Three Faces of Identity

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Abstract
We review three traditions in research on identity. The first two traditions, which stress (a) the internalization of social positions and their meanings as part of the self structure and (b) the impact of cultural meanings and social situations on actors’ identities, are closely intertwined. The third, the burgeoning literature on collective identity, has developed quite independently of the first two and focuses more on group-level processes. Unlike previous reviews of identity, which have focused on the sources of internalized identity (e.g., role relationship, group membership, or category descriptor), we focus here on the theoretical mechanisms underlying theories of identity. We organize our review by highlighting whether those mechanisms are located in the individual’s self-structure, in the situation, or in the larger sociopolitical context. We especially attempt to draw connections between the social psychological literature on identity processes and the distinct, relatively independent literature on collective identity.
INTRODUCTION

Most reviews of research on identity organize their presentation around the sources of the identity (e.g., Thoits & Virshup 1997, Owens 2003). Identities that guide social action can come from role relationships, affiliation with social groups, identification with social categories, or personal narratives. Here, we take a different tack. We highlight the theoretical processes that are the central mechanisms in the major treatments of identity. These theoretical mechanisms operate across the identities that come from the sources listed above.

We first draw a distinction between identity theories that focus on internalization of social positions within a self-structure and those that focus on how consensual, cultural identity meanings are implemented within situations that evoke them. The former theories (e.g., Stryker’s and Burke’s Identity Theory) focus on how stable, internalized aspects of social identities are formed and how they affect behavior as the social actor moves from one situation to the next. Implicitly, these internalization theories assume a socialization process through which repeated social interactions lead to the development of personalized identity meanings; these meanings then become incorporated into a stable, trans-situational self-concept. The latter theories (e.g., Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory and Heise’s Affect Control Theory) emphasize how social contexts elicit certain identities and shape their meanings. These theories focus on how consensual cultural meanings associated with identities are imported by actors into local interactions and how situational environments shape the localized meanings of the situationally relevant identities. The situation and the culture within which it is embedded are more central than any internalized aspect of the actor.

After developing this (somewhat subtle) distinction between personal, internalized identity theories and situational, culturally based identity theories, we then examine a literature that places the concept of identity at the group level. Cerulo (1997) reviewed this literature on collective identity, emphasizing its roots in classic sociological constructs like Durkheim’s collective consciousness, Marx’s class consciousness, Weber’s Verstehen, and Tonnies’s Gemeinschaft. Here, we draw out the connections between this fast-growing literature (located primarily in the study of politics, social movements, and culture) and the more social psychological theories of identity in the microsociological literature (see Owens & Aronson 2000, Stryker et al. 2000). Since the collective identity literature only fleetingly refers to the more social psychological treatments, we attempt to identify areas where those connections can enrich both subfields.

Before reviewing our three faces of the identity literature, we illustrate how the concept of identity is nested in the broader concepts of self and self-concept. Identity occupies an interesting position vis-à-vis these broader concepts. It is both a nested component of the more general self-structures, yet also refers to social positions that exist outside the individual actor that are available to be ascertained, enacted, and potentially internalized. This dualism motivates the organization of our review.

SELF, SELF-CONCEPT, AND IDENTITY: NESTED CONCEPTS

For theorists who emphasize the internalized nature of identity within the context of a stable self-structure, the concept of identity is nested within the more inclusive concepts of the self and the self-concept. Identity occupies an interesting position vis-à-vis these broader concepts. It is both a nested component of the more general self-structures, yet also refers to social positions that exist outside the individual actor that are available to be ascertained, enacted, and potentially internalized. This dualism motivates the organization of our review.
The majority of work in sociology is on the “me” aspect of the self, which includes the self-concept and the identities that are incorporated into it.

Once the self emerges in the human organism, a nascent self-concept soon follows. Rosenberg (1979) defined self-concept as the totality of a specific person’s thoughts and feelings toward him- or herself as an object of reflection. The self-concept (or the “me”) can be thought to consist of three broad classes of individual attributes (Rosenberg 1979, pp. 15–17): self-referring dispositions, physical characteristics, and identities. Self-referring dispositions denote the abstract categories people develop over their life courses and then use to shape their response tendencies, including attitudes such as liberalism, traits such as altruism, values such as patriotism, and abilities such as athletic skill. Thoits & Virshup (1997) refer to these elements as one’s individual identity because they represent ways to differentiate oneself from others (as opposed to representing communalities with others through roles or group membership).

Physical characteristics include one’s external attributes such as being obese, deaf, or tall. These physical characteristics become sociologically interesting when they are also incorporated into a person’s self-image and thus have the potential to shape one’s behavior or one’s social and psychological well-being. They also, of course, have an external character that influences how others respond to us, shaping their internalization into the self-concept.

The third component of Rosenberg’s self-concept is the focus of our review here: identity. There are four key sources of identity characterizations: personal or individual identity, role-based identity, category-based identity, and group membership–based identity. Personal identity is the most elementary type of identity, defined here as the social classification of an individual into a category of one (Rosenberg 1979). It denotes a unique individual with self-descriptions drawn from one’s own biography and singular constellation of experiences. Examples include: I am Roy Smith, Pat Smith’s spouse; I served in Patton’s Third Army during World War II; I was born in Robeson County Hospital at 3:14 PM; my mother had a cousin named Edna; I drove the school bus during my junior year in high school. Although personal identity consists of unique identifiers and an individual narrative, it is social and institutional in origin. As such, soldiers are identified and differentiated from other soldiers by their names, ranks, and serial numbers; academics by their names, ranks, departmental affiliations, and the institutions from which their highest degree was awarded. These distinctions are created and organized by the institutions within which they occur.

As individualized as it is, one’s personal identity information is the basis for one’s other identities. “If an individual could not be recognized from one occasion to another as the same person, no stable social relationships could be constructed” and no other identities could be formed (McCall & Simmons 1966, p. 65). We distinguish between these individuated narratives in personal identities and what Thoits & Virshup (1997) termed “individual identity.” They defined individual identity as self-ideas abstracted from one’s biographical details and framed in terms of broader social categories such as working class, Midwesterner, diabetic, snowbird, or progressive. When such abstracted self-categorizations are internalized, they often correspond to group or categorical identities as described below.

Identities based on role relationships are the most central in the theories that stress internalization of identity meaning into the self-structure. We define role-identity as a social position a person holds in a larger social structure, considers self-descriptive, and enacts in a role relationship with at least one other person (Thoits 1995). Because it is self-descriptive and internalized, it becomes part of one’s self-concept. Role-identities are predicated on recurrent interactions between role
partners and provide the self with meaning because they carry recognized role expectations, whether complementary (teacher-pupil), competing (union negotiator–business executive), or counter (detective–criminal) (e.g., Hogg et al. 1995, Weinstein et al. 1966).

