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The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory*

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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 with identities. The second, reflected in the work of Burke and colleagues, focuses on the internal process of self-verification. In the present paper we review each of these strands and then discuss ways in which the two relate to and complement one another. Each provides a context for the other: the relation of social structures to identities influences the process of self-verification, while the process of self-verification creates and sustains social structures. The paper concludes with examples of potentially useful applications of identity theory to other arenas of social psychology, and with a discussion of challenges that identity theory must meet to provide a clear understanding of the relation between self and society.

The language of "identity" is ubiquitous in contemporary social science, cutting across psychoanalysis, psychology, political science, sociology, and history. The common usage of the term *identity*, however, belies the considerable variability in both its conceptual meanings and its theoretical role. Even when consideration is restricted to sociology and social psychology, variation is still considerable.[1]

Three relatively distinct usages exist. Some use *identity* to refer essentially to the culture of a people; indeed they draw no distinction between identity and, for example, ethnicity (see the collected papers in Calhoun 1994). Thus they obscure the theoretical purpose of its introduction. Others use *identity* 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, thus creating a common culture among participants (Snow and Oliver 1995). Finally, some use the term, as we do in the work underlying this paper, with reference to parts of a self composed of the meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated contemporary societies.

This last usage, of course, is 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; those who take a situated identity perspective are a case in point (e.g., Alexander and Wiley 1981). McCall and Simmons (1966) develop ideas closely related to the earliest published presentation (Stryker 1968) of the ideas basic to this paper,[2] yet different in more than nuance and in approach to theory development. Specifically, the frame within which identity is conceptualized here is shared (for example) by affect control theorists and researchers (Heise 1977, 1979; MacKinnon 1994; Smith-Lovin and Heise 1988) who are motivated by theoretical problems related

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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).

[2] Identity theory was first presented 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 ideas involved were in the air at the time. Not yet in place was a body of research testing and extending these ideas.

but not identical to 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 our attention here to the strand of theorizing and research represented by, and developing from, our earlier work. Since 1966, this work has appeared under the label *identity theory;* in the rest of this paper we retain that usage to simplify presentation.

Identity theory has evolved in two somewhat different but closely related directions. Both are instantiations of a theoretical and research program labeled *structural symbolic interactionism* (Stryker 1980), whose goal is to understand and explain how social structures affect self and how self affects social behaviors. The first aspect, however, concentrates on examining how social structures affect the structure of self and how structure of the self influences social behavior, whereas the second concentrates on the internal dynamics of self-processes as these affect social behavior. Thus, relatively speaking, the first neglects internal dynamics of self-processes, while the second neglects ways in which external social structures impinge on the internal processes. The first is represented by work of Stryker 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). By explicitly articulating the relation between these two bodies of work, we can refine and expand the scope of the structural symbolic interactionist frame and suggest new applications of the frame and derivative theories. The present paper is directed to these purposes.

We begin by presenting the variant of identity theory and related research focusing on links between external social structure and the structure of self; we provide metatheoretical considerations necessary to understanding the concepts and propositions. In the next section we present the variant focusing on the internal dynamics of self-processes. We then articulate the two variants. Finally, we discuss extensions and applications of the articulated frame, as well as new questions opened by the articulated frame.

EXTERNAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE STRUCTURE OF SELF

Identity theory traces its roots to the writings of George Herbert Mead (especially 1934) which present a framework underwriting the analyses of numerous sociological and social psychological issues. In themselves, however, they do not present a testable theory of any issue. Many observers believe that this situation is due to the ambiguity of central concepts and to the attendant difficulty of operationalizing such concepts (Meltzer 1972; Stryker 1980). In highly simplified form, Mead's framework asserted a formula: "Society shapes self shapes social behavior." Identity theory began by attempting to specify and make researchable the concepts of "society" and "self" in Mead's frame and to organize these as explanations of specified behaviors; such 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 sociologist'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, and institutions, and intersected by crosscutting boundaries of class, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, and other variables. In addition, persons are seen as living their lives in relatively small and specialized networks of social relationships, through roles that support 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 influenced by larger social structures in which those networks are embedded. That is, social structures outside given social networks act as boundaries affecting the probability that persons will enter those networks.

