

"Hong Kong Today" Module

Identity

Identity

Identity refers to the roles an individual plays in different groups or the qualifications, such as nationality and qualifications that a person possesses. When we are looking for shared or different attributes between us and others, or when we find ourselves in different groups, we decide whether we view ourselves or others as members of a particular group based on different scenarios or factors. A sense of recognition and belonging to a group may be developed after the acceptance of an individual's identity. The emergence and formation of such feelings can be regarded as a construction process known as identification.

The identity of an individual may originate from different sources. Some identities are innate, such as gender and race. The majority of Hong Kong people are of Chinese ethnicity, and some of their ancestors and elders also came from the Mainland. Other identities are acquired after birth. These can include those assigned by groups (e.g. a committee member of student association, a member of trade union), from academic or professional qualifications (e.g. a Ph.D. or becoming a medical specialist), and even those acquired by legal provision (e.g. Article 24 of the Basic Law determines whether a person is a permanent resident of Hong Kong). There are many ways to indicate shared identities, including clothing, language, etiquette and even certificates of identity (e.g. a membership card or a passport). As we enter different stages of life and our external environment evolves, we occupy various positions in different social settings, including household, workplace, the society and even the country, resulting in the coexistence of multiple identities.





Building an identity means *sharing attributes with other members of a group (e.g. an alma mater, a city of residence or country) and resonating with them on an emotional level that develops a sense of belonging*. As a result, identities can be defined objectively, but the transition from identity confirmation to identity building can be a complex and diverse process to accept, approve and identify with a group or groups. This process involves an emotional commitment and is subject to many external factors. These can include race, lineage, system, feelings towards one's place of residence, personal experience and values (e.g. political views and religious beliefs), shared emotions among group members and even the behaviours of group members.

Identity involves different levels, one of which is national identity. This identity involves a number of factors including the country's language, cultural heritage, history, people's livelihood, governance, overall national strength and international status. *At times, the level of sense of identity may vary with changes in the external environment or subjective feelings*.

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Many Hong Kong people have profound feelings of pride for Hong Kong, the land where they were born and raised, for its way of life and culture. On the other hand, Hong Kong is an inalienable part of China and is closely linked with the nation, so an emphasis on local identity and recognition of the characteristics and strengths of Hong Kong can also be a driving force for Hong Kong people to promote national development and care for the well-being of the whole nation, and enhance their sense of national identity. **Local and national identities simply represent different levels of recognition and they co-exist and promote each other.**

