THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF AN IDENTITY THEORY

Sheldon Stryker

Indiana University

Peter J. Burke

Washington State University

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Abstract

Among the many traditions of research on "identity," two somewhat different yet strongly related strands of Identity Theory have developed. The first, reflected in the work of Stryker and colleagues, focuses on the linkages of social structures and identities. The second, reflected in the work of Burke and colleagues, focuses on the internal process of self-verification. The present paper reviews each of these strands, then discusses ways in which the two relate to and complement one another. Each provides a context for the other: the relation of social structures and identities influencing the process of self-verification, while the process of self-verification create and sustain social structures. Examples of potentially useful applications of Identity Theory to other arenas of social psychology, and a discussion of challenges Identity Theory must meet in the future to provide a clear understanding of the relation between self and society, conclude the paper.

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF AN IDENTITY THEORY

Introduction

The language of "identity" is ubiquitous in contemporary social science, the ubiquity cutting across disciplines, from psychoanalysis through psychology, political science, sociology, and history. Common usage of the term, however, belies the considerable variability in both its conceptual meanings and its theoretical role. Restricting consideration to sociology and social psychology, variation is still considerable.[1] Three relatively distinct usages exist. Some use the term to refer essentially to the culture of a people, indeed drawing no distinction between identity and, for example, ethnicity (see the collected papers in Calhoun (1994)) thus obscuring the theoretical point of its introduction. Some use it to refer to common identification with a collectivity or social category as in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1982) or in contemporary work on social movements creating a common culture among participants (Snow and Oliver 1995). Finally, some use it, as we do in the work underlying this paper, with reference to parts of a self composed of the meanings attached by persons to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated contemporary societies.

This last usage is, of course, not unique to our prior work. In some ways, it is shared by all who claim Mead (1934) and symbolic interactionism as important to their intellectual heritage, and who recognize the complexity of contemporary social life; a case in point is those taking a situated identity perspective (Alexander and Wiley 1981).

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[1] See the extended discussion, most of which lies outside the concerns of this paper, in Cerulo (1997), or the more limited treatment in (Stryker 2000).

McCall and Simmons (1966) develop ideas closely related to yet different in more than nuance and in approach to theory development from the earliest published presentation (Stryker 1968) of the ideas basic to this paper.[2] More specifically, the frame within which identity is conceptualized here is shared by, e.g., affect control theorists and researchers (Heise 1977; Heise 1979; MacKinnon 1994; Smith-Lovin and Heise 1988) motivated by related but different theoretical problems than those underlying the present paper, and by students of multiple roles and identities and their consequences (e.g., Reitzes and Mutran 1995; Thoits 1983; Wiley 1991).

We limit subsequent attention to the strand of theorizing and research represented by, and developing from, earlier work by the authors. Since 1966, this work has appeared under the label "Identity Theory," and the rest of this paper continues that usage to simplify presentation.

Identity Theory has evolved in two somewhat different, yet strongly related, directions. Both are instantiations of a theoretical and research program labeled structural symbolic interactionism (Stryker 1980), having the goal of understanding and explaining how social structures impact self and how self impacts social behaviors. However, the first concentrates on examining how social structures impact the structure of self and the impact of the latter on social behavior, while the second concentrates on the internal dynamics of self-processes as these impact social behavior. Thus, in degree, the first neglects internal dynamics of self-processes, the second ways in which external social structures impinge on the internal processes. The first is represented by work of Stryker

[2] Published in 1968, the earliest presentation of Identity Theory was at the 1966 meetings of the American Sociological Association. At the end of the presentation, McCall approached Stryker and exclaimed: "You've just presented our book!" (The book had not yet appeared.) Clearly, the fundamental

and colleagues (e.g., Stryker 1980; Stryker and Serpe 1982), the second by work of Burke and colleagues (e.g., Burke 1991; Burke and Reitzes 1991; Burke and Stets 1999). Explicitly articulating the relation between these two bodies of work can refine and expand the scope of the structural symbolic interactionist frame and suggest new applications of the frame and derivative theories. The present effort is directed to these ends.