These considerations led to the initial identity theory specification of Mead's formula. Mead's "social behavior" became "role choice behavior." The theory sought to answer this quintessential question: Given

situations in which there exist 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, 1980).

Acceptance of 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 possessing as many selves as groups of persons with which they interact. To refer to each group-based self, the theorists 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 across persons in a given situation. Borrowing from cognitive social psychology (Markus 1977), theorists understand identities as cognitive schemas—internally stored information and meanings serving as frameworks for interpreting experience. As such, they are cognitive bases for defining situations, and they increase sensitivity and receptivity to certain cues for behavior. With self thus specified, identity theorists hypothesized that the higher the salience of an identity relative to other identities incorporated into the self, the greater the probability of behavioral choices in accord with the expectations attached to that identity.

The building of identity theory also required specification of the concept of "society." Theorists found that specification in the concept of "commitment." Persons, as stated above, tend to live their lives in relatively small, specialized networks of social relationships. Commitment refers to the degree to which persons' relationships to others in their networks depend on possessing a particular identity and role; commitment is measurable by the costs of losing meaningful relations to others, should the identity be forgone. The theory hypothesized that the salience of an identity reflected commitment to the role relationships requiring that identity. Thus we arrive at identity theory's specification of Mead's formula: commitment shapes identity salience shapes role choice behavior.

Various researchers have examined that specification. The general conclusion is that the propositions of identity theory are supported reasonably well. Accomplished research, however, also suggests the need for refinements of concept and measurement for amplifications of the theory.

Thus, 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; he also presents evidence that commitment to others in the blood donor community affects the salience of the donor identity. Nuttbrock and Freudiger (1991) provide evidence that the salience of the mother identity among first-time mothers explains, (although to a 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 stability in identities and their salience across time and situations. 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 by entering new social relationships at the university, and these changes in commitments have the expected effects on the salience of identities.

In related research, Serpe and Stryker (1987) find that on entering the university, students seek new relationships by joining organizations that provide 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 find or use such opportunities.

INTERNAL MECHANISMS

Identity theory began with questions about 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 in which 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; theorists argue that expectations attached to roles were internalized and acted out. This last link, later strengthened by conceptualizing identities as cognitive schemas (Stryker and Serpe 1994), remained theoretically underdeveloped. Another side to the study of identities remained, one concerning the nature of identities and how they operate within the contexts in which they are held.

The problem required a clearer understanding of the way in which identities produced behaviors expressing 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 also can be characterized as meaningful; Burke and Reitzes (1981) proposed that the link between identity and behavior existed in the meanings they shared.

Implementation of 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), which also has symbolic interactionist roots.[3] Burke and Tully (1977) showed that self-meanings, as reflexive responses to self-in-role, could be measured reliably with semantic differential scales.

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

The question "How do self-meanings relate to meanings of one's behavior?" was elaborated later in a cybernetic model of perceptual control based on the work of Powers (1973). Affect control theory (Heise 1979) and the models of Carver and Scheier (1990) developed along similar lines. For identity theory, the model consists of four central components (Burke 1991): the identity standard, or the set of (culturally prescribed) meanings held by the individual which define his or her role identity in a situation; The person's perceptions of meanings within the situation, matched to the dimensions of meaning in the identity standard; the comparator or the mechanism that compares the perceived situational meanings with those held in the identity standard; and the individual's behavior or activity, 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

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[3] Affect control theory used the semantic differential to measure the meaning of identities along the universal dimensions of evaluation, potency, and activity, whereas identity theory chose to measure the meanings of role identities as they related to counter roles in situations.

self-relevant meanings into agreement with the identity standard is self-verification; This is accomplished by altering the current situation or by 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, which now are brought together in a common framework. First, by 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) one can view 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, et al. 1986). The model views emotion as due in part to the relationship between perceived self-meanings in the situation and the self-definitional meanings held in the identity standard (see Carver and Scheier 1990; Stryker 1987). A mismatch or increasing an discrepancy (i.e., problems in self-verification) results in negative emotion; a match or a 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 that the intensity of anger and how long anger lasts are functions of the kinds of interruptions of the self-verification process.

