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Identity Development in Identity Theory

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

John Manuel Aldecoa

September 2019

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents.

Thank you for everything.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Identity Development in Identity Theory

by

John Manuel Aldecoa

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Sociology
University of California, Riverside, September 2019
Dr. Jan E. Stets, Chairperson

The purpose of this dissertation is to further develop the concept of identity development in identity theory. Identity development is the process of change that occurs in identities during which the meanings that are contained in identities become less inconsistent. Individuals will work to reduce the amount of inconsistencies between their identity meanings so that they may verify their identities in situations. Identities will be verified more frequently the more they are developed. I suggest that the hierarchical control system in identity theory, which is a complex model that explains how multiple identities interact in situations, can model identity development among multiple identities. Using the hierarchical control system, I attempt to integrate the concept of identity development into established theory in identity theory. I also suggest that there are three phases of identity development: the pre-formative, formative, and transformative phases. The pre-formative phase of identity development occurs as identities begin to emerge from having not existed. Little is known in identity theory with respect to how identities emerge, but this early phase in identity development is important to understand from where identities and identity meanings derive. The formative phase takes place after identities have

already emerged and begin to interact with one another in situations. The formative phase explains how the meanings that are contained in identities that define who persons are in social positions, such as the categorical/group and role identities, will influence more abstract person identity meanings that are attached to the individual. Finally, the transformative phase explains how person identity meanings influence categorical/group and role identity meanings. A focus on identity development advances identity theory in several ways, which I discuss in the conclusion of this dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Identity theory is a prominent social psychological theory of self and identity that explains the perceptual and structural components of persons' identities (Burke and Stets 2009). According to identity theorists, an identity is a set of meanings that persons use to define who they are in their social categories (categorical identity), group memberships (group identity), social roles (role identity), or as unique individuals (person identities). Identities will become activated in a situation when persons perceive meanings in the situation that correspond with their identity meanings. When identities activate in situations, persons become motivated to perceive that the meanings of the situation match the meanings of their identities. This is identity verification. The process of identity verification becomes complex when persons must verify multiple identity meanings in a situation.

Often identity meanings may conflict with one another creating a situation in which identity verification is impossible (Burke 2006). That is, the verification of one identity meaning may imply that another identity meaning is not verified. Identity theorists argue that persons are constantly negotiating and adjusting their identity meanings while in situations so that they may reduce such conflicts from occurring and ensure that their identities are verified. The adjustment of identity meanings in situations to verify an identity or identities serves to integrate identity meanings such that they come to share similarities or, at least, are compatible. Identity meanings become integrated the more persons are able to perceive a consistency between them that may ease the process of identity verification. The compatibility that exists among identity

meanings that are integrated allows persons to perceive that their multiple identities or identity meanings can be verified simultaneously in a situation.

For example, a working mother may be faced with a situation in which her daughter is sick at school and the school nurse calls her at work to pick her up. In this situation, the mother may be faced with an identity conflict – does she leave work early and risk potentially not verifying her work identity, or rather, does she stay at work and risk not verifying her mother identity? Additionally, she may have only recently started her new job and wants to impress her new employer, and she fears that leaving work early might tarnish her work reputation. The mother may need to negotiate her identity meanings to find a compromise between her work identity meanings and her mother identity meanings. If she can find a compromise and resolve this identity conflict, she may be able to verify both her work identity and her mother identity. Otherwise, she risks not verifying at least one identity with the decisions she makes.

The integration of identity meanings such that the multiple identity meanings that may be invoked in a situation are compatible and verifiable is, thus, a central concern in identity theory (Aldecoa 2019; Burke 2003; Burke and Stets 2009). In this dissertation, I argue that the integration of identity meanings, either within a single identity or among multiple identities, constitutes the development of the identity. That is, I propose that identities develop as they increasingly work to integrate their identity meanings within and across identities. A concept of identity development has not yet been proposed in identity theory and, as I argue in this dissertation, the concept of identity development has important implications for understanding the life course of identities.

Identity development is conceptualized using the hierarchical control system in identity theory, a cybernetic model that explains how multiple identities interact with one another in a situation to achieve identity verification (Burke 2003). According to the hierarchical control system, when multiple identities activate in a situation, they are ranked based on how abstract are the meanings they contain. Person identities are considered the most abstract meanings, given that they are identities that are not tied to a social position, but rather, they are tied to the individual (Burke and Stets 2009). Thus, person identities are considered higher-ranking identities when they are activated alongside categorical/group and role identities, which are considered lower-ranking identities.

Persons attempt to verify both higher-ranking and lower-ranking identities when they are activated in situations. As persons attempt to verify higher- and lower-ranking identities, these identities will influence each other's identity meanings. To verify higher-ranking person identities, persons may need to adjust the meanings of lower-ranking identities to match their person identity meanings. This perceived match will ease the verification of their person identities. Similarly, to verify lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities, persons may need to adjust the meanings of higher-ranking, person identities until they perceive that their person identity meanings match their lower-ranking identity meanings. The goal is to perceive a match between higher- and lower-ranking identity meanings to ease the verification of each identity in a situation.

Identity development occurs when the meanings that are contained in an identity become more integrated in the identity as well as with the meanings of other identities that persons embrace. The more integrated is an identity, the more likely are persons to verify it in situations and thus maintain these identity meanings over time. Alternatively, the less integrated are identity meanings, the less likely are persons to verify it in situations and the more likely are they to experience changes in the meanings of their identity until it is verified. Since identities that are more developed receive more verifying feedback than under-developed identities, developed identities are more stable across time, since persons will work to maintain their identity meanings that are verified and change those that are not verified. Therefore, identity development, especially among multiple identities, leads to a more stable sense of self during the life course.

Throughout this dissertation I discuss identity development in three phases: the pre-formative, formative, and transformative phases of identity development (see also, Aldecoa 2019). These phases are not meant to be viewed as "stages" of development. Rather, since identity development among multiple identities is complex, these phases serve as a heuristic model to simplify the various components of identity development. Accordingly, the first phase of identity development is the pre-formative phase. The pre-formative phase of identity development is the phase in which an identity emerges and begins to form. Identity theorists have only briefly explored the emergence of identities (Burke and Stets 2009), but this area still lacks development. I explore how different types of identities might emerge and suggest that identities might emerge in different

ways depending on the identity type. Given the lack of research in this area of identity theory, many of these claims are speculative and subject to future research.

The formative phase of identity development is the phase in which lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities influence higher-ranking, person identities. As mentioned, the main mechanism of influence is identity conflict. When persons perceive a conflict between their lower-ranking and higher-ranking identities, they will reconcile it by adjusting their identity meanings until they perceive that their identity meanings are compatible and, thus, verifiable. Identity theorists have argued that higher-ranking identities will influence lower-ranking identities in situations by adjusting the meanings of lower-ranking identities to match the meanings of higher-ranking identities (Burke 2003; Burke and Stets 2009; Stets 1995). While I do not deny this claim, I suggest that identity theorists must further develop understanding of the possibility that lower-ranking identities also can influence higher-ranking identities. I discuss the mechanisms that undergird this process as well as how different types of lower-ranking identities might have different impacts on higher-ranking, person identities.

The transformative phase of identity theory is the phase during which higher-ranking, person identities influence lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities. I discuss how person identities might influence lower-ranking identities during identity development. Developed and under-developed person identities have different impacts on lower-ranking identities, and these impacts are significant and vary across identity types. As mentioned, identity theorists have spent much more time theorizing how person identities influence lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities (Burke 2003;

Stets 1995). I advance this prior theorizing by exploring its implications for understanding identity development and the development of different types of identities.

This dissertation takes the following form. In Chapter 2, I provide the reader with an overview of the core concepts in identity theory. I discuss the history of identity theory as well as its most current conceptualization. Chapter 3 explores the dynamics of identity development, introducing the hierarchical control system in identity theory and how the hierarchical control system can serve as a model of identity development in identity theory. I also define identity development and discuss its significance as a concept in identity theory. Chapter 4, 5, and 6, focus on the three phases of identity development. Chapter 4 focuses on the pre-formative phase of identity development and thus explores how identities might emerge. Chapter 5 discusses the formative phase, and Chapter 6 explores the dynamics of the transformative phase. I conclude this dissertation with a discussion of the implications of introducing the concept of identity development in identity theory and potential areas for future research.

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CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY THEORY

This chapter provides an overview of identity theory (Burke and Stets 2009) by defining key concepts and terms in identity theory to serve as a basis for the arguments made in subsequent chapters. I begin with a brief history of the symbolic interactionist roots of identity theory dating back to the early works of George Herbert Mead (1934). Then, I discuss early theorizing within the structural and perceptual approaches to identity theory (Burke 1991; Stryker 2002 [1980]) followed by an overview of its most current conceptualization. I conclude with an overview of the topics discussed in the following chapters.

THE FOUNDATION OF IDENTITY THEORY

Identity theory owes much to the early works of George Herbert Mead, who laid the foundation for what would eventually become "symbolic interactionism" (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934). Symbolic interactionism is a framework that views social interaction as carried out through the use of *symbols* or cultural meanings that people communicate to one another. As Mead believed, social interaction is maintained and sustained by those symbols that are shared by interacting persons. Identity theory follows this basic premise of symbolic interactionism (Stryker 1980; Burke 1980). But identity theorists do not incorporate the entirety of Mead's work into identity theory. Rather, they take a handful of his key concepts of the self combined with the works of other scholars of the self, such as William James and Charles Horton Cooley, among others (Burke and Stets 2009).

There are four concepts that identity theorists have discussed from Mead's early theory of the self: (1) Mead's concept of "mind;" (2) Mead's understanding of "self;" (3)

Mead's distinction between "signs" and "symbols;" and (4) Mead's concept of significant "gestures." Each of Mead's contributions to identity theory are delineated and defined below:

1. *Mind*: Mind is a person's consciousness of self in a situation such that persons will (a) think about themselves as an object behaving in a situation that (b) is motivated by some goal or end-state and (c) will adjust their behavior in ways to achieve the goal or end-state. To have "mind" means to have the capacity to reflect upon oneself as an object no different than any other object in a given (social) environment. This ability to reflect upon oneself in a situation is central to symbolic interactionism and, more specifically, identity theory. When persons can reflect upon their behavior in a situation and also think about their motivation to behave (their desired goal or end-state), they can then orient or adjust their behavior or the environment in ways that allow them to achieve their goal. According to identity theorists, people always act or behave to achieve some goal or end-state (Burke and Stets 2009).

2. *Self*: The self is made up of two parts – the "I" and the "me." The "I" is the goal-seeking agent that compels the self to act in order to meet its desires. Because the "I" can be impulsive, the "me" works to regulate this impulse by orienting the self in ways that correspond to the context of a situation. The "me" learns to orient the self by adopting a general understanding of the cultural knowledge of society, what Mead terms the "generalized other." Mead also argues that the generalized

other is learned as the "me" comes to see the world from the point of view of the other. Thus, the "me" orients the self in ways that reflect the views of the generalized other.

3. *Signs and symbols*: The concept of shared meanings is central to Mead's view of the self. Indeed, Mead believed that through self processes (e.g. self-regulation) develops a "universal community" built upon a system of shared meanings. Mead based his understanding of meanings on his distinction between a sign and a symbol. A *sign* is a situational stimulus that provokes a response in individuals. For example, the sight of smoke might signal the presence of a fire and persons will respond by calling 911 to alert the fire department. Similarly, facial expressions signal to others a person's mood and others respond by altering how they interact with the person. Meaning is the response to the stimulus and *symbols* emerge when these meanings are shared among persons. That is, symbols are a social consensus that defines the appropriate responses to situational stimuli.

4. *Gestures*: Gestures are symbolic acts that occur in the course of social interaction to provoke a response in others. Mead suggested that gestures are central to how "meaning" is produced in social interaction. Mead (1934) argued that meaning is produced in a three-step process. First, there must occur an initial gesture. Second, another person interprets the gesture ("adjustive response"). Third, that person responds (behaviorally) to the initial gesture. As Mead states, "the adjustive response of the other organism is the meaning of the gesture" (Mead 1934: 81). Thus, gestures are only meaningful when they can arouse a response in others that

was intended by the gesturer. If there is no "communicability" or common understanding of the meaning of a gesture, then the gesture has no meaning.

Identity theorists have taken the above concepts from Mead's theory of self to further develop and advance understandings of the self. Identity theorists also have incorporated the works of other prominent scholars of the self, including William James (1890) and Charles Horton Cooley (1902). Below, I briefly discuss James' and Cooley's contributions to identity theory followed by the more recent works of Sheldon Stryker (2002 [1980]) and Peter Burke (1980).

William James and "Multiple Selves"

Whereas Mead argued that the self reflects society, he did not see the self as complex and differentiated, as is society. Stryker (1980) noted this absence in Mead's theory of the self and thus looked toward the works of William James (1890). In James' (1890) early work, he argued that the self is comprised of "multiple selves." For James, there were four types of self, only one of which was the "social" self, and people could have as many social selves are there are others who recognize them as such (James 1890: 294). Identity theorists have adopted this same idea, though in modified form. For example, identity theorists view the self as entirely social (as did Baldwin [1902] and Cooley [1906]), not just partly. Also, instead of using the term "multiple selves," identity theorists view the self as comprised of "multiple identities" (Stryker 1980). Either way, the concept of a differentiated self was an important advancement on Mead's work because it demonstrated how the self-structure reflected the complexity and differentiation of the social structure.

William James Theory of Self-Esteem

Identity theorists also take from James' (1890) idea about self-esteem (Burke and Stets 2009). James defined self-esteem as a ratio of "successes" to "pretension." James believed that a person with a high rate of success can still have low self-esteem if he has high aspirations. A person can enhance their self-esteem equally by either increasing their rate of success or by lowering their aspirations. It is in this discussion of self-esteem that James distinguishes between the "potential" self and the "actual" self, which is a concept that closely relates to identity theorist's distinction between the "ideal" self and the "situational" self (McCall and Simmons 1979). Mead's theory of the self does not incorporate the concept of self-esteem, which, as identity theorists have argued, has important implications for identity processes (Cast and Burke 2002).

Charles Horton Cooley's Emphasis on Sentiment

Emotions are surprisingly marginalized in Mead's work on the self. Hence, identity theorists have turned to Cooley's (1902) notion of the "looking glass self" to integrate emotions into the concept of the self. Cooley argued that how people view themselves reflects others' reactions to them. These reactions from others are known as "reflected appraisals" in identity theory (Burke and Stets 2009). It is through reflected appraisals that people come to develop a sense of self or identity. Importantly, Cooley recognized that from reflected appraisals can arise emotions such as pride or shame. For instance, people feel proud when reflected appraisals match how they view themselves. However, they may experience shame if reflected appraisals do not match how they view themselves.

These early ideas were certainly important and highly insightful to identity theorists' understanding of the self and self processes. However, despite, for example, Cooley's attempts to develop his methodology of "sympathetic introspection," these ideas lacked a theoretical foundation upon which they could be tested, empirically and systemically. Identity theory has emerged as a scientific theory largely due to the works of Sheldon Stryker (1980) and Peter Burke (1980, 1991). Identity theorists have since conceptualized three bases of self-esteem: self-authenticity, self-efficacy, and self-worth (Stets and Burke 2014). Further, recent research in identity theory has broadened, conceptually, the range of emotions aroused during identity processes (Turner and Stets 2005, 2006; Stets 2005; Stets and Asencio 2008; Stets, Carter, Harrod, Cerven, and Abrutyn 2008). Before discussing the core concepts of identity theory, I will briefly note Stryker's and Burke's original contributions.

SHELDON STRYKER'S STRUCTURAL SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Stryker's (1980) structural symbolic interactionism derives, mainly, from his contention with Mead's view of society as a relatively undifferentiated structure that is held together by shared or "universal" meanings among persons (Serpe and Stryker 2011). Mead (1934) also believed that conflict in society would reduce the more meanings are shared among persons. On the contrary, Stryker argued that conflict and differentiation are constants in society. Another issue to which Stryker (2002 [1980]) alludes in Mead's theory of self is Mead's view of self as a relatively undifferentiated

whole. Stryker argues that if self reflects society, and society is made up of differentiated component parts, then the self also is differentiated and made up of multiple components, which he called "identities."

Stryker's "structural" symbolic interactionism thus adopts Mead's basic premises of social interaction – that is, that social interaction occurs through the communication of meanings and symbols – and also recognizes how the "ongoing patterns of interaction," or social structure, "constrain" the possibilities by which people develop meanings of themselves in the situation (pg. 52). This structural approach allowed symbolic interactionists to explain, for example, how different role identities create conflict that persons must rectify in social situations, which could not occur without a concept of a differentiated self. Stryker uses the example of a father who must choose between playing golf on the weekend with his friends or spending that time taking his children to the zoo. Stryker pulls from the works of other sociologists (e.g. Turner 1962) to propose several premises that underline his structural symbolic interactionist approach (pg. 53-55):[1]

1. *Behavior is dependent upon a named or classified world*. Society exists prior to the person. Therefore, the meanings of society must also exist prior to the person entering society. Through social interaction, persons learn the pre-existent, shared meanings of society. They learn how to define themselves, others, situations, and the expectations of self and others in situations through social interaction.

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[1] Of the eight founding premises of Stryker's (1980) structural symbolic interactionism, Peter Burke and Jan Stets' (2009) book *Identity Theory*, suggest that there are four "main" premises central to identity theory (see Burke and Stets 2009: 25). This list focuses only on these four main premises.

2. *Symbols by which people designate social positions carry in them the shared behavioral expectations*. These social positions are called social roles. Social roles, or simply "roles," are behavioral expectations attached to social positions. Stryker suggests that roles such as mother, doctor, or student carry in them expectations that are derived from the "relatively stable, morphological components of social structure." For example, there are relatively shared understandings of the role expectations of a mother (e.g. caring for a child), a doctor (e.g. attending to the ailments of the sick), and a student (e.g. studying, reading, writing). These expectations are stable in that they are embedded in the shared (societal) meanings of these identities.

3. *People name (or label) others with respect to the positions they occupy in the social structure*. Labels symbolically represent who one is in a given social position and also invoke shared meanings with respect to one's behavior in that social position. For example, the label of "police officer" depicts a person's position in society and what is expected of the person in this social position.

4. *People also name (or label) themselves with respect to the positions they occupy in the social structure*. Not only are labels provided by others, but they also are self-prescribed. This is when a role becomes a role "identity." A role identity is a label or definition that persons prescribe to themselves in a role. Roles become role identities when particular expectations or meanings come

to define who one is in a role. They become a part of who one is. In this way, the self comes to reflect society; people come to identify with their social position, as a part of the social structure.

PETER BURKE'S PERCEPTUAL CONTROL SYSTEM

Burke (1980), on the other hand, took a more cognitive approach to the self by viewing role-identities as comprised of *meanings* that people use to define who they are in an identity. Burke argued that identity meanings are an internalized sense of self that emerges through social interaction as people reflect upon their behavior in identities and how others view them in that role-identity. Burke (1991) later developed a *perceptual control system*, which systematically conceptualizes how identity meanings operate in situations to guide people's behavior. The perceptual control system operates as a negative feedback loop in that self-discrepancies that are perceived in a social environment arouse distress that compel persons to control their perceptions to match their self-view. The goal is for a person to perceive an equilibrium between how they see themselves and how others see them. Burke's perceptual control model is, in fact, much more complex than this and I will explain its mechanisms in detail below. But, note that Burke's perceptual approach was a significant advancement in symbolic interactionism in that it provided a way to understand how identity meanings are maintained.

ONE IDENTITY THEORY

These two approaches – structural symbolic interactionism and identity control theory – aroused confusion among researchers with regard to the relationship between the two. Identity theorists have stressed that these two approaches are tied to the same

16

theoretical principles of identity theory (Stryker and Burke 2000; Burke and Stets 2009).

That is, Burke's perceptual approach as well as Stryker's structural approach consider

both cognitive and structural factors as they relate to the identity process. Identity theory

is a single theory that explains the relationship between self and society. The

developmental approach proposed in the following chapters uses assumptions in both the

perceptual and structural approach to present a general theory of identity development.

CORE CONCEPTS IN IDENTITY THEORY

The following sections describe what Stets and Serpe (2013) have previous

referred to as the "core concepts" in identity theory. I will focus on the concepts of the

social structure, identities, identity verification, identity salience, identity commitment,

identity prominence, and resources in identity theory. Each of these concepts have an

important role in the development of an identity. Thus, it is important to understand these

basic concepts to understand how each influences the develop of identities.