We begin by presenting the variant of Identity Theory and related research focusing on links between external social structure and the structure of self, providing metatheoretical considerations necessary to understanding its concepts and propositions. A second section presents the variant focusing on the internal dynamics of self-processes. We then turn to articulating of the two variants. Finally, we discuss extensions and applications of the articulated frame, as well as new questions the articulated frame opens up.

External Social Structure And The Structure Of Self

Identity Theory traces its roots to the writings of George Herbert Mead (especially 1934) whose writings present a framework underwriting analyses of a host of sociological and social psychological issues. However, in themselves they do not present a testable theory of any issue, a condition assessed by many as due to the ambiguity of central concepts and the attendant difficulty of operationalizing those concepts (Meltzer 1972; Stryker 1980). Oversimplified, Mead's framework asserted a formula: "Society shapes self shapes social behavior." Identity Theory began by attempting to specify and render researchable the concepts of "society" and "self" in Mead's frame and organize

ideas involved were in the air at the time. What was not in place was a body of research testing and extending these ideas.

these as explanations of specified behaviors, which putative explanations could be tested in systematic empirical research (Stryker 1968).

This specification accepts the utility of Mead's framework, but departs from Mead to adopt a view consistent with contemporary sociology's imagery: society is seen as a mosaic of relatively durable patterned interactions and relationships, differentiated yet organized, embedded in an array of groups, organizations, communities, institutions, and intersected by crosscutting boundaries of class, ethnicity, age, gender, religion and more. Too, persons are seen as living their lives in relatively small and specialized networks of social relationships, doing so through roles that underwrite their participation in such networks. The embeddedness of patterned interactions and relationships implies a structural symbolic interactionist argument: the probability of entering into the concrete (and discrete) social networks in which persons live their lives is impacted by larger social structures in which those networks are embedded. That is, social structures outside given social networks act as boundaries affecting the probability of persons entering those networks.

These considerations led to the initial Identity Theory specification of Mead's formula. Mead's "social behavior" becomes "role choice behavior." The quintessential question the theory sought to answer is, given situations in which there exists behavioral options aligned with two (or more) sets of role expectations attached to two (or more) positions in networks of social relationships, why do persons choose one particular course of action (Stryker 1968; Stryker 1980)?

Accepting Mead's "self reflects society" dictum implies that the self is multifaceted, made up of interdependent and independent, mutually reinforcing and conflicting, parts.

Identity Theory thus adopts James' (1890) vision of persons having as many selves as groups of persons with which they interact. To refer to each group-based self, the theory chose the term identity, asserting that persons have as many identities as distinct networks of relationships in which they occupy positions and play roles. In Identity Theory usage, social roles are expectations attached to positions occupied in networks of relationships; identities are internalized role expectations. The theory asserts that role-choices are a function of identities so conceptualized, and that identities within self are organized in a salience hierarchy reflecting the importance of hierarchy as an organizational principle in society.

Identity salience is defined as the probability that an identity will be invoked across a variety of situations, or, alternatively, as the differential probability across persons that an identity will be invoked in a given situation. Borrowing from cognitive social psychology (Markus 1977), identities are understood as cognitive schema—internally stored information and meanings serving as frameworks for interpreting experience. As such, they are cognitive bases for defining situations, and they make for greater sensitivity and receptivity to certain cues for behavior. With self thus specified, Identity Theory hypothesized that the higher the salience of an identity relative to other identities incorporated into the self, the higher the probability of behavioral choices in accord with the expectations attached to that identity.

Building Identity Theory also required specification of the concept of "society." The theory found that specification in the concept of "commitment." Persons, as noted, tend to live their lives in relatively small, specialized networks of social relationships. Commitment refers to the degree persons' relationships to others in their networks

depends on having a particular identity and role, measurable by the costs of loosing meaningful relations to others should the identity be foregone. The theory hypothesized that the salience of an identity reflected commitment to the role relationships requiring that identity. We arrive at Identity Theory's specification of Mead's formula: commitment shapes identity salience shapes role choice behavior.