McCall & Simmons (1966) tended to ascribe more individual volition to the crafting of one’s role-identity than do most identity theorists. To McCall & Simmons, role-identity entailed the “character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position,” including “his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position” (p. 67; emphasis in the original). Their conceptualization illustrates clearly the internalized, individuated nature of identity meanings, even those identities that arise from social structural positions.

The two final bases of identity are formed by similarities that we see between ourselves and others, rather than the role relationships with another actor. Identities can be based on perceived membership in a socially meaningful category (e.g., Arab or American) or on actual membership in a bounded, interconnected social group (e.g., a Girl Scout or a member of Earth First). The distinction between the two bases is blurred because of the homophilous structure of interactions (McPherson et al. 2001, 2006): We are much more likely to interact with those actors with whom we share salient characteristics. So, being an Arab American may be an identity that comes from a category of people, but is likely reinforced by interactions within mosques or ethnically identified churches, ethnic neighborhood enclaves, and other culturally meaningful group activities.

Our summary of these bases on which identities are formed makes clear why we choose to organize this review around theoretical mechanisms and the distinct intellectual traditions that they create, rather than the more common classification around the source of identity (e.g., personal/individual, role based, social category based, group based). First, the distinction among the sources is blurry and has little relationship to how theorists believe that identities organize and motivate action within social contexts (Smith-Lovin 2007, Burke 2004).

Second, identities are elements of both the social structure and the individual self-structures that internalize them. While individuals may incorporate meanings associated by social positions and distinctions into their view of themselves, the menu from which they choose to do so is created by a larger social environment. Therefore, some theories of identity operate at levels other than the self-structure. In particular, this is true of the identity theories that emphasize situational or contextual elements (our second section here) and the literature on collective identity (our third section). Before turning to these aspects of identities theories, however, we begin with a review of the more traditional theories that emphasize the internalization of identity meanings into the self-structure.

**THEORIES EMPHASIZING INTERNALIZED ROLE-IDENTITY MEANINGS**

*One has no identity apart from society; one has no individuality apart from identity.*

—Nelson N. Foote (1951, p. 21)

The fact that we internalize how others see us is a core insight of classic symbolic interaction (Mead 1934, Cooley 1902). At least since Foote’s (1951) classic article on identification as a basis for motivation, sociological researchers have focused on how the social positions that people occupy become stable, internalized aspects of their self-concepts. In this section, we examine the class of theories that emphasize identities that are attached to and internalized by individuals, particularly but not necessarily, in structured role relationships. The theories covered in this section are Role-Identity Theory (McCall & Simmons 1966), Identity Theory (Stryker 1968, 1980), Identity Accumulation Theory (Thoits 1983), and Identity Control Theory (Burke 1991). However,
before discussing the specific theories, we briefly address motivation as it generally applies to these internalization theories.

Nearly six decades ago, Foote (1951) attempted to clarify role theory by using a social psychology of motivation that both rejected biological determinism (“the person impelled from within”) and cultural determinism (“the person driven from without”) (p. 21). Foote’s theory of situated motivation is based upon symbolic interactionist notions of language and identification. Specifically, language is central to motivation because it helps shape behavior by enabling individuals to meaningfully understand and label their past actions in order to formulate present and future outcomes. Through identification, people appropriate and commit to particular identities. People have multiple identities, and their identities give their behavior meaning and purpose. However, because people also perform roles that are attached to particular identities, the role/identity nexus is also an important ingredient in motivation and choice. Indeed, the very notion of identity in symbolic interactionism connotes an intimate linkage between self and role (Burke & Tully 1977) such that human beings are confronted regularly with choices between alternative commitments and actions.

Two influential mid-range identity theories were developed in the 1960s to represent the ways in which structural role positions and their internalizations guided choices that actors make in social interaction. Both McCall & Simmons (1966) and Stryker (1968) attempted to link the structural-functional insights about role relationships and their functions in larger sociology that dominated the mainstream sociology of the day with the dynamic, processual insights about self that dominated microsociological thinking. The result was a remarkably fruitful theoretical tradition that grew out of these two similar perspectives on identity.

Role-Identity Theory

McCall & Simmons (1966) defined role-identity in dramaturgical language as the character that individuals devise for themselves when occupying specific social positions. And as discussed earlier, they saw role-identities as stemming from the preferred perceptions that one has of oneself as one occupies various social positions. In this case, role-identities influence people’s everyday lives by serving as their primary source of personal action plans. The theory has a view of people capable of creativity and improvisation in the performance of their roles, yet within the overall requirements and restrictions of their social position(s). This com mingling of individuality, idiosyncrasy, and impulsiveness with behavior constrained by social convention occurs through a dialog between the “I” and the “me” bounded by the broad dictates of one’s role-identity.

Because people have multiple and often competing role-identities, which also come and go during one’s life course, an important theoretical problem in McCall & Simmons’s theory is to explain which role-identities people value most and will thus attempt to perform. They argue that a person’s various role-identities get organized into a hierarchy of prominence, where a role-identity’s prominence reflects the relative value it has for his or her overall conception of one’s ideal self. In this way, one’s prominence hierarchy is equivalent to one’s ideal self (McCall & Simmons 1966, pp. 76–80, 264). Prominence itself is predicated on many factors. First, people must assess the degree of commitment they have to a particular role-identity and, by extension, how much their self-esteem is bound to its successful activation. That is, commitment signifies how deeply a person stakes who he or she is by virtue of his or her role-identity and its performance. This conceptualization is directly relevant to James’s (1890) definition of self-esteem as the ratio of one’s perceived success in a particular role-identity to one’s desired level of success.

2Their concept of ideal self, which traces back to Horney (1945), is part wish and part obligation with regard to an individual’s most personal aspirations and wants for him- or herself (e.g., to be a distinguished professor, a loving mother, a successful businessperson).
Second, when considering their ideal selves vis-à-vis particular role-identities, people evaluate how their prior actions generally comport with their role-identity performances and how much they are living up to their ideal selves. Third, as a sign of the importance of reflected appraisals, people try to determine how their significant others will evaluate and appraise the role when and if it is activated. Fourth, individuals assess the rewards they may or may not have received from the prior activation of a role-identity, a notion consistent with social learning theory (e.g., Bandura 1977).

**Identity Theory**

Stryker’s Identity Theory (1968, 1980, 2008) has been the dominant perspective on self and identity within structural symbolic interactionism for the past four decades. Since Stryker (2008) recently offered a focused treatment of his theory in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, we only review its basic form here (see also Owens 2003). Identity Theory sees a multifaceted self composed of multiple identities arranged hierarchically in an identity salience structure. The more salient an identity, the higher is the probability of its being invoked in an interactional situation that allows some agency or choice. The salience itself is based on two dimensions of one’s commitment to the identity: interactional and affective. Interactional commitment is the extensiveness of the interactions a person has in a social network through a particular identity (e.g., the number of persons one interacts with based on the identity). Affective commitment is a person’s emotional investment in relationships premised on the identity (e.g., how emotionally close others in the role relationship are to the individual). Note that Stryker’s use of the term “commitment” is more multidimensional and less psychological than the use of the same concept label in McCall & Simmons’s Role-Identity Theory above.

