different from the way the person saw the participant (item 2). These items were rated on 7-point scales in the Likert format (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree). The 12 items are presented in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
Personal-Relational Identity Gap Scale

-
- | | |
|---|--|
| *1.
2.
*3.
4.
*5.
6.
7.
8.
*9.
10.
*11.
*12. | I feel that my communication partners see me as I see myself
I am different from the way my communication partners see me.
I agree with how my communication partners describe me.
I feel that my communication partners have wrong images of me
I feel that my communication partners have correct information about me.
I feel that my communication partners portray me not based on information provided by myself but information from other sources.
I feel that my communication partners stereotype me.
I feel that my communication partners do not realize that I have been changing and still portray me based on my past images.
I feel that my communication partners know who I used to be when they portray me.
When my communication partners talk about me, I often wonder if they talk about me or someone else.
I feel that there is no difference between who I think I am and who my communication partners think I am.
My communication partners like the things about me that I like about myself. |
|---|--|
-

Note. Items with an asterisk were reversed in scoring.

From a factor analysis using the Principal Component extraction method, two factors were retained with eigenvalues of 1.0 or greater (see Table 1). Direct Oblimin rotation clarified the distinction between the factors. The correlation between the two factors was .50 and indicated that the oblique rotation was appropriate. According to Comrey and Lee's (1992) suggestion, items were considered to load on a factor if they exhibited primary loadings of .45 or greater on the factor with secondary loadings smaller than .45.¹ As a result, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 11 fell into factor 1, which was

labeled Difference. Items 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 belonged to factor 2, which was named Preconception. Item 12 did not meet the criteria and was eliminated (see Table 2).

TABLE 1
Total Variance Explained in Factor Analysis for Personal-Relational Identity Gap Scale

Factor	Total Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.798	39.987	39.987
2	<u>1.359</u>	11.326	51.313
3	.969	8.074	59.388
4	.843	7.025	66.413
5	.813	6.778	73.191
6	.666	5.553	78.744
7	.637	5.311	84.055
8	.507	4.227	88.282
9	.456	3.804	92.086
10	.400	3.335	95.421
11	.311	2.593	98.014
12	.238	1.986	100.00

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
The factors with underlined eigenvalues were retained.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the six items of Difference factor and the five items of Preconception factor were .85 and .74 respectively. The items in each factor, accordingly, were viewed to be sufficiently reliable for each factor. The alpha coefficient of all 11 items was .86. Given the high degree of correlation between the factors and the internal consistency of the overall set of 11 items, this should be treated as a single scale. Thus, the 11 items in the two factors were set as an overall measure of personal-relational identity gap. In either case, the internal consistency reliability of each factor, as well as the overall scale was quite good.

TABLE 2
Factor Loadings for Two-Factor Solution of Personal-Relational Identity Gap Scale

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
1.	.885	-8.442E-02
2.	.874	-.156
3.	.791	-5.447E-02
4.	.638	.184
5.	.552	.246
6.	-7.620E-02	.752
7.	7.031E-02	.631
8.	2.167E-02	.750
9.	4.509E-03	.692
10.	4.070E-02	.638
11.	.528	.348
12.	.296	5.690E-02

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
The items with underlined loadings were included in a factor.

Personal-enacted identity gap scale. An 11-item scale was developed to operationalize the personal-enacted identity gap. Items reflected either an isomorphism between expressions of identity and views of self or inconsistencies. Isomorphism was reflected

by statements describing situations in which the participant felt that he/she could be his/her real self (item 3), while inconsistencies were reflected when the participant felt they had to hide important information about her/himself (item 5). Each item was rated a 7-point scale in the Likert format (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree). The 11 items appear in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
Personal-Enacted Identity Gap Scale

-
- *1. When I communicate with my communication partners, they get to know "real me."
 - *2. I feel that I can communicate with my communication partners in a way that is consistent with who I really am.
 - *3. I feel that I can be myself when communicating with my communication partners.
 - 4. I express myself in a certain way that is not the real me when communicating with my communication partners.
 - 5. I do not reveal important aspects of myself in communication with my communication partners.
 - 6. When communicating with my communication partners, I often lose sense of who I am.
 - 7. I do not express the real me when I think it is different from my communication partners' expectation.
 - 8. I sometimes mislead my communication partners about who I really am.
 - 9. There is a difference between the real me and the impression I give my communication partners about me.
 - *10. I speak truthfully to my communication partners about myself.
 - *11. I freely express the real me in communication with my communication partners.
-

Note. Items with an asterisk were reversed in scoring

A factor analysis was conducted with the 11 items utilizing the Principal Component extraction method and Direct Oblimin rotation. The factor analysis yielded two factors with eigenvalues of 1 or greater (see Table 3). With the same criteria for item inclusion used above, items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 fell into factor 1. Factor 2 involved items 1, 2, 3, and 11 (see Table 4). The interfactor correlation was $-.58$ and, thus, the oblique rotation was appropriate.