That specification has been examined in a variety of researches. The general conclusion from accomplished research is that the propositions of Identity Theory are reasonably well supported. However, accomplished research also suggests the need for conceptual and measurement refinements and amplifications of the theory.

So, for example, Stryker and Serpe (1982) demonstrate that the salience of religious identities predicts time spent in religious activities, and the salience of religious identities is predicted by commitment to role-relationships based on religion. Callero (1985) shows that the salience of a donor identity predicts the frequency of blood donations, and presents other evidence that commitment to others in the blood donor community impacts the salience of the donor identity. Nuttbrock and Freudiger (1991) provide evidence that the salience of the mother identity among first-time mothers explains, albeit in limited degree, whether they accept the burdens of motherhood and make sacrifices for their child.

The Identity Theory conceptions of identity and identity salience suggest cross-time and cross-situation stability in identities and their salience. Such stability is demonstrated by Serpe (1987) in a longitudinal study of new students who move from home to a university in a small city. At the same time, Serpe shows that students experience changes in prior commitments through entering new social relationships at the university,

and these changes in commitments have the expected subsequent effects on the salience of identities.

In related research, Serpe and Stryker (1987) find that on entrance to the university, students seek new relationships by joining organizations allowing opportunities to behave in accord with highly salient identities held before entrance. When they succeed in doing so, their self-structures remain stable; changes in the salience of their identities occur when they are *unable* to access such opportunities.

Internal Mechanisms

Identity Theory began with questions concerning the origins of differential salience of identities in persons' self-structures and why identity salience may change over time (e.g., Stryker 1968; Wells and Stryker 1988). These questions led to the development of theory concerning ways people are tied into social structure and the consequences of these ties for their identities. The theory then asserted a link between identity salience and behaviors tied to roles underlying the identities, arguing that expectations attached to roles were internalized and acted out. This last link, later bolstered by conceptualizing identities as cognitive schema (Stryker and Serpe 1994) remained theoretically underdeveloped; there remained another side to the study of identities, one concerning the nature of identities and how they operate within the contexts in which they are held.

The problem required a better understanding of the way in which identities produced behaviors expressive of the identities. The solution was based on the traditional symbolic interactionist ideas that identities are self-meanings and that self-meanings develop in the context of meanings of roles and counter-roles (Burke 1980; Burke and Tully 1977). From a symbolic interactionist perspective, behaviors can also be characterized as

meaningful, and Burke and Reitzes (1981) proposed that the link between identity and behavior was through the meanings they shared.

Implementing these ideas required measurement procedures applicable to both identities and behaviors. Burke and Tully (1977) found these in work by Osgood and colleagues (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum 1957), who developed the semantic differential measurement procedure reflecting their view of meaning as internal, bipolar responses to stimuli. This idea was incorporated into earlier work on self (Schwartz and Stryker 1970) and is fundamental to the evolution of Affect Control Theory (Heise 1977; Smith-Lovin and Heise 1988), a theory also with symbolic interactionist roots.[3] Burke and Tully (1977) showed that self-meanings, as reflexive responses to self-in-role, could reliably be measured using semantic differential scales.

Using the semantic differential to measure college students' identities and behaviors along the same dimensions, Burke and Reitzes (1981) found the link between identity and behavior was in shared meaning: only when the meaning of the identity corresponded with the meaning of the behavior did identities predict behavior. For example, students' self-view as sociable (one dimension of the student identity) did not predict college plans because they did not share meaning, while students' self-views of academic responsibility (another dimension of the student identity) strongly predicted college plans.

The question of how self-meanings relate to meanings of one's behavior was later elaborated in a cybernetic model of perceptual control based on the work of Powers (Powers 1973). Affect Control Theory (Heise 1979) and the models of Carver and

[3] While Affect Control Theory used the semantic differential to measuring meaning of identities along the universal dimensions of evaluation, potency, and activity, Identity Theory chose to measure the meanings of role identities as they related to counter-roles in situations.