In an early empirical test of the theory, Serpe (1987) showed that college students’ commitments to their student-related identities at Time 1 impacted those identities’ saliences at Time 2, whereas Time 2 student-identity salience impacted contemporaneous commitment to that identity. This pattern suggested that commitment precedes salience. However, the degree of structural freedom students had in choosing one role-identity over another (i.e., coursework versus dating) was key. Only situations involving choice showed the pattern. More recently, Owens & Serpe (2003) found that behavioral and affective commitment were both significantly related to family identity salience for Hispanics, but only behavioral commitment was predictive of family-identity salience for Anglos and blacks. They argued that the significance of affective commitment for Hispanics was heightened by the family’s particular importance for this group.

Finally, Stryker et al. (2005) recently discussed an ongoing problem in Identity Theory—how multilevel social structures facilitate or constrain one’s opportunity for, and the strength of, commitment to particular role-identities (i.e., family, work, and volunteering). They show that intermediate-level social structures (e.g., neighborhood or school) influenced commitment most by fostering ingroup identity-based relationships. Proximal-level social structures, though important, had less impact than intermediate structures. The proximal-level represents social embeddedness in multiple networks of social relations (e.g., number of workmates who are also one’s relatives). Finally, large-scale stratification systems (e.g., gender, race, socioeconomic status) had the least impact on commitment to a particular identity.

**Identity Accumulation Theory**

Thoits (1983, 1986, 2003) drew heavily on Role-Identity Theory (McCall & Simmons 1966) and Identity Theory (Stryker 1968, 1980, 2008) in her formulation of Identity Accumulation Theory, her description of the importance that multiple role-identities can have for a person’s psychological and emotional well-being. Her theory asserts that multiple role-identities can be psychological resources that help reduce
emotional distress (depression) and foster global self-esteem in complex selves. Underpinning Identity Accumulation Theory are two key assumptions. The first, an essential aspect of symbolic interactionism, is that identities provide individuals with meaning and purpose by answering the question: Who am I? Second, roles give individuals structure and organization by answering the question: What should I do? By extension, multiple role-identities provide the person with an orientation toward life situations that help foster well-being. As Ahrens & Ryff (2006) point out, more roles also are associated with beneficial individual resources, such as social connections, power, and prestige. The more options one has to obtain these resources, the better the outcome.

Numerous recent empirical studies support the hypothesis linking multiple role-identities to lower levels of psychological distress (Kikuzawa 2006, Sachs-Ericsson & Ciarlo 2000, Wethington et al. 2000), fewer physical health problems (Janzen & Muhajarine 2003), or both (Barnett & Hyde 2001). Conversely, Brook et al. (2008) cited other studies indicating that multiple role-identities can actually increase or prolong depression when role-identity demands are incompatible with other behavioral expectations or when the role-identity claims too much of a person’s time and drains her energy. Brook et al. (2008) claimed that the key to understanding the difference between positive and negative benefits of multiple roles is the mediating effect of positive or negative emotions on the interactions between the number of identities a person holds, their subjective importance to the person, and how harmoniously they interact with each other.

Jackson (1997) added an important status dimension involving race and ethnicity to Identity Accumulation Theory and showed that the multiple role-identities were associated with lower depression and greater happiness among non-Hispanic white and Mexican American men and women but not African Americans. Kikuzawa (2006) added a person’s location in the life course to race/ethnicity in a cross-cultural study of depression levels for Americans and Japanese age 60 and over. She found that role accumulation (spouse, parent, and community volunteer) benefited older Americans’ mental health, but any role beyond being either a spouse or a parent had no impact on well-being for older Japanese. Theoretical understanding of these varying patterns in different racial, ethnic, and age groups is still needed.

A common thread running through many studies of multiple identities, including the work above on Identity Accumulation Theory, is the importance of Stryker’s Identity Theory in the framing of the empirical research. Few, however, actually employ Stryker’s conceptions of role interactional and affective commitment in their empirical analyses. Even among those who try to hew closely to Stryker’s theoretical conceptualizations, differences in the way salience and commitment are operationalized help explain empirical inconsistencies in the relationship between multiple role-identities and well-being.

Serpe (1987) and Thoits (2003) may offer an important piece missing in Identity Accumulation Theory: assessing the degree of choice people have in enacting their many role-identities. If multiple role-identities are a resource, then the most consequential for well-being should be the identities a person has some freedom to choose. For example, the mother role and worker role are more constraining because they offer less choice in enacting than the freedom to choose the PTA role and church choir role.

Identity Control Theory

Whereas Stryker’s Identity Theory focused on identity choices, Burke developed an elaboration of the theory to specify how internalized meanings guided action after an identity was adopted within an institutional context (Stryker & Burke 2000). Burke’s (1991, Burke & Reitzes 1991) theoretical developments are often known as Identity Control Theory to distinguish them from Stryker’s more structural focus on commitment and identity enactment. Burke built on the work
of Powers (1973) to represent the relationship between internalized identity meanings and perceptions of an interactional situation as a control system or cybernetic feedback loop [Robinson (2007) provides a recent review of control theorizing in sociology]. Meanings are typically measured using bipolar semantic differential scales (Osgood et al. 1957, 1975). The dimensions on which meanings vary are assessed in each institutional context and then measured at the level of the individual actor.

Consistent with the other internalization identity theories summarized above, Identity Control Theory emphasizes the importance of understanding identity not just as a state or trait characteristic of the individual, but as a continuous process of affirmation and reaffirmation in social situations. “An identity process,” according to Burke & Reitzes (1991), “is a continuously operating, self-adjusting, feedback loop: individuals continually adjust behavior to keep their reflected appraisals congruent with their identity standards or references” (p. 840, emphasis in the original). Furthermore, Burke and associates follow mainstream symbolic interactionism by viewing an identity as a set of meanings applied to the self in a social role [although later presentations of the theory explicitly expand its scope to consider identities that come from group or category membership (e.g., Burke 2004, Burke & Stets 2009)]. These meaning-sets act as a standard or reference for understanding who one is in a given situation and what are the expectations in order to maintain that identity in the eyes of self and others.

When an identity is brought into play in an interaction situation, a feedback process ensues via reflected appraisals. That is, a cybernetic control process balances any identity discrepancies that may arise when a particular identity standard (the internalized meanings of self in role, group, or category) is compared to the identity’s situated meaning via a comparator. It is hypothesized that people behave so as to counter and reduce any discrepancy that arises from interaction. Since actions are generated to reduce discrepancies, they can vary in quality, depending on the disturbing events. This feature of the theory allows it to describe how actors respond creatively to circumstances other than normal role performances.