Social Structure

As mentioned, identity theory developed out of the structural symbolic

interactionist framework (Stryker 1980). Stryker (1980), following Mead (1934), argued

that society shapes self, and self shapes society. Identity theorists see society as

"patterned" in that behavior and interactions are organized, ritualized, and structured

(Stets and Serpe 2013). Identity theorists conceptualize three types of social structures:

large, intermediate, and proximate social structures (Stryker, Serpe and Hunt 2005).

Large social structures operate as systems of social stratification and organize people based on social categories, such as race, class, gender, religion, education, socioeconomic status, and so on (Blau 1977).

Large social structures create "boundaries" that increase the likelihood that people in certain social positions will form social relationships with others, will define themselves in ways similar to others, or will have access to certain resources. For instance, consider social class. Students are more likely to form friendships with others of the same social class (Malacarne 2017; Neugarten 1946). People of the same social class are more likely to live near each other and work alongside one another, which increases the likelihood of interacting largely with people of the same social class (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Social class also influences the types of colleges students apply to and attend, even among high-achieving students (Brookings Institute 2013). Thus, class standing can have marked effects on the types of people one interacts with and the types of resources one has access to.

Intermediate social structures are made up of more localized social affiliation networks such as communities, neighborhoods, schools, or workplaces that influence the types of social relationships that people develop. Intermediate social structures, like schools, bring large numbers of people together in a single setting, which increases the likelihood of forming relational ties to others. Thus, whereas large social structures create boundaries to interaction, intermediate social structures facilitate interaction with others. For instance, schools are an important intermediate social structure that can mitigate the social class divide among students (Malacarne 2017).

Proximal social structures constitute everyday interpersonal interaction and provide the contexts within which persons can embrace and develop identities and foster social relationships (Merolla et al. 2012; Serpe et al. 2019). Such interaction takes place among family members, friends, coworkers, school peers, and so forth. Identity theorists argue that the proximate social structure is where identity prominence emerges insofar as the proximate social structure provides an environment that reinforces people's identities. Proximate social structures are viewed as personal social networks in which persons may share similar identities with others (Stets, Aldecoa, Blum, Winegar, forthcoming). The more people with whom persons share identities in the proximate social structure, the more they will receive reinforcing feedback for their identities.

Identities

Identity theorists posit that just as society is complex and comprised of differentiated component parts, so too is the self. These different components of the self are called *identities*. Identities are a set of meanings (i.e. self-descriptions) that people use to define who they are. As mentioned above, *meanings* are mediational responses to stimuli (Burke and Stets 2009). The stimuli could be the self, another person, or the situation. The response is one's behavior and meanings mediate between the stimuli and the behavioral response. Meanings also define who persons are in an identity. Meanings that define persons in identities are called identity meanings. Identity meanings act as a stimulus for further action. For instance, persons who identify with the meaning of "caring" will invoke this identity meaning in situations that call forth a caring response.

Meanings thus define who one is in an identity and provide the motivation to control perceptions of oneself so they are consistent with these identity meanings.

Identity theorists contend that there are different types or "bases" of identities (Burke and Stets 2009). The different bases of identities are delineated as follows:

1. *Social identities* are meanings persons use to define who they are in relation to social categories, such as being a Republican, African American, or Jewish. Social categories stratify persons in society, and persons' social rank determines how they are be treated by others. Social identity meanings align persons responses to situations in relation to the attitudes and values of the social category. For example, persons who identify as Republican might embrace meanings of "small government" that inform their aversive response to policies that increase taxation. These meanings are controlled by individuals who seek to verify their Republican identity but also are informed by the social category of "Republican" with which they identify.

2. *Group identities* are meanings that emerge in interaction to define persons in relation to their group members, such as in a family, friendship, or religious community. The interactional component of group identities distinguishes it from social identities. That is, social identities emerge from a process of grouping or self-categorization whereas group identities emerge as meanings become shared among persons during social interaction. Both group and social identities provide people with a sense of belonging, which in turn, can increase their sense of self-worth (Stets and Burke 2014).

3. *Role identities* are meanings attached to roles persons occupy in society, such as a teacher, student, or parent. Role identities guide persons' perceptions in social roles to match their corresponding meanings. For example, a sports coach might identify as "successful" and works to ensure that his perceptions of his identity match this meaning, which may take place by winning games or championships. Matching one's perceptions with the meanings of role identities provides persons with feelings of being competent in that role. Therefore, a coach who leads his team to victory may perceive that his performance in the coach role identity matches the identity's meanings.

4. *Person identities* are meanings associated with the unique qualities or characteristics that distinguish people from others. For example, persons might view themselves as moral, dominant, or masterful. Identity theorists argue that since the meanings of being moral or dominant are culturally shared, persons also can draw upon these meanings to reinforce not only their own identities but others' identities as well. For example, what it means to be moral is likely shared among others in society and these shared meanings of morality can be employed to verify persons' moral identities and others' moral identities in social situations.

Identity Verification

Persons are motivated to perceive a match between who they think they are, and how they think others see them in social situations. For example, a student might view herself as "intelligent" and thus strive to ensure that her perceptions of herself in the student identity match the meaning of being intelligent. Receiving a bad grade on an

exam may disrupt her perception of herself as an intelligent student. To counteract this

perceived discrepancy, she may make some adjustment to realign her perception of

herself with her student identity meaning. For example, she may study harder to improve

her score on the following exam. However, if she continues to receive poor grades on her

exams that do not match her student identity meaning, her student identity meaning may,

over time, adjust to the meaning she perceives in her exam grades – that she is not as

intelligent as she once thought she was. This process of adjusting one's self-perceptions

to match identity meanings is how persons verify their identities in social situations.

In identity theory, identity verification is conceptualized in terms of a perceptual

control system (Burke 1991). The perceptual control system contains five key

components: (1) the identity standard, (2) perceptual input, (3) comparator, (4) emotions,

and (5) output. Figure 2.1 illustrates how each component fits into the verification

process.
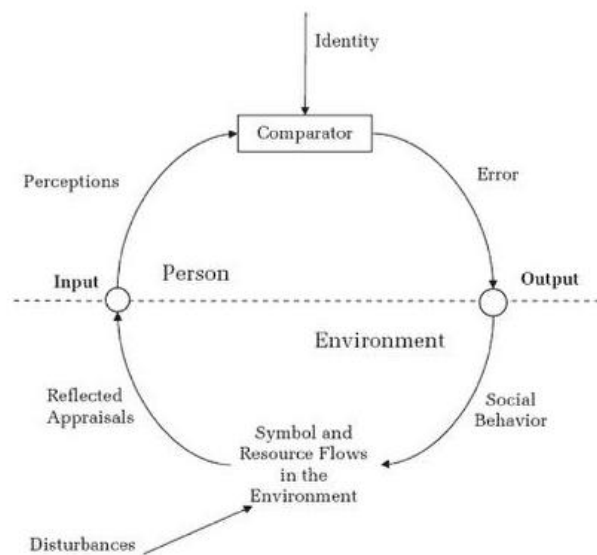
Figure 2.1: Identity Control Model (Burke and Stets 2009: 63)

When persons enter social situations and perceive the meanings of the situation, an identity with meanings that correspond to the meanings of the situation will activate. The *identity standard* is the meanings that define who persons are in an identity. When activated, the identity standard guides persons' perceptions of their identity (or identities) in the situation to match their perceptions with their identity standard. The *output* that persons emit in a situation is the behavioral response to situational stimuli as guided by identity meanings. Persons then receive feedback for their behavior from others in the form of reflected appraisals. This feedback is received as perceptual *input*, or rather, how persons think others view their identities.

Persons will then compare the meanings of reflected appraisals with their identity standard meanings to perceive a match. If persons perceive a match between reflected appraisals and their identity meanings, then the identity has been verified. Identity verification means that persons perceive that they have successfully controlled the meanings of their identity in the situation. Persons feel good when their identities are verified. Identity verification also means that persons can continue to behave in the same way until they perceive a discrepancy between their identity meanings and meanings from the situation.

When persons perceive a discrepancy between identity meanings and situational meanings (reflected appraisals), the identity has been non-verified. Identity non-verification occurs when an identity is "over-verified" or "under-verified." Over-verification of an identity is non-verifying feedback in a positive or upward direction. For example, if a student who views himself as "average" is awarded the opportunity to

23

participate in honors courses, the over-appraisal of his student identity might place added stress on the student to perform above his identity standard. Under-verification is non-verification in a negative or downward direction. For example, the under-verifying feedback that the same student receives for a failing grade on an exam will arouse distress for not having matched the meaning of his student identity.

Persons tend to feel bad when their identities are over- or under-verified and will work harder to ensure that they are verified in the future. There are several ways in which persons can ensure that non-verified identities are verified. For instance, persons may adjust the meanings of their behavior to match the meanings of the situation. Persons also may consider leaving the situation to find opportunities for identity verification elsewhere (Stets et al., forthcoming; Swann 1987). If identity non-verification persists over an extended period of time, persons identity meanings may shift in alignment with the meanings of the situation. This is a form of identity change, which occurs over a long period of time (Burke 2006).

Identity Salience

Identity salience is the probability that an identity will be activated across social situations (Stryker 2002 [1980]). The higher the salience of an identity the more likely it will be activated across situations. Stryker (2002 [1980]) argued that identities are organized in terms of a rank ordering of identity salience. Identities with a higher level of salience are ranked above identities with a lower level of salience. An identity's position in the hierarchy is, in turn, determined by how committed persons are to the identity. That is, identities to which persons are more committed are positioned higher in the hierarchy

than identities to which persons are less committed. Stated differently, the more committed persons are to an identity, the more frequently the identity will be activated in social situations.

Identity Commitment

Identity commitment is conceptualized in two ways in identity theory. Stryker (1980) has argued that identity commitment refers to the costs incurred for not activating an identity. These costs refer to persons' social ties such that the number of social ties persons have based on an identity (*interactional commitment*) and the emotional bonds to these ties (*affective commitment*) increase the costliness of not activating the identity in social situations. For example, entire nations rely on their leaders to provide a sense of safety and security. Given the magnitude of persons who rely on leaders to enact their leader identity, the cost of not enacting the leader identity could have large-scale social impacts. Similarly, the emotional bonds that mothers form with their children also might increase their commitment to their mother identity whereas not enacting their mother identity will be emotionally burdensome.

Alternatively, Burke and Reitzes (1991) conceptualize identity commitment as persons' motivation to verify an identity in social situations. The more committed persons are to an identity, the more motivated they will be to verify it in social situations. Burke and Reitzes (1991) discuss two bases of identity commitment: cognitive and socioemotional. Cognitive bases of commitment refer to the perceived social rewards and positive emotions that persons receive in an identity. For example, commitment to a student identity might be motivated by the expected or perceived praise that persons

receive for getting good grades. Socioemotional bases of commitment refer to the social ties that persons form while embedded in social networks. Persons form social bonds with family members, friends, and significant others who may provide verifying feedback for their identities, and vice versa. The verification that persons receive while interacting with social ties increases identity commitment.

Identity Prominence

The prominence (or "centrality" [Rosenberg 1979]) of an identity is defined as how important an identity is to a person. Prominent identities may be representative of people's core values and desires (for who they want to be and how they want others to see them). In identity theory, prominence is organized in terms of a prominence hierarchy. The more prominent an identity, or the higher it is positioned in the prominence hierarchy, the more likely persons will invoke it across social situations (McCall and Simmons 1978). Prominence differs from salience in at least one important way. Stryker and Serpe (1994) have argued that identity salience operates at a more subconscious level of awareness whereas people are more aware of how prominent is an identity (Stryker and Serpe 1994). Further, there is some evidence in identity theory to suggest that identity prominence influences salience (likely mediated by identity commitment) (Brenner, Serpe, and Stryker 2014).

Resources

Resources are anything that sustains the self and interaction within the social structure (Freese and Burke 1994). This definition places the focus less on what resources are and more on what resources do (Stets and Serpe 2013). Accordingly, resources

facilitate identity verification and sustain social interactions. Persons use resources to verify their identities in social situations. For example, teachers may use paper, pencils, chalkboards, visual aids, textbooks, and their own knowledge and experiences within the classroom to verify their teacher identity. At the same time, as teachers use these resource to facilitate classroom instruction, they are sustaining their interaction with students.

Identity theorists distinguish between actual and potential resources (Burke and Stets 2009; Freese and Burke 1994). Any object is a potential resource to be used in a situation. But only when a potential resource is symbolically represented as "useful" in a situation does it become an actual resource. That is, the utility of a resource is not inherent in the object itself, but in the meanings that persons attach to the object. Teachers use the resources at their disposal when appropriate to do so, that is, when it either verifies their identity or sustains social interaction. Identity theorists have discussed three types of resources: structural, interpersonal, and personal resources (Stets and Cast 2007).

Structural resources such as social status, prestige, or social, cultural, and economic capital provide people with social influence in interaction. Structural resources orient how persons interact with one another, such as how employees interact with their bosses or children with parents. *Interpersonal resources* sustain systems of interaction by assisting in the verification of peoples' identities. Examples of interpersonal resources are role-taking, social likeability or desirability, and trust (Stets and Cast 2007). Role-taking and trust, for example, are important in forming social relationships. When people are able to take the perspective of the other, they are able to develop an understanding of

other's viewpoints. In effect, role-taking builds trust through a "mutual verification context" (Burke and Stets 1999). A mutual verification context is a situation in which interacting partners mutually verify one another. When interacting partners mutually verify, they begin to trust one another and, in effect, work to maintain that identity.

Personal resources are persons' belief in themselves as authentic (in person identity), competent (in role identity), and worthwhile (in group or social identity) that facilitate the verification of their identities. Authenticity, competence, and worthiness are all components of self-esteem and high self-esteem is a resource that persons can use in situations to ensure that their identities are verified (Stets and Burke 2014). In turn, persons feel good when their identities are verified and will strive to sustain the interaction to continue to receive verifying feedback for their identities.

MOVING FORWARD: ADVANCING IDENTITY THEORY

This chapter provides a brief overview of identity theory, its history, and its current conceptualization. This overview is meant to provide the reader with a foundation of knowledge about the concepts and terms in identity theory that will be used in the following chapters. Chapter 3 expands upon the above conceptualization of the perceptual control system by exploring how the perceptual control system operates as a mechanism for identity development. I demonstrate how the perceptual control system, as conceptualized in identity theory (Burke and Stets 2009), provides a robust conceptual model that explains how identities develop over time.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I explore three phases of identity development as discussed in recent work in identity theory (Aldecoa 2019). Each chapter will focus on a

different phase of identity development. Chapter 4 focuses on the *pre-formative phase* in identity development, that is, the phase that occurs prior to the formation or acquisition of an identity. To understand how identities might develop, it also is important to discuss how identities emerge. Identity theorists have not yet explored how identities might emerge. Thus, Chapter 4 explores the potential sources of identity meanings, identity prominence, identity salience, and identity commitment.

Chapter 5 focuses on the *formative phase* in identity development. The formative phase is the phase that occurs as persons learn identity meanings and develop identity prominence, salience, and commitment in social interaction. In the formative phase, society influences the self. That is, identities are taking shape based on the influence that society has on persons. Here, society is conceptualized as a social network in which persons are tied to others who influence their identities. Also, I discuss several agents of socialization such as parents and friends who have important influences on the identities that persons embrace and how these identities develop in the formative phase.

Chapter 6 is on the *transformative phase* in identity development, that is, the phase in which identities influence society. Again, society is conceptualized as a social network. However, in this chapter, focus is placed less on how others influence a person and more so on how persons influence others. Recent theorizing in identity theory has demonstrated how the identity verification process can shape persons' social networks (Stets et al., forthcoming). In this chapter, I suggest that the influence an identity has on social network depends on how developed is the identity in terms of its prominence, salience, and commitment.

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CHAPTER 3: THE HIERARCHICAL CONTROL SYSTEM AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

This chapter explores how identities develop within the hierarchical control system in identity theory (Burke and Stets 2009). Persons may use several identity meanings to define themselves in a given identity. I suggest that identities develop as the identity meanings that persons embrace to define themselves in these identities become more consistent such that persons perceive less discrepancies between their identity meanings and can more easily verify them in situations. Identity meanings become more consistent the more there exists a consistency between them that may ease the process of identity verification. For example, a mother identity may contain both the meanings of "caring" and "enforcer," and as a mother, she may need to control her perceptions of these meanings to ensure that they are both verified when, say, her children are fighting and she must resolve the issue. This negotiation process is how identities develop. That is, identities develop as persons learn how to reduce the amount of inconsistencies that exist among their identity meanings to achieve identity verification within and across social situations. The more consistent are the meanings in an identity, the less persons will perceive discrepancies that may inhibit identity verification. Identity meanings become more consistent the more experience persons have in an identity, and thus, the more opportunities they have to control their perceptions to verify it within and across situations.

I explore how an identity's development may interact with the development of other identities that persons embrace using the hierarchical control system in identity

theory. The hierarchical control system is a complex model that explains how multiple

identities that activate together in situations interact as persons work to control their

perceptions to verify each identity. Identities are organized hierarchically by their levels

of abstraction. Since person identities contain more abstract meanings than

categorical/group and role identities, person identities are ranked at the highest level in

the hierarchy. Identity theorists posit that higher-ranking, person identities will operate

like a reference or identity standard that guides the meanings of lower-ranking,

categorical/group and role identities to ensure that the meanings of higher-ranking

identities are verified.

There has been less focus in identity theory on how lower-ranking identities

influence higher-ranking identities in social situations. Aldecoa (2019) has argued that

the influence of lower-ranking identities on higher-ranking identities might be important

for understanding how higher-ranking identities develop over time, within and across

social situations. Aldecoa posited that lower-ranking identities might influence the

development of person identities whereas person identities might influence the

development of categorical/group and role identities. The hierarchical control system thus

explains the developmental processes of multiple identities, such that the meanings of

identities become more consistent, over time, to reduce perceived discrepancies that may

arise among multiple identities in situations.

This chapter begins with an overview of the hierarchical control system in identity

theory. Focus is placed on conceptualizing the hierarchical control system and discussing

how it explains the interactions that occur among identities. When identities interact in

situations, persons must control their perceptions to ensure that each activated identity is verified. The integration of identity meanings from multiple identities eases the verification process by reducing the potential for perceived discrepancies or identity conflict arising in the situation. This is explained in the second half of the chapter, when I discuss how higher- and lower-ranking identities interact during identity development. This chapter serves as a primer for subsequent chapters that further develop the concept of identity development by focusing on the three phases of identity development.

THE HIERARCHICAL CONTROL SYSTEM IN IDENTITY THEORY

Recall from Chapter 2 that an identity will activate in a situation when persons perceive meanings in the situation that match meanings in that identity. The activation of an identity in a situation occurs automatically, that is, people do not typically think about activating an identity. Rather, the activation of an identity is a quick response to perceived meanings in the situation that match the meanings in the activated identity, such as when a student identity is activated upon entering a classroom or when a woman's mother identity is activated when her children are present (Stets 2016; Stets and Serpe 2013). When identities are activated in a situation, persons are motivated to verify their identities by attempting to perceive that others in the situation see them in the same way that they see themselves in their identities. A perceived match between one's self-view and the views of others is identity verification and individuals will feel good, and a perceived mismatch between self and others' views is identity non-verification and individuals will feel bad.

Multiple identities will activate together in a situation when persons perceive meanings in the situation that match the meanings of more than one identity (Burke and Stets 2009; Stets 1995). Identity theorists emphasize that there are different bases of identities that may activate together in situations. In a single situation, persons may perceive meanings that activate their person identity alongside a role identity and/or a categorical/group identity. For example, a police officer who pulls over his friend for drunk driving might perceive meanings in the situation that activate his moral person identity and friend role identity alongside his police officer identity. Since persons are motivated to verify each identity that is activated in a situation, the police officer must attempt to verify his moral identity, police officer identity, and friend identity.

The verification of multiple identities may become complicated, however, when identities that are activated together contain different or contradictory meanings. When identity meanings conflict, it may be difficult or impossible to achieve identity verification. For instance, the police officer identity might contain the meaning of law-enforce, his moral identity might contain the meaning of "justice," and his friend identity might contain the meaning of "loyalty." To verify each identity, the police officer must perceive that who he is in the situation is consistent with each of these identity meanings. This may be a difficult task considering that, if he controls perceptions of enforcing the law and justice to verify his police officer and moral identities, these perceptions will be discrepant with the friend identity standard. On the other hand, if he controls perceptions of loyalty to verify his friend identity, these perceptions may be discrepant with his moral

and police officer identity standards. When multiple identities are activated together in a situation, persons must negotiate meanings in each identity in the situation to ensure that each identity is verified.