Scheier (1990) developed along similar lines. For Identity Theory, the model is composed of four central components (Burke 1991): the identity standard, or the set of (culturally prescribed) meanings held by the individual defining their role identity in a situation; perceptions by the person of meanings within the situation matched to the dimensions of meaning in the identity standard; the comparator or mechanism that compares the perceived situational meanings with those held in the identity standard; and behavior or activity of the individual, which is a function of the difference between perceptions and standard. Behavior, in this model, is organized to change the situation and hence the perceived self-relevant meanings in order to bring them into agreement with those in the identity standard. Bringing situationally perceived self-relevant meanings into agreement with the identity standard is self-verification, accomplished through altering the present situation or seeking and creating new situations in which perceived self-relevant meanings match those of the identity standard.

This model clarifies several processes, none unique to the model, now brought together in a common framework. First, seeing behavior as a function of the relationship between what a person perceives in the situation and the self-meanings held by the individual (Burke 1997; Heise 1979; Stets 1997) allows a view of behavior as goal directed: behavior changes the situation *in order to* match meanings perceived in the situation with meanings held in the standard. This view gives agency to the individual (Burke and Gray 1999; Tsushima and Burke 1999).

Second, emotion can be incorporated directly into the model as with Affect Control Theory (Heise 1979) and Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, Bond, Klein, and Strauman 1986). The model views emotion as in part the result of the relationship between

perceived self-meanings in the situation and the self-definitional meanings held in the identity standard (cf. Carver and Scheier 1990; Stryker 1987). A mismatch or increasing discrepancy (i.e., problems in self-verification) results in negative emotion, while a match or decreasing discrepancy (self-verification) results in positive emotion (Burke and Stets 1999; Ellestad and Stets 1998; Smith-Lovin 1995; Stets and Tsushima 1999). For example, Stets and Tsushima (1999) find the intensity of anger and how long anger lasts are a function of the kinds of interruptions of the self-verification process that occur.

However, beyond emotion and affect as outcomes of self-processes, emotions are also recognized as having their own consequences, both directly on the individual experiencing them and on others as outward expressions of the state of the individual. Emotions signal to self and others what that state is, making that state part of the situation to which all parties including the self respond (Frank 1988; Stryker 1987). For example, Burke and Stets (1999) find that depression and distress, which result from problems in verifying the spousal identity, lead to reduced commitment to that identity.

The focus on meanings was expanded to include not only symbolic meanings (as traditionally understood within symbolic interactionism) but also sign meanings that are not necessarily shared (Lindesmith and Strauss 1956). Drawing on the work of Freese (1988), Freese and Burke (1994) showed that meaning derived from signs allows one to act on the environment in order to alter the level and flow of resources present in a situation to match standards held in an identity. Bringing resources into Identity Theory allows it to take advantage of work on exchange as well as tying it into relatively recent emphases on meanings in exchange theory—first introduced by Emerson (1969; 1981) and later entering into Molm and Cook's (Molm and Cook 1994) treatment of exchange

theory. With this, Identity Theory is able to consider the more mundane expectations for a person occupying a role, such as using materials, fixing food, earning a living, and buying goods and services (Burke 1997).

Putting the Two Together

In this section, we move towards integrating the two parts of Identity Theory, one emphasizing the social structural sources of identity and the relations among identities, the other focusing on internal, cognitive identity processes. The two meet at behavior expressive of identities, often in interaction with others.[4] The former arrives at behavior by moving from social structures to commitments to relationships through the consequent salience of the identity to behavior. The latter moves from internalized identity standards and perceptions of self-relevant meanings through a comparison of the two that either verifies the identities or indicates a discrepancy to behavior that repairs the discrepancy by altering the situation or creating new situations.

This description suggests that these lines of theorizing developed independently of one another. In fact, they did not. The structural approach understood identity in cognitive terms and understood identities sought confirmation by finding or creating situations in which they could be expressed; and the cognitive approach understood that identities were embedded in and impacted by social structural contexts. Both understood self as, in part, a structure of multiple identities. Both understood identities to be linked to roles and to behavior through meanings. The argument of the first, that salient identities are cognitive schema affecting how persons define situations and making them more

[4] McCall and Simmons (1966) also note the meeting of self-processes and social structure in interaction.

sensitive to cues calling for identity-relevant behavior (Stryker and Serpe 1994) is given greater force and precision by the argument of the second that the tie between identity and behavior is through their common meaning (Burke and Reitzes 1981).