Yet, in addition to emotion and affect as outcomes of self-processes, emotions are recognized as having their own consequences, both directly on the individual who experiences them and on others as outward expressions of the individual's state. Emotions signal to self and to others what that state is, making the 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.

Scholars expanded the focus on meanings to include not only symbolic meanings (as traditionally understood in symbolic interactionism) but also sign meanings, which 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, so as to match standards held in an identity. The inclusion of resources in identity theory allows the theory to take advantage of work on exchange and to tie it into relatively recent emphases on meanings in exchange theory. Such meanings were first introduced by Emerson (1969, 1981) and later entering into Molm and Cook's (1994) treatment of exchange theory. As a result, identity theory is able to consider the more mundane expectations for a person occupying a role, such as using materials, preparing food, earning a living, and buying goods and services (Burke 1997).

PUTTING TOGETHER THE TWO STRANDS

In this section we move towards integrating the two parts of identity theory: one emphasizes the social structural sources of identity and the relations among identities, and the other focuses on internal, cognitive identity processes. The two meet at behavior that expresses 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

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

one another. In fact, however, they did not. The structural approach conceived identity in cognitive terms and understood that identities sought confirmation by finding or creating situations in which they could be expressed. The cognitive approach understood that identities were embedded in and affected by social structural contexts. Both understood self as partially a structure of multiple identities. Both understood identities as linked to roles and to behavior through meanings. In the first approach, it is argued that salient identities are cognitive schemas affecting how persons define situations and making them more sensitive to cues calling for identity-relevant behavior (Stryker and Serpe 1994). This argument is given greater force and precision by the argument of the second approach: that the tie between identity and behavior exists in their common meaning (Burke and Reitzes 1981).

One can see the complementary nature of structural and cognitive identity theory by examining how these two emphases fit together. The concept of identity salience implies that persons are more likely to define situations they enter, or in which they find themselves, in ways that make a highly salient identity relevant; this process enables them to enact that identity (Burke and Franzoi 1988). Situations, however, involve relations to others; the extent to which persons can verify their identities depends on the identities of those others, on how the others respond to identity claims, and on whether behaviors that could alter the situation to align perceptions with standards of self-meanings in fact are viable (Riley and Burke 1995). Thus, identities may or may not be confirmed in situationally based interaction. 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 is likely to diminish, perhaps considerably.

Relevant to further elaboration of the links between the two parts of identity theory is a view of social structures in which identities exist. Identity theory generally has focused on role identities.[5] That term implies

a duality. Role is external; it is linked to social positions within the social structure. Identity is internal, consisting of 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 controlled mutually or sequentially.

In addition to the roles themselves, each role or set of roles is embedded in one or more of a variety of groups that provide context for the meanings and expectations associated with the role. Examples include groups and networks, as well as organizations, classes, unions, and other social units (insofar as these units involve concrete relationships and interactions). The structure or connectedness of the roles and groupings provides the first level of social structures' impact on identities.

One component of commitment is the number of others to whom one is connected by possessing 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 identities associated with those position and roles that are more salient.

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

Some aspects of social structures, however, are more problematic from the viewpoint of commitment to particular role relation-

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[5] Social identity theory, on the other hand, focuses on category-based identities. We discuss the relation between identity theory and social identity theory later in this paper.

ships, identities attached to those role relationships, or the potential gap between self-relevant perceptions in situations and identity standards. Persons typically are embedded in multiple role relationships in multiple groups 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 that complicate the reciprocal relationships between 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, the identity based on greater commitment and higher salience will be reflected (in situations where alternative identities can be invoked) 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 that a gap between identity standard and perceived self-meanings will lose motivational force, and will become 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 to stall or prevent behavioral repair of a gap between standards and perceived self-meanings (Burke 1991).

The variety of structural locations of identities implies that varying resources will be available for their construction and functioning, including achievement of self-verification (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; Ridgeway and Berger 1988). Tsushima and Burke (1999) distinguished between lower-level identity standards, which pertain to programs of behavior, and higher-level identity standards, which pertain to general principles and values guiding the lower-level standards for behavior. They found that mothers possessing fewer resources (with less income or education, or unmarried) had less well-developed higher-level identity standards. Further, mothers without such standards encountered more problems of control and confrontation regarding their children, and suffered feelings of lower self-worth and efficacy. In addition, these mothers tended to use child-rearing practices that led to children's failure to develop higher-level identity standards.

While the above concerns the influence of social structure on identities, 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 held by each, their commitment to one another increases. Further, they begin to view themselves as a group-that is, as a new social structure. Alternatively, when persons interacting in a common situation have difficulties in 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 husbands' and wives' spousal identities 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; we have already suggested some of these. Here we focus on two opportunities for the application of identity theory concepts and models, which have remained relatively unexploited until now.

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 as 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 present competing or conflicting expectations for persons' behavior is widely understood and has entered much sociological and social psychological theory and research (Gross, McEachern, and Mason 1958; Hill 1949; Stryker and Statham 1985). More recently these ideas have been displayed quite prominently in literature on working women's conflicts and dilemmas concerning role demands of work and of fam-

ily (Thoits 1987). Earlier, scholars addressed related themes regarding the existence and consequences of status inconsistency (Jackson and Burke 1965; Lenski 1954; Stryker and Macke 1978).

Yet, conceptualizations 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, nor the theoretical and research possibilities inherent in such conceptualizations. These require the *internalization* of role-related expectations and their ordering in a hierarchy of salience. They also require the filtering of identity standards through perceptions relevant to the self; the existence of such perceptions is one compelling reason why identity and identity salience cannot simply be inferred from social locations.

In brief, the identity-theoretic model is different from role-conflict and status inconsistency models and opens up different opportunities than do those models. The possibilities of this model are exhibited in recent work on gender-related topics (Simon 1995; Stets 1995a, 1995b; Thoits 1986). Even here, however, the opportunities are not exploited thoroughly, 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 theorizing and research on social movements (Stryker 2000). As noted earlier, students of social movements recently have borrowed from social identity theory the concept of identity as identification with a social category (Tajfel 1982). This concept, and the concept of collective identity as a cultural emergent from the interaction of social movement members, are keys 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 explain why persons join social movements (McAdam and Paulsen 1993). None of these efforts, however, adequately treat variations in rates and kinds of movement members' participation in movement activities. None deal successfully with questions such as the reasons for variation in

members' willingness to contribute money, time, or other resources—including risk of life—to a movement.

Such questions can be approached with a conception of self composed of multiple identities tied to participation in networks of social relationships or in groups with potentially different agendas and expectations for members, each affected by perceptions relevant to the self. This conception visualizes the possibility, even the likelihood, of competition among identities. By recognizing the interplay of multiple identities, an analyst can account for variation in persons' participation in social movements by reference to ways in which commitments and identities reinforce, conflict with, or are independent of one another.

This illustration can be generalized. Any social network or group is likely to contain members (and the larger the network or group, the more likely it is to include such persons) whose membership in other networks or groups may create identities that either reinforce or impede various forms of participation. Although this insight is not new, its use has been limited; it could be applied widely not only to spousal and parent-child relationships, but also to broader kin, religious, voluntary associational, political, and any other type of relationship that allows variation in levels or kinds of participation.

Amplifying Expectation States Theory and Status Characteristics Theory. Sociological social psychologists currently run the risk—visible in the work of our psychological counterparts—of creating numerous specialized theories to deal with equally numerous specialized research topics. These theories do not appear to bear much relationship to one another. That risk must be avoided if possible; thus the relating of 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, et al. 1972; Foschi 1989; Wagner and Berger 1993) can help clarify central processes emphasized in these theories (see Stets and Burke 1996).

Within the identity theory formulation, value or worth can be conceived as a cognitive attribution made to those resources that allow self-verification. Among the important resources incorporated into participant's identity standards 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 according status, respect, and esteem to those individuals (again including themselves). Participants who receive status, respect, and esteem from other participants will themselves be aided in the self-verification process. In turn, they are likely to accord status, respect, and esteem to others who help in their own self-verification.

