Identity Evolution from crossing borders-Influencing Factors

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"Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists" by Franklin D. Roosevelt reminds us that humanity has always been mobile. Migration can be defined as being internal or international movement to gain survival supplements such as money and cultural resources which could be materialistic or non-materialistic (Mangalam & Morgan, 1968) and mobility in the context of a traditional hunter gatherer is understood as "where the group wandered in a seasonal pattern with their tents and supplies" (Settles, 2001). The various roles we adopt in our life such as a parent, student or employee integrates into parts of our identity, and identity can change as our roles change across various contexts. Identity can be defined as an ever-changing aspect of self that connects the self to societal relationships, at the same time defining the uniqueness of the inner self of an individual. Therefore, as Woodward puts across, identity can be fluid and is always changing as the individual tries to relate to the world (Glover, 2017). With respect to mobility, interactions with the changing environment, society and culture can mold parts of our identity as we position ourselves in the changed circumstance. This essay will discuss the various factors that can influence the change in one's identity by progressing in three parts; types of Migration, Social characteristics and Individual vs Group mobility and the impact it has on one's evolving identity.

Let us consider the different ways that people migrate. It could be internal which is crossing borders within their state and country or external migration which could mean they are moving to another country. For example, Alex migrated from South India to North India after receiving a good job offer. Though there are diverse religious and traditional customs within the country which the individual would have awareness of, he was not exposed to the custom and language. But he bought a house in a neighborhood predominantly occupied by South Indians, learned the new language and years later identified as a North Indian. The individual is still governed by the same government and can exercise his/her rights in the state migrating to without political restrictions. However, this changes if Alex is to move outside his country. An individual moving across country will be experiencing changes with respect to unknown cultures, customs, religious views and additionally will be faced with political restrictions in terms of individual rights in the new land. For example: An Indian moving to the UAE, where he/she cannot own land or property, needs a sponsor and can be asked to leave the country at any point in time. Hence, while internal migration can change some aspects of Identity with respect to language or customs, external migration can cause a large change to identity, leaving a greater impact. In other words, Thorton's view that borders are developed on the basis of resources available and that it can be perceived as a threat when you cross borders to gain more access to resources which were preciously limited to you (Thorton, 1987), this threat can have a greater impact when it's external migration as compared to internal.

Though the migrating nature may differ, by delving deeper into social characteristics on an individualistic level, reasons for migration such as economic opportunities, education prospects

and being an ethnic minority can have an impact on how it influences one's identity. Research shows that migrating at a younger age such as for educational purposes instills positive attitudes towards the migrated country however, the sense of belonging is greater towards the homeland (Tartakovsky, 2008). As mentioned in Sichone's article, better education and employable characteristics are survival tactics that decreases their chances of being 'illegal aliens' (Sichone, 2008:260). However, this might be a struggle with respect to identity by drawing on the concept of Placed Resources by Blommaert. The skills, language efficiency and educational quality one has acquired, though important in their native may not have the same value in the new context (Blommaert, 2004). For example: One might be proficient in communicating in English in their home country, but it may not be considered fluent or coherent in the foreign country due to heavy accent.

Drawing on a different perspective of mobility in terms of individual or social migration, an identity can have a greater change when it's individual mobility. The individual is placed in a completely different context to adjust to the various customs and language such as in the aforementioned example of an individual migrating from South India to North India. Whereas, in group mobility, though they experience identity change over time, the change can be more biculturalism, as the identity of the group among themselves remain fixed but can assimilate when the group is separated within the boundaries (Bhugra, 2004). This could be further explained with an example: A group of Indians (three generations of a family along with their cousins) migrate to United States for better employment opportunities. They join an Indian community in U.S and send their kids to Indian schools. The locality also has Indian shop vendors and exported Indian products. Here, their social Identity that is connected to India can remain the same however, they could internalize some values from the foreign country through interactions in their workplace. Moreover, as Woodward considers identity to be in relation to others in the society, in the above giving example, as the society consists of a group of migrant Indians, the identity change becomes correlational to the group identity of those individuals.

So, in conclusion factors such as external migration, higher education and employment characteristics and migrating as a group can influence identity of the individual differently when compared to internal migration, under-rated social characteristics and individual migration. Identity remains fluid and is constantly changing when crossing borders irrespective of what factors interplay within their contexts. Although, the change in identity can differ according to the factors that are involved in the migration process.

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