Identity Control Theory is thoroughly reviewed in Burke & Stets (2009). Here we describe only a few studies as exemplars of this research tradition. In one of the initial statements of the theory, Burke (1991) posed a challenge to prevailing views of social stress by positing that disruption of the otherwise continuous identity process and the inability to close the gap between disapproving reflected appraisals and an identity standard will result in distress. Burke & Stets (1999) show how self-processes can influence social structure, while Stets & Tsushima (2001) have extended the theory to an examination of the moderating influence of group-based identities and role-based identities on how people experience and cope with the potent emotion of anger. More recently, Burke et al. (2007) combined Identity Control Theory, Status Characteristics Theory (discussed briefly at the end of the next section), and Legitimacy Theory in an experiment on how gender factors into leader and subordinate identity verification. They studied task-oriented groups of four people (two women and two men) when leadership is conferred by a higher, legitimate authority (the experimenter). Among their findings are that female leaders (who were legitimated by the experimenter when the group was formed) and males (who were not legitimated) both had higher levels of identity verification than others. This study illustrates an interesting new theme in Identity Control Theory—the relevance of resources to the ability of an actor to verify his or her identity (see Burke & Stets 2009, pp. 79–82, 229–33). This emphasis on a larger structure brings the theory closer to the situational/cultural emphasis of the theories reviewed in the next section.

THEORIES EMPHASIZING CULTURE AND SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

Presumably, a “definition of the situation” is almost always to be found, but those who are in
the situation ordinarily do not create this definition, even though their society can be said to do so; ordinarily, all they do is to assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and then act accordingly.

—Erving Goffman (1974, pp. 1–2)

The theories of internalized identity meanings reviewed in the previous section build on the foundational insight of Mead and Cooley that we incorporate the social positions that we occupy into our cognitive image of ourselves as people. Here, we shift attention to theories that give priority to situational, social structural, and cultural elements that lie outside the individual. We caution that our categorization here does not imply competition or contradiction. Instead, theories (and the conceptualizations embedded within them) necessarily simplify reality by focusing on some elements to the exclusion of others. So the theories described here do not reject the idea that social roles, group memberships, and category memberships are incorporated into the self-image. Rather, they emphasize how the elements of situations in which actors are involved shape their behavioral, cognitive, and emotional reactions, rather than focus on the intraindividual features of identity in the self-structure that are carried from situation to situation.

This tradition of emphasizing the importance of situational context for social action began to develop in its modern form during the 1950s and early 1960s. It was partially a response to the sense that symbolic interactionism, and sociological social psychology more generally, had lost its connection to the structural focus of the larger discipline (Stryker 2008). Foote’s (1951) influential theory of situated motivation, discussed above, was published in this period, using the concept of identity to focus attention on the actor-situation nexus. Goffman (1959, 1963) emphasized that actors presented themselves to others in a manner that served to maintain certain images. His Presentation of Self in Everyday Life was concerned more with the interactional presentation of self and how situational context supported or undermined it than with the underlying character of the “self” that was being presented [see Hochschild (1983, appendix A) for a related discussion]. Similar intellectual movements were afoot in psychology, as Heider’s (1946, 1958) Balance Theory drew attention to configurations of interaction and their implications.

**Situating Identity Theory**

An early attempt to develop a formal, empirically testable theory based on this situational focus was Alexander’s Situated Identity Theory (Alexander & Knight 1971; summarized in Alexander & Wiley 1981). Building on Heider and Goffman, Alexander conceptualized situated identities not as properties possessed by persons or as features located in some external environmental structure. Instead, the situated identity defined the relationship between an individual and the environment (especially the other actors within it) at a given time. Like many situational theories that followed, Alexander focused initially on relatively simple situations in which actors were assumed to have similar perspectives; he restricted his experimental work to situated activities that met that consensus criterion. In his most cited study (Alexander & Knight 1971), he replicated a classic cognitive dissonance experiment, showing that the desirability of the situated identity associated with an outcome predicted whether people chose that outcome, often in violation of cognitive dissonance predictions. Although this research tradition is not currently very active, it was a groundbreaking effort to consider systematically the impact of situational cues on identity occupancy and social conduct flowing from that identity. It also pioneered the use of experimental methods in this domain within sociology.

We now move to a review of currently active theories that emphasize the impact of situational and cultural features on social interaction. We discuss two traditions in sociology and psychology—Affect Control Theory and Social Identity Theory—that conceptualize the sociocultural environment in very different ways.
We then briefly discuss Status Characteristics Theory. Although this theoretical research program is not based in the identity tradition, its findings have some important connections to the phenomena that we explore here.

**Affect Control Theory**

To make the connection between the internalized and situational/cultural conceptions of identity clear, we begin our discussion of the more situational/cultural conception of identity with Affect Control Theory (Heise 1979, 2007), which shares many elements with Burke’s Identity Control Theory. Both theories drew directly on Powers’s (1973) insight that much of human processing of stimuli from the environment was described by a control system rather than a direct translation of inputs into outputs. But even given this shared control imagery, the subtle differences between the theories are an excellent demonstration of the distinction that we make here between personal and social theories of identity. They also illustrate the danger of making this categorization seem too rigid.

Affect Control Theory was developed by Heise (1979) by combining two psychological research programs—Osgood’s work on the measurement of affective meaning (Osgood et al. 1957, 1975) and Gollob’s (1968) work on impression formation—with Powers’s new ideas about control systems. The resulting theory had three elements. First, it used Osgood’s work to create a measurement system in which meanings were conceptualized on three dimensions of affective meaning—evaluation (good-bad), potency (powerful-powerless), and activity (lively-quiet). Measuring meaning on just these three dimensions missed some nuances but allowed all the elements of a social event (the actor, the social action, the object-person at whom the action is directed, and later emotions, setting, nonverbal behaviors, status characteristics, etc.) to be mapped into the same three-dimensional space. The second element of the theory was an empirical framework for describing how events changed the meanings within a situation. Using a paradigm developed by Gollob, Heise combined identity labels and social behaviors into simple event sentences (e.g., the mother slaps the child) to study how the initial meanings of the event elements (a mother, slapping someone, a child) would be transformed by their combination in the event (what do you think—on the three dimensions of affective meaning—of a mother who has slapped a child?).

The third element of the theory is the control system, adapted from Powers (1973), which it shares with Identity Control Theory. When social interaction deflects meanings away from their stable, culturally determined values, Affect Control Theory proposes that actors try to create new events to bring the transitory, situated meanings back into line with the stable, cultural meanings. Deflection of meanings is defined mathematically, by the summed absolute differences between transient, situated meanings for event elements (actor, behavior, and object-person) and the culturally given reference values for each of those elements. The search for a new event that, when enacted, will minimize that deflection then becomes a search for a three-number profile: the evaluation, potency, and activity of a behavior (what could X do next to remedy the situation?), a new label for the actor (what kind of a person would do such a thing?), or a new label for the object-person (what kind of a person would deserve to have that happen to them?). Once the profile is found, one can search a cultural “dictionary” of affective meanings to find qualitative labels that fit the affectively appropriate response.