Identity theory reinforces the idea that in the absence of specific information about skills and performance levels relevant to the task, participants in a group that seeks to solve a collective problem will draw upon cultural memory contained in previous status and esteem allocations to obtain information about possible resources available for the task at hand. In this sense, status, respect, and esteem are symbolic; they represent resources potentially available for successful accomplishment of the task and thus for self-verification (Ridgeway and Berger 1986; Ridgeway, Johnson, and Diekema 1994). Manipulation of symbols and resources in order to obtain goals is an important function of identities (Freese and Burke 1994). In doing this, identities create value; and by 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 these identities will be activated in other situations.

Challenges

An immediate challenge is entailed in suggesting ways in which the two parts of identity theory are linked. It lies in designing and conducting research examining how commitment to networks of social relationships and identity salience affects identity standards and perceptions of self-relevant meanings, and vice versa. Here, however, we are interested in a larger question: What

work needs to be done beyond this immediate challenge to extend the range and applicability of identity theory?

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

Certainly there is reason to believe that 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 affected by other identities and other group memberships. As suggested earlier, however, 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 such as of spouse and labor force participant. In such a case, oppositional role expectations, identity standards, and perceptions of self-relevant meanings can be ascertained fairly readily.

The reason is so is obvious: the greater the number of related identities, the greater the difficulty of dealing simultaneously with relationships among them. There is no clear way of attacking the issue at hand. Perhaps this issue could be handled by 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.[8] Or perhaps this challenge could be met

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[6] Again, one must keep in mind that "multiple identities" is not equivalent to "multiple roles."

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

[8] Stets (1995b) suggested linking identities through shared meanings.

by following the procedures adopted in expectation states theory to combine the status implications of multiple status characteristics (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 nonexperimental research. Given the conceptions of identity and identity salience as cognitive schemas, as well as contemporary interactive computer-based interviewing technology, we envision an interesting possibility: the use of 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, et al. 1982; Higgins, Strauman, and Klein 1986; Markus and Wurf 1987). Cognitive schemas enhance the speed and accuracy of recognizing stimuli related to the schemas (relative to unrelated stimuli) as well as increasing 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—that is, that latency is a direct measure of identity salience.

Again, given contemporary technology, we see no great difficulty either in presenting verbal or pictorial cues related and unrelated to identities, or in measuring intervals between exposure to cues and recognition of cues. In addition, by using similar procedures and requiring rapid evaluation of identity-related cues as affectively positive or negative, we can obtain a measure of the psychological centrality or importance (Rosenberg 1979) of an identity, which measure is accomplished in a manner that avoids self-reports and that is independent of identity salience.

Another challenge lies in developing a clearer and more complete understanding of different bases of identity. Social identity theory has focused on category-based identities (e.g., 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 such as 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 the lack thereof, depending on whether the category is valued positively or negatively by the person or by others in the person's environment. Self-efficacy especially may reflect successful role performance and the approbation of role partners; feelings of authenticity may result from the ability to verify personal identities across roles and situations.

A further, critical challenge lies in the need to detail more explicitly how emotions fit into the framework of identity theory. The resources for meeting this need are diverse: they include 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 the work of Higgins, Bond, et al. (1986) showing that different types of identity standards lead to different types of emotional response when self-verification fails. This resarch focuses on failures to meet standards composed of others' expectations of what one ought to do, which result in anxiety, and failures to meet self-generated ideal standards, which result in depression. Perhaps other types of identity standards can be distinguished, implicating other kinds of emotional responses.

Researchers should explore the emotional consequences of 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. 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 it necessarily and generally correct to assume that self-verification produces positive affect?

Finally, Stryker (1987) has proposed that emotional outbursts during social interaction can serve as surprise signals, to the self, of the previously unrrecognized salience of identities underlying the interaction. Yet, we need to explore more generally and more 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 discussion can be integrated into an identity theory that includes both social structural and internal self-processes. Working on the premise that this belief is sound, whether or not it is, promises to deepen understandings of both self-processes and emotional responses and to clarify how they relate to one another.

Much work remains to be done in the next millennium to meet these challenges, and by 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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Sheldon Stryker

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