One can see the complementary nature of structural and cognitive Identity Theory examining how these two emphases fit together. The concept of identity salience implies persons are more likely to define situations they enter, or find themselves, in ways making a highly salient identity relevant, enabling them to enact that identity (Burke and Franzoi 1988). But situations involve relations to others, and the extent persons can verify their identities depends on the identities of those others and how they respond to identity claims, as well as on whether behaviors that could alter the situation to align standards and perceptions of self-meanings are in fact viable (Riley and Burke 1995). Thus, identities may or may not be confirmed in situationally based interaction. And again, if the identity confirmation process is successful, the salience of the identity will be reinforced; if the process is unsuccessful, the salience of the identity will likely diminish, perhaps considerably.

Relevant to further elaboration of the links between the two parts of Identity Theory is a view of social structures within which identities exist. Identity theory has generally focused on role-identities.[5] Implicit in that term is a duality. Role is external, linked to social positions, and part of social structure. Identity is internal, internalized meanings and expectations associated with a role. From this perspective, social structure is made up of interconnecting positions and associated roles, each linked through the activities, resources, and meanings that are mutually or sequentially controlled. In addition to the

roles themselves, each role or set of roles is embedded in one or more of a variety of groupings providing context for the meanings and expectations associated with the role. Groups, networks, as well as organizations, classes, unions and other social units (insofar as these units involve concrete relationships and interactions) are examples of these groupings. It is the structure or connectedness of the roles and groupings that provides the first level of impact of social structures on identities.

One component of commitment is the number of others to whom one is connected by virtue of having a particular identity (Stryker 1980). This aspect of commitment reflects density of ties, a characteristic of the social structure in which an identity is embedded. Connectedness increases the salience of the identity, making it more likely that the identity will be activated in a given situation: persons occupying densely connected positions and holding related roles will have more salient identities associated with those positions and roles.

This increased salience is reflected in role performances more in accord with the meanings and expectations attached to that identity. Burke and Reitzes (1991) found the ability to predict from identity meanings to performances was higher for those with more committed identities. Students with a more committed student identity work more effectively to verify and maintain that identity, i.e., keep perceptions of self-relevant meanings in the situation in line with self-meanings in their identity standard.

However, there are aspects of social structures more problematic from the point of view of issues of commitment to particular role-relationships, identities attached to those role-relationships, or the potential gap between self-relevant perceptions in situations and

[5] Social Identity Theory, on the other hand has focused on category-based identities. We discuss the relation between Identity Theory and Social Identity theory later in this paper.

identity standards. Persons are typically embedded in multiple role-relationships in multiple groupings and they hold multiple identities. These multiple roles and multiple identities may reinforce one another, but perhaps more often do not (Reitzes and Mutran 1995; Thoits 1983; Wiley 1991). When they do not, they introduce identity competition or conflicts complicating the reciprocal relationships among commitments, identity salience, identity standards, and self-relevant perceptions (Stryker 2000).

If the competing or conflicting identities reflect greatly different commitments and consequently differ greatly in salience, that identity based on greater commitment and higher salience will (in situations where alternative identities can be invoked) be reflected in the operative identity standard and perceived self-meanings. If the pressures of the immediate situation require low commitment and a low identity salience, we expect a gap between standard and perceived self-meanings will lose motivational force, becoming inconsequential for behavior. If multiple competing or conflicting identities involve high and roughly equivalent commitments and salience, considerable stress is likely to be generated and stall or prevent behavioral repair of a gap between standards and perceived self-meanings (Burke 1991).