TABLE 3
Total Variance Explained in Factor Analysis for Personal-Enacted Identity Gap Scale

Factor	Total Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	<u>5.313</u>	48.299	48.299
2	<u>1.293</u>	11.751	60.050
3	.881	8.005	68.055
4	.793	7.206	75.261
5	.633	5.751	81.012
6	.533	4.845	85.857
7	.430	3.908	89.766
8	.405	3.679	93.444
9	.317	2.879	96.323
10	.225	2.045	98.369
11	.179	1.631	100.00

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
The factors with underlined eigenvalues were retained.

However, the two factors seemed to be a methodological artifact of scoring. All of the items loading on the second factor (item 1, 2, 3, and 11) were reverse scored. The distinction between the two factors seemed to reflect the difference in scoring, not a substantive or conceptual difference. In addition, the high correlation between the two

factors (-.58) also suggested that the two factors overlapped significantly. Thus, the distinction between the factors could be regarded as not meaningful and that a one-factor solution rather than the two-factor solution appeared to be more appropriate for the scale.

TABLE 4
Factor Loadings for Two-Factor Solution of Personal-Enacted Identity Gap Scale

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
1.	-.211	-.868
2.	.174	-.788
3.	.127	-.800
4.	<u>.479</u>	-.417
5.	<u>.639</u>	.144
6.	<u>.639</u>	2.214E-03
7.	<u>.790</u>	2.871E-02
8.	<u>.793</u>	-1.783E-02
9.	<u>.661</u>	-.326
10.	<u>.538</u>	-.222
11.	.425	-.572

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
The items with underlined loadings were included in a factor.

In the one-factor solution utilizing Principal Component extraction method, all 11 items were included in the factor at the cut-off point of .45 (see Table 5). This indicated that each of the 11 items shared a significant amount of variance (minimum 20% of variance) with the retained factor (Comrey & Lee, 1992). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the overall scale was .89. The internal consistency reliability increases only slightly by .006 when the weakest item (item 5) was eliminated and therefore the item was retained because the increase was negligible. Thus, all 11 items were included in a highly reliable single factor scale and served as the measure of personal-enacted identity gap.

TABLE 5
Factor Loadings for One-Factor Solution of Personal-Enacted Identity Gap Scale

Item	Factor 1
1	.513
2	<u>.786</u>
3	<u>.755</u>
4	<u>.755</u>
5	<u>.446</u>
6	<u>.559</u>
7	<u>.670</u>
8	<u>.711</u>
9	<u>.842</u>
10	<u>.651</u>
11	<u>.833</u>

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
The items with underlined loadings were included in the factor.

Communication satisfaction. This variable was operationalized by a measure originally developed by Hecht (1978) and modified by Hecht et al. (1992). The 14-item Likert-type scale of the modified version was used in this study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was .77 in this study.

Feeling understood. This variable was operationalized by the 8-item Likert-type scale developed by Hecht et al. (1992) and used by Martin et al. (1994). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the feeling understood scale was .78.

Conversational appropriateness and effectiveness. The 14-item scale in a semantic differential format, which was simplified from Spitzberg and Phelps's (1982) original scale by Coleman (1992), was selected to operationalize this construct. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was .91.

RESULTS

The research hypotheses predicted negative relationships between the identity gaps and three communication outcomes. These hypotheses were tested through a series of zero order correlations between each gap and each outcome. The correlations, reported in Table 8, are all in the predicted direction, statistically significant, and moderately high. The findings support the research hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 predicted a negative correlation between the personal-relational identity gap and communication satisfaction, feeling understood, and communication appropriateness and effectiveness. The correlations support this hypothesis. The correlation between the personal-relational identity gap and communication satisfaction was $-.50$ ($p < .001$), while the gap correlated $-.52$ ($p < .001$) with feeling understood and $-.42$ ($p < .001$) with communication appropriateness and effectiveness. When the individual factors are used instead of the overall gap, the pattern of correlations is similar (see Table 6), although the findings for Preconception factor are weaker.

TABLE 6
Correlations between Identity Gaps and Communication Outcomes

Identity Gaps	Satisfaction	Understood	Ap & Ef
Personal-Relational (Overall)	-.50***	-.52***	-.42***
Difference Factor	-.53***	-.50***	-.43***
Preconception Factor	-.35***	-.41***	-.30***
Personal-Enacted	-.60***	-.61***	-.46***

Note. Satisfaction = Communication Satisfaction. Understood = Feeling Understood. Ap & Ef = Conversational Appropriateness and Effectiveness.