The contrast between Affect Control Theory and the more recently developed Identity Control Theory is described extensively in Smith-Lovin & Robinson (2006). The theories differ in their approaches to measurement, formalization, and emotional response. Here we emphasize only the differences in personal versus situational focus that are key to our discussion.

The first contrast between the theories is the reference level that is being maintained by the control system in each theory. Identity Control Theory’s reference level is the internalized
meanings that an actor incorporates into the self-structure. In Affect Control Theory, people try to maintain meanings associated with the entire situation—their own identities, the identities of others, actions, and behavior settings (Smith-Lovin 1979). A second difference flows directly from the first. In Affect Control Theory, the actions of others are explicitly considered as possible remedies for meaning-deflecting events. In personal identity theories, the assumption is that people operate to maintain their own identities. Affect Control Theory explicitly considers how a situation in which meanings have been disrupted can be repaired by any of the actors that are copresent in a situation, even those who were not involved in the deflecting event.

Finally, the theories differ somewhat in their assumptions about the stability of meaning. Since Identity Control Theory focuses on personal, internalized identity meanings, much of this research program looks at how these meanings shift as a result of interactions over a period of sustained interactions (e.g., Stets & Burke 2005). In Affect Control Theory, meanings are assumed to be quite stable and acquired through long-term socialization processes from the culture at large. Most extreme dislocations of meaning that cannot be resolved behaviorally are resolved through relabeling a person or action. Since both theories share the core control imagery of Powers (1973), much research that supports Affect Control Theory could support either theory (e.g., Robinson & Smith-Lovin 1992, 1999), as well as self-consistency theories from psychology. Work that is more distinctive to this theoretical tradition looks at features other than the central actor. For example, one series of studies examines how emotion displays (which signal transient meanings and deflections from identity) lead to labeling after a deviant act (e.g., Robinson et al. 1994). Another looks at how people work to manage the identities of others, even at some cost to their own self-image (C.L. Rogalin, D.T. Robinson, L. Smith-Lovin, submitted manuscript).

Since Affect Control Theory focuses on the situation, it often deals with identities that are not core to an actor’s self-structure. Smith-Lovin (2007) reported an experiential sampling study that found we actually spend most of our time in such noncore identities. In fact, Affect Control Theory had no real conceptualization of a stable, organized self-structure during the first three decades of its development (Heise 1979, Smith-Lovin & Heise 1988, MacKinnon 1994); it was a theory about roles, identities, and situated action.

Recent developments, however, make clear that the boundary between personal and social identity theories is indistinct and ever-changing. MacKinnon & Heise (2010) develop a control theory of the self that is based on Affect Control Theory. The theory has two elements. First, actors use a “cultural theory of people”—the collection of categories and logical implications among them—as a menu of possibilities for self-identification and understanding others. Second, when self-identity meanings are deflected in one situation (and if those deflections cannot easily be behaviorally resolved), then actors seek out other possible identities in situations that, when maintained, will resolve the deflection at the level of the self. Therefore, although it uses the mathematical control system from Affect Control Theory, this new identity theory clearly moves back into the realm of internalized, personal identity theories by concentrating on how people maintain a stable self-image over a series of situational encounters. In this case, they do so by agentically entering situations that place them in different identities and lead to the experience of self-relevant situated meanings. Notice the similarity to the basic question posed (and answered) by Stryker’s Identity Theory: How do people choose which identities to enact, when they have a choice? MacKinnon and Heise give a more formal answer to this question than Stryker, but they are definitely building in his domain.

Having discussed how two very similar theories differ in their emphasis on personal versus social/cultural focus, we now turn to a perspective that focuses on how contextual elements affect self-meanings that are derived from category memberships. Social Identity Theory
deals with cognitions about categories of in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner 1979). Therefore, it would seem to be the prototype of an intrapersonal identity theory. However, the mechanisms described by the theory actually center on the impact of the social environment on those cognitions, placing this theory in the situational/cultural category for our treatment here. We emphasize those contextual elements of the theory in our description of it.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory has its roots in work by Tajfel during the late 1950s and 1960s on the social factors that influence perception. It was further developed with Turner in the 1970s and 1980s (Tajfel & Turner 1979, Turner & Tajfel 1982; see also Hogg 1992). Like all the theories we review here, Social Identity Theory sees social actors as having multiple identities that get activated by different social contexts. Here, the emphasis is on category memberships (e.g., being a Muslim or an Australian). When a category membership becomes salient (relevant to the social context), self-perception and conduct become in-group normative. Perceptions of other groups become out-group stereotypical. Depending on the nature of the relationship between the groups (e.g., whether it is competitive or status-ranked), self- and other-perceptions can shift toward different types of perceptual discrimination.

Unlike the control theories of identity reviewed above, Social Identity Theory assumes a self-enhancement motive. After self-categorization occurs in the context of a situation, actors are motivated to make comparisons that favor the in-group (and sometimes disparage the out-group). The strength of this tendency varies, depending on the potential for mobility—it is stronger for immutable ascribed categorizations (e.g., race, gender, nationality) than it is for achieved categorizations (e.g., educational degree status, membership on sports teams), especially if the higher status is within reach. Therefore, it is the social environment and, in particular, the relevant group contrasts within that environment that determine what dimensions of self-perception, other-stereotyping, and intergroup competition/discrimination occur. If I think of myself as an American and I am in a social context where the British are my out-group, I might think of my American self as egalitarian (as opposed to the class-oriented British). But if I am (still) an American and I am comparing myself to an Italian, I might think of myself as orderly (as opposed to the unsettled, fractious Italians). The hypotheses of Social Identity Theory typically focus on how variations in the social situation (the relevant out-groups, the beliefs about the degree of mobility and social change possible, etc.) influence the content of the operative meanings for the in-group (i.e., situated self-meanings) and the out-group (stereotypes and discrimination).

Notice that in Social Identity Theory, the concept of salience has a very different meaning from that in Identity Theory. In Stryker’s Identity Theory, identity salience is a stable part of the self—a result of commitment (frequent and affectively valued relationships to others). It is something that actors carry from situation to situation. In Social Identity Theory, salience is conceptualized as the impact of the situation on self-categorizations. I might be an American in Paris, but at a Civil War reenactment, I am a Southerner, and in the American Sociological Association, I am a professor and a social psychologist. And in each of these venues, I might have different meanings for those categorical identities, depending on the salient out-group at the time. In comparing Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory and Stryker’s Identity Theory, Hogg et al. (1995, p. 263) noted that Tajfel’s theory put more emphasis on social context for identity and their meanings, whereas the sociological Identity Theory focused on self-structure for motivating the
enactment of identities and long-term social experience for the internalized meanings.