The various structural locations of identities implies they will have varying resources available for their construction and functioning, including achieving self-verification (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; Ridgeway and Berger 1988). Tsushima and Burke (1999) distinguished between lower-level identity standards that have to do with programs of behavior and higher-level identity standards that have to do with general principles and values guiding the lower-level standards for behavior. They find that mothers with fewer resources (less income or education, unmarried) had less developed

higher-level identity standards. Further, mothers without higher-level standards had more problems of control over and confrontation with their children and lower feelings of self-worth and efficacy. In addition, these mothers tended to use child-rearing practices leading to children's failure to develop higher-level identity standards.

Turning matters around, some research is beginning to show how social structures depend on the functioning of identities. Burke and Stets (1999) present evidence that when several persons interacting in a common situation mutually verify the identities each holds, their commitment to one another increases. Further, they begin to view themselves as a group, i.e., a new social structure. Alternatively, when persons interacting in a common situation have difficulties verifying their identities, existing ties are broken and structures dissolve. For example, Cast and Burke (1999) have shown that divorce is more likely when the spousal identities of husbands and wives are not verified.

Applications and Next Challenges

Applications

Identity Theory has the potential to illuminate a wide range of sociological and social psychological arenas and issues, a number of which already have been suggested. Here, we wish to focus on two opportunities for the application of Identity Theory concepts and models, which to this point have remained relatively unexploited.

1. *Opportunities Inherent in the Multiple Identities Conceptualization of Self*

Sociology has long conceptualized persons as occupying multiple positions in organized sets of social relationships and playing out the diverse roles associated with those multiple positions (Linton 1936; Merton 1957; Parsons 1949; Turner 1978). The

related idea that these diverse roles can hold competing or conflicting expectations for persons' behavior is both widely understood and has entered much sociological and social psychological theory and research (Gross, McEachern, and Mason 1958; Hill 1949; Stryker and Statham 1985). Recently, these ideas perhaps have been most prominently displayed in literature on conflicts and dilemmas working women face between role demands of work and those of family (Thoits 1987). Earlier, related themes were struck with regard to the existence and consequences of status inconsistency (Jackson and Burke 1965; Lenski 1954; Stryker and Macke 1978).

However, conceptions of persons as occupying multiple statuses or multiple social positions with divergent role expectations do not fully incorporate or anticipate a multiple identities conception of self or the theoretical and research possibilities inherent in that conceptualization, which requires the *internalization* of role-related expectations and their ordering in a salience hierarchy. It also requires the filtering of identity standards through self-relevant perceptions, whose existence is one strong reason why identity and identity salience cannot simply be inferred from social locations. In brief, the identity theoretic model is both different from and opens up different opportunities than do role-conflict and status inconsistency models. The possibilities of this model are exhibited in recent work on gender-related topics (Simon 1995; Stets 1995a; Stets 1995b; Thoits 1986); yet even here, the opportunities are not thoroughly exploited, in part because of limitations in current measurement approaches to multiple identities.

To visualize those opportunities, we review a recent attempt to apply Identity Theory to social movements theorizing and research (Stryker 2000). As earlier noted, students of social movements recently have borrowed from Social Identity Theory the concept of

identity as identification with a social category (Tajfel 1982)s. This concept, and the concept of collective identity as a cultural emergent from the interaction of social movement members, are key to the literature on "new social movements" (Larana, Johnston, and Gusfield 1995). Indeed, some sociological students of movements have used Identity Theory's concept of identity salience to account for why persons join social movements (McAdam and Paulsen 1993). None of these efforts, however, adequately treats variations in rates and kinds of movement members' participation in movement activities. None dealt well with questions such as why variation in members' willingness to contribute money, time, or other resources—including risk of life—to a movement. A conception of self comprised of multiple identities tied to participation in networks of social relationships or groups with potentially different agendas and expectations for members, each impacted by self-relevant perceptions—a conception that visualizes the possibility, even likelihood, of competition among identities—can provide a handle on such questions. Recognizing the interplay of multiple identities permits an analyst to account for variation in persons' social movement participation by reference to ways in which commitments and identities reinforce, conflict with, or are independent of one another.