*** $p < .001$

Hypothesis 2 predicted a negative correlation between the personal-enacted identity gap and communication satisfaction, feeling understood, and communication appropriateness and effectiveness. The correlations support this hypothesis. The correlation between the personal-enacted identity gap and communication satisfaction was $-.60$ ($p < .001$), while this gap correlated $-.61$ ($p < .001$) with feeling understood and $-.46$ ($p < .001$) with communication appropriateness and effectiveness.

Post Hoc Analyses

After examining the hypothesized correlations between the identity gaps and the communication outcomes, the more specific nature of the relationships was explored.

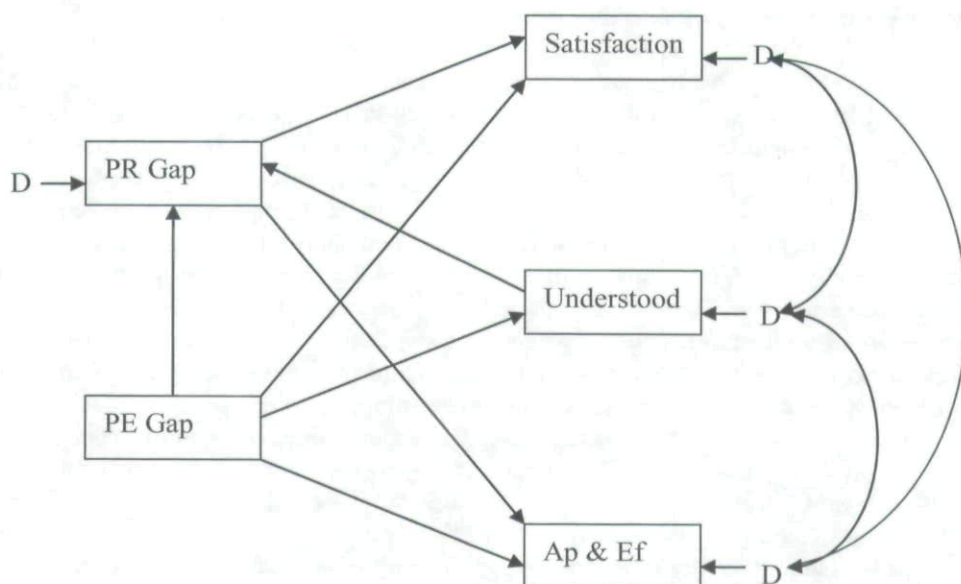
Utilizing path analysis, the potential causal directions of the relationships between the identity gaps and the communication outcomes were examined. Because of the limitation of path analysis itself and the nature of the cross-sectional data used in this study, however, the results are, at best, suggestive of the directions of effects.

A path model was suggested on the basis of the characteristics of the two identity gaps and the three communication outcomes described in the previous section and reflected in hypotheses 1 and 2. Both the personal-enacted and the personal-relational identity gaps were expected to have effects on communication satisfaction and conversational appropriateness and effectiveness. Feeling understood was likely to be influenced by the personal-enacted identity gap first and then influence the personal-relational identity gap. As for the relationship between the two identity gaps, which were highly correlated ($r=.62$, $p < .001$), the personal-enacted identity gap should precede the personal-relational identity gap because the latter tended to arise as a result of communication, and the former was directly related to communicative behavior and more likely to arise in the process of communication. All pairwise correlations among the three outcomes were high. Correlation coefficients between communication satisfaction and feeling understood, communication satisfaction and conversational appropriateness and effectiveness, and feeling understood and conversational appropriateness and effectiveness were .677 ($p < .001$), .585 ($p < .001$), and .615 ($p < .001$) respectively. However, since the three endogenous variables shared at least a common cause in the proposed model (see Figure 1), the correlations among the three outcomes in the model could be regarded as spurious ones (Kline, 1998), and thus the correlations could not be added to the model. Also, since the directions of effects among the three variables were not clear theoretically, adding unidirectional paths to the model was not available. Adding reciprocal paths among the three variables also were not possible because it made the model underidentified. The only choice to include the likely relationships among the three variables in the model was adding pairwise correlations among the disturbances of the three endogenous variables.² As a result, the proposed model included seven unidirectional paths among the variables and three correlation arcs among the disturbances (see Figure 3). Although the model contained correlations among the disturbances of the three endogenous variables, it could be regarded as a recursive model because no paths were included among the three endogenous variables (Kline, 1998). Since it was a recursive model and numbers of parameters and observations were the same, the model was just-identified. This initial, just-identified model was trimmed down to seek an optimal and parsimonious model.