Multiple identities that activate together in a situation also might complement each other when they embrace similar meanings. For instance, persons who embrace the person identity meanings of "nurturing" might be inclined to take on role identities such as "nurse" or "babysitter." When persons perceive meanings in a situation that invoke a nurturing response, these identities may activate together based on their shared meaning of "nurturing." Persons often adopt identities that share meanings with their other identities and these identities will frequently activate together in situations (Stets 1995; Stets, Aldecoa, Blum, and Winegar, forthcoming; Stets and Carter 2006).

According to identity theorists, when multiple identities activate in a situation, these identities will be ranked based on their level of abstraction (Burke and Stets 2009). Identities that are more abstract, that is, identities with meanings that are less attached to the categories/groups or roles with which persons identify, will be positioned higher in the hierarchy and influence identities with meanings that are more attached to the categories/groups or roles with which persons identify, which are positioned lower in the hierarchy (Burke 2003). Higher-ranking identities will operate like an identity standard for lower-ranking identities to guide the meanings of lower-ranking identities in situations. The influence that higher-ranking identities have over lower-ranking identities fosters the likelihood that higher-ranking identities will be verified in situations. Persons

will help ensure that higher-ranking identities are verified by attempting to align the

meanings of lower-ranking identities with those of higher-ranking identities.

The hierarchical control system in identity theory explains these relationships

among identities that activate together in situations (Burke 2003; Burke and Stets 2009;

Tsushima and Burke 1999). The hierarchical control system models the processes that

undergird the activation and verification of multiple identities in a situation. Figure 3.1

illustrates the hierarchical control system.
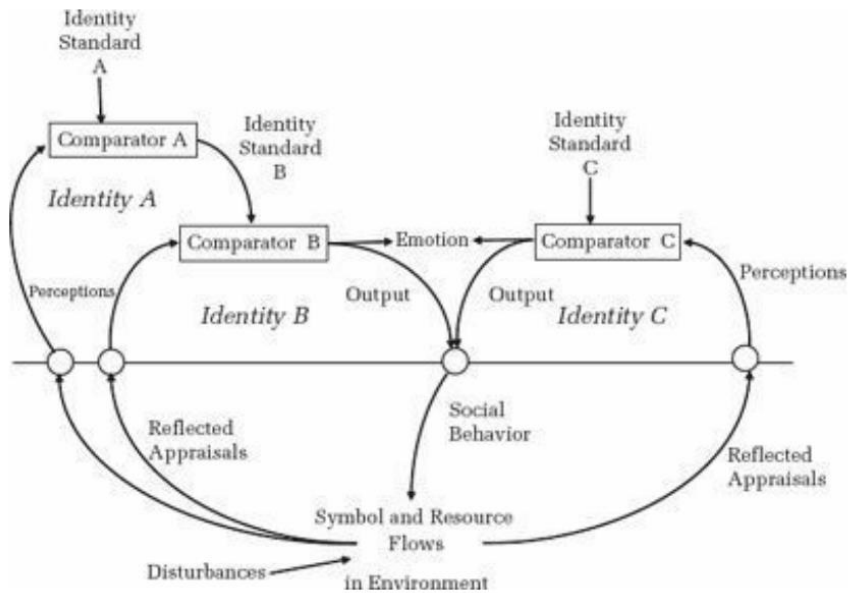
**Figure 3.1:** Hierarchical Control System (Burke and Stets 2009: 134)

The hierarchical control system is a perceptual control system that operates at

multiple levels of perceptual control. Following Figure 3.1, identities B and C exist at the

lowest level of perceptual control. Each identity is its own control system and thus

operates to achieve identity verification in the situation. At the same time, since each

identity is contained within a single person, the outputs of these identities merge to form a single behavioral output. Persons' behaviors in situations control situational meanings to align persons' perceptions of situational meanings with their identity standards.

Identity A represents a higher-ranking identity, often conceptualized as person identities that contain more abstract meanings compared to lower-ranking identities B and C, which are often understood as role and/or categorical/group identities. Recall that person identity meanings define the qualities that distinguish persons from others in society. Person identity meanings are thus attached to individuals rather than situations, and individuals carry these person identity meanings with them across social situations. This means that person identities are activated frequently across social situations. Burke (2003) also argues that given that person identities are frequently activated in situations, persons also are likely to view person identities as highly prominent.

Identities B and C represent lower-ranking identities. Lower-ranking identities are any categorical/group or role identity that activates alongside a person identity in a situation. Categorical/group and role identities contain less-abstract meanings and are more specific to situations. That is, a group identity might activate when persons are in the presence of other members of their social group, or a role identity might activate when persons are enacting a specific role. Categorical/group and role identities activate alongside person identities when persons perceive meanings that correspond to the meanings of each identity (Stets 1995), such as when the moral identity is activated alongside the political identity when persons perceive moral meanings in political situations (Stets et al., forthcoming).

As a higher-ranking person identity, the output of identity A becomes a reference or identity standard for identities B and C and thus guide the meanings of identities B and C when these identities are activated together in situations. For example, a woman's moral identity (identity A) meaning of "caring" might guide the meanings of her mother identity (identity B) and spousal identity (identity C) such that she might perceive herself as a caring mother to her children and a caring spouse to her husband. As the output of identity A works to guide the meanings of identities B and C, the meanings of identities B and C, in turn, guide persons' perceptions so that their perceptions of who they are in the situation match their identity standard meanings.

In Figure 3.1, identities A, B, and C operate at the *principle level* of control in the perceptual control system. Meanings at the principle level of perceptual control consist of abstract goals such as one's values, beliefs, and identities (Burke and Stets 2009). Burke and Stets (2009: 137) argue that principle level goals are "long-range goals" that take time to accomplish or verify, and the accomplishment of principle level goals often requires the accomplishment of program level goals.

The *program level* of perceptual control is just below the principle level. Meanings at the program level are concrete goals that are accomplished in immediate situations. Meanings at the principle level guide meanings at the program level. For example, if in the parent identity (identity B), one embraces the principle level meaning of "responsibility" (identity A), she might attempt to verify it by accomplishing program level meanings, such as reading to her child and instilling in her child good study habits (Tsushima and Burke 1999).

Burke and Stets (2009) posit that the control of perceptions of meanings at the principle level requires control of the patterns of perceptions at the program level. For example, to satisfy program level goals, such as "success," parents might attempt to control their perceptions of meanings in situations as they encourage their children to complete their homework assignments. Some parents may have not developed principle level goals, and thus, their actions in the parent identity may be guided by program level goals. But, parents who have developed principle level goals expect that their program level goals operate to satisfy their principle level goals. Therefore, if parents perceive that encouraging their children to complete their homework has not accomplished the goal of being responsible, then their parent identity is not verified and some adjustment must be made to verify the identity.

Overall, the hierarchical control system in identity theory explains how identities and identity meanings are organized and influence each another in the course of identity verification. Following, I discuss how the hierarchical control system can explain changes that occur in the meanings of identities. Changes to identity meanings may occur in response to changes in situations, conflicts between identities, conflicts between identity and behavioral meanings, and when negotiating meanings in social relationships. Identity change may increase or decrease how well persons control their perceptions of their identities in situations and, thus, identity change has an important role in identity development.

Identity Change

Identity change is any change that occurs in how persons perceive themselves in an identity. Identity change may consist of changes in the semantic meanings that persons use to define their identities, such as when persons who once viewed themselves as "caring" now see themselves as "uncaring." Alternatively, persons may view their identity as less important to who they are and may become less committed to their identity. Similarly, persons may avoid situations that may invoke certain meanings, thereby impacting the salience of that identity (Burke 2003).

Generally speaking, identities are resistant to change. Persons control their perceptions of situations to bring their perceptions of the situation into alignment with how they view themselves in their identities. That is, persons may change how they interpret the meanings of a situation to ensure that their perceptions of situational meanings align with their identity standard meanings. This resistance to change provides stability in identities, and yet, identities still experience changes, over time. Identity change still occurs in situations as persons work to control meanings in situations to verify their identities. Changes in identities are often small and occur slowly and often go unnoticed; only in rare occasions, such as traumatic experiences, do identities change rapidly. As these changes accumulate over time, persons may experience noticeable changes in their identity meanings.

Burke and Stets (2009) discuss three sources of identity change. First, identities might change as a result of events in which the outcomes are irreversible. Burke and Cast (1997) studied how becoming a parent for the first time might impact the meanings of

43

parents' gender identity. The gender identity is a role identity that defines persons along a spectrum from masculine to feminine and the parent identity is a role identity that persons acquire and use to define themselves when they have children. A newborn child can drastically alter the meanings of a situation and these meanings cannot easily be changed. Therefore, first-time parents may experience changes in their identity meanings as they attempt to control their perceptions in this new situation.

Indeed, this is what Burke and Cast (1997) found. Specifically, becoming parents for the first time initiated a gradual shift in the meanings of each parent's gender identity such that men became more masculine and women more feminine. Burke and Cast argued that the birth of a child may accentuate gendered stereotypes of parenthood. For instance, when their child was born, men felt that they must be strong and protective and women felt that they must be caring and nurturing. Therefore, as the meanings of the situation changed, so did the meanings of each parent's gender identity.

Second, identities might change as a result of identity conflict in situations. Identity conflict occur when multiple identities are activated in a situation and these identities contain contradictory meanings, thereby preventing the possibility for identity verification (Burke 2003, 2006). The police officer example described above describes a situation in which the meanings of multiple identities may prevent the possibility of verifying both identities. Persons must overcome identity conflict to achieve identity verification.

One way to overcome identity conflict is for the meanings of each identity to shift closer to each other in the development of a shared identity meaning. Shared meanings among identities ease identity verification by reducing the number of meanings that must be controlled in the situation.

The extent to which identities change depend on their levels of salience and commitment. The meanings of identities with lower levels of identity salience and commitment will experience greater change than identities with higher levels of identity salience and commitment (Burke 2003, 2006; Burke and Stets 2009). Alternatively, if identity conflict prevents identity verification, persons may become less committed to an identity and thus less likely to activate it in situations. In fact, persons may eventually choose to entirely avoid situations that may invoke an identity to avoid the potential for receiving identity non-verifying feedback.

Third, identities might change as a result of a conflict between the meanings of persons' behavior and their identity standard. The meanings of persons behaviors can inform them about their identities (Cast 2003). For example, an elite athlete may interpret taking a day off from training as inconsistent with his athlete identity meaning of "dedication," thereby not verifying his athlete identity. This seemingly innocuous decision may have only a slight impact on his athlete identity – indeed, he may be able to justify his rest and return to practice the next day. However, if he continues to take days off from training and he interprets this behavior as inconsistent with his athlete identity, he must resolve this discrepancy to verify his athlete identity. Over time, he may come to view himself as less dedicated in his athlete identity.

UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Identity development is the process by which identity meanings becomes less inconsistent with one another to ease identity verification within and across situations. Identity meanings become less inconsistent when they are activated frequently in situations. When persons attempt to verify multiple identities or multiple identity meanings tied to one identity in a situation, they are tasked to control their perceptions of the identity meanings to ensure that their identities are verified (Burke 2003). When these identities or identity meanings are activated together frequently in situations, over time, they will begin to merge closer to one another as persons learn how to control their perceptions when they are activated simultaneously. For example, it may take a mother some time to control her perceptions in her mother identity when the meanings of "caring" and "enforcer" are frequently activated together in situations. But the more these meanings are invoked together in situations, the more opportunities the mother will have to control her perceptions of each, which will result in these meanings merging closer together to ensure that her mother identity is verified when they are activated in the same situation.

Identity development is a continuous process that occurs across the lifespan as persons interact in situations in which multiple identities or multiple identity meanings are activated and they must work to verify each. Persons attempt to control their perceptions of meanings to verify their identities in response to feedback they receive from others in situations (Burke 2003, 2006; Burke and Stets 2009). Therefore, persons' motivation to verify their identities in situations is what drives identity development. This

requires that identities are activated in situations to initiate the identity verification processes that drive identity development. Identities that are activated more frequently in situations will have more opportunities to develop than identities that are less frequently activated given their increased time in activation.

Identities develop as persons learn how to control their perceptions in situations to verify their identities. The process of identity development may be influenced by the identity verifying or non-verifying feedback that persons receive in situations. Identity verifying feedback works to maintain identity meanings and signals that they have successfully controlled their perceptions related to the identity. Identity verifying feedback also is known to increase the levels of prominence, salience, and commitment in an identity (Burke 2003).

When persons perceive discrepancies or identity non-verifying feedback in situations that arouses negative emotions, these negative emotions will motivate them to counteract this discrepancy to verify their identities. As persons learn how to control their perceptions related to their identities so that their identities are verified in situations, this identity verifying feedback will serve to maintain their identity meanings and potentially increase how important their identities are to them, how frequently the identities are invoked across situations, and how motivated they are to verify their identities in situations.

Persons may employ behavioral and cognitive adjustments to control their perceptions in that identity when their identity is not verified. Behavioral adjustments are small and temporary changes in one's behavior that attempt to control perceptions of

situational meanings to verify an identity. Cognitive adjustments are adjustments that occur in how persons perceive themselves in a situation. When persons receive identity non-verifying feedback, they will concurrently employ behavioral and cognitive adjustments to achieve identity verification. This means that they will attempt to alter their behavior so that the meanings better match their identity standard meanings while, simultaneously, altering how they view themselves in their identity or identities to better match how others see them. These adjustments work, in tandem, until persons perceive a match between their self-view and how they think others view them in the situation, and these adjustments constitute identity change.

The goal of identity development is that persons learn how to successfully control their perceptions in their identities such that their identities and the multiple meanings that make up their identities are verified. Identity development is never a completed process and continues throughout the course of one's life. But as identity development never ends, persons' ability to control their perceptions in their identities may become easier, over time. For example, persons may choose to interact in situations in which their identities are continuously verified by others, thereby perceiving that they have successfully controlled their perceptions in the identity. Alternatively, they may avoid situations in which their identities are not verified to maximize their likelihood of perceiving identity verifying feedback from others in situations.

As persons learn to control their perceptions in identities such that their identities are verified in situations, they may develop a sense of stability within and across situations. Indeed, the identity processes that undergird identity development explain how

identities are both a source of stability and change to persons. Identity theorists have found that identities are, in fact, quite stable across time (Serpe 1987; Serpe and Stryker 1987). Once persons learn how to control their perceptions in their identities, their identities become quite stable across time and identity control processes will operate to resist change in identities by counteracting perceived discrepancies that arise in situations (Burke and Stets 2009). Persons may be even more resistant to change identity meanings that are more important to who they are or to which they are more committed, given their heightened level of motivation to verify these identities. Similarly, highly salient identities may be more resistant to change, since these identities are more frequently invoked across situations.

While identities develop alongside other identities in the self, when multiple identities are activated together in situations, they are hierarchically ranked based on their levels of abstraction. The hierarchical rank of an identity in a situation determines its influence on other activated identities. The following section uses the hierarchical control system to better explain how the hierarchical rank of identities might impact how identities develop across the lifespan. Identity theorists have only begun to explore how lower-ranking identities might influence higher-ranking identities (Aldecoa 2019). This discussion advances prior theorizing and lays the foundation for a discussion on the three phases of identity development discussed in the following chapters.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER- AND LOWER-RANKING IDENTITIES

Recall that person identities are positioned higher in the hierarchy and operate like an identity standard for categorical/group and role identities that are positioned lower in

the hierarchy (Burke and Stets 2009). Specifically, when activated together in situations, higher-ranking, person identities guide the meanings of lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities. In turn, categorical/group and role identities guide the meanings of persons' behaviors to control meanings in the situation (Burke 2003). Identity theorists posit that person identities influence categorical/group and role identities (Burke 2006; Burke and Stets 2009). The meanings of categorical/group and role identities adjust to match the meanings of person identities, and these changes take place to ensure that person identities are verified in situations.

The influence that identities have in the developmental process is important because it allows identity theorists to predict how identity meanings are likely to shift as they become less inconsistent over time. Accordingly, it is likely that the meanings of categorical/group and role identities will shift more so in the direction of person identity meanings during identity development than the reverse. Person identity meanings also will change, but at a slower rate than categorical/group and role identities. As persons work to control their perceptions in multiple identities, they will adjust their perceptions in categorical/group and role identities to align with their person identity meanings to achieve identity verification.

Persons also may ensure that person identities are verified by adopting categorical/group or role identities that share meanings with person identity meanings or by adjusting the meanings of existing categorical/group and role identities to match the meanings of person identities. For instance, a person may adopt a police officer identity that contains the meaning of "justice" because this identity meaning matches his moral

person identity meaning of "justice" (Stets and Carter 2006). This shared meaning of "justice" in the two identities ensures that when these identities are activated together in situations, their moral identity also is verified.

Adopting lower-ranking identities that share meanings with person identities eases persons' ability to control their perceptions when these identities are activated together in situations, thereby facilitating identity verification. Contrarily, when persons embrace identities that do not share similar meanings, they are more likely to experience identity conflict when these identities are activated together in situations. Identity conflict may motivate persons to control their perceptions to ensure that they perceive a match between their identity meanings and the meanings of the situation. When persons perceive identity non-verifying feedback, several outcomes may occur. As discussed, persons may adjust their identity meanings by resolving the discrepancy and thus integrating the identity meanings, thereby easing their ability to control their perceptions. For example, the mother in the above example needed to resolve the discrepancy between her mother identity meanings of "caring" and "enforcer" to ensure that she perceived identity verifying feedback in the situation in which her children were fighting.

Alternatively, persons may avoid identities or identity meanings in which they are more likely to experience identity non-verifying feedback. By not invoking an identity that may not be verified by others, persons may find it easier to control their perceptions. It is easier to avoid negative appraisals than to experience them and have to devise strategies to counteract them.

Person identities change in similar ways, but at a slower rate than lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities. During the lifespan, persons are likely to embrace identities that contain meanings that conflict with their person identity meanings, and these conflicts must be resolved. As suggested above, one solution is to avoid invoking the identity or to simply abandon the identity altogether. However, this is not always an appropriate solution. There may be identities that persons are unable to exit or abandon, such as a parent role identity. Persons who embrace the parent identity, especially among new parents, may not embrace person identities that share meanings with the parent identity. For example, the parent identity might require of a person to be "responsible" whereas the person has always viewed himself as "irresponsible."

This identity conflict is one that must be resolved, and the new parent may, over time, experience changes in his person identity such that he comes to view himself as a more responsible person. Hence, the person may begin to experience a change in his person identity meaning of "irresponsible" such that it becomes more aligned with the parent identity meaning of "responsible." This shift in his person identity meaning that causes him to view himself as more responsible than he once was, also may cause him to adopt new identities that are associated with the meaning of "responsible," such as a work identity.

Certain identities may have a greater influence on person identities than other identities. Particularly, as this example suggests, identities that are difficult to exit may have a greater influence on changes in person identity meanings, over time, than identities that are easier to exit. When an identity is difficult to exit, persons may need to

learn how resolve discrepancies with other identities, that is, they must learn how to live with the identity, since they will be unable to drop the identity or avoid invoking it in situations. Alternatively, when identities are easier to exit or abandon, persons may choose to resolve a perceived discrepancy with their person identity by simply abandoning the identity altogether. When the identity is abandoned, it will no longer influence the person identity, and therefore, shape the meanings that make up the person identity.

Identity theorists have focused largely on cases during which person identities influence categorical/group and role identities (Burke and Stets 2009; Stets 1995; Stets and Carter 2006). This is what Aldecoa (2019) called the "transformative phase" of identity development. In the transformative phase, person identities influence categorical/group and role identities to ensure that person identities are verified in situations. The influence of person identities on categorical/group and role identities has transformative effects on the self and society. That is, the self experiences changes in terms of the types of identities and identity meanings persons embrace as well as how prominent and salient are identities, and how committed person are to their identities. Society changes as persons work to control the meanings of situations to ensure that person identities are verified. The process of identity verification can have important impacts on persons' social networks, over time (Stets et al., forthcoming).

But categorical/group and role identities also may cause changes to person identity meanings when person identities cannot be verified alongside categorical/group or role identities in situations. Aldecoa (2019) refers to this as the "formative phase" of

53

identity development. The formative phase of identity development takes place as society influences persons' identities through reflected appraisals and their identities interact to influence person identities. The social contexts in which persons activate their identities is important in that it provides persons with feedback for their identities that can influence how persons view themselves in that identity. In turn, this feedback causes changes in identities that influence their development. The formative phase of identity development explains how social influence shapes identities and identity processes as identities develop and their meanings become more consistent, over time.