This illustration clearly can be generalized. Any social network or group is likely to have members (and the larger the network or group, the more likely it is to have members) whose membership in other networks or groups may create identities that reinforce or impose impediments to various forms of participation. While this insight is not new, its use has been limited; it could be applied widely not only to spousal and parent-child relationships, but to broader kin, religious, voluntary associational, political,

and to any other type of relationship that allows variation in levels or kinds of participation.

2. *Amplifying Expectation States Theory and Status Characteristics Theory*

Currently, sociological social psychologists run the risk—visible in the work of our psychological counterparts—of creating numerous specialized theories to deal with equally numerous specialized research topics, which specialized theories do not appear to bear much relationship to one another. That risk is to be avoided if possible; thus relating ideas across specialized theoretical and research traditions is valuable. Bringing Identity Theory into the framework of Expectation States Theory (Berger 1988; Fisek, Berger, and Norman 1995; Ridgeway and Berger 1986) and Status Characteristics Theory (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; Foschi 1989; Wagner and Berger 1993) can help clarify central processes emphasized in these theories (cf., Stets and Burke 1996).

Within the Identity Theory formulation, value or worth can be conceived as a cognitive attribution made to those resources allowing self-verification. Among the important resources incorporated into identity standards of participants for the accomplishment of a shared goal are the skills and the performance levels of the participants themselves. Participants may attribute value to the individuals, including themselves, who possess these resources, thus affording status, respect, and esteem to those individuals, again including themselves. Participants who are afforded status, respect, and esteem by other participants will find themselves aided in the self-verification process. And they, in turn, are likely to afford status, respect, and esteem to others who help in their own self-verification process.

Identity Theory reinforces the idea that in the absence of specific information about task-relevant skills and performance levels, participants in a group seeking to solve a joint problem will draw upon cultural memory contained in prior status and esteem allocations for information about potential resources available for the task at hand. In this sense, status, respect, and esteem are symbolic, representing potential resources available for successful task accomplishment and thus for self-verification (Ridgeway and Berger 1986; Ridgeway, Johnson, and Diekema 1994). Manipulating symbols and resources in order to obtain goals is importantly what identities do (Freese and Burke 1994). In doing this, identities create value, and through creating value, identities can both increase the level of commitment to groups that underlie the identities and increase their salience, that is, the likelihood that they will be activated in other situations.

Challenges

The immediate challenge entailed in suggesting ways the two parts of Identity Theory are linked lies in designing and carrying out research examining the impact of commitment to networks of social relationships and identity salience on identity standards and perceptions of self-relevant meanings, and vice versa. Our interest here, however, is in addressing larger questions of what work needs to be done beyond this immediate challenge to extend the range and applicability of Identity Theory.

One critical task involves finding ways of implementing in research designs the conceptual and theoretical insights attached to a view of self as comprised of multiple identities.[6] There is good reason to believe the feedback processes modeled by Burke need to accommodate multiple identities. We suggest that self-verification processes

[6]Again, that multiple identities do not equate to multiple roles needs be kept in mind.

involving a single identity will themselves be affected by the existence of other identities implicated in self-relevant meanings and/or identity standards.[7] Neither social life nor self-cognitions consist of elements completely isolated from one another other than analytically. There is certainly reason to believe the postulated links between commitment and identity salience, and between identity salience and role behavior, for a given identity tied to a given network of social relationships will be impacted by other identities and other group memberships. Yet, as earlier suggested, research to date generally has not faced squarely the implications of the multiple identities conceptualization except in the limited case of pairs of conflicting identities like that of spouse and labor force participant where oppositional role expectations, identity standards, and perceptions of self-relevant meanings can fairly readily be ascertained.

Why this is so is obvious: the greater the number of related identities, the greater the difficulty of simultaneously dealing with relationships among them, and there is no clear way of attacking the issue at hand. Perhaps adapting the Burke and Reitzes (1981) technique of establishing commonality of meanings of identity and behavior to establish commonality of meanings among large(r) numbers of identities could deal with this issue.[8] Or perhaps the procedures adopted in Expectation States Theory to combine the status implications of multiple status characteristics could provide the basis for meeting this challenge (Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980).

