



Five Family Identity Paths

PATH	DESCRIPTION	OPPORTUNITIES AND DANGERS
THE UNIVERSALISTIC PATH	Couples create an identity that transcends the particular cultural and religious identity that either of them was raised with. Or they will take elements of their own as well as other cultures to create a unique blend.	<i>Opportunity:</i> Families can find ways to positively relate to their own and others' cultures and religions. <i>Danger:</i> Some couples use this path as a way to avoid anxiety of dealing with their differences.
THE MINIMALIST APPROACH	Families who create a family life that is largely secular in outlook. While some elements of either or both of the partners' cultures or religions may be integrated into family life, the main identity of the family is as a family or a couple, not as part of a larger group.	<i>Opportunity:</i> Can work well when neither partner has a strong cultural or religious identity and the family has other meaningful activities with which to identify. <i>Danger:</i> Little sense of belonging for children.
THE BALANCED SOLUTION	Couples work to include important elements of the cultures and religions of both of them into the family life and try to find ways to balance their importance and resolve conflicts between the two when they arise.	<i>Opportunity:</i> Both partners' cultures and religions can be enjoyed and made part of family life. Neither partner has to give up her or his identity or practice. <i>Danger:</i> Diffuse or confused identity for children if parents are not clear about dealing with the contradictions, especially beliefs of their two religions.
TWO CULTURES, ONE RELIGION	In these families one partner either converts to the religion of the other or actively participates in the other partner's religion without conversion. The couples, however, find ways to acknowledge their different roots as they practice a single religion.	<i>Opportunity:</i> Allows for spiritual togetherness of family while incorporating both cultures. <i>Danger:</i> Resentment if the partner who gives up her or his religion does not do so wholeheartedly.
ONE CULTURE, ONE RELIGION	These couples immerse themselves in the cultural and religious life of a single community. The partner who moves into the new culture spends time and energy assimilating into the community, going through many of the stages that the immigrant goes through in adapting to a new nation.	<i>Opportunity:</i> Clear cultural and religious focus for the family. <i>Danger:</i> One partner may feel he has given up too much of her or his identity and will resent the solution.