To end our section on situational/cultural theories of identity, we turn to a theory that is not considered an identity theory at all—the Status Characteristics Theory branch of the expectation states theoretical research program. We include the theory in this review not to cover all of its rich contributions to microsociology, but to highlight the elements of the theory that deal with the relationships among identity and interaction. The increasing use of the theory outside of its scope conditions by identity researchers justifies its placement here.

**Status Characteristics Theory**

The intellectual roots of Status Characteristics Theory are not in symbolic interaction, but in the exchange tradition (Correll & Ridgeway 2003). When people work together on a task and will be rewarded jointly for its successful completion (the scope conditions of the theory), actors are motivated to assess who will contribute most effectively to the task completion. The actors for whom task expectations are the highest are given action opportunities, receive positive evaluations, and have other interactional advantages. Actors’ characteristics (e.g., gender, race) become important within a situation when those characteristics are evaluated by self and others, and are perceived (either implicitly or explicitly) to be relevant to expectations about task performance. The theory’s core mechanism is that group members will exchange deference within the group interaction for the high-expectation actors’ contributions to the task (resulting in higher benefits for all group members, including the lower-expectation ones).

Note, however, the similarities between Status Characteristics Theory and Affect Control Theory (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin 1994). Both theories posit that largely consensual cultural meanings are imported into a situation to organize action within that setting. Both theories suggest that the identities (and, therefore, cultural meanings) that are relevant are determined by the situation, not by an internal self-structure. And both provide a generative account of how action unfolds in the situation, given these meanings. The fact that Status Characteristics Theory is frequently now applied outside of its scope conditions of collaborative, jointly rewarded task orientation—which nullifies the exchange mechanism—makes it closer to a situationally based identity theory than the status-exchange theory of its origins. Researchers in both the Affect Control Theory and the Identity Control Theory traditions have used the theory to discuss how status meanings organize action within social situations (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin 1994, Rashotte & Smith-Lovin 1997, Stets 1997, Stets & Harrod 2004, Cast et al. 1999). For example, Stets & Harrod (2004) find that actors in higher-status positions have interactional resources that allow them to sustain their identity meanings within situations, avoiding negative emotions that come with lack of identity maintenance.

Having reviewed the systematically developed theories of identity and action that emphasize internalized meanings and situational/cultural elements, respectively, we now turn to a body of literature on collective identity that has a very different emphasis. Indeed, a review of this literature a decade ago (Cerulo 1997) barely mentions social psychological theories. Here, we try to summarize the differing emphasis of this substantial literature on collective identity and to draw out connections between its treatment of identity and the social psychological literature reviewed above.

**COLLECTIVE IDENTITY**

*The solidarity that derives from similarities is at its maximum when the collective consciousness completely envelopes our total consciousness, coinciding with it at every point.*

—Emile Durkheim (1893)

The sociological literature on collective identity is less organized around distinct midrange
theories than are the literatures on personal identity and situated identity. Rather, it is a wide-ranging literature coming out of a number of traditions, including cultural sociology, social movements theory, feminist sociology, and cognitive sociology. Consequently, this section of our review is organized around concepts and process rather than around specific theoretical traditions. We attempt to draw connections between this vibrant literature and the midrange microsociological theories reviewed above.

The internal and situational identity processes reviewed in the section above can lead identities to serve as an organizational force, binding us to those with commonalities of interest and providing a social glue that can serve as a foundation for mobilizing joint action. Collective identities should not be seen as a third type of identity as much as an attempt by this literature to highlight another set of identity-related dynamics at the group level. Both internalized identities and situational identities can underpin the sense of connection and shared destiny requisite for collective identification. Indeed, Nagel (1995, p. 21) refers to the collective variant of ethnic identity as “a dialectic between internal identification and external ascription.”

Most definitions of collective identity include a notion of identification with shared features along with a recognition of shared opportunities and constraints afforded by those features (Melucci 1989). Taylor & Whittier (1999, p. 170) define collective identity as the “shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences, and solidarity.” A sense of we-ness, or connection to other members of the group/category, is an essential component of collective identity, but the concept goes far beyond that. Prentice et al. (1994) specifically distinguish between group identities based on common bonds (attachments to individual group members) and those based on common identities (attachments directly to the group or category). The latter form of attachment is necessary to produce a collective identity.

Psychologists working in the social identity and self-categorization theoretical traditions refer to the “collective self” as nearly interchangeable with “social identity” as used in those theories (Brewer & Gardner 1996) and thus focus largely on its consequences for self-definition and interpersonal judgment. Sociological use of the term collective identity focuses more on its consequences for mobilizing joint action. This is closer to what Heise (1998) referred to as empathic solidarity. Heise (1998, p. 197) defines empathic solidarity as “a reciprocated sense of merged consciousness and alliance, with faith in others’ commitments to shared purposes.” Heise argues that when people take on the same identity, experience the same reality, and observe one another’s parallel emotions and collateral behaviors, a sense of common destiny and empathic connection arises. It is this phenomenon, operating at the group level, that makes the sociological literature on collective identity distinctive from the microsociological identity literature that we review above.

Collective Identity and the New Social Movements

A concern with understanding what mobilizes joint action motivates much of sociology’s attention to collective identity. Collective identity is a central organizing concept in the literature on new social movements. New social movement theory (Laraña et al. 1994; Melucci 1989, 1994; Offe 1985; Turner 1969) juxtaposes modern (post-1960s) movements with earlier social movements, arguing that contemporary movements are less about Marxist-style conflict over material interests and more concerned with identity meanings and other symbolic resources. For example, Turner (1969) related protest participation to identity dynamics and referred to the emerging number of “identity seeking” movements. The identity dynamics described by Turner focused on personal identities and the identification/disidentification with various groups. Later researchers refined the notion of collective identity as a group-level...
phenomenon (Melucci 1989, 1994) central to giving a group or category the coherence and energy necessary to mobilize its constituents into collective action. Nearly a decade ago, Polletta & Jasper (2001) reviewed the literature on collective identity and social movements, revealing how identity processes are deeply related to all aspects of social movements, including (a) movement emergence, (b) recruitment and participation, (c) movement strategy, and (d) interpretation of outcomes (see Stryker et al. 2000).

Boundary Work

Taylor & Whittier (1999) describe three factors that contribute to the development of a collective identity capable of motivating group-level action: (a) the creation of social boundaries, (b) the development and recognition of social criteria that account for a group’s structural position, and (c) negotiation of intergroup and intragroup meanings. Boundaries identify who is and is not a member of a collective, but it is group consciousness that gives significance to a collectivity (Taylor & Whittier 1999, p. 179). In the case of mobilizing collective consciousness in response to a dominant group or oppressive understanding, this significance takes the form of what Morris (1999) calls oppositional consciousness. Strategies and practices used by collectives to create, maintain, and transform cultural categories are collectively referred to as boundary work (Nippert-Eng 2002).