The path model was tested by means of EQS. The Wald statistics in the results revealed that the contribution of the two paths from the personal-relational gap to communication satisfaction and to conversational appropriateness and effectiveness to the model fit was not significant and suggested to drop them. Thus, the model without the two paths was set as the alternative model (see Figure 4).

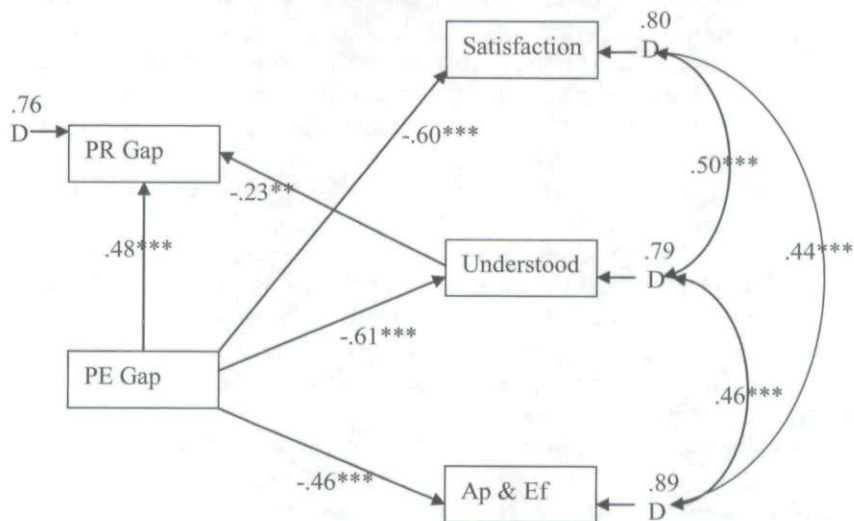
The test of the alternative model produced the following fit indexes: Chi-square = 2.37, $df = 2$, $p = .31$; NFI = .99; CFI = .99; GFI = .99; SRMR = .02; RMSEA = .04. All of these indexes indicated that the model fit the data very well and thus was an optimal model for the data. In the model, personal-enacted identity gap exhibited strong effects on all the other variables, personal-relational identity gap, communication satisfaction, feeling understood, and conversational appropriateness and effectiveness. The standardized coefficients of these paths were .48, -.60, -.61, and -.46 respectively (see Figure 4). The p -values of these coefficients were all less than .001. Feeling understood had a

FIGURE 3
Hypothesized model for identity gaps and communication outcomes.



Note. PR Gap = Personal-Relational Identity Gap. PE Gap = Personal-Enacted Identity Gap. Satisfaction = Communication Satisfaction. Understood = Feeling Understood. Ap & Ef = Conversational Appropriateness and Effectiveness

FIGURE 4
Adjusted model for identity gaps and communication outcomes



Note. PR Gap = Personal-Relational Identity Gap. PE Gap = Personal-Enacted Identity Gap. Satisfaction = Communication Satisfaction. Understood = Feeling Understood. Ap & Ef = Conversational Appropriateness and Effectiveness.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

significant effect on personal-relational identity gap with the path coefficient $-.23$ ($p < .01$). All three correlations among the disturbances of the three communication outcomes were also significant with p -values less than $.001$.

DISCUSSION

The Communication Theory of Identity emerged in the last decade in an attempt to centralize communication in the study of identity. CTI provides an integrative perspective on identity and an analytic framework for understanding this construct by suggesting four frames of identity and dynamic relationships among them. The four frames of identity explain various aspects of identity but it is the interpenetration that explains the dynamic nature of identity. To date, most of the research utilizing CTI has focused on the four frames of identity. Interpenetration has received little attention and been left as a relatively underdeveloped concept. Thus, this paper sought to examine and elaborate the CTI's assumption that the frames interpenetrate each other. In this pursuit, identity gaps were articulated to describe an aspect of interpenetration.

Among all 11 possible gaps between and among the four identity frames, gaps between the personal and the relational frames and between the personal and the enacted frames were chosen for the study because these gaps reflect how self, communication, and relationships are interrelated aspects of identity and thus provide a unique, integrative approach to studying identity and social relations.

As hypothesized, high negative correlations were found between each of the identity gaps and each of the communication outcomes. These results have two important implications. First, the identity gaps were conceptualized as occurring in the process and/or as a result of communication, that is, as a communicative phenomenon. The high correlations between the identity gaps and the communication outcomes support this conceptualization. Second, the strong relationships between the identity gaps and the communication outcomes support the close relationship between identity and communication posited in CTI. Thus, it can be argued that the results provide an empirical evidence of the fundamental assumption of CTI—that identity is inherently communicative.