A second critical challenge is to develop measures of identity meanings and identity salience that are independent of self-reports and that can be utilized in non-experimental

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[7] This is one area which the simulation of network exchange with an identity theory model needed further development to match some empirical outcomes (1997).

[8] Linking identities through shared meanings was suggested by Stets (1995b).

research. Given the conceptions of identity and identity salience as cognitive schema, as well as contemporary interactive computer-based interviewing technology, an interesting possibility exists: using priming procedures and response latency measures common in experimental cognitive social psychological research to measure both the existence and the salience of identities (Baldwin 1994; Fazio, Chen, McDonal, and Sherman 1982; Higgins, Strauman, and Klein 1986; Markus and Wurf 1987). Cognitive schema enhance the rapidity and accuracy of recognition of stimuli related to the schema (relative to unrelated stimuli) as well as enhancing storage and recall of these cues; it can be argued that greater responsiveness to identity-related cues increases the likelihood that identity-relevant behavior will be enacted, i.e., that latency is a direct measure of identity salience.

Again, given contemporary technology, neither presentation of verbal or pictorial cues related and unrelated to identities nor the measurement of intervals between exposure to and recognition of cues pose any great difficulty. Too, using similar procedures and requiring rapid evaluation of identity-related cues as affectively positive or negative can provide a measure of the psychological centrality or importance (Rosenberg 1979) of an identity in a manner that avoids self-reports and that is independent of identity salience.

Another challenge lies in developing a better understanding of different bases of identity. Social Identity Theory has focused attention of category-based identities (e.g., as black or white, Christian or Jew), Identity Theory has focused primarily on role-based identities (e.g., parent or child, teacher or student). To some extent, both have discussed person-based identities (e.g., dominance, honesty, or perseverance). It may be that each basis of identity has stronger or weaker ties to various psychological outcomes. A principal outcome of category-based identities, for example, may be self-esteem or lack

thereof, depending on whether the category is positively or negatively valued by the person or by others in the person's environment. Self-efficacy may especially reflect successful role performance and the approbation of role-partners; and feelings of authenticity may result from being able to verify personal identities across roles and situations.

A further, critical challenge lies in the need to more explicitly detail how emotions fit into the framework of Identity Theory. The resources to meet this need are diverse, ranging from Cooley's (1902) distinction between the more biologically based emotions and the more socially based sentiments, Goffman's (1959) ideas regarding the centrality of self in the production of sentiments, Kemper's (1991) structural theory arguing the emotional consequences of changes in persons' changes in power and status positions in social structure, and the modeling of the role of sentiments in the management of identity meanings in Affect Control Theory (Smith-Lovin 1995). Relevant to this challenge is Higgins' (1986) work showing that different types of identity standards lead to different types of emotional response when self-verification fails. Higgins focuses on failures in relation to standards comprised of others' expectations of what persons ought to do, which result in anxiety, and failures in relation to self-generated ideal standards, which result in depression. Perhaps other types of identity standards can be distinguished implicating other kinds of emotional responses.

Exploration of the emotional consequences failures in self-verification in relation to various other dimensions of identity standards—public and private, individual and group, supervised and unsupervised, practiced and new, higher and lower in the identity hierarchy—should be undertaken. Certainly too, the other side of the self-verification and

emotional response needs to be explored: what are the emotional products of successful verification of self-standards? Is the assumption that self-verification produces positive affect necessarily and generally correct? Finally, while Stryker (1987) has proposed that emotional outbursts in the context of social interaction can serve as surprise signals to the self of the there-to-fore unrealized salience of identities underlying the interaction, we need to explore more generally and fully the implications of a wide variety of emotions and their expression for commitment, salience, self-verification and the buffering of stress. We believe that the great variety of ideas about emotion implicated in the foregoing can be integrated into an Identity Theory that includes both social structural and internal self-processes. Whether or not that belief is sound, working on the premise that it is promises to deepen understandings of both self processes and emotional responses as well as how they relate to one another.

Clearly, there is much work yet to be done in the next millennium to meet these challenges, and through doing so to bring us closer to completing the task begun by Mead (1934): providing a clear understanding of the reciprocal relationships between self and society.

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