Gamson (1995) points out that fixed categories are the basis for both oppression and political power. Consequently, boundary work regarding collective identities such as race, gender, and sexuality can sometimes vacillate between taking on the goal of deconstructing boundaries (e.g., Lorber 2006) and taking on the goal of fixing the boundaries to mobilize on the basis of them (e.g., Jenson 1995).

Within this theoretical tradition, Lamont (1992) offered an in-depth analysis of the symbolic boundaries people draw when categorizing self and others in her comparative study of upper-middle-class culture in France and the United States. Her work suggests that boundary work around collective identities operates multidimensionally and that the relative prominence of those dimensions can vary between cultural settings (echoing some themes in Social Identity Theory). Her analysis distinguished between three types of symbolic boundaries: moral, socioeconomic, and cultural. According to Lamont’s research, French social and cultural specialists draw stronger cultural boundaries, while social and cultural specialists in the United States attend more to economic boundaries. More specifically, Lamont found that boundary-drawing activities in the United States vary with the degree to which they are embedded in occupational structures that are dependent on profit-making. U.S. social and cultural specialists in the nonprofit sector felt more similar to, and connected with, other nonprofit workers than to other social and cultural specialists who were dependent on profit-making. In contrast, French social and cultural specialists identified more with the intellectual and cultural boundaries around their vocations and less with the economic aspects.

The boundary work literature focuses primarily on the strategies and practices that groups use to construct collective identities and to manage the symbolic boundaries around those identities. However, theorists have also attended to how external structures create and constrain the emergence and salience of collective identities. Again, this work picks up some themes emphasized in the sociocultural/situational theories of identity in microsociology.

Competition and Contact

Two opposing logics guide the theoretical literature regarding the impact of external forces on the salience of collective identity boundaries and the strength of collective identity bonds. One is that direct competition strengthens group boundaries and mobilizes collective identity-based conflict. Competition theory (Olzak 1994) argues that when economic and demographic changes lead to a breakdown in labor market segmentation, the increase in
intergroup interaction and the intensification of competition for scarce resources strain intergroup relations and, consequently, increase collective identification—particularly ethnic identification. Olzak and colleagues have amassed considerable support for the idea that increased economic competition leads to surges in ethnic protests and collective action (Olzak et al. 1994, 1996; Soule 1992). Nagel (1995), on the other hand, found that cultural renewal among Native Americans has taken place under exactly the kinds of conditions that are thought to produce cultural decline. One argument is that positive economic conditions set the stage for this renewal. According to Nagel, structural externalities such as successful land claims, increases in federal spending, and minority set aside programs have increased the symbolic and material value of Native American identity.

In contrast to the idea that increased interaction and competition foster collective identification, the cultural division of labor theory proposes that group solidarity and collective identity arise when groups are distinctively positioned in an occupational structure on the basis of cultural markers (Hechter 1978, 2000). Occupational segregation increases intragroup interaction relative to intergroup interaction and consequently increases commonality of interests and futures. Thus, when cultural and economic boundaries overlap, collective identity will arise on the basis of cultural, rather than economic, similarity.

Okamoto (2003) extended and synthesized these contrasting arguments into a theory about the shifting, layered nature of ethnic identities. In a study of the relationship between economic competition, cultural division of labor, and pan-Asian identity, Okamoto found that the collective identity boundaries tracked the patterns of occupational segregation: When Asian ethnic groups occupy a shared place in the occupational market, pan-Asian identities are more likely to emerge and mobilize pan-ethnic collective action. When separate Asian ethnic groups are segregated into different occupations, the separate ethnic identities remain salient and pan-ethnic collective action is suppressed.

**Nested Identities**

As Okamoto’s work highlights, boundary work by collectives is not simply a matter of sharpening contrasts between competing groups or emphasizing distinctiveness from a larger oppressive culture. At times collective identification is a process of crystallizing subgroup boundaries that fractionalize a larger whole, or melding subgroups into larger, cohesive collectives. Green (1999) describes four groups of sectarian evangelical Protestants whose efforts animated the first wave of a Christian Right movement, but whose intergroup conflicts ultimately contributed to the decline of the movement. The success of a second wave of the Christian Right movement, according to Green, was facilitated by the development of a new collective identity for these groups.

Similarly, in her study of the emergence of a pan-tribal Native American identity, Nagel (1995) described the process by which subgroups can join to form a larger common identity. She referred to ethnic renewal as the process by which new ethnic identities are built/rebuilt out of historical social and symbolic systems. Among Native Americans, a shared history of discrimination and oppression, combined with some of the positive economic externalities described above, created a common fate among ethnic groups with otherwise distinctive cultural histories. These developments facilitated the collective processes (e.g., institution building via the establishment of new organizations and religions) and cultural practices (development of new shared rituals and symbols) involved in ethnic renewal.

**Identity, Emotions, and Mobilization**

Close on the heels of renewed attention to the role of identity in social movements has been a revival of interest in how emotions mobilize joint action. Scholars have recently become more focused on how emotions create
solidarity and energize collective bonds (Britt & Heise 2000, Collins 1990, Gould 2004, Heise 1998, Jasper 1998). Britt & Heise (2000) point out that shared emotion is not enough to generate collective identification and action. Using arguments from Affect Control Theory, Britt & Heise (2000) argued that negative emotions that are low energy and low potency (e.g., shame and depression) are not useful for activating collective bonds or motivating joint action. In contrast, negative emotions that are higher in energy and potency (e.g., anger) can motivate individual participation in collective actions—from mild protests to large-scale conflict. To truly energize a mobilized collective identity, however, requires both energy and a positive sense of connection within the collective. Such mobilization is facilitated, according to Britt & Heise, by positive, powerful, and energetic emotions like pride. Britt & Heise argued that certain emotion transformations (e.g., shame to pride) are difficult to make without transitioning between more affectively similar emotions along the way. They illustrated how aspects of participation in the gay rights movement could be seen as efforts to transform shame to anger to pride in an effort to construct a solidarity and energized collective identity.

Collective Identity and Modernity

Much has been written about the relationship between modernity and contemporary loci of collective identity. The conventional argument is that social and institutional complexity of late modernity (Giddens 1991) or postmodernity (Gergen 1991) has fractionalized the contemporary self. Wimmer (2002) speaks to this idea in his study of nationalism and ethnicity, but argues for the opposite relationship. According to Wimmer, contemporary notions of identity are responsible for the emergence of modernity. Wimmer distinguishes three positions on the issue of nationalism and ethnicity. The first is that nations and ethnic groups are truly modern phenomena. Second, nations and ethnic groups as we currently understand them are transitory—what he refers to as “birth pains of modernity.” Third, national and ethnic identities are perennial and basic to human social organization. Wimmer then presents what he describes as a radical modern argument: that ethnicity nationalism produced modernity as we understand it. According to Wimmer, it was the fusion of three notions of peoplehood that resulted in the modern politicization of ethnicity: (a) the notion of the people as a sovereign entity—with power by means of political (such as democratic) procedures; (b) the notion of people as citizens—with rights and responsibilities; and (c) the notion of people as an ethnic community bound by common political destiny and shared cultural features. The commingling of these notions translated into three modern political principles: democracy, citizenship, and national self-determination. Wimmer further argues that nations differ in the relative salience of these principles. According to Wimmer, the French and Swiss emphasize democracy and rely on the concept of democracy to derive the principles of citizenship and nationalism. In contrast, Wimmer argues that Germany, Greece, and Israel stress nationality and from it derive the principles of democracy and citizenship.