In addition to the correlations, the potential causal directions of effects between the identity gaps and the communication outcomes were examined in the post hoc analyses. The path model suggests that the personal-enacted identity gap has strong effects on all three communication outcomes. Thus, there is a possibility that this identity gap causes the outcomes. Because the gap, itself, involves the communication processes (e.g., arises out of communication) it is likely to be causally related to outcomes of those communication processes.

The path analyses did not reveal any significant effects of the personal-relational identity gap on the communication outcomes. Personal-relational identity gap does not seem to precede or cause the outcomes. Instead, since this identity gap is affected by the personal-enacted identity gap as are the communication outcomes, the gap may actually be an outcome itself. It is also possible that the gap is actually caused by the communication outcomes. One can speculate that a gap between one's self-images (personal identity) and the ascriptions of others (relational identity) results from dissatisfaction, misunderstanding, and/or inappropriate and ineffective communication. The significant effect of feeling understood on personal-relational identity gap in the model may be a clue of these directions of effects. One significant effect, however, cannot provide enough evidence to reach this conclusion. The relationships between the com-

munication outcomes and the personal-relational identity gap may be further clarified by examining other outcome variables in a longitudinal design.

The findings of this empirical study contribute to a growing body of knowledge about the relationship between identity and social behavior. For example, it was reported that differential identities are associated with adolescent drug use (Marsiglia, Kulis, and Hecht, 2001) and interethnic communication (Hecht et al. 1992). However, the relationship is a complex one, with certain types of identity associated with positive outcomes while others are associated with negative ones. The construct of identity gap may help explain some of these findings. Rather than merely the type and degree of identification with a particular group, for example, it may also be needed to consider the gaps to explain dynamic relationships between and among the various identity frames.

In future research, further elaboration of the construct of identity gaps is needed. Although this study supports the idea that identity gaps are related to communication outcomes and suggests some specific relationships between them, examining identity gaps in relation with other communication variables may further clarify the characteristics of identity gaps. For example, a study may be needed to examine if identity gaps are influenced by communication input variables, such as communication styles, communication competence, and conversational improvement strategies. Studying the identity gap with such input variables as well as outcome variables will help delineate the functions (e.g., mediation function) of the identity gap in relation with communication inputs and outcomes.

Identity gaps also should be studied from the perspective of both communication parties (i.e., dyadic data) because the gaps arise in both parties out of their communication, and the gaps of both parties are expected to be related to each other (i.e., one person's gaps are related to the other person's gaps). These joint functions are worth investigating because they may provide clues to explain the process by which the gaps occur and are negotiated. Hence, it would be desirable to collect dyadic level data to further understand this construct.

The results of this study suggest that larger identity gaps lead to more negative outcomes. Reduced identity gaps in communication may result in better outcomes. Developing strategies or models for reducing the identity gaps will add strong practical and theoretical power to the theory.

Finally, identity gaps may also have potential associations with psychological issues such as depression and behavioral issues such as drug use and violent behavior. Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987; Higgins et al., 1986; Higgins et al., 1985), theories about excessive reassurance seeking (Coyne, 1976) and lack of positive reinforcement (Lewinsohn, 1974) determined that similar concepts are related to depression. Self-silencing, a kind of personal-enacted identity gap, is likely to lead to depression (Jack, 1991, 1999). Jang and Johnson's (2003) study found that general strain, which seems to share some common characteristics with personal-relational identity gap, was related to violent behavior and drug use. Thus, identity gaps can be studied relating it with psychological and behavioral issues.

The study provides an important extension and test of the Communication Theory of Identity and adds to growing understanding of communication outcomes. The paper develops a new construct, identity gaps, and, consistent with the theory, demonstrates their relationship to communication outcomes. Directions for future research are suggested to develop the construct of identity gap further and apply it to various

domains. Such studies are needed to extend the range and explanatory power of communication theories as well as demonstrating their usefulness in practice.

NOTES

- ¹ This liberal criterion is used because in the early stage of measure development it is desirable to retain rather than eliminate items.
- ² According to Lee-Hershberger replacing rules (Lee & Hershberger, 1990), unidirectional paths, reciprocal paths, and correlated disturbances can be used interchangeably for the variables in the initial model that is just-identified and with unidirectional paths to subsequent variables. Thus, in the proposed model, adding correlations among the three disturbances is a way to include a type of relationships among the three variables.

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