The following chapters explore these relationships among identities and the situations in which identities are invoked, focusing on how identities interact during identity development and how (or whether) identity meanings become more consistent over time. The next chapter, Chapter 4, focuses on what takes place before identities emerge and begins to develop. Identity theorists have not yet explored what happens when an identity does not yet exist, so many of the claims in the next chapter are exploratory and subject to future empirical research. Chapter 5 discusses the formative phase whereas Chapter 6 focuses on the transformative phase.

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of the hierarchical control system and discusses how the hierarchical control system can explain identity development. The hierarchical control system is a system of interlocking perceptual control systems (identities) that interact to achieve a shared goal (identity verification). Identities interact when they are activated together in situations. When multiple identities are activated

together, persons' behaviors must control situational meanings to verify the meanings of each identity in the situation. The verification process becomes complicated when persons must control their perceptions in multiple identities in the same situation to verify each identity. As multiple identities interact in situations, they may influence each other's development. That is, the interactions that occur among identities in situations will impact how successful persons are in controlling their perceptions in some identities over others. Identities will influence each other's development across the lifespan.

Identity development is the process of change that occurs in identities such that individuals come to view the meanings that are contained in their identities as less inconsistent, and thus, more verifiable. This process occurs throughout the lifespan as persons enter new identities and continue to control their perceptions of identity meanings across situations in which their identities are invoked. Identities are more developed the better are persons able to control rather than not control their perceptions in situations. When persons succeed in controlling their perceptions of meanings in their identities, their identities are verified. When persons fail to control their perceptions of meanings in situations, their identities are not verified and may experience identity change. Identity change occurs slowly may result in the integration of identity meanings, thereby facilitating greater likelihood identity verification in future interactions.

In this chapter, I demonstrated how the hierarchical control system can be used to explain how identities develop and become more consistent over time. The integration of identity meanings occurs as identity meanings shift in response to feedback persons receive while in their identities. The extent to which identity meanings shift is predicted

by the hierarchical rank of the identity during an interaction. Lower-ranking identities will experience a greater shift toward higher-ranking identities than will higher-ranking identities toward lower-ranking identities. These adjustments in identity meanings constitute identity change; persons' ability to control their perceptions in these identities or identity meanings indicates how developed are their identities.

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CHAPTER 4: THE PRE-FORMATIVE PHASE

What are the sources of identities? Where do persons learn the meanings that make up their identity standards and how are these meanings internalized? The pre-formative phase of identity development is the period during which an identity does not yet exist in the self but, rather, identities beginning to emerge. It is during the pre-formative phase that persons become exposed to situations that contain meanings with which they can identify, such as when a young child learns how to be a student for the first time or a new mother learns the meanings of motherhood. As persons encounter new situations and learn the meanings of these situations, they will begin to internalize these meanings to define who they are in these situations. The internalization of meanings will then motivate persons to control their perceptions in their identities to ensure that how they see themselves in their identities – that is, their identity standard meanings – are consistent with how they think others see them. That is, once persons internalize meanings to define their identities, these identity meanings, when activated in situations, will activate the identity verification processes that drive identity development.

The pre-formative phase of identity development is the least developed phase in identity theory. There is scant research in identity theory on how persons adopt or create new identities. Burke and Stets (2009) have proposed that there are three mechanisms involved in the creation of an identity. First, persons learn meanings from the cultures in which they develop. By observing and imitating others and experiencing the rewards and punishments associated with certain behaviors, over time, persons will internalize meanings into their own identity. Second, persons are directly socialized by parents,

teachers, friends, employers, and so forth. For instance, newly hired employees might be required to attend orientation and job training to learn the meanings and expectations of the worker role with which they will soon come to identify. Third, persons embrace identities by interpreting the evaluations of others and then reflecting upon how they think others view them during interaction (Cooley 1902).

In this chapter, I further develop the above three mechanisms that are involved in the creation of an identity in the pre-formative phase of identity development by discussing how different bases of identity, such as categorical/group, role, and person identities, as well as different types of identities, such as normative or counter-normative, stigmatized, and obligatory or voluntary identities, might emerge in the self. Different bases of identities might emerge at different points in time during identity development such that the emergence of one identity may be contingent on the emergence of another identity. Also, different types of identities might rely on different sources as they emerge in the self, which, in turn, may impact persons' ability to control their perceptions in their identities in other phases of identity development, such as the formative and transformative phases.

This chapter does not address the emergence of identities from an ontogenetic perspective, that is, from birth to the emerge of an identity in a child's sense of self. Research and theorizing on the development of selfhood in the early years of a child's life is already well-established in the psychological literature (Rochat 2009). Rather, I focus on a more general theoretical approach to the emergence of identities that is applicable to the emergence of any identity in the self regardless of a person's age and

cognitive or behavioral abilities. That is, I discuss each mechanism that may underlie the emergence of an identity as a general mechanism that undergirds the emergence of all identities. While some persons, such as children or the elderly, may lack certain cognitive or motor skills that inhibit identity development in the early years of life, these mechanisms will still be at play in some capacity. I do not discuss these differences in this chapter. Given the lack of research in this phase of identity development, the arguments made in this chapter are speculative and should be tested in future empirical studies.

SOCIAL LEARNING

One way in which persons learn the meanings that they use to define who they are in their identities is through social learning (Bandura 1977). Meanings are learned as persons interact with others in situations. In fact, Burke and Stets (2009) argue that the first source of identity standards is the general culture in which persons are born and raised. The situations in which persons interact take place within a larger cultural context that contains meanings and expectations about the roles, groups, and categories with which persons identify. Persons learn about who they are by internalizing these cultural meanings. From an early age, children may begin to learn meanings from their parents, television shows, books, and movies, and sometime later, the internet.

Children might begin to engage in role-playing, such as when young girls pretend that they are the mothers to their toy dolls. As children role-play, they are practicing or rehearsing new identities and learning how to control meanings as if they were someone who embraced that identity. Burke and Stets (2009) refer to role-playing as *anticipatory*

socialization, which entails adopting and learning meanings of identities with which one does not identify (see also, Merton 1957). Anticipatory socialization occurs as any person, regardless of age, learns an identity or the meanings of an identity and how to control their perceptions while in it, which can facilitate better understanding of the meanings of others' identities and behaviors.

Bandura (1977) discussed how persons learn meanings and expectations in situations as they begin to observe and imitate those with whom they interact (see also, Mead 1934). Bandura referred to individuals who persons observe as "models" to indicate how these individuals influence how persons come to behave and identify. Persons imitate models, which is known as *modeling*, to learn about their social environments; that is, the meanings and expectations that exist in the social environment. Some research has shown that persons imitate others' behaviors rather readily in social environments, even when they do not fully understand the meanings that guide others' behaviors (Whiten, Allan, Devlin, Kseib, Raw, McGuigan 2016). This readiness to imitate or mimic others' behaviors is a way by which persons learn new meanings, and, this research suggests, persons seem to be primed to learn new meanings in their social environments.

Also, people are more likely to imitate others with whom they perceive to share similarities, such as similar meanings or identities (Rosekrans 1967; Bandura 1977). By observing and imitating others who embrace similar identities, persons can better model what others do in that identity to better understand the meanings and expectations of the identity. Learning new identities is a trial-and-error process as persons explore potential

identity meanings and learn how to control their perceptions of these meanings. Burke

and Stets (2009) argue that persons often explore different aspects of identities, which

allows them to learn what to do and what not to do in that identity. These lessons are

learned as persons perceive positive or negative evaluations from others in situations.

Persons may perceive positive evaluations, such as praise, as a motivation to maintain

certain identity meanings whereas the perception of negative evaluations, such as

punishment, could motivate persons to adjust their perceptions of who they are in the

situation, as they learn about their identity in the situation. Persons also may observe the

evaluations that others receive while in an identity and use this information to learn from

the feedback that others receive, such as when persons learn from others' mistakes.

DIRECT SOCIALIZATION

Persons also may learn meanings and expectations for identities through direct

socialization (Burke and Stets 2009). *Direct socialization* is the process of learning

meanings and expectations through deliberative instruction from others. Direct

socialization occurs within schools and workplaces and among families and friends.

Direct socialization may be formal or informal. Formal types of direct socialization occur

in a more systematic, institutionalized, or organized manner. The most prevalent example

of formal direct socialization might be the education system, which facilitates directed

instruction to students. Places of employment also might implement direct socialization

practices in the form of formal training sessions for employees. These training sessions

serve to educate prospective employees of the meanings and expectations of the worker role, thereby orienting the worker identity standard before workers even begin their first day on the job.

Informal direct socialization is less systematic or institutionalized and occurs more so during everyday interactions with others. For example, parents may instill in their children religious teachings before their children ever identify as religious persons. Religious teachings may facilitate certain meanings and expectations that their parents want their children to learn as they come to embrace a religious identity. Similarly, parents may teach their children gendered meanings and expectations, such as gender stereotypes, that later inform their children's gender identity (Halim and Ruble 2010). Friends and peers also are involved in direct socialization, especially during adolescence, when children often are given and seek out more independence from their parents. Friends and peers may use direct socialization to teach persons new identities, such as a drug user identity or a guitarist identity, by directly teaching them how the meanings and expectations in each identity.

Formal and informal direct socialization occurs through deliberative instruction that is intended to teach persons new identities and identity meanings as well as how to control their perceptions in these identities. Direct socialization promotes conformity among individuals who interact in situations by encouraging persons to perceive meanings that are already established in situations, such as when new employees must learn the meanings and expectations of their new workplace. Persons who facilitate direct socialization often reinforce those whom they are instructing with positive evaluations

when they are successfully socialized and negative evaluations when they are not successfully socialized, whereas successful socialization is marked by one's ability to control their perceptions in the identity in ways that are consistent with the meanings and expectations that were taught.

REFLECTED APPRAISALS

Recall that *reflected appraisals* refer to how persons think others evaluate them in a situation. Persons reflect upon how others evaluate them in an identity to inform their own perceptions of themselves in the identity, that is, how persons think others view them in an identity teaches them about who they are in that identity (Cooley 1902). Identity theorists typically discuss how reflected appraisals inform persons of those identities that they already have. However, reflected appraisals also exist in the period prior to the emergence of an identity in a person's sense of self. As soon as persons enter situations in which they may come to embrace an identity, they reflect upon how they think others are evaluating them in the situation, and these reflected appraisals can inform their future identity in the situation.

For example, a person who begins a new job may rely on how he thinks others view him in his new work identity to define how he sees himself in that identity. If he perceives that his coworkers are negatively evaluating him at work, for example, if he perceives that his coworkers view him as lazy, as his work identity emerges, he may come to view himself in his work identity as someone who is a lazy worker. Similarly, someone who enters a new social group and perceives that members of the group evaluate him positively while in the group may come to view his new group identity

more positively compared to someone who is negatively evaluated by other group members. Positive evaluations by others in the group may facilitate one's willingness to identify with the group, whereas negative evaluations by others in the group might motivate a person to avoid identifying with the group to avoid these negative evaluations.

In this sense, the evaluations or reflected appraisals that persons receive in situations may predict whether the person embraces an identity and, if so, how they come to perceive themselves in the identity. As mentioned persons who are negatively evaluated in a situation may avoid embracing an identity in that situation so that they may avoid negative appraisals from others. If avoiding the identity is difficult, such as when the identity is a racial or gender identity, the person may develop strategies to counteract negative evaluations once the identity emerges, or perhaps, embrace these negative evaluations to define themselves in the identity. Alternatively, positive evaluations may facilitate the emergence of an identity as persons perceive that they have succeeded in controlling their perceptions of meanings in the situation. Also, persons may be more likely to define themselves using meanings that they perceive to have succeeded in controlling as these meanings will serve as a source for future identity verification.

THE SOURCES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF IDENTITIES

The remainder of this chapter explores the differences among identities with respect to how different identities emerge in the pre-formative phase of identity development. Identities may rely on different sources as they emerge in the pre-formative phase of identity development.

Also, there may exist variations among the different bases of identities in terms of how and when they might emerge. Different bases of identities may emerge by way of different sources, and the emergence of some bases of identities may precede the emergence of others. For the remainder of this chapter, I explore these possibilities and posit how different identities might emerge in the pre-formative phase. First, I discuss how different categorical/group and role identities might emerge, focusing on normative and counter-normative identities, stigmatized identities, and voluntary and obligatory identities. Then, I discuss the sources of person identities as well as how person identities might emerge as a consequence of the development of categorical/group and role identities.

Normative and Counter-Normative Identities

In identity theory, *normative identities* are identities that persons embrace that follow mainstream cultural meanings and expectations and are generally viewed by others as socially desirable. For example, given that the United States is a majority religious country with roughly three-fourths of the country who identify as religious (Pew Research 2015), it can be argued that, in the United States, it is normative to embrace a religious identity. Similarly, the majority of children in the United States still live in dual-parent households (69%), which suggests that it is still normative to view the family identity as representative of a dual-parent household even though, as some suggest (Pew Research 2014), what it means to be a family has begun to change in recent years.

Alternatively, *counter-normative identities* are identities that contradict societal prescripts and are often viewed by others as socially undesirable. For example, since

67

atheists make up only a little over 3% of the American population (Pew Research 2015), persons who identify as atheists are considered to hold a counter-normative identity. Similarly, a vast majority of parents in the United States who live together with their children are married (65%) as opposed to unmarried (7%), which suggests that to identify as an unmarried parent is counter-normative, despite a growing trend of unmarried parents.

This distinction between normative and counter-normative identities in identity theory neglects how individuals perceive their own identities. How persons view their identities as normative or counter-normative is largely subject to the individual's own interpretation of their identity and less reflective of larger demographic trends (Marcussen, Gallagher, and Ritter 2018). For example, children who are raised by cohabiting parents may view it as entirely normal for parents to be unmarried, since this is the situation in which they were socialized. Similarly, children who were raised in non-religious households may find it perfectly normal to identify as non-religious, since this identity may be all that they have ever known.

Children may not yet embrace alternative identities that can resist an atheist identity; they may not have a prior religious identity that can resist the meanings of an atheist identity. Often, children of unmarried parents are only raised in one family and, thus, do not possess any reference upon which to compare their identity with another family identity. This often does not occur until children begin to interact with their peers who have a different family arrangement. Young children may, therefore, perceive normative and counter-normative identities as normative since they do not possess a point

of reference with which to compare their identities. Persons may view their identities as normative if they have no basis with which to compare it. That is, any identity may be considered normative until persons become aware that it is counter-normative through their interactions with others.

Young children may develop normative and counter-normative identities in the same way. These identities may emerge as children observe, imitate, and model others' behaviors in their social environment and begin to learn the meanings of these behaviors. Young children also may learn meanings through direct socialization, such as when their parents teach them what it means to be religious or non-religious. As these meanings are internalized and begin to motivate future actions, children will reflect upon others' evaluations of their identities and they will define their identities with respect to these evaluations. Counter-normative identities likely emerge as persons reflect upon the evaluations that they receive from others in an identity and come to realize that the identity is not normative. When persons realize that their identity is counter-normative, the counter-normative identity may begin to operate in different ways than normative identities.

For example, persons who may not realize that their identity is counter-normative may continue to invoke the identity in situations and the identity will operate like any other identity. However, by invoking the identity in situations, the person may perceive that others evaluate him negatively in that identity and, thus, he is unable to verify it among others. From these negative evaluations, persons may come to realize that their identity is not "normal," which could lead to changes in the identity. For instance, the

identity may become less salient over time, as persons choose to invoke it less in situations to avoid the potential for receiving negative evaluations in the identity (Long, Yarrison, and Rowland 2015; Yarrison 2013). In turn, a decrease in the salience of the identity also may reduce the person's sense of authenticity, as he feels unable to invoke the identity and verify it in situations.

Also, there are certain identities that may be adopted due to the absence of certain meanings during one's development. For example, a person may have never considered the possibility of identifying as religious because religious meanings were not present during his early childhood socialization (Merino 2012). However, while religious meanings were not present, non-religious meanings were not salient either. That is, this person simply may have not considered religiosity or non-religiosity as a salient part of his self. Only while interacting with others may he begin to identify as "non-religious" and embrace the meanings of this counter-normative identity. For example, his peers may negatively evaluate him for not believing in God, or for not celebrating religious holidays that they ritualistically celebrate. Hence, his counter-normative, non-religious identity emerges as a result of reflecting upon the negative evaluations of others who embrace a more normative, religious identity.

To understand how normative and counter-normative identities emerge in the self, it is essential to know how persons perceive themselves in the identity. Persons may embrace a counter-normative identity but not view the identity as counter-normative, and therefore, the identity may continue to operate like a normative identity. Counter-normative identities will emerge and begin to operate like a counter-normative identity

when persons view the identity as counter-normative, which will likely occur as persons begin to interact with and receive negative evaluations from others who embrace a normative identity. Therefore, to understand how counter-normative identities emerge in the pre-formative phase of identity development, identity theorists might want to focus on how reflected appraisals, or how persons think others view them in an identity, influence how persons come to view their identities as normative or counter-normative.

Stigmatized Identities

Stigmatized identities are counter-normative identities that contain meanings associated with the negative stereotypes of a social category, group, or role persons occupy (Ascencio and Burke 2011; Marcussen and Ascencio 2016; Marcussen, Gallagher, and Ritter 2018). Persons have internalized the negative evaluations of others such that they define themselves negatively in their counter-normative identities. For example, persons may view themselves as "bad" while in the criminal identity because others evaluate their criminal identity as bad and they have internalized this identity meaning. Similarly, parents may view themselves more negatively when they become jobless or homeless because they can no longer provide for their children, which is an important meaning of being a parent.

Stigmatized identities are different from counter-normative identities in that persons who embrace a stigmatized identity have internalized the negative evaluations that they receive from others to define themselves in the identity (Long 2016). That is, persons who embrace a stigmatized identity will view themselves negatively in the identity whereas persons who embrace a counter-normative identity still may view

71

themselves positively despite the negative evaluations they receive from others during interaction. Therefore, to understand how stigmatized identities might emerge, it is necessary to understand why persons who come to embrace a stigmatized identity might internalize others' negative evaluations rather than try to counteract them so that they may see themselves in a more positive light. There are several ways in which stigmatized identities might emerge.

Stigmatized identities might emerge through social learning as persons learn cultural meanings of good-bad or right-wrong. Persons may learn from the cultural meanings conveyed in media sources that certain people are more negatively portrayed than others, such as when African Americans are portrayed negatively on television (Oliver 2003). African Americans may learn from these cultural meanings that are conveyed on television that their own identity is "bad," or at least "not as good" as other identities, such as a "White" identity. These meanings that are learned from the media might become internalized into their own identity, such that they embrace their own stigma and come to view themselves as lesser than other racial identities.

Similarly, Wilder and Cain (2011) discuss how although African American families overtly teach their children how to cope with negative racial stereotypes of African Americans that they may experience outside the home, these teachings may be challenged when they enter situations outside the home. Some persons detailed how their parents' teachings were negated by how they thought other children viewed them at school, and that they would adopt these perceptions of themselves to define their own

identity. For example, one person discussed how she internalized the perception that her lighter skin was "prettier" than her peers' darker skin.

Wilder and Cain (2011) also indicate that African American families might serve to reinforce negative racial stereotypes through direct socialization. In their study, persons detailed their experiences of parents or other relatives who taught them that black skin is unattractive. One person stated that "it was like there was one word 'blackandugly'" (p. 585). Another person recollected her mother trying to persuade her to use products that would lighten her skin. Her mother, who is light-skinned, wanted her daughter to be light-skinned, as well, so that her daughter would not face negative evaluations for being dark-skinned. These lessons that family teaches one another can reinforce negative racial stereotypes that become internalized into a person's racial identity. These each indicate that they came to view their dark skin more negatively, recognizing from their family's teachings that dark skin is "bad" or "ugly" compared to light skin.

Also important for understanding how stigmatized identities might emerge is how persons might resist negative evaluations from others. Persons may react differently to negative evaluations or stigma (Thoits 2011), and this may explain the difference between how counter-normative and stigmatized identities emerge from negative evaluations from others. Thoits (2011) posits that persons may simply accept negative evaluations and define themselves in this way, that is, persons embrace the stigmatized identity. But, persons also may deflect or challenge these negative evaluations to maintain a more positive self-view.

Deflecting negative evaluations refers to certain strategies that persons may employ so that they may perceive themselves in a more positive light. Persons may deflect when they recognize that negative evaluations of their identity exist, but disagree that these evaluations can be appropriately applied to their own identity. *Challenging* negative evaluations entails behaving in ways that counteract negative evaluations so that persons may verify their identity standard in situations. Persons may challenge negative evaluations from others, for example, by not acting in ways consistent with negative stereotypes of their identity. Therefore, the extent to which persons employ these strategies to counteract negative evaluations in situations will determine the extent to which a stigmatized identity will emerge in a person's sense of self.

Obligatory and Voluntary Identities

Persons often view their identities as either obligatory or voluntary. *Obligatory identities* are identities that persons embrace that they perceive to be difficult to exit or abandon, either due to social constraints or their emotional attachment to others in an identity. *Voluntary identities* are identities that persons willfully embrace, regardless of whether they are difficult to exit (Burke and Stets 2009; Gallagher 2016; Thoits 2003). Persons may view obligatory identities as voluntary if they feel as if invoking the identity is their own choice and not forced upon them by some external source, such as social constraints. Thus, to understand how obligatory and voluntary identities emerge, it is necessary to focus on how persons perceive their identities as either obligatory or voluntary, since how persons view themselves in an identity will determine how the identity operates when invoked in situations.

Burke and Stets (2009) posit that obligatory identities are important in society because they provide a sense of continuity and commitment to others, which in turn, provides stability to the social structure. For example, a family identity is an identity that is difficult to exit given the biological ties that persons have with other members of their family. The family unit is often considered the foundation of society and the primary source of the socialization of children. Commitment to the family identity might entail strong attachment family members, such as to one's parents or siblings. Research has shown that strong familial attachments not only benefits individuals in terms of healthier life outcomes, such as psychological and physical wellbeing, but also in terms of fostering stronger and healthier relationships later in life, which can facilitate more stable social ties (Gilligan, Suitor, Nam, Routh, Rurka, and Con 2017).

Identities likely do not become voluntary or obligatory, however, until persons embrace an identity to which they can apply these perceptions. That is, identities become voluntary or obligatory after they have already emerged and persons can apply meanings to these identities that define them as obligatory or voluntary. For a brother to view his brother identity as obligatory, he must already embrace the brother identity so that he may apply meanings to it that define it as obligatory. For example, for a brother to view the brother identity as obligatory, that is, he views the brother identity as an identity that he cannot easily exit, he must already embrace the brother identity. The brother identity may only be seen as obligatory when the brother wants to exit the identity but realizes that it cannot be done. For example, when siblings fight and say things like "I hate you" or "I wish you weren't my sister/brother," they are attempting to exit their brother or

sister identity by disavowing their relationship with their sibling. Upon realizing that this attempted exit from their identity is unsuccessful, they may realize that their brother or sister identity is obligatory – they cannot exit it easily. That is, obligatory identities emerge once persons realize that they cannot easily exit the identity and they will not emerge otherwise.

I suggest that persons will not view an identity as obligatory, that is, an obligatory identity will not emerge until persons become aware of the difficulty to exit the identity. This is likely to occur when identity non-verification motivates persons to attempt to exit the identity. When persons attempt to exit an identity, or even invoke the identity less in situations, to avoid identity non-verification, they may come to realize that the identity is obligatory. For example, the child in the above example who does not want to be his sister's brother anymore might soon realize that exiting his brother identity is difficult, if not impossible. His parents may not let him exit the identity, or his emotional attachment to his sister may motivate him to reconsider exiting the identity. As he realizes his obligation to his brother identity, he will likely come to view the brother identity as an obligatory identity.

Therefore, an obligatory identity will emerge as persons explore the identity and possibility to exit the identity in situations, and persons are more likely to explore the possibility to exit the identity when the identity is not verified in situations. Persons may be less motivated to exit an identity that is frequently verified in situations because they will want to continue to receive identity verifying feedback from others, since identity verification makes them feel good about themselves in that identity. As persons come to

view an identity as obligatory, such as when a brother realizes that his brother identity is obligatory, subsequent identity verification may provide more intense positive emotions than the verification of voluntary identities, since obligatory identities are considered more important in society (Burke and Stets 2009).

Person Identities

Person identities define the unique qualities that distinguish persons from one another (Burke and Stets 2009). Whereas categorical/group and role identities emerge as persons interact with others in social categories, groups, or roles, person identities are considered to be not attached to the categories, groups, and roles that persons occupy and, therefore, do not emerge in the same way. Rather, I suggest, person identities might emerge as a byproduct of the emergence of categorical/group and role identities. That is, persons may initially develop categorical/group and role identities, and these identities will, in turn, inform persons of their own unique characteristics and qualities. For example, while interacting in a boy identity, a child may come to view himself as "aggressive" and "tough," and these meanings may begin to inform his person identity meanings of "aggressive" and "tough." Similarly, persons who do well in their student identity may come to see themselves as an "intellectual," and they may begin to invoke this identity meaning like a person identity across social situations.

Burke and Stets (2015) refer to person identities as "bio-social" identities, which suggests that person identities may reflect certain biological proclivities that persons are born with. For example, a child's pre-natal exposure to the hormone, androgen (or testosterone), is known to increase certain masculine behaviors in males, such as a

proclivity for aggression and risk-taking (Udry 2000). Hence, the meanings of "aggressive" and "risk-taker" that often accompany a person's masculine identity might be seen as a reflection of certain biological tendencies that are associated with being male rather than female just as much as they are a reflection of the cultural meanings that distinguish masculinity from femininity.

The biological component of person identities is important to note because it implies that certain proclivities may be present prior to the emergence of an identity. As persons interact in their categorical/group and role identities, they may reflect upon how they differ in relation to others in the same positions, and these differences are informed by their biology. For example, when pre-natal male children are exposed to lower than normal levels of androgen, they may come to demonstrate more feminine behaviors. Similarly, when female children are exposed to higher than normal levels of androgen, they are more likely to behave more masculine. When children who are exposed to abnormal levels of androgen interact with other children, they may come to identify differences between how they act in their gender role identity compared to how others act in the same identity. Perhaps a male child realizes that he is less aggressive than other boys on the playground, and instead, he views himself as more "passive" or "diffident." This identity meaning can then inform who he is across situations.

Alternately, a female who is exposed to higher than normal levels of androgen may realize that she is more aggressive and assertive than other girls on the playground. As she comes to view herself as an "aggressive" and "assertive" person, she may be more inclined to adopt leadership identities, such as team captain in a sport or class president.

Indeed, research has shown that women who occupy dominant leadership positions tend to have higher levels of testosterone than those who do not (van Anders et al. 2015). Similarly, females who have higher levels of testosterone are more likely to engage in risky and violent criminal behaviors, which are often seen as largely perpetrated by males (Assari, Caldwell, and Zimmerman 2014).

Person identities likely emerge through social comparison, as persons compare their own qualities with those of others with whom they interact.[2] Persons may learn about who they are as a unique person by distinguishing who they are with how they see others in the same or similar identities. In the above example, the boys and girls compared their gender identity meanings with how they interpret others' gender identities, and their identity meanings that differ from those of their peers become unique qualities that define their person identity. This same process occurs in each identity that persons embrace. That is, as persons work to control their perceptions in their categorical/group and role identities to ensure that their identities are verified, they also learn about their own unique qualities and draw patterns across identities of their unique qualities. These patterns become their person identities and inform persons of who they are as distinct from others within and across social situations.

Therefore, person identities emerge as persons learn how to control their perceptions of identity meanings that distinguish them from others in their

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[2] Some scholars have argued persons categorize themselves into social groups based on social comparisons (Hogg 2000). That is, by comparing oneself with others, persons perceive similarities with others and come to identify with others. I suggest here that the opposite is equally true. Just as persons perceive similarities with others that allow them to form categorical/group identities, they also may perceive dissimilarities that make up their unique qualities, or person identities.

categorical/group and role identities. Only once persons embrace a person identity will their person identity operate to control their perceptions in categorical/group and role identities. Before this, persons are likely to embrace identities in specific situations, and as they learn how to control their perceptions in these identities, they will discover patterns across their identities that define their unique qualities. These unique qualities become their person identities, and they will become motivated to control their perceptions in these person identities across situations.

CONCLUSION

In identity theory, still little is known about what occurs prior to the emergence of an identity in the self. Burke and Stets (2009) have argued that identities emerge by way of social learning, direct socialization, and reflected appraisals. In this chapter, I have explored how there might be differences across identities with respect to how they emerge. In doing so, I distinguish between different types of categorical/group and role identities, focusing on distinctions that may arise between normative and counter-normative identities, stigmatized identities, and obligatory and voluntary identities. Accordingly, persons may only realize that their identity is counter-normative when they reflect upon the negative evaluations of others in the identity. Persons may view any identity as normative if they are not made aware of the fact that their identity is counter-normative. Thus, the evaluations that persons receive in an identity during interaction have a significant role in the emergence of a counter-normative identity.

Persons who embrace a counter-normative or stigmatized identity will experience social stigma, or negative evaluations from others. However, a stigmatized identity will

likely emerge when person are unable, or unwilling, to counteract these negative evaluations. When persons do not counteract the negative evaluations that they receive while in an identity, they are more likely to internalize these negative evaluations such that they come to view themselves in the same way. Persons who are better able to counteract negative evaluations from others will be less likely to internalize these negative evaluations, and therefore, they will maintain a more positive self-view despite the stigma they receive from others while in the identity.

Obligatory identities emerge as person explore the possibility to exit the identity, and this will occur when persons are not verified in the identity. When persons are not verified in an identity, they may avoid invoking the identity in situations to avoid further receiving identity non-verification. Upon realizing that the identity is difficult to exit, they will come to view the identity as obligatory. I also argue that person identities might emerge in the self as persons compare themselves in their categorical/group and role identities with others and identify those qualities that distinguish themselves from others. These qualities come to define their person identities within and across situations. The following chapter on the formative phase of identity development discusses the developmental processes that occur when identities already exist in the self.

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CHAPTER 5: THE FORMATIVE PHASE

Recall from Chapter 3 that identity development is the process of reducing the amount of inconsistencies that exist among identity meanings within and across identities that persons embrace. Identity theorists have recently discussed these inconsistencies between identity meanings as how "dispersed" are identity meanings (Burke, forthcoming; Cantwell 2016). Identity dispersion is to the amount of inconsistencies that exist across the set of meanings that are contained within and across identities that persons embrace. The more identity meanings are dispersed in an identity, the more persons perceive discrepancies between their identity meanings (Burke, forthcoming). In this dissertation, I have proposed that identity dispersion will decrease the more developed are identities. The less identities are dispersed, the less persons will perceive discrepancies in their identity meanings and the more they will experience identity verification.

This chapter explores the process of identity development that occurs when lower-ranking categorical/group and role identities influence higher-ranking, person identities and its effects on the development of person identities. Lower-ranking identities influence higher-ranking identities during the formative phase of identity development. During the formative phase of identity development, person identity meanings are shaped through their interactions with lower-ranking identities. Specifically, the formative phase of identity development explains the developmental processes during which person identity meanings shift in the direction of lower-ranking identities less inconsistencies or discrepancies between their lower-ranking and higher-ranking identities.

I discuss how lower-ranking identities might influence person identities during the formative phase by focusing on the different bases and types of identities. The impact that lower-ranking identities have on person identities in the formative phase may vary with respect to the different bases and types of identities involved in the interaction. For instance, I suggest that categorical/group identities might influence the meanings in person identities to promote a greater sense of self-worth or belonging while persons are in their social groups or categories. Person's desire to enhance their self-worth or sense of belonging, since group membership can lead to depersonalization, or the process by which persons begin to identify as a member of a social group rather than as a unique person (Hogg 2006). On the other hand, role identities might influence changes in person identities to ensure that persons may feel more competent in their role identities.

I also discuss how various types of categorical/group and role identities, i.e. normative and counter-normative identities, stigmatized identities, and obligatory and voluntary identities, might possess unique features that can have different effects on the development of person identities. For instance, I suggest below that counter-normative identities may influence how authentic persons think they are in their counter-normative identity. Given that counter-normative identities are embraced when they align with person identity meanings, persons who feel as if they can invoke their counter-normative identity frequently will feel more authentic than persons who do not frequently invoke their identity to avoid negative evaluations from others. Feelings of inauthenticity that result from not being able to invoke counter-normative identities may lead to changes in person identity meanings.

Similarly, stigmatized identities might have unique qualities from non-stigmatized identities that impact person identities differently during identity development. In particular, when persons cannot find opportunities to verify their stigmatized identity, the meanings that they use to define themselves in these identities may negatively impact their person identity meanings. I develop these ideas further in this chapter by exemplifying how the meanings that persons use to define their stigmatized identities may impact such identities as the moral and masculine person identities. Lastly, I suggest that obligatory identities may have a greater long-term impact on person identity meanings than voluntary identities whereas voluntary identities may have greater short-term impacts.

This chapter is organized in the following way. First, I discuss the developmental processes that occur during the formative phase whereby lower-ranking identities influence person identity meanings so that persons may experience a reduction in the amount of dispersion in their person identity meanings and between their person identity and lower-ranking identity meanings. This is followed by a discussion on how the different bases and types of lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities influence the development of person identity. Categorical/group and role identities not only influence the types of meanings that come to make up person identities, but also how dispersed are these meanings with other identities that persons embrace. Finally, I discuss how different types of categorical/group and role identities, such as normative and counter-normative identities, stigmatized identities, and obligatory and voluntary identities, influence the development of person identities.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE FORMATIVE PHASE

Burke (forthcoming) has recently suggested that inconsistencies that exist among persons' identity meanings, what he calls "identity dispersion," may increase the likelihood that persons perceive discrepancies among their identities or identity meanings. The more dispersed or inconsistent are the meanings in the identities that persons embrace, the more likely are they to feel uncertain about who they are in the identity. At the same time, these inconsistencies may mediate the negative impact that identity non-verification has on individuals when they are not verified in an identity. That is, the non-verifying feedback that persons' might receive for one identity meaning could be verifying for another meaning in that identity. Hence, these inconsistencies may allow persons to partially verify their identities in situations and thus reduce the negative impacts (e.g. negative emotions) of identity non-verification. Overall, Burke argues that inconsistencies that exist among identity meanings may increase feelings of uncertainty in an identity while also reducing the intensity to which persons experience negative emotions due to non-verifying feedback in an identity.

The concept of identity dispersion is relatively new in identity theory (Cantwell 2016), and can be advanced from a developmental perspective. That is, during identity development, persons will work to reduce the amount of inconsistencies, i.e. the amount of identity dispersion, that exist among their identity meanings so that they may perceive less discrepancies or identity non-verification. As persons develop their identities, their identity meanings will become more consistent (less dispersed) and they will develop a more coherent understanding of who they are while in their identities. The process of

identity development thus works to reduces the amount of dispersion within and across identities so that persons may more consistently verify their identities and develop a more coherent understanding of who they are.

Central to the process of identity development are the changes that occur in identity meanings. To better understand how these meanings change, a deeper understanding of identity meanings is needed. In Chapter 2, I discussed how identity meanings are mediational responses to stimuli (Burke and Stets 2009). The stimuli may be the self, others individuals, or the situation itself. The response is one's behavior and meanings mediate between the stimuli and the behavioral response. Meanings also define who persons are in their identities and these identity meanings act as a stimulus for future actions, such as when an "aggressive" person reacts aggressively in situations that call forth this identity meaning. Meanings define who persons are while in their identities and motivate persons to control their perceptions of who they are while in their identities.

In prior research, identity theorists have followed Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum's (1957) measurement of identity meanings by using a semantic differential scale (Burke and Stets 2009; Reitzes and Burke 1980). Using semantic differentials, identity meanings are measured as opposing or bipolar adjectives, and persons choose the adjective that most closely reflects how they see themselves in a specific identity. For example, in Stets and Carter's (2012) study on the moral identity, the researchers examined 12 bipolar characteristics such as honest/dishonest, caring/uncaring, and friendly/unfriendly. These opposing characteristics of an identity are placed on opposing ends of a scale that ranges from 1-5, where a value of "1" implies that persons identify

more with one characteristic, a value of "5" reflects their identification with the other, and a "3" suggests that persons are somewhere in-between these two characteristics.

How persons initially identify along this measurement scale may change during the identity verification process, and this change in their identity meanings is central to identity development. Burke (2006) has argued that identities will change when persons perceive discrepancies that lead to identity non-verification, and identities will change to facilitate identity verification. Identities may change when persons perceive that their identity standard meanings are discrepant with the meanings they perceive in others' appraisals. Alternatively, identities may change when their meanings are discrepant with the meanings in another identity that activates alongside it in situations. That is, a person who initially identifies as a "4" in fairness, may either increase or decrease this perception of their level of fairness if they receive identity non-verifying feedback from others in a situation or if their identity meaning is discrepant with the perceived meanings in a situation.

The process of identity development thus begins when persons perceive discrepancies between their identity meanings. Perceived discrepancies signal to persons that one or multiple identities or identity meanings have not been verified, and they will need to counteract this identity non-verifying feedback. Since persons will perceive more discrepancies among identity meanings that are more rather than less dispersed or inconsistent (Burke, forthcoming), during identity development, persons may be motivated to reduce the amount of dispersion or inconsistencies in their identity meanings so that they may perceive less discrepancies and verify their identities.

When persons perceive inconsistencies or discrepancies between their identity meanings, they will work to counteract them by shifting their perceptions of their behavioral and identity standard meanings (Stets et al. 2019). As mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, persons will experience changes in their behavioral and identity standard meanings and these changes will take place simultaneously, although changes in behavioral meanings will be faster and more immediately noticeable than changes in identity meanings, which occur slower and are less noticeable. Persons might adjust their behavioral meanings in situations so that they may experience identity verification, such as when a "lazy" student perceives that he has studied harder than usual to pass his final exam. As persons shift the meanings of their behaviors, they also begin to shift their understand of who they are in the identity standard. That is, the student also will begin to view himself as less "lazy" and more "hardworking" in his student identity standard. These changes in identity meanings in situations are small and often go unnoticed, but they may accumulate over time and become more noticeable.

Persons will continue to shift their perceptions of their behavioral and identity standard meanings until they perceive that these meanings are consistent and verifiable. This occurs through a process of negotiation where persons must make compromises between their identity meanings so that they may verify each in situations. However, when persons perceive that a compromise between discrepant identity meanings is impossible, they may choose to abandon the identity or identity meaning for an identity meaning that is more compatible. For instance, a person who embraces a "leader" person identity may embrace the meaning of "creative" in his leader identity. If this person is

unable to verify his "creative" identity meaning in his worker identity on the assembly line, perhaps because the job does not require much creativity, he may become unsatisfied in his worker identity and, thus, he may seek out opportunities to be promoted to a supervisor position that, he perceives, will allow him to verify his "creative" leader identity meaning.

When persons perceive a discrepancy between their identity meanings, they may attempt to resolve this discrepancy by shifting their semantic meanings closer together to reduce the extent to which they view these meanings as inconsistent. Semantic changes in behavioral and identity meanings imply that persons change how they view themselves or their behavior in an identity. Semantic changes may occur when persons experience shifts in the existing meanings that are contained in an identity, such as when persons who identify as "not hardworking" come to view themselves as "hardworking," by abandoning meanings that persons view as irreconcilably discrepant with their other identity meanings, and adopting identity meanings that are more consistent with existing identity meanings. Either way, semantic changes in identities may reduce identity dispersion, and thus enhance persons' ability to perceive consistencies among their identity meanings.

For example, a student may need to negotiate the meanings of "studious" and "sociable" in his student identity so that he may experience identity verification. The student may perceive a discrepancy in these identity meanings when his friends ask him to attend a social gathering, but he feels compelled to stay home to study for an upcoming exam. By staying home, he may choose to verify his studious identity meaning over his

sociable identity meaning, and he may interpret staying home as being less sociable than his sociable identity standard. This perceived discrepancy between his behavioral meaning and his sociable identity meaning may lead to changes in his sociable identity meanings such that he may come to view himself as less sociable. Over time, if he continues to verify his studious identity meaning over his sociable identity meaning, he may come to no longer view himself as sociable, and instead, he may see himself as more so "reclusive." This shift in the semantic meaning of his student identity from "sociable" to "reclusive" may, in fact, increase his ability to verify his student identity if he perceives that being reclusive is consistent with being studious. For instance, he may think that by being reclusive in his student identity, he is better able to focus on his studies, and thus verify his studious identity meaning.

Burke (forthcoming) also finds that identities with a more dispersed set of meanings may be better able to buffer the negative emotions that persons experience when their identities are not verified compared to identities that are less dispersed. Persons with less dispersed identity meanings are more likely to experience intense negative emotions when their identities are not verified because identity verification will implicate a greater portion of the identity than it would in less dispersed identities. But, the negative emotions that persons experience in their identities is separate from their motivation to develop their identities such that they become less dispersed and more coherent over time. Indeed, Burke also finds that persons desire clarity and coherence in their identities and will work to develop their identities to reduce perceived

inconsistencies. Therefore, persons may be motivated to develop their identities to reduce the amount of dispersion in their identities so that they may perceive less discrepancies and greater identity verification.

HOW CATEGORICAL/GROUP AND ROLE IDENTITIES INFLUENCE PERSON IDENTITIES

Burke and Stets (2015) argue that person identity meanings are derived from the available meanings in the culture of society, thus allowing for meanings to be shared with others. Subcultures contain distinct cultural meanings that vary across subcultural groups and serve to create divisions among societal members. Burke and Stets also posit that as person identity meanings come to match the meanings of the cultural and subcultural contexts in which persons interact, their person identity meanings will then serve to guide them as they choose to embrace categorical/group and role identities. Individuals will choose to embrace categorical/group and role identities that match the meanings of their person identity so that these lower-ranking identities may help verify their person identity.

These lower-ranking identities also contain cultural meanings that are shared with others whom also occupy the same social roles, groups, and categories with which persons identify (Burke and Stets 2009), and the meanings that these lower-ranking identities contain also influence person identities as they develop. Focusing on the influence that these lower-ranking identities have on person identities, and specifically, how these different bases of identity may have different effects on person identities, may allow for a more nuanced understanding of how cultural meanings shape person identities

94

during identity development. For instance, the categorical/group and role identities that persons embrace are informed by meanings that help to sustain persons' sense of belonging to a social group. Role identities contain meanings that are task-oriented and relate to a person's sense of competence. These distinctions among categorical/group and role identities may lead to different developmental outcomes in person identities, which I discuss in detail below.

This idea that lower-ranking identities might influence person identity meanings derives from recent theorizing in identity theory. Aldecoa (2019) argued that categorical/group and role identities also might contain moral meanings that inform the moral person identity. Identity theorists have argued that the moral identity contains meanings of "fairness," "care," "loyalty," "sanctity," and "purity" (Stets, Aldecoa, Blum, Winegar, forthcoming), and each of these moral identity meanings might exist in other identities. The meaning of "fairness" might also be contained in the police officer identity, since it is expected of police officers to treat each citizen fairly. The meanings of care and loyalty might help define an spousal identity, given that it is expected of spouses to care for and remain loyal toward one another. Lastly, the meanings of "sanctity" and "purity" are often contained in the religious identity as religions are often centrally concerned with issues of the sacred and moral purity (Haidt 2012).

Given the overlap that moral identity meanings have with lower-ranking identities, it is likely lower-ranking identities will contain meanings that inform person identity meanings. Indeed, as mentioned above, Stets (1995) found that person identities and role identities are linked by a shared or common set of identity meanings. Identity

theorists have not focused much on how person identities are influenced by lower-ranking identities. The remainder of this chapter serves to develop, theoretically, this area in identity theory by speculating how and why different bases and types of identities might influence person identities in the formative phase of identity development. I begin by discussing how different bases of lower-ranking identities – that is, categorical/group and role identities – might have different effects on person identities, and then on how different types of identities – normative/counter-normative, stigmatized, and obligatory/voluntary identities – might, as well.

Role and Categorical/Group Identities

A role identity is a set of meanings that persons use to define who they are in a social role (Burke and Stets 2009). The meanings that are contained in role identities are derived from culture as well as one's own interpretation of themselves in the identity. When persons occupy a social role, they will learn the meanings and expectations of their role as they interact with and receive feedback from others in the identity. The role identity emerges as persons interpret the meanings from others feedback and develop an understanding of who they are in that social position. These two parts of the role identity are what McCall and Simmons (1978) refer to as the conventional and idiosyncratic dimensions. The conventional dimension of a role identity refers to the meanings that persons learn from others while in the role identity, whereas the idiosyncratic dimension refers to how persons use these meanings to define themselves in the role identity.

When role identities are verified in situations, persons feel a heightened sense of competence (Stets and Burke 2014). Competence relates to persons' perceived ability to

accomplish role tasks. That is, when individuals perceive that their role behavior aligns with their role identity standard meanings, they are likely to feel competent or efficacious. For example, the verification of a teacher role identity might indicate to the individual that he is an effective or competent teacher. It is likely that, during the formative phase of identity development, role identities will influence the development of person identities so that persons may experience higher levels of competence in their role identities.

When the meanings of a person identity conflict with the meanings of a role identity, persons may need to adjust the meanings of their person identity so that they may verify their role identity and feel more competent while in it. For example, a person who maintains a manager role identity may not be a highly sociable person, that is, he may have a low sociable person identity, and his low sociability is preventing him from verifying his manager identity. Perhaps he is does not communicate well with his employees, which has led to multiple failed work projects and a subsequent reprimand from his boss. He may perceive that this non-verifying feedback in his manager identity derives from the discrepancy between his manager identity and his sociable identity. To counteract the discrepancy, he may adjust his person identity meanings until he perceives a match between his manager and sociable identities that allows him to verify both identities. This verification may allow him to feel more competent in his manager role identity.

Categorical/group identities contain meanings that define who persons are in their social categories and group memberships. Social categories and groups differ with

respect to how much persons interact with other members of the category or group. Burke and Stets (2009) argue that persons will interact more with members in their same social group than social category. Group identities emerge as persons interact and develop shared goals and meanings that define the group identity. In contrast, categorical identities are ascribed by society and serve to stratify individuals based on their social status or worth (Stets and Serpe 2013). However, categorical/group identities are similar in that, when these identities are verified, persons will feel a greater sense of self-worth and belonging (Stets and Burke 2014).

Categorical/group identities influence person identities through the process of depersonalization (Stets and Burke 2000; Hogg 2006). Depersonalization is the process whereby individuals focus on themselves as a group member rather than a unique individual. Hogg (2006) suggests that depersonalization is what allows group processes to occur. As persons begin to view themselves less as unique individuals and more so as part of their social group or category, they will begin to embrace goals and motivations that mirror those of other members of the group or category. This is because the meanings in categorical/group identities are shared among group members to create uniformity in their perceptions while in the identity (Oakes, Haslam, and Turner 1994).

The extent to which depersonalization occurs among individuals may vary from extreme cases, such as what might occur in a religious cult or terrorist organization, to non-extreme cases, such as when persons identify with their work organization. In the most extreme cases, persons may become extremely depersonalized such that their person identity meanings begin to overlap entirely with their group identity meanings (Swann,

Jetten, Gomez, Whitehouse, and Bastian 2012). This identity change may make it difficult for these individuals to distinguish their own motives and intentions from those of their group, and it has been a known cause of altruistic suicide and other forms of altruistic violence (Durkheim 1897 [2013]). When persons experience extreme depersonalization, they will begin to lose their sense of self as a unique individual as their person identity meanings increasingly merge with their categorical/group identity. Thus, the developmental processes that occur in the formative phase serve to ensure that the categorical/group identity will be verified in situations.

In the least extreme cases, persons may adjust their person identity meanings to match the meanings of their social group to the extent that they are able to feel a sense of worth and belonging among their group members. Perhaps a person who values his place of work becomes more sociable at work by befriending coworkers and becoming more immersed in the organization's culture. In these less extreme cases, persons still experience changes in their person identity meanings to meet the needs and expectations of the social category or group. However, these changes are not likely to result in extreme cases of altruism that lend way to altruistic suicide and violence, as is often the case in more extreme cases of depersonalization.

Overall, the influence that categorical/group and role identities can have on person identities may lead to changes in person identity meanings, but the purpose and overall outcome of these changes differs with respect to the specific base of identity that causes the change. That is, a role identity will influence person identities to promote a greater sense of competence in the role identity. Although, a categorical/group identity

will influence person identities to facilitate a greater sense of self-worth or belonging in a social group. Next, let us explore the impact that different types of identities might have on person identities.

Normative and Counter-Normative Identities

Recall from Chapter 4 that much of the past research and theorizing in identity theory has focused, primarily, on normative identities, such as the student identity, spousal identity, or religious identity (Burke and Stets 2009). Normative identities are an essential type of identity because these identities are what bind persons to the mainstream cultural meanings that are shared among individuals in a society. But more recent research in identity theory has shown that counter-normative identities have unique qualities that distinguish them from normative identities (Long, Yarrison, and Rowland 2015; Yarrison 2013). These distinctions between normative and counter-normative identities may have a potential impact on the development of person identities. But to understand these potential implications, it is necessary to explain why persons embrace counter-normative identities.

There is a strong incentive to embrace normative rather than counter-normative identities. Primarily, it may be easier for persons to receive identity verifying feedback in normative rather than counter-normative identities (Markowski 2016). Normative identities contain meanings from mainstream culture and, hence, it will be easier for persons with normative identities to find others who will verify them in the identity. Persons who embrace a counter-normative identity also may find others who will verify their identity, but it may be more difficult as they must seek out these opportunities

among others who share a similar identity or identity meanings. But given that these identities are counter-normative and thus go against the meanings in the mainstream culture, persons may be dissuaded from adopting a counter-normative identity in the first place, and if they do adopt a counter-normative identity, they may conceal it from others in the mainstream culture to avoid receiving negative evaluations.

Yet, persons with counter-normative identities find opportunities to verify their identities. For example, teenagers are notorious for adopting counter-normative identities as a way to rebel against mainstream cultural meanings and to express their independence from their parents (Pickhardt 2013). Some teenagers may come to identify with a counter-normative music scene, such as punk rock, or decide to identify as non-religious in spite of their religious upbringing. Teenagers may even receive negative evaluations, either from their families, teachers, or friends, while in their counter-normative identity, and continue to invoke this identity and attempt to verify it in situations. This may be because they identify with a social group or community that has embraced them and their counter-normative identity and who provide them with verifying feedback while they are in their counter-normative identity.

Persons may choose to embrace a counter-normative identity to exercise their agency or ability to make unique choices within a mainstream cultural context. Individuals have unique preferences and inclinations that may inform their motivations to adopt certain identities over others, and these inclinations are derived from their person identities. A teenager who identifies as "rebellious" may seek out counter-normative role identities that contain the meaning of "rebellious," such as a dare-devil or criminal

identity. This person also may seek out certain categorical/group identities that contain the same meaning and in which he may interact with other rebellious individuals, perhaps to the dismay of his parents. The act of seeking out counter-normative identities based on persons' interests is an expression of their agency, since their interests go 'against the grain,' so to speak, of mainstream culture. These persons make the unique choice to seek out subcultures that better satisfy their personal and interpersonal interests and needs.

While person identities guide persons as the come to embrace counter-normative identities, sometimes persons conceal their counter-normative identities out fear of receiving negative evaluations from others, such as their family members or friends (Markowski 2016). For example, a person who identifies as gay or lesbian may avoid disclosing this identity to their friends or family to avoid the potential for receiving negative evaluations from loved ones. When persons do not invoke their counter-normative identities in situations to avoid negative evaluations, they may come feel less authentic (Markowski 2016). This sense of inauthenticity stems from not being able to invoke an identity that aligns with their preferences in their person identity meanings. Hence, the person identity is not verified. A "rebellious" teenager who feels as if he cannot be rebellious because his parents frown on those identities in which he can express his rebellious identity, such as the dare-devil identity, may feel as if he is suppressing his true or authentic identity.

The inauthenticity that persons feel when they suppress their counter-normative identities may be why persons seek out opportunities to interact with others who have similar identities and identity meanings. By interacting with these individuals, persons

may feel comfortable enough to openly express their counter-normative identity and be verified in it. In turn, identity verification in their counter-normative identity might increase their sense of authenticity as they are able to invoke the identity that they prefer to invoke in situations. However, if persons are unable to seek out individuals who might verify their counter-normative identity, they are likely to continue feeling inauthentic so long as they feel as if they are unable to invoke their identity in situations.

Stigmatized Identities

Stigmatized identities are counter-normative identities in which persons internalize the negative meanings associated with the identity and experience the negative consequences, such as stress, anxiety, and depression, that are associated with stigma (Long 2016). Persons might internalize negative evaluations rather than counteract them to verify their identity standard when they lack the ability to control their perceptions in the situation, which may be due to their lack of social status or power in an interact. Persons who lack social status in an interaction may be more susceptible to persuasion, and thus, more likely than higher status persons to adjust their identity standard meanings to match the negative or stigmatizing meanings by which they think others view them. Similarly, persons who lack social power may be unable to control meanings in the situation and, therefore, they may be more likely than higher power persons to be coerced into embracing negative meanings in their identity.

Persons who have high status and/or power in an interaction will experience some change in their identities or identity meanings, and thus, theoretically, these changes in their identity lead them to adopt a stigmatized identity. However, persons who lack social

status and/or power in an interaction may be more likely to adopt a stigmatized identity. Persons with low status and/or power are less likely to verify their identities compared to persons with high status and/or power (Stets 1997, 2004; Stets and Harrod 2004). Lacking the ability to verify their identity amid negative evaluations they receive in situations may result in changes in their identity meanings toward the meanings of these negative evaluations such that they come to embrace these negative or stigmatizing meanings in their identity.

Whatever the reason why persons come to embrace stigmatized identities, the negative meanings that persons use to define themselves in these identities will likely have a significant impact on their person identities. Persons who embrace a stigmatized role identity, such as a sex worker identity, might experience a greater amount of negative evaluations from others while in this identity. These negative evaluations might influence the meanings of person identities that also are invoked in these situations. For instance, a sex worker role identity might be frequently invoked alongside a person's moral person identity. That is, persons might perceive moral meanings in situations in which they invoke their sex worker identity, which also invoke their moral person identity. If persons view themselves as morally "good" but morally "bad" or "impure" while in their sex worker identity, these persons will need to rectify this discrepancy to verify their identities. During the formative phase of identity development, these persons may come to view themselves as less moral to match the meanings of their moral identity with their sex worker identity.

Even the categorical/group identities that persons take on might be stigmatized. Persons might identify with a stigmatized religious or ethnic community and will, consequently, experience negative evaluations from others that are associated with the identity. When persons embrace a stigmatized categorical/group identity, they apply negative meanings to not only themselves but their entire social group or category. For example, a widespread phenomenon in the American black community is "colorism," or the phenomenon in which members of the black community discriminate other members of the black community based on the darkness of their skin, such that persons with a lighter complexion are treated more favorably than persons with a darker complexion (Hunter 2007). Persons who identify within the "darker-skinned" category often internalize their own stigma. Studies have shown that this internalized stigma can impact their sense of authenticity, which, as mentioned, is associated with the verification of person identity meanings. This suggests that stigmatized categorical/group identities may have some influence on person identity meanings in that the groups with which persons identify also influence how they see themselves as unique individuals.

The extent to which stigmatized identities will influence person identities will likely be determined by how salient is the identity. In Kaufman and Johnson's (2004) study on the gay and lesbian identities, the researchers found that entering into a romantic relationship made persons' gay/lesbian identity visible to their friends and family members, which led many individuals to experience increased stigma for their identity. The more salient is a stigmatized identity, that is, the more frequently the identity is invoked in situations, the more susceptible are persons to experiencing negative

evaluations from others. When these negative evaluations are internalized, such that persons come to view themselves negatively in the identity, these negative self-evaluations may influence person identity meanings that do not match these evaluations.

Further, the meanings that persons perceive in negative evaluations might implicate different person identities. For example, persons who embrace a gay or lesbian identity might perceive themselves in this identity as morally "impure" or "disgusting" based on the negative evaluations they have received from others through interaction (Meyer and Dean 1998). If these negative evaluations are discrepant with how they see themselves in their moral identity, their moral identity meanings may begin to shift toward the meanings of their stigmatized gay or lesbian identity. That is, these persons may come to view themselves as less morally pure than before due to the impact that their stigmatized gay or lesbian identity had on their moral person identity.

Alternatively, persons who embrace a gay or lesbian identity might be stigmatized on the basis of their masculinity or femininity (Meyer and Dean 1998). Persons often reference tradition and biology to claim that males are supposed to be "masculine" and females are supposed to be "feminine." Within the gay and lesbian community, these claims are employed by outsiders to negatively evaluate gay men as overly "feminine" or "girly" and lesbian women as overly "masculine" or "boyish." If these negative evaluations are internalized into their sexuality identity and these meanings are discrepant with their masculine/feminine person identity, then persons may experience changes in their person identity to match the meanings of their sexuality identity. That is, some gay males may come to identify as more "feminine" than before, and this person identity will

then influence their other identities. Similarly, lesbian females may view themselves as more "masculine" than before, which also might influence how they view themselves in their other identities.

Obligatory and Voluntary Identities

Another way to distinguish categorical/group and role identities is between those identities that are obligatory and those that are voluntary (Gallagher 2016; Thoits 2003). In Chapter 3, I argued that obligatory identities, or those identities that persons view as more difficult to abandon, will have a greater influence on the development of person identities than voluntary identities. Compared to voluntary identities with which persons can enter and exit rather easily, persons are more likely to maintain obligatory identities for long periods of time because these identities are difficult to abandon or not invoke in situations. Hence, persons may spend more time in obligatory identities than voluntary identities, which increases their ability to influence the meanings of person identities that are activated alongside them.

For this reason, obligatory identities may have a greater influence on person identities than voluntary identities, at least in the long term. Persons will experience a greater amount of change in person identity meanings due to the influence of obligatory identities than they might experience due to voluntary identities, because persons are more likely to stay in obligatory identities longer than in voluntary identities. Since voluntary identities are easy to exit, when they conflict with person identities, persons may find it easier to exit or abandon the voluntary identity as a means to correct the perceived discrepancy. Due to the difficulty in exiting obligatory identities, persons may

rely on adjusting their identity meanings to counteract a perceived discrepancy, and these adjustments will occur in person identities as well as lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities.

However, in the short term, voluntary identities may have a greater influence on person identity meanings. Individuals choose to embrace voluntary identities because these identities correspond with their individual preferences, that is, the meanings of their voluntary identities align well with their person identity meanings (Thoits 2003). When voluntary identities are not verified in situations, this non-verifying feedback also may impact their person identity meanings that are shared with their voluntary identity. Thus, persons may experience changes in their person identities due to non-verifying feedback in their voluntary identities, and these changes will occur to ensure that both identities are verified in future interactions.

CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on how categorical/group and role identities influence the development of person identities. A specific focus was placed on how person identities are shaped to become less dispersed and to merge closer with the categorical/group and role identities that persons embrace. The primary mechanism that drives the identity development are discrepancies that persons perceive when their identity meanings are inconsistent and, thus, non-verifiable. When persons perceive discrepancies among their identity meanings that prevent identity verification, they must counteract these discrepancies by adjusting their meanings until they perceive a match. Typically, person identity meanings will have a greater influence on lower-ranking identities than lower-

ranking identities will have on person identities, and changes that occur in person identities take place at a slower pace than lower-ranking identities. However, change does occur in person identities, and further research and theorizing is needed to better understand how and why person identities change during identity development. The formative phase of identity development focuses on how person identities might change and the types of changes that might occur during identity development.

I suggest that the influence that categorical/group and role identities have on person identities depends on the base of identity in question. Each identity has a different influence on person identities. I demonstrate how role identities may influence changes in person identities so that persons may feel more competent in their role identities. Similarly, categorical/group identities might cause changes in person identity meanings that benefit persons' feelings of self-worth and belonging to their social groups and/or categories. The influence that categorical/group identities have on person identities may lead to depersonalization, whereby persons begin to identify more so with their group membership and less as a unique individual. The more depersonalization occurs, the more individuals' motivations to verify person identities might also serve to verify categorical/group identities, and vice versa, due to the shared system of meanings between these identities.

I also posit the distinctions between how certain types of identities influence person identities. I discussed how counter-normative identities might lead to feelings of inauthenticity among persons who choose to conceal their counter-normative identity in situations. Stigmatized identities, on the other hand, might negatively influence certain

person identities that contain meanings that relate to the stigmatized identity. For instance, persons may come to view themselves as less moral in their moral identity if their stigmatized identity contains meanings that relate to morality. Lastly, I suggest how obligatory might have a greater influence on person identities than voluntary identities. Given the perceived difficulty to exit obligatory identities, persons may instead try to counteract perceived discrepancies with person identities by adjusting their identity meanings until their identities are verified.

As categorical/group and role identities influence the meanings that make up person identities, these person identity meanings will, in turn, influence the meanings of categorical/group and role identities that persons embrace. Persons may seek out identities that correspond with their person identity meanings, or person identities may influence the meanings of identities that they already embrace. The influence that person identities have on categorical/group and role identities is discussed in the following chapter on the transformative phase of identity development.

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CHAPTER 6: THE TRANSFORMATIVE PHASE

Thus far, this dissertation has focused primarily on how lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities influence higher/ranking, person identities. Chapter 4 discussed how person identities might emerge later than categorical/group and role identities as individuals learn how to distinguish themselves from others with whom they share similar lower-ranking identities. Through interacting with similar others in categorical/group and role identities, persons may begin to learn about what makes them distinct from others and apply meanings they learn during interaction to define themselves as unique individuals. Chapter 5 further explored how person identities are influenced by lower-ranking identities during identity development. During the formative phase of identity development, lower-ranking identities can influence the types of meanings that make up person identities as well as how dispersed are the meanings in person identities and with lower-ranking identities. I suggested that lower-ranking identities will influence person identities so that persons may feel more competent in their role identities or a. greater sense of self-worth or belonging in their categorical/group identities.

The present chapter focuses on the transformative phase of identity development, which is the phase in which person identities guide the meanings of lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities within and across social situations. As person identities influence changes in lower-ranking identities so that their meanings may be less inconsistent, persons will perceive less discrepancies between their person identity and lower-ranking identity meanings and will be more likely to verify their identities. Person

identities influence the meanings of lower-ranking identities so that person identities may be verified. In turn, the verification of person identities facilitates feelings of authenticity. Therefore, as the meanings in lower-ranking identities shift closer to the meanings of person identities during the transformative phase, persons may feel a greater sense of authenticity while in their lower-ranking identities.

Contrary to the formative phase of identity development, the processes that occur in the transformative phase are more developed in identity theory. Much of the focus in prior research on the relationship among higher- and lower-ranking identities in identity theory has been on how higher-ranking, person identities guide the meanings of lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities (Burke 2003; Burke and Stets 2009; Tsushima and Burke 1999). Stets (1995) demonstrated how the mastery person identity influences the gender role identity in situations. Similarly, Stets and Carter (2006) and Stets (2010) have argued that the moral person identity guides the meanings of lower-ranking identities and might influence the types of lower-ranking identities that persons choose to embrace. Hitlin (2003) also has demonstrated how the values that are contained in person identities (what he refers to as "personal identities") motivate persons to adopt group and role identities that are consistent with their values.

Following this prior research, I suggest that the transformative phase in identity development will have a greater influence during identity development than the formative phase. That is, person identities will influence lower-ranking identities more than lower-ranking identities will influence person identities. I advance this prior research and theorizing by focusing the discussion on identity development, and specifically, on how

115

person identities influence on lower-ranking identities might lead to a lower amount of dispersion among the identity meanings that persons embrace. As identity meanings become less dispersed in the transformative phase, persons may experience greater identity verification and, perhaps, this reduced dispersion in their identity meanings will foster a more coherent understand of who they are within and across their identities.

I also suggest that the extent to which person identities operate to create less dispersion across their identity meanings may depend on how dispersed are the meanings in person identities. Person identities that are more than less developed, and therefore, contain less dispersion among their identity meanings, will be better able to create less dispersion among their lower-ranking identity meanings. Person identities that are more developed will be better able to influence changes in the meanings of lower-ranking identities in the direction of the person identity. In turn, changes in the direction of lower-ranking identities may either increase or decrease feelings of competence in role identities and self-worth in categorical/group identities. Differences also may exist in the relationship between person identities and different types of lower-ranking identities, which I discuss in detail below.

Overall, in the transformative phase of identity development, person identities work to reduce the amount of dispersion that exists between lower-ranking identity meanings and person identity meanings so that persons may experience more verification in their person identities, and therefore, greater feelings of authenticity. Person identities will organize lower-ranking identities by adjusting the meanings of existing identities, adopting identities that contain similar meanings with person identities, or abandoning

116

identities that are irreparably discrepant with the person identity. By reducing the amount of dispersion among identity meanings, both within and across higher- and lower-ranking identities, the processes that occur in the transformative phase facilitate a more coherent understanding of who one is by allowing persons to shape their lower-ranking identities in ways that better align with what they perceive is their "true" or "real" identity.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of identity development in the transformative phase. I explain why the transformative phase is more influential during identity development than the formative phase, how these phases are related to one another, and how the development of person identities might predict the amount of influence it may have on lower-ranking identities. Then, I discuss how the relationship between person identities and lower-ranking identities might vary with respect to the base or type of lower-ranking identity involved. These distinctions have not been developed in identity theory and, I suggest, they present important avenues for future research and theorizing. Finally, I conclude this chapter by summarizing the key arguments and their theoretical significance in identity theory.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE TRANSFORMATIVE PHASE

In the formative phase of identity development, lower-ranking identities influence person identities such that the meanings of person identities will move closer to the meanings of lower-ranking identities until persons perceive that their identity meanings are consistent and verifiable. However, in the transformative phase of identity development, the direction of influence is reversed. That is, the meanings in lower-ranking, categorical/group and role identities will, instead, shift in the direction of person

117

identity meanings so that individuals may experience less discrepancies between their higher- and lower-ranking identity meanings. The less discrepant are their higher- and lower-ranking identities, the more they will be able to verify these identities in situations. Lower-ranking identities will shift in the direction of person identity meanings so that persons may verify their person identities in situations, and this identity verification will enhance feelings of authenticity in their person identities.

Stets and Burke (2014) have argued that person identities represent what is most central or core to individuals, and when person identities are verified, individuals will feel as if their "true" or "real" self is validated. This feeling of being validated in a person identity is known as self-authenticity, or simply, authenticity. Authenticity provides persons with a sense of meaning and coherence in their lives and a better understanding about their self. The motivation to feel authentic in person identities is what drives persons to adjust their lower-ranking identities and identity meanings in the transformative phase of identity development to match the meanings in their person identities. This motivation to feel authentic is, perhaps, stronger than the motivations to feel competent in role identities and worthy in categorical/group identities. For this reason, person identities might influence the meanings in lower-ranking identities more so than the other way around (Burke and Stets 2009; Hitlin 2003).

Indeed, much of the research in identity theory has supported this claim. For example, in early research on the hierarchical control system in identity theory, Tsushima and Burke (1999) found that higher-ranking identity standards influence lower-ranking identity standards in the parent identity. When parents embraced more abstract or higher-

118

ranking identity standard meanings, such as wanting to challenge their children, these meanings would influence their less-abstract or lower-ranking identity meanings, such as "forcing" their children to do their homework. Parents perceived that verification in these lower-ranking identity standard meanings facilitated verification in their higher-ranking identity standard meanings. This research parallels Stets' (1995) study on the mastery person identity and gender role identity and Hitlin's (2003) study on how values in the personal (or person) identity influence other identities persons embrace. Each of these studies find that higher-ranking person identities exhibit a greater influence on lower-ranking identities than the reverse.

While person identities influence the development of lower-ranking identities more so than the reverse, it is likely that not all person identities will have the same ability to reduce the amount of dispersion that exists in lower-ranking identities. That is, some person identities may be better able to reduce dispersion among lower-ranking identities than others. I suggest that a person identity's ability to reduce the amount of dispersion in lower-ranking identities is determined by how developed is the identity. Person identities that are more developed, that is, person identities that have low compared to high dispersion among their meanings will be better able to reduce the amount of dispersion that exists in lower-ranking identities. Let me explain.

When a person identity contains meanings that are widely dispersed and, thus, inconsistent, persons are more likely to perceive discrepancies between their person identity meanings. These discrepancies imply that persons do not possess a highly coherent understanding of who they are while in the person identity, and the meanings

119

that are contained in their person identity conflict with one another, which may lead to contradictory responses in situations when the identity is invoked. If the goal in the transformative phase is to reduce dispersion in lower-ranking identities so that persons may develop a more coherent understanding of who they are across their many identities, under-developed person identities may not provide the best guidance.

Therefore, the development of person identities is related to how effective person identities will be at reducing the amount of dispersion or inconsistencies and perceived discrepancies that exist between lower-ranking identity meanings. That is, for person identities to effectively guide lower-ranking identity meanings during the transformative phase to reduce dispersion, they must be developed such that their meanings have low dispersion. Low dispersion among person identity meanings implies that person identity meanings are consistent and, hence, individuals will have a clearer or more coherent understanding of who they are in their person identity.

When persons have a clear understanding of who they are while in their person identity, they will be better able to reduce the amount of dispersion in lower-ranking identities. The consistencies that exist among person identity meanings that have low dispersion will influence the amount of dispersion in lower-ranking identities, since these meanings will guide lower-ranking identity meanings. For instance, persons will be more likely to adopt lower-ranking identities that are consistent with their other lower-ranking identities, since these other lower-ranking identities will likely be consistent with their person identity meanings.

On the contrary, when persons have a poor understanding of who they are while in their person identities, which is due to high dispersion in their person identity meanings, they will likely experience a high amount of dispersion in their lower-ranking identities. Indeed, Burke (forthcoming) finds that the amount of dispersion among the meanings in one identity predicts the amount of dispersion in other identities. In other words, when persons have high (or low) dispersion in one identity, they are likely to have high (or low) dispersion in other identities. I suggest that this is because under-developed person identities do not guide lower-ranking identity meanings as well as more developed person identities to reduce dispersion among lower-ranking identities.

The Relationship Between the Three Phases in Identity Development

Before transitioning to the following section, it is important to note that all three phases of identity development, that is, the pre-formative, formative, and transformative phases, take place concurrently as identities emerge and develop. Identity development is an iterative process that is explained within the hierarchical control system in identity theory (Burke and Stets 2009). Within the hierarchical control system, higher- and lower-ranking identities influence one another when they are activated together in situations. Since higher-ranking identities will have a greater influence on lower-ranking identities than vice versa, identity theorists might expect that lower-ranking identities will experience changes faster than person identities. That is, while person identities changes in the formative phase of identity development, this change is expected to be much slower than the changes that occur in lower-ranking identities.

The formative and transformative phases are mutually constitutive, meaning that each phase influences and relies on the other. For instance, as person identities develop during the formative phase, their increased development will impact how effect they are at reducing the amount of dispersion among lower-ranking identity meanings. In turn, as lower-ranking identity meanings develop during the transformative phase, and thereby reduce the amount of dispersion that exists among their identity meanings, their increased development will help to maintain person identity meanings by ensuring that they are consistently verified in situations. Thus, the development of lower-ranking identities has a positive impact on the stability of person identities, over time. Person identities will become more stable the more developed are lower-ranking identities, and this stability in person identity meanings.

As identity theorists begin to better understand the dynamics of identity development, they may want to explore how and/or when identity processes transition between these different phases. But overall, my claim in this chapter, and this dissertation, more generally, is that identities develop to reduce the amount of dispersion or inconsistencies that exists among the meanings of identities so that persons may develop a clearer or more coherent sense of self. A more coherent sense of self develops as persons reduce the amount of inconsistencies that exist among their identity meanings, thereby reducing the amount of discrepancies they perceive between their identity meanings. For the remainder of this chapter, I will explore how person identities influence different bases and types of lower-ranking identities in the transformative phase of identity development.

PERSON IDENTITIES' INFLUENCE ON LOWER-RANKING IDENTITIES

The influence that person identities might have on lower-ranking identities might vary with respect to the base or type of identity invoked alongside the person identity in an interaction. This section explores the potential variabilities that might emerge as person identities influence lower-ranking identities. I begin by focusing on differences that may exist among the three bases of lower-ranking identities, that is, categorical/group and role identities. Following, I propose that person identities might have different impacts on the different types of identities that I have discussed in earlier chapters, including normative and counter-normative identities, stigmatized identities, and obligatory and voluntary identities. Also, the following arguments assume that there will be variability in how developed are person identities. More developed person identities will have a more pronounced impact on lower-ranking identities than less developed person identities. The reader should keep this in mind when reading the remaining sections of this chapter.

Role and Categorical/Group Identities

Recall from Chapter 5 that role identities influence person identities during the formative phase so that persons may feel a greater sense of competence while in their role identities. When persons feel competent in a role identity, they perceive that they are able to perform their role successfully. In the formative phase of identity development, person identity meanings may shift in the direction of role identities when these identities are inconsistent and persons perceive discrepancies between them, and this shift in person identity meanings serves to improve persons' ability to verify their role identity. Burke

and Stets (2009: 117) argue that the competence that persons feel in a role may be a "self-fulfilling prophecy," in that when persons feel competent in a role identity, they are more likely to take on more challenging tasks while in the role. However, persons who feel less competent in a role identity may avoid taking on more challenging tasks due to their fear of failure in the role identity. Thus, as persons adjust their person identity meanings to feel more competent in their role identities, this adjustment may lead to even greater feelings of competence as persons attempt to take on more challenging tasks in their role identity.

Contrarily, in the transformative phase, when individuals perceive a discrepancy between their person identity meanings and their role identity meanings, they will rely more so on their person identity meanings to guide their perceptions in the situation so that their person identity may still be verified regardless of whether the role identity is verified. Indeed, this is what Stets (1995) found in her study on the relationship between the mastery person identity and gender role identity. Stets found that persons who identified as more feminine and who perceived that they had low control in the situation were more likely to overcompensate by being overly controlling, despite their feminine identity. What Stets' finding suggests is that when persons perceive discrepancies between their person identity and role identity in situations, they will act in ways to verify their person identity over their role identity. This might ensure that persons are able to continue to view themselves as authentic in their person identities.

As persons rely more on their person identity meanings than their role identity meanings when they perceive that these identities are inconsistent or discrepant, their

person identity meanings will influence a change in their role identity meanings to reduce these inconsistencies. Role identity change will take place as persons adjust their behavioral and identity standard meanings, and it will continue until persons perceive that their role identity meanings are compatible or consistent with their person identity meanings. When role identity change during the transformative phase leads to identity verification, persons may feel more competent while in their role identities and more authentic while in their person identities. However, when persons are unable to resolve the discrepancy between role identity and person identity meanings, they will focus on ensuring their person identity is verified, which may result in feeling less competent in their role identities and the potential abandonment of the identity altogether.

For example, if the person identity meaning of "indifferent" is seen as inconsistent with the mother role identity meaning of "caring," the mother may adjust her mother identity meaning to resolve this discrepancy. She may adjust her perceptions of her behavior in her mother identity and shift her mother identity standard meaning of "caring" so that she may view it as compatible with her person identity meaning of "indifferent." The outcome of this change in her mother identity is that she might become an indifferent mother. Alternatively, if she cannot resolve this discrepancy between her person identity and mother identity meanings, she may come to view herself as an incompetent mother, and potentially, she may abandon the mother identity.

For categorical/group identities, identity verification provides persons with feelings of self-worth or belonging to a social group or category (Stets and Burke 2014). Persons desire to feel as if they belong in society, that is, that they are accepted by others

with whom they interact. In the formative phase of identity development, categorical/group identities will experience changes in their meanings when persons perceive that their meanings are discrepant with their person identity meanings. Similar to role identities, the meanings in categorical/group identities will shift in the direction of person identity meanings, thereby reducing the amount of dispersion that exists between their identity meanings. If persons perceive that these changes in categorical/group identity meanings make the more consistent with person identity meanings such that they may be verified together in situations, persons may feel greater feelings of self-worth in their categorical/group identity and authenticity in their person identity.

Normative and Counter-Normative Identities

As mentioned in Chapter 5, persons embrace counter-normative identities because their meanings match the meanings in their person identities. Thus, adopting a counter-normative identity is a choice that persons make based on their unique interests and preferences. In the previous chapter, I used the example of a teenager who identifies as "rebellious" and who may want to embrace counter-normative identities, such as a dare-devil role identity or a criminal role identity, given that he views these identities as sharing meanings with his rebellious person identity. Insofar as he is able to embrace and invoke either of these counter-normative role identities, he will feel more authentic in his person identity. Yet, if he perceives that he is unable to embrace or invoke these counter-normative identities, he may feel less authentic in situations.

In the transformative phase of identity development, individuals work to ensure that they adopt normative and counter-normative identities that correspond with their

person identity meanings. In their discussion on the moral person identity, Stets and Carter (2006) argued that the moral identity will influence the types of identities that persons will adopt. For example, a person who embraces the moral identity meaning of "justice" might prefer to adopt the role identity of "police officer" or "lawyer" given that these identities likely share similar meanings with the moral identity. Similarly, a person who views himself as embracing a highly masculine person identity may be more oriented toward identities in which he can express his masculinity, such as a football player identity or a wrestler identity. Person identity meanings inform persons of their interests and preferences and guide them to adopt lower-ranking identities that match these interests and preferences, even if people are guided to adopt counter-normative identities in which they might experience non-verifying feedback from others.

Compared to normative identities, which are widely accepted in the mainstream culture, people may find it more difficult to verify their counter-normative identity while interacting with those who subscribe to more normative conventions. For example, the rebellious teenager's parents may condemn their child's dare-devil or criminal identity, hoping their child will instead consider adopting more normative identities. Given that counter-normative identities are likely to share similarities with person identities, when individuals feel they are unable to invoke their counter-normative identity in situations, they may experience negative emotions due to feeling inauthentic. These negative emotions may result in changes in how they view their behavioral and identity standard meanings in their counter-normative identity.

For example, if the rebellious teenager is unable to invoke his counter-normative identity in situations, he may increase the level of rebelliousness in his counter-normative identity so that he may continue to verify his person identity. As he comes to view the meanings in his behavior as more rebellious, he will come to view himself as more rebellious in his counter-normative identity. That is, his rebellious person identity standard meanings may shift the "rebellious" identity meaning in his counter-normative identity as his perceptions of his behavior change. To ensure that his "rebellious" person identity meaning is verified, he must become even more rebellious in his counter-normative identity.

As he comes to view himself as more rebellious, he may perceive that he has become more rebellious in his actions, such as when he ends his relationships with more conventional individuals who do not verify his counter-normative identity, and forms new relationships with other rebellious persons who are more likely to verify him in his counter-normative identity. Indeed, prior research on deviant youths indicates that deviant youths who are rejected by more conventional society will form relationships with other deviant youths who may verify their counter-normative identity (Chapple 2005; Kandel and Davies 1991).

In all, this change in his counter-normative identity will be driven by his motivation to verify his person identity meaning of "rebellious." During the transformative phase of identity development, person identity meanings will influence changes in counter-normative identity meanings so that persons may more frequently invoke their counter-normative identity in situations and verify it. When these changes in

counter-normative identities facilitates more frequent identity activation and verification, persons will feel more authentic in their counter-normative identities. However, if they are unable to see changes that increase the frequency of activation and/or verification in their counter-normative identities, they are more likely to experience feelings of inauthenticity, which may motivate them to abandon the counter-normative identity.

Stigmatized Identities

Recall that stigmatized identities contain negative evaluations that individuals apply to themselves while in the identity. People may embrace a stigmatized role identity, such as a criminal identity, and come to view themselves negatively while in the identity. Similarly, they may embrace stigmatized categorical/group identities, such as when they identify as a member of a marginalized social group or category, and apply negative evaluations to their entire social group or category. In the formative phase, stigmatized identities might influence the meanings of person identities such that persons may come to adopt a more negative view of themselves in their person identities. When the meanings in person identities shift in the direction of stigmatized categorical/group and role identities, persons may come to apply negative or stigmatizing meanings to themselves in their person identities. Hence, they may not only view themselves negatively in their social positions, such as the categories, groups, or roles with which they identify, but they also may come to stigmatize who they are as unique individuals.

In the transformative phase, however, person identities may influence stigmatized identities to either reinforce the meanings in their stigmatized identity, or instead, to begin to see themselves in a less negative light. Person identity meanings are likely to

reinforce stigmatized identities when individuals also view themselves negatively while in their person identities. For example, Mexican-Americans, as a group, have often been stigmatized as being "lazy" and "unintelligent" (Aldecoa and Munoz 2016). If a person who is Mexican-American embraces negative person identity meanings, such as "lazy" and "dumb," these person identity meanings may work to maintain negative meanings that he also embraces in his stigmatized Mexican-American identity. Hence, his person identity meanings will reinforce his negative view of himself while in his Mexican-American identity.

Yet, when persons perceive that their stigmatized identity meanings and person identity meanings are inconsistent, their stigmatized identity meanings may shift in the direction of their person identity meanings so that they may become more consistent. People may experience inconsistencies between their person identity meanings and stigmatized identity meanings when they have a more positive view themselves in their person identity compared to their stigmatized identity.

For example, an adolescent may begin to feel poorly about his racial identity due to the frequency and intensity with which he is stigmatized by others while in his racial identity. Individuals with whom he interacts may appeal to negative stereotypes about his racial group, suggesting that he is a gang member or criminal. Internalizing these negative meanings into his racial identity, he may begin to hate his racial identity and perhaps even perpetuate these negative stereotypes about his own racial community. However, in so doing, he may perceive meanings of "loyalty" in his actions that invoke his moral person identity meaning of "loyalty" to community. As the moral identity

meaning of "loyalty" interacts with his stigmatized racial identity, he may perceive that his disloyalty to others in his racial identity is discrepant with his moral identity meaning. He may then adjust the meanings in his racial identity so that it better corresponds with his moral identity. In turn, this perceived match may facilitate a more positive self-view in his racial identity as he begins to see himself as more loyal rather than disloyal to his racial group.

Individuals will continue to shift the meanings in their stigmatized identities until they perceive that their stigmatized identity meanings match the meanings in their person identity. But, if people are unable to shift their stigmatized identity meanings in alignment with their person identity meanings, they may, instead, focus on verifying their person identity meanings despite not verifying their stigmatized identity. The verification of person identity meanings may help to mitigate the negative emotions that individuals feel while in their non-verified stigmatized identity. Also, identity verification in the person identity will foster feelings of authenticity. People also may attempt to abandon the stigmatized identity if they continue to perceive that its meanings are inconsistent with how they see themselves in their person identity.

Obligatory and Voluntary Identities

Thoits (2003) has argued that voluntary identities are identities that are embraced by individual choice whereas obligatory identities are more binding and difficult to exit. Thoits argues that because individuals have a greater choice in their voluntary identities in that they can more easily enter and exit these identities compared to obligatory identities, they may experience more positive emotions related to their voluntary rather

131

than obligatory identities. In contrast, identity theorists argue that the verification of voluntary and obligatory identities will result in more positive feelings whereas the non-verification of these identities will result in more negative feelings (Burke and Stets 2009). People feel good in those identities that are verified and will want to maintain these identities to continue receiving verifying feedback. Burke and Stets (2009: 147) posit that persons are more likely to experience non-verification in obligatory identities compared to voluntary identities, and as a result, persons will have lower self-esteem in obligatory rather than voluntary identities.

Like counter-normative identities, persons will choose to embrace voluntary or obligatory identities based on how well they perceive these identities correspond with their person identity meanings. The similarity between person identity meanings and the meanings of the voluntary and/or obligatory identities ensures that each identity will be verified when they are invoked in the same situation. For example, a person who embraces the moral identity meaning of "caring" may consider adopting identities that also contain this meaning, such as a caretaker identity. This person may become a volunteer at a local non-profit organization that works to help the local homeless population. Similarly, persons who view themselves as "caring" may be more likely to adopt an obligatory parent identity that reflects their caring nature. The adoption of these voluntary and obligatory identities are based on their own interests and preferences, which are guided by their person identity meanings.

During the transformative phase of identity development, individuals may perceive that their person identity meanings are discrepant with their voluntary or

obligatory identity meanings. This perceived discrepancy will result in changes in their voluntary or obligatory identities such that their identity meanings will move closer to the meanings of their person identity meanings. I suggest that there are notable differences in how voluntary and obligatory identities change in the transformative phase. For instance, as the person identity influences changes in voluntary identity meanings during the transformative phase of identity development, persons may be able to successfully shift their voluntary identity meanings such that they become more compatible with their person identity meanings. When persons perceive that the meanings in these identities are consistent, they will be more likely to verify these identities in situations. However, if persons are unable to successfully shift their voluntary identity meanings to match their person identity meanings, they may continue to view these identities as discrepant, and because this is a voluntary identity, they will be more likely to simply exit the identity and adopt one that more closely matches their person identity meanings.

The same may not be true for obligatory identities. While persons may be able to successfully shift their obligatory identity meanings to reduce the amount of inconsistencies that exist between their obligatory identity and person identity meanings, when persons are unsuccessful at reducing the discrepancy, they may not as easily exit or abandon the identity as they might in a voluntary identity. Instead, since obligatory identities are more difficult to exit than voluntary identities, persons may be compelled to continue to embrace the non-verified identity, which may result in more negative emotions and lower self-esteem (Burke and Stets 2009).

Further, when an obligatory identity is not verified, persons may attempt to overcompensate in their person identity to make up for the lack of identity verification in their obligatory identity. Consider when a "rule-oriented" father is not verified in his parent identity and so he over-compensates in his mastery identity meaning of "control" so that he may regain control of the situation, perhaps by being somewhat dominant and authoritarian in his CEO position at his place of work. The parent identity is an obligatory identity that is not easy to exit. Thus, if the father continues to experience non-verifying feedback in his parent identity, he may continue to overcompensate for this lack of identity verification by perceiving himself as overly controlling in his mastery person identity (Stets 1995), which may have effects in other obligatory identities. Verification in his mastery person identity may help to temper the negative emotions he feels when he perceives that his parent identity is not verified, and persons may continue to adjust the meanings in non-verified obligatory identities until they are able to perceive that its identity meanings are consistent with their person identity meanings.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I further developed understanding of the transformative phase of identity development by focusing on how person identities might influence the meanings in lower-ranking identities so that persons may experience identity verification in their person identities. I suggest that person identities influence changes in lower-ranking identities during identity development to reduce the amount of dispersion or inconsistencies that exists between person identities and lower-ranking identities. The more inconsistencies that exist between persons' identity meanings, the more likely are

they to perceive that their meanings are discrepant. When individuals perceive discrepancies between their lower-ranking identities and person identities, they may feel as if these lower-ranking identities are not compatible with who they truly are. In effect, they may attempt to adjust their lower-ranking identity meanings so that they might perceive a match with their person identity meanings. Finally, when people perceive that a match exists, thereby allowing them to verify their person identity while in the lower-ranking identity, they will feel more authentic in their lower-ranking identity.

The influence that person identities have on lower-ranking identities will, generally, be greater than the influence that lower-ranking identities will have on person identities. However, the influence that person identities have on lower-ranking identities will differ with respect to how developed are person identities. I suggest that more developed person identities, that is, those person identities that contain a less dispersed set of meanings, will be better able to influence changes in lower-ranking identities that reduce the amount of dispersion within and across identities. Contrarily, less developed person identities will influence changes in lower-ranking identities that increase the amount of dispersion within and across identities. Since individuals with less developed person identities will have a less coherent understanding of who they are while in their person identities, as person identities influence lower-ranking identities, they will create changes in lower-ranking identities that lead to greater dispersion and, thus, more inconsistencies among their lower-ranking identity meanings.

Also, I discuss how the outcome of the developmental processes in the transformative phase will vary with respect to which lower-ranking identities are

interacting with the person identity. When person identities interact with role (or categorical/group) identities, the influence that person identities have on role (or categorical/group) identities may either increase or decrease persons' feelings of competence (or self-worth) in their role (or categorical/group) identity. People will experience a greater level of competence (or self-worth) when they can successfully shift their role (or categorical/group) identity in ways that allow them to perceive a consistency between these identities. However, they will experience a decreased level of competence (or self-worth) when they cannot perceive a consistency between their role (or categorical/group) identity and person identity meanings.

Turning to the different types of identities, I suggest that when counter-normative identities are not invoked frequently or verified in situations, person identity meanings will operate to increase their likelihood of activation and verification. If person identity meanings can successfully increase the likelihood of activation and verification in counter-normative identities, persons may feel more authentic while in their counter-normative identities, but if not, they will experience greater feelings of inauthenticity. Person identities might influence stigmatized identities by either reinforcing the meanings in stigmatized identities or shifting their meanings so that persons may come to view themselves in a more positive light. Lastly, I posit that identity non-verification in obligatory identities may motivate persons to focus on verifying their person identity over their obligatory identity in situations to ensure that they continue to view themselves as authentic while in a non-verified obligatory identity. Future research will want to test these claims made in this chapter.

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CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to further develop the concept of identity development that has been recently proposed in identity theory (Aldecoa 2019). Identity development has been largely under-developed in identity theory, and yet, the idea that identities develop over time fits well within identity theory's current conceptualization. For instance, I have demonstrated how the process of identity development can be explained using the hierarchical control system in identity theory. I also have linked identity development to identity dispersion, a relatively new concept in identity theory that focuses on the impacts that perceived inconsistencies among identity meanings have on individuals (Burke, forthcoming; Cantwell 2016).

Overall, I have proposed that identity development is the process of change that occurs in identities to reduce the amount of dispersion among identity meanings. As identities develop, their meanings will shift closer together as persons adjust their behavioral and identity standard meanings so that they may perceive these meanings as more consistent and compatible with the meanings in their other identities. Identity development results in greater identity verification in both higher- and lower-ranking identities, and this identity verification serves to stabilize identity meanings over time.

Perhaps the most significant benefit to this approach to identity development is that it fits well into established theory in identity theory, which allows identity theorists to measure the development of identities based on existing measures in identity theory. As mentioned in Chapter 5, identity theorists measure meanings as bipolar opposites such as "just/unjust," "fair/unfair," or "strong/weak." Persons may identify with any one of

these meanings along each dimension and embrace several identity meanings in a single identity, such as seeing themselves as very "just," "fair," and "caring" in the moral identity. When persons perceive that their identity meanings are inconsistent and they are unable to verify them, their identity meanings will shift so that they can come to see them as more consistent. These shifts in identity meanings signal identity change in identity theory, a concept that already is well-established in identity theory (Burke 2006).

At the same time, identities develop as their meanings become less dispersed over time. Recent research in identity theory has developed measures for identity dispersion (Burke, forthcoming; Cantwell 2016). To measure identity dispersion, identity theorists have taken the average of the total responses on identity meaning measures and compared this average to the variability in individual item responses. For example, identity theorists might measure an identity by asking participants to respond to a series of scales of opposing adjectives that reflect the range of possible meanings that persons might contain in their identity. By taking the mean of individuals' responses to each of these items and then measuring the variability of each item response from the mean, identity theorists are able to measure how similar or different is each identity meaning from the mean. This is identity dispersion.

By employing the measures of identity change and identity dispersion that are already established in identity theory, identity theorists may be able to measure the extent to which identities are developed. Since identity development is the process of change in identities that leads to a reduction in the amount of dispersion that exists among identity meanings, it is plausible to expect that identities that are more developed will exhibit less

variability than less developed identities, which will exhibit greater variability. Moreover, the amount of variability that exists among identity meanings also should decrease as identities become more developed and increase as identities become less developed.

Below, I propose testable hypotheses based on arguments made in earlier chapters. In Chapter 4, I argued that persons may come to embrace person identities as they interact in their lower-ranking identities. As persons interact in their lower-ranking identities, they may compare themselves to others who share a similar lower-ranking identity. Specifically, individuals will compare their own identity standard meanings to the meanings they think that others apply to themselves. Through this process of social comparison, persons will begin to identify meanings that are unique to who they are. These meanings that they believe to be unique to their own identity will, over time, become more abstract as they recognize these same unique meanings in other identities and begin to apply these meanings to themselves as opposed to the social positions they occupy. Person identity meanings are more abstract than lower-ranking identity meanings because they are applied to the individual rather than their social positions. Therefore, person identity meanings may emerge later as persons develop more abstract understandings of who they are from the more concrete understandings in their lower-ranking identities.

Identity theorists have not yet studied the emergence of an identity and new measurement tools will be needed to empirically study how identities emerge. But, identity theorists may begin to explore how and when identities emerge through qualitative research. Recent research in identity theory that has explored what happens

when individuals lose their identity may serve as a guide for future research on identity emergence (Francis, Adams, Konig, and Hoey 2019). Francis et al. (2019) studied the impacts of identity loss among an elderly population with Alzheimer's syndrome using semi-structured interviews. When participants were asked about a particular identity, such as a parent identity, grandparent identity, or spousal identity, several respondents would indicate that they could not recall whether they had the identity, or they would forget information related to an identity, such as forgetting their spouses' or children's names. Many maintained their commitment to their identity even when it had been forgotten.

Using a semi-structured interview method, identity theorists may be able to study how identities and their corresponding meanings emerge over time. For instance, as the elderly who experienced identity loss maintained their commitment to their identities, children also may maintain a level of commitment to an identity that they have not yet acquired. Children may be committed to cultural meanings before they embrace these meanings to define themselves in an identity, as I discuss Chapter 4. Using semi-structured interviews, identity theorists may be able to gather information on which identities children have embraced and which they have not yet embraced. For example, some research has suggested that children will view their behaviors as "moral" even when they have not yet adopted a moral identity (Krettenauer and Hertz 2015). Exploring where these moral meanings come from and how (or if) they inform their moral identity as it emerges might be questions to explore in future qualitative research.

Based on what I have argued in Chapter 4, I would suggest that moral meanings are learned in lower-ranking identities, and through interacting in lower-ranking identities, children will begin to develop a deeper understanding of who they are as a moral person. That is, children will develop a moral person identity after they learn moral meanings in their lower-ranking identities (Aldecoa 2019). More generally, during the life course, person identities will emerge later than lower-ranking identities, which brings me to the first hypothesis:

H₁: Person identities will emerge later in the life course than lower-ranking identities.

When person identities emerge, they will, in turn, work to guide the meanings in lower-ranking identities in situations. During identity development, person identities will influence changes in lower-ranking identities so that individuals may perceive less inconsistencies between their person identity meanings and lower-ranking identity meanings. These changes work to reduce the amount of dispersion between the meanings of lower-ranking identities so that they may become more consistent across lower-ranking identities and between lower-ranking and higher-ranking identities.

I have argued that the influence that person identities have on lower-ranking identities might differ with respect to how developed are person identities. Person identities that are more developed and thus less dispersed might be better able to reduce the amount of dispersion in lower-ranking identities whereas less developed person

identities will increase the amount of dispersion in lower-ranking identities. This follows Burke's (forthcoming) recent finding that the amount of dispersion in one identity reflects the amount of dispersion in other identities. Following, I suggest:

H2: The amount of dispersion in lower-ranking identities will reflect the amount of dispersion in related person identities.

Identities are considered more developed the less dispersed are the meanings that are contained in the identity. When identity meanings are less dispersed in an identity, people are less likely to perceive discrepancies between their identity meanings. That is, persons will view these identity meanings as consistent, and because they are viewed as consistent, people will be more likely to verify their identity in situations. The same is true when the meanings of multiple identities activate in a situation. When multiple identities are invoked in the same situation, persons will work to ensure that their meanings are consistent and thus verifiable. When persons reduce the amount of dispersion among their identity meanings such that they come to perceive that their identity meanings are consistent, they are more likely to verify their identities in situations. Given this, I suggest the following hypothesis:

H3: Identities that are more rather than less developed will experience greater identity verification.

The impact that identity development has on identities may differ with respect to the base or type of identity involved. In this dissertation, I have discussed how when role identities are verified, persons feel more competent, and when persons are verified in their categorical/group identities, they will experience greater feelings of self-worth or

belonging. Given that identity development reduces the amount of dispersion among identity meanings, which in turn, leads to reduced perceptions of inconsistencies among persons' identities and more identity verification, when persons develop their role (or categorical/group) identities, they will feel greater feelings of competence (or self-worth) while in these identities. The following hypothesis reflects this conclusion:

> H_4: *The less dispersed are the meanings in role identities, the more persons will feel competent while in the identity.*

> H_5: *The less dispersed are the meanings in categorical/group identities, the more persons will feel worthy while in the identity.*

Similar to role and categorical/group identities, when persons experience identity verifying feedback in their person identities, they will experience elevated feelings of authenticity. Authenticity is related to persons' feeling their "true" or "real" self (Stets and Burke 2014). As I have discussed in this dissertation, the less dispersed are the meanings in person identities, the more likely are person identities to be verified. When the amount of dispersion is low among person identity meanings, person identities will be more effective at reducing the amount of inconsistencies among lower-ranking identity meanings by shifting lower-ranking identity meanings in the direction of person identity meanings. The less inconsistencies that individuals perceive between their meanings in lower-ranking identities and person identities, the more they will verify their person identities across social situations (Burke 2003; Stets 1995). This identity verification may result in more consistent feelings of authenticity as persons interact in their lower-ranking

identities. Given this, I suggest that the person identities that contain meanings that are less compared to more dispersed will experience more identity verification, and this identity verification will enhance a person's feelings of authenticity.

> *H6: The less dispersed are the meanings in person identities, the more persons will feel authentic while in the identity.*

This dissertation also presents some shortcomings. For instance, in this dissertation, I only have explored one potential aspect of identity development: identity dispersion. While identity dispersion may be an important aspect of identity development, it certainly may not be the only relevant aspect related to an identity's development. Identities also may be considered more developed when they become more prominent or more important than other identities that persons embrace. Identity prominence has been related to the concept of identity "centrality" or how central an identity is to a person compared to other identities the person embraces (Rosenberg 1979; Stryker and Serpe 1994). The prominence of an identity is likely to increase the more individuals are able to verify it (Burke and Stets 2009). Thus, as an identity develops and becomes more consistently verified in situations, individuals may come to view the identity as a more important or central part of who they are.

More recent research in identity theory has found that identity prominence is related to identity salience, or how frequently are persons to invoke the identity in situations (Brenner, Serpe, and Stryker 2014; Yarrison 2016). Identities that are more important to a person are more likely to be invoked in situations than less important identities. This means that more important identities will more frequently guide the

meaning of persons' behaviors in situations, which might suggest that enhancing an identity's salience will also be an important aspect of identity development. But, since identity prominence precedes identity salience, increases in identity prominence may be a more fundamental aspect of identity development than are increases in identity salience. Future research and theorizing may want to consider the role of identity prominence and salience in identity development. While it is likely that more developed identities will be more prominent due to the verifying feedback persons receive in their more developed identities (Burke and Stets 2009), it remains unclear what role identity prominence has in determining the development of an identity.

Another shortcoming of this dissertation is that it lacks a more descriptive or qualitative approach to identity development. While this dissertation develops a conceptual understanding of identity development, there remains little research from which to develop an understanding of how identities might emerge. For example, prior developmental theories, such as Piaget's (1934) and Kohlberg's (1984) theories of cognitive development, have not only proposed conceptual models of development but also they have provided thick descriptive detail of the developmental process based on their qualitative and experimental research. Future research in identity theory should consider incorporating qualitative research to develop a more descriptive understanding of developmental processes during the life course.

A descriptive approach to identity development can present a better understanding of how identities change over the life course. Indeed, much of the current research in identity theory has focused on identity processes that occur among adults (Burke and

Stets 2009). It is unclear whether these processes hold true for different age groups. In fact, a more recent study has found that traditional assumptions about identity processes in identity theory do not hold true for elderly populations with Alzheimer's syndrome (Francis, Adams, Konig, and Hoey 2019). In this study, they found that identities may be enacted even after the identity standard has been lost or diminished. That is, even though persons in this elderly population did not embrace an identity standard to guide their meanings in their identity-relevant behavior, they continued to maintain the behavior nonetheless.

Just as individuals may continue to enact identity-relevant behaviors long after they lose an identity, individuals' identities may be informed by behaviors that they enact prior to embracing the identity (Cast 2003). Research studies on infants and young children seem to suggest that young children enact behaviors, such as staring at objects or grabbing objects that are near them, that indicate their unique preferences for certain objects and people over others (Heiphetz 2018). As children develop and begin to reflect upon the meanings of these behaviors, these meanings may inform who they are while they enact these behaviors.

A qualitative analysis may be able to better determine how identities emerge from individuals' behaviors and how their behaviors might influence the emergence of different bases of identity. By analyzing how individuals understand the meanings of their behaviors, identity theorists may be able to better understand how individuals' behaviors influence their different bases of identity. For instance, a young child may apply the meanings of his behavior to his student role identity or son role identity,

whereas an elder child may apply similar meanings to her moral identity. These distinctions may be rooted in individuals' age and/or gender differences, but perhaps other factors, such as race/ethnicity, may be involved. Future research will want to study how behavior influences the emergence of identities.

It is difficult to predict how identities develop over time, given the paucity of research in identity theory on identity processes among different age groups. Future research will want to consider how identities operate among different age groups to better inform understanding of identity development across the life course. This dissertation provides a starting point upon which identity theorists may be able to develop a more robust understanding of identities and identity development, more generally. Identity theorists may begin by testing the above hypotheses to ensure that the claims that I have made in this dissertation are accurate. If so, identity theorists may then consider advancing the concept of identity development by exploring other aspects of development that were not discussed in this dissertation as well as more qualitative analyses of how identities develop over time.

In conclusion, identity development is the process of change in identities such that the amount of dispersion among the meanings that are contained in an identity is reduced. When the amount of dispersion is reduced among identity meanings, individuals will perceive less discrepancies between their identity meanings. Thus, individuals will experience greater identity verification the more their identities develop. Among the three phases of identity development, higher- and lower-ranking identities will influence each other so that individuals may perceive that their identity meanings are consistent. The

more individuals view their higher- and lower-ranking identities are consistent, the more they will verify these identities when they are activated together in situations. Future research will want to test the claims in this dissertation.

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