While social movement theorists focus on both aspects of collective identity—common interests/fate and common symbolic meanings—there is a strong thread in the modernity/postmodernity literature that documents a shift over time in the relative
importance of these two aspects in shaping category-based action. Pre-1960s movements are presumed to be motivated more by more structural, ascriptive category memberships and jointness of interest, whereas post-1960s movements are thought to be driven more by meaning-based bonds (Laraña et al. 1994, Melucci 1994, Offe 1985). This argument about the trend away from the importance of structurally defined group identities toward more personally and culturally defined group identities parallels the findings in social psychology about the transition (over a similar historical period) from more structural/institutional definitions of self to more personal/dispositional definitions of self (Turner 1976).

Fractal Organization of Identity Dynamics

Collective identities are to groups what social identities are to individuals (Owens 2003, p. 227). Therefore, collective identity processes can sometimes mirror the processes described by the theories about internal and situational identity dynamics reviewed above. The process of boundary work, often fueled by competition or contact, can lead to the development of an identity, making it available for members of a category to see themselves as having a common set of interests or fate. Sometimes new labels are developed and added to a culture’s “cultural theory of people” (MacKinnon & Heise 2010), making them available for individuals to adopt and incorporate into a self-structure. Further, intergroup dynamics can lead to situations that allow groups and/or individuals to adopt different identity orientations at different moments in a political/social process.

While identity accumulation theory (Thoits 1983, 2003) and self-complexity theory (Linville 1987) argue that having access to multiple role-identities can provide the self with resources that help provide a buffer against stress, the social movement literature reveals that collective identities with layers of nested identities can provide a movement with a richer set of resources for mobilizing effective collective action (Heckathorn 1993, Lichterman 1999, Oliver & Marwell 1988, Richards 2004). Moreover, just as multiple identities within self-structures can sometimes lead to identity conflict, competing or layered identities within collectives can create opportunities for conflict and fractionalization.

Richards (2004) illustrates this point with her examination of the delicate balancing act required to mobilize and maintain collective identity in the ethnically and economically diverse women’s movements in Chile. She studied the relationships between the poor, working-class pobladoras, the indigenous Mapuche, and the National Women’s Service (SERNAM). Nested class and ethnic identities set the stage for potential fractures among these various groups involved in the women’s movement. Both the pobladoras and the Mapuche describe being left out of the programs implemented by SERNAM. Pobladoras identified gender as important in explaining their activism—yet initially organized around roles as wives and mothers. Richards describes how the pobladoras’ self-views became transformed through participation in the movement. Meanwhile, the Mapuche claims of difference and disadvantage conflicted with SERNAM’s goal of equality/sameness, causing schisms in both discourse and agendas. Richards’s work showed how members of the women’s movement navigate the danger of fragmentation by suppressing the separate identities in the superordinate collective. This careful negotiation of a coherent, integrated collective identity echoes the findings of Lichterman’s (1999) study of a sexual minority activist group as it attempted to create and maintain a solidary collective identity as a coalition-building network. Lichterman found that compared to some of its constituent groups, the LGBT coalition-building group actively avoided reflective discourse and engaged in more unified talk carefully designed not to raise the specter of difference or to activate potentially schismatic organizing processes.
CONCLUSIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

This review, with its unusual structure and its coverage of the relatively disconnected literatures on identity within the microsociology and social movements areas, is designed to allow readers to see opportunities for enriching both traditions. We deal first with the opportunity for connections within the microlevel traditions and then with potential for enrichment across the two distinct literatures.

The relatively subtle distinction that we have drawn between theories that emphasize how self-structures and internalized meanings organize social life, on the one hand, and how we import cultural meanings and shape them within the context of situated interaction, on the other, points to a need for two types of new research. While much of the microsociological literature has used either surveys (to study self-structure and internalized meanings) or experiments (to study situated meanings and how they shift in context), we may need new study of naturally occurring situations to fully exploit the linkages between internalized structure and situated action. Some insights from Stryker’s Identity Theory could be linked to the fast-growing literature on networks to develop the linkage between commitment and salience more fully and to explore how it impacts situated action. The new work by MacKinnon & Heise (2010; see also Moore & Robinson 2006) about how people use movement from one situation to another to maintain fundamental sentiments toward the self could be linked to Thoit’s work on identity accumulation to show how situated action accomplishes mental health benefits (or, among some categories of people, fails to do so). Exploring the few competing theoretical predictions from Identity Control Theory and Affect Control Theory (Smith-Lovin & Robinson 2006) might allow us to assess the relative value of emic, individualized meaning measurement (as used in Burke’s work) and mathematical formalization (as used by Heise). It might also reveal some scope conditions for when people privilege internalized, idiosyncratic meanings over a definition of situation that is institutionally imposed.

Connections between the microsociological literature and the group-level treatment of collective identity are more challenging. The obvious point of departure is that the people who are motivated by collective identities toward political or social action are undergoing the processes already well described by the microsociological theories. This fact alone might provide some leverage for determining when recruitment, re-framing of a social situation, and mobilization might succeed or fail. More interesting are the ways in which the collective identity literature can suggest new topics for microsociological research. Much of this literature focuses on the structural conditions under which new options are created for a definition of the situation. The definition of the situation is a central process in microsociological identity theories, but it is rarely studied explicitly. The collective identity literature’s use of Goffman’s framing concept, and its attention to the inter- and intragroup processes that successfully motivate actors to view a contested situation in a new way, could point to a useful exploration of these key processes at the microlevel. A second area of potential enrichment comes from the collective identity focus on the group as a unit that generates social action. As we noted above, there is a parallel between processes at the individual and group levels, both in defining situations and in generating action. Although theorists should avoid loose analogies, the processes by which groups manage multiple, nested, layered identities and use particular identities (and the emotional responses associated with them) to motivate organized collective action may mirror the process of managing nested identity structures within individual selves. An exploration of this process might require a refocusing of attention on group-level studies in microsociology. We have excellent midlevel theories of group process in sociological social psychology, and they are becoming increasingly connected intellectually to the issue of identity [see, for an excellent example, Lawler et al.’s (2009) new book]...
on affective commitments to groups. We need to push these developments to see how groups organize actions vis-à-vis other outside group-level interests.

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**LITERATURE